

**CONSCIOUSNESS OF SPIRITUAL VOID: THE  
TRAPPED PROTAGONISTS IN THE SELECT NOVELS  
OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, JOSEPH HELLER, AND  
NORMAN KINGSLEY MAILER.**

Thesis Submitted For the Award of the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**  
in  
**ENGLISH**

By  
**Sonia Luthra**  
Regd. No.- 41400173

**Supervised By**  
**Dr. Ajoy Batta**  
Professor and Head  
Department of English  
Lovely Professional University

**Co-Supervised by**  
**Dr. Gowher Ahmad Naik**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Lovely Professional University



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### **Certificate by Advisor**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Consciousness of Spiritual Void: The Trapped Protagonists in the Select Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer” submitted to the Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy in English is a record of original and independent research work conducted by Sonia Luthra (41400173) under my supervision and guidance . The thesis had not formed the basis for the award of any degree/diploma/ associateship/fellowship or any other similar title to any candidate by any university/ institute.

The candidate has pursued the prescribed coursework of research, and she has incorporated all the suggestions given by the Department Doctoral Board of the university during her annual presentations and pre-submission seminar held on 10 September, 2021.

**Place: Phagwara**

**Dated: 7 April, 2022**

**Advisor**

**Dr. Ajoy Batta**

Professor and Head of  
Department of English  
Lovely Professional  
University, Phagwara

## **Declaration**

### **I do hereby acknowledge that:**

- The thesis entitled “Consciousness of Spiritual Void: The Trapped Protagonists in the Select Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer” is a presentation of my original work completed under the kind guidance of my adviser Dr. Ajoy Batta. Every effort has been made to incorporate the opportune suggestions provided by the Department Doctoral Board of Lovely Professional University, Phagwara.
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**Sonia Luthra**

**41400173**

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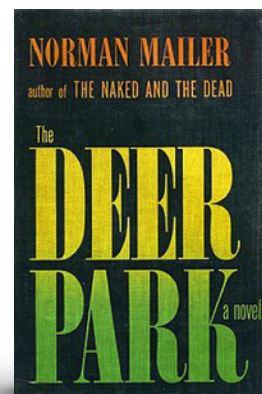
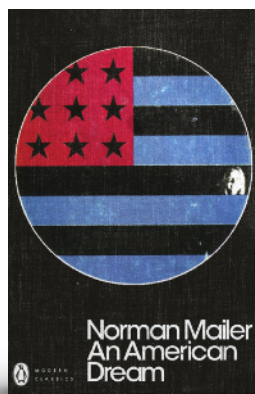
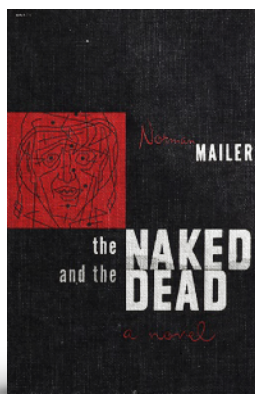
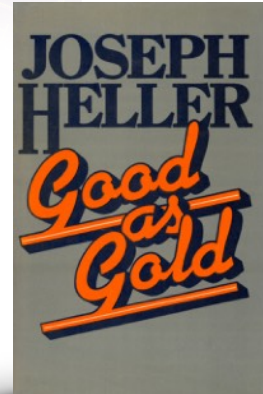
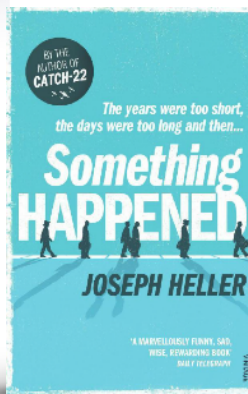
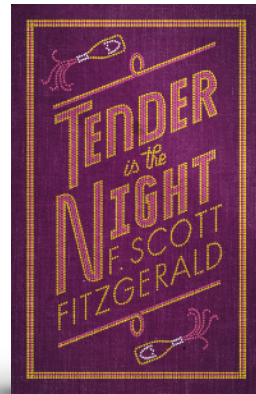
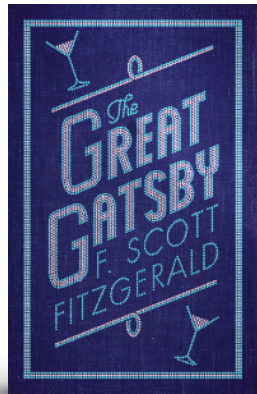
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Consciousness of Spiritual Void: The Trapped Protagonists in the Select Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer





## Introduction

*“Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life”*

—*Buddha*

The prominent characteristics of the American novels that appeared during and after World Wars depict the loss of stability and certainty of life and the emergence of dilemmas that grip the psyche of modern man. The American novelists have depicted the grim war and post-war situation and the trapped nature of the protagonists as highlighted by the novelists under research. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer are famous as war novelists. The war situation brought new challenges for the Americans. America never wanted to join World War II but on the 7th of December 1941, tons of Japanese fighter planes bombed the Pearl Harbour destroying 20 American ships and killing two thousand American soldiers. Subsequently, the American President declared war on Germany and Japan. Millions young boys were forced to go to the battlefield to defeat the Germans and the Japanese forces. The American novelists turned to Dostoevsky, Thomas Mann, and Kafka and imported existential theories of different existentialists like Karl Jaspers, Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus in America. The World Wars created a wave of fear, terror, and nihilism in America. Younger generation looked confused and baffled because of the nightmarish war situation. They questioned religion, morality and the concept of American Dream. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer took up the themes of depression, anxiety and most importantly *Catch-22* situation. The American people were trapped in ambiguities and uncertainties. They revolted against naturalism, rationalism, and idealism. They were forced to confront the reality of the new war culture. The young soldiers fighting on the front endured nightmarish, absurd existence defined by bureaucracy and violence. They turned pessimists and nihilists and lost faith in God, divinity, and Christianity. The protagonists of Fitzgerald, Heller, and Norman Mailer encounter the powerful militaristic, bureaucratic and corporate forces. Each protagonist is rendered impotent and ineffectual by these forces. For instance, Yossarian the anti-hero of Heller's *Catch-22*

is stifled by the military power of Milo. Yossarian is forced to assume insanity to survive in the callous totalitarian society.

In the Greek tragedies, man was in harmony with Nature and God. He enjoyed absolute faith in God as his life was determined and conditioned by the forces of divinity. Plato and Aristotle's quest was for truth and faith in divinity. Aristotle observed that man has inner divine energy in him as he can explore the inexplicable. Shakespeare's Hamlet finds disorder and chaos in society but he devotes his life to bring order out of chaos. There is no spiritual void in the life of protagonists of Shakespeare. Whereas, in the selected novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer, one finds trapped protagonists who are tattered and fallen beings suffering from the Spiritual void.

The awareness of spiritual void began in the beginning of the 20th century with the emergence of anxiety and absurdity. World War I (1914-1918), The Great Depression (1929), and World War II (1939-1945) brought about disillusionment, nihilism, skepticism, anxiety, pessimism, and the new sense of uncertainty which imparted a new awareness to the American novelists. A majority of them turned towards philosophers like Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche. Schopenhauer wrote *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) and propagated the philosophy of pessimism and Friedrich Nietzsche thoroughly studied Schopenhauer and wrote *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1883 declaring that "God is dead" (Nietzsche 47) and propagated skepticism, doubt, and despair. The phrase "God is dead," doesn't mean that Nietzsche believed in an actual God who first existed and then died in a literal sense. The phrase conveys the idea that the Christian God is no longer a source of moral principles. The death of God brought about nihilism in the world which led man to become sick of divinity as he found himself rootless and alienated. The ideals of American Dream collapsed since the soldiers who returned from the war looked baffled and confused. They were shocked to find their friends rolling in wealth while they were fighting on the front. The dollar had become God in America. The protagonists of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer are all trapped in this catastrophic war and a post-war situation where there is no escape. Being

trapped they look bewildered and muddled which makes them unable to come out of this labyrinth of spiritual void.

The protagonists depicted in all the novels discarded the ideals of the American dream and pursued the easy way to mint money. Gatsby of Fitzgerald indulged in bootlegging and made huge money in smuggling alcohol that was banned in America. All the protagonists such as Gatsby, Dick, Bob Slocum, Gold, and Rojack throw all the morality into the wind in the mad pursuit of making money and thus are trapped in new war culture of America. Truth became a life- sustaining illusion. Mind, consciousness, and soul are considered illusive and meaningless things. Interestingly in the American novels of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer the traditional hero has totally vanished. Instead, there are trapped protagonists who are caught in the web of the war machine, bureaucracy, militarism and in the mad pursuit of minting dollars. The American novelists adroitly project them as a trapped product of social conditions who disrupt the value system of America. For many of them, dollar is Supreme and other relations are meaningless. The evolution of war fiction in America brought revolution as new themes of war and survival mesmerised the young readers. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer depicted the tendency of the army and air force to bulldoze the identity of the individuals. Some common features of the American fiction of post-war include the negation of all values, and trapped nature of the protagonists. The general effect is often a nightmare or dreamlike atmosphere in which the protagonist is overwhelmed by the chaotic or irrational nature of his environment. The protagonists are trapped in such an alley where there is hard to escape. They weave a web of illusions and delusions and ultimately get killed or suffer disintegration of life and self. The statement of the problem is that the World Wars and the Great Depression created a spiritual void and the protagonists, who were afflicted with it, became vulnerable and consequently trapped in the money and power culture of America.

The research is aimed to achieve five primary objectives: the first research objective is aimed to trace the causes of the spiritual void; analyse its roots to better understand its effects on the protagonists and their psyche. In the selected novels, it has been observed that a major cause of spiritual void is the direct or indirect effect of war on their psyches and the society. Most of the protagonists are war-heroes who suffer from the atrocities and traumas of the battlefield. As a result, lose their rational thinking, and psychic fantasy and trauma grip their consciousness. Furthermore, the war had a devastating impact on the society as well, because the commodity culture that emerged after the World Wars created an unrestrained desire for money in postwar America and doubled social and moral decay. The second research objective is aimed to find the impact of spiritual void on the life of the protagonists of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer. Spiritual Void throws people towards pessimism and demoralisation. This pessimism and demoralisation create nihilism, man gives way to despair and instead of worshipping God, he starts worshipping money. Spiritual Void makes man's inner self weak and he easily becomes vulnerable to his circumstances. It ultimately strips a man of his spirit.

The third research objective is intended to examine and reinterpret the money culture of America and understanding how all the protagonists are trapped by the oppressive forces of bureaucracy, military and power politics. For the protagonists of the selected novels, money has a great influence on the characters' relationships, inspirations, and consequences. Most of the protagonists expose themselves to be extremely money-oriented, their wishes driven by their craving for wealth and prestige. The fourth research objective is aimed at investigating the protagonists' Catch-22 situation and its consequences, and the impact of war on their psyche, on their vision, love, sex, and identity. All the protagonists are trapped in a catch-22 situation. A catch-22 is a situation where it is hard to find escape because of its contradictory nature. Therefore, no matter what choice the protagonists make, they are bound to suffer. War and the mad pursuit of money and power make them psychic wrecks. All of them have a pessimistic and nihilistic vision towards life, while love

and sex become commodities to them. As a result, their identity gets shattered and disintegrated.

The last research objective is aimed to apply the psychoanalytical theories of Freud given in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and of post Freudian thinkers such as Karen Horney's *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) and Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) on the bewildered and trapped protagonists. All of the protagonists are victims of the trauma that was a direct or indirect result of the war and post-war landscape. Freud and Breuer emphasise in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that the "primary event was not traumatic in itself but only in its later remembrance" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 13). Trauma is therefore described in relation to the process of remembering and as an incident dwelling within the unconscious that causes a splitting of the ego or dissociation. Freud says:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. (qtd. in Caruth 186)

Freud's study on war neurosis and the issue of traumatic flashbacks in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) adapts and extends his prior theories on the defense mechanisms of the ego along with the cause and impact of trauma upon the psyche. "The mind as an organism"- according to Freud- "harbours outer and inner layers, with the outer layer having a 'protective shield' against dangerous external stimuli" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3731). However, when 'fright' occurs, that is "the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it" (3718), the lack of anxiety coupled with the external stimuli cause neurosis. Such is the "fright" that Slocum faces when he gets the shocking news of Virginia's death and the news that he himself killed his son by suffocating him. His anxiety, which acts as a protection mechanism against traumatic neurosis, carries no defence against these

unexpected situations. These external stimuli rupture the barrier and enter his inner psyche without the adequate internal defence. Freud writes:

We describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield ... with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. Trauma is imagined as both an external agent that shocks the unprepared system and an internal action of defence against overstimulation. (3732)

In the traditional trauma model pioneered by Cathy Caruth, trauma is viewed as an "event that fragments consciousness and prevents direct linguistic representation. The model draws attention to the severity of suffering by suggesting the traumatic experience irrevocably damages the psyche. Trauma is an unassimilated event that shatters identity and remains outside normal memory and narrative representation" (Caruth 74). All of the protagonists repressed their traumatic memories that arose due to the landscape of contemporary America. Repression in its essence is an unconscious type of forgetting the existence of something that brings us discomfort or pain.

The critical framework of the research is based upon the psychoanalytical theories of Freud given in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), Karen Horney's *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) and Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* writes that this repression is caused because an individual wants to achieve something which is pleasant to the mind and wants to forget occurrences which are unpleasant. Guilt inducing desires and traumatic events are relegated into the unconscious which emerge only at a particular moment in the form of images, dream, and Freudian slips. This reaction in an evolutionary sense is beneficial for a person. It drives a person to pleasurable behaviours and thoughts. Freud and Breuer point out that memory of trauma seems to be far more detrimental to the psyche of individuals than trauma itself. The traumatic memory is hidden deep in our psyche so that retrieval becomes almost impossible. Our conscious mind never wants to access the unpleasant experiences as they are disturbing. But when major events and traumatic experiences

are repressed by an individual, it can have an extremely detrimental effect on their psyche. It can later surface itself through neurosis and hysteria. The trauma is concerned with excitation, either obsessive or emotional, where the more intense the trauma, the more intense is excitation. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the subject to function pragmatically. Cathy Caruth points out that this repression and its later repetition can negatively affect the psyche of an individual.

As modern neurobiologists point out, the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashbacks can be itself re-traumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration. (Caruth 63).

Karen Horney in light of a person's conflict states: "[Neurotics are] torn by inner conflicts ... Every neurotic ... is at war with himself" (Horney, *Neurosis* 11). She further describes this phenomenon of the shallow pursuit of money and power, showing a truly grotesque image of what the American dream had turned itself into. She writes:

The neurotic, as long as he must adhere to his illusions about himself, cannot recognise limitations, the search for glory goes into the unlimited. Because the main goal is the attainment of glory, he becomes uninterested in the process of learning, of doing, or of gaining step by step — indeed, tends to scorn it. He does not want to climb a mountain; he wants to be on the peak. (38)

In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that Freud co-authored with Breuer, he asserted that hysteria was caused by the patient's efforts to repress traumatic memories, according to Freud, external traumatic events coupled with internal impulses that are improperly repressed by the ego and that, therefore, find alternative expression are required for neurosis to manifest itself. The neurotic that needs treatment simply has more debilitating symptoms- formations that prevent enjoyment and active achievement in life.

Neurotic Anxiety arises when the ego of an individual feels that it is going to be overwhelmed by the id. Ego always tries to control the

desires of Id, but since the desires of Id are more powerful, Ego is unable to do so. As a consequence, Id tries to fulfil its desires through irrational thoughts, fantasy, and abnormal behaviours. (Freud, *The Complete Works* 295)

Dr Karen Horney opines that obsession becomes a major cause of depression. The trauma, and the resulting obsession and hysteria of the protagonists made them vulnerable to the vices of the society and sowed the seeds of spiritual void in their minds. This spiritual eclipse ultimately led to the miserable downfall of all the protagonists and trapped them in the money and power culture of America.

In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), Albert Camus- a French philosopher, author, and journalist- has explored the depths of absurdity and existentialism. The absurd, for Camus, is a complex notion of man's relationship to the world. It is also, as used in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, an ambiguous term. By absurd Camus means primarily the whole scandalous paradox of the human condition. Man stands before the world in which he finds himself, questioning. Camus's case is that his questions are not answered. There is a lack of meaning in life. There is an inevitable obscurity where we desire clarity. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus quotes Kierkegaard when he seeks an explanation of the guilty despair that is part of the sentiment of absurdity:

There is nothing more profound, for example, than Kierkegaard's opinion that despair is not an act but a state: the state of sin. For sin is whatever separates us from God. The absurd, which is the metaphysical state of conscious man, does not lead to God. (Camus 14)

Bewildered by the absurd and materialistic world they inhabit, the protagonists of the selected novels live a life of sins, straying further and further away from God and morals.

In line with the research methodology of this study, the 8th edition of MLA Style sheet is strictly followed. The main focus of the thesis is on the trapped situation of the protagonists of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer. The research is qualitative and is based on the knowledge. No field work is required and comparative textual study is the main focus to depict the trapped situation of the



protagonists during and after the Wars in America. Furthermore, the study is thematic and investigative; the trapped condition of the protagonists by bureaucracy, army, and war machine has been highlighted. The thesis deals with theme analysis.

This research is a critical, qualitative investigation of the issues of pessimism and nihilism which grew in the Post- War American society. The present study explores the trapped nature of the protagonists who lead a life in death as they cannot escape from the net and ultimately get disintegrated or killed. The texts of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer have been examined and explored from the perspective of consciousness of spiritual void that gripped the psyche of the lost intellectuals of America. The research is knowledge based and no collection of empirical data is required. The objective of the present study is to explore the trapped situation of the protagonists who live in war-ridden society with new money culture. The youth of America who returned from war experienced the growth of utilitarianism and greed and got trapped in the cruelty of the hegemony of money and power. The young American people were seen trapped in the dark and death-like alley. Money power, conformity created dilemmas and ambiguities in their lives. They looked confused and bewildered as they were trapped in the Catch-22 situation. In order to achieve these objectives, this study is primarily a textual examination of the selected novels and their protagonists such as Gatsby, Dick, Captain John Yossarian, Bob Slocum, Bruce Gold, and Rojack, who were afflicted with depression and trauma. In the present research project the guidelines of the latest 8th edition of MLA style sheet have been observed. The comparative study of the protagonists of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer has been fruitful in understanding the psyche of the protagonists. To provide a thorough understanding of the methodology and its application in the present study, this dissertation deals with theme analysis research, the textual analysis and the comparative study of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer. The original works of Freud and post-Freudian thinkers such as Karen Horney and Cathy Caruth have been investigated and data is collected to trace the impact on the mind and sensibility of the protagonists of the selected novelists.

Intertextuality as a term was first used in Julia Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966) and then in "The Bounded Text" (1966-67), essays she wrote shortly after arriving in Paris from her native Bulgaria. The concept of intertextuality that she initiated proposes the text as a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products. The concept of intertextuality requires that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures. Rejecting the New Critical principle of textual autonomy, the theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole, and so, that it does not function as a closed system. All the selected novels are connected with the red thread of spiritual void, which highlights their intertextuality, in addition to the similar themes of war, materialism, absurdity and nihilism. Built upon a similar period and consequently each other, all the selected novels carry traces of each other in varying amounts. This has been analysed in this thesis, to paint a clearer picture of the minds of the selected novelists and other novelists of the war and post-war era.

There is a significant research gap between the present and past researches. The vantage point of the researcher on the selected novels has been quite different from the points of view of a number of critics and writers. For instance, *The Great Gatsby* (1925) has been analysed from different points-of-view such as nihilistic society (Lehan 112), materialism of the age (Moyer 218), fragmented life of Gatsby (Troy 226), innocence (Brooks 163), theme (Hanzo 183), modernism (Kerr 405), ethnicity (Slater 53), historical perspective (Rohrkemper 153), mortality (Steinbrink 157), and sexual roles (Thornton 457).

Edith Wharton wrote, "Let me say at once how much I like Gatsby" ( qtd. from Fitzgerald, *Crack-Up* 309); she praised Fitzgerald's techniques and didn't mention the trapped situation. Maxwell Perkins used adjectives such as "extraordinary," "magnificent," "brilliant," "unequaled" (Perkins 34) for Fitzgerald as he focuses on the themes only. Although many writers have talked about the contemporary materialistic society and the symbolism of the book, no detailed study

has been done on how the protagonists are trapped due to their inherent spiritual void and their morally decadent environment. Therefore, there is a lacuna between the past and present research.

Similarly, there have been many studies on *Tender is the Night* (1934), inspected from various angles such as its style and composition (Bruccolli 2), incest (Boker 304), psychoanalysis of Nicole (Cokal 75), transference Love (Boker 294), and gender roles (Chazarenc 7). None of the writers and critics, however, have written about the trapped situation of the protagonists created as a result of their spiritual eclipse and post-war American landscape.

*Catch-22* (1961) has been assessed from the different perspectives such as the mythic dimension of Yossarian who plays multiple roles in the novel (Thomas 189), destructive black humor techniques used in the novel (Green 186), the irrationality of war inclusive of the irrational behaviour of man (Hasley 197), the absurdity of war (Bell 71), use of Black Comedy in the novel (Aldridge 18), complete absurdity and madness of war (Kazin 85), and destructive use of language in the novel (Pearson 30).

Most of the critics have written about the black humor, the pitiable condition of soldiers in the war, the moral collapse of the system and the horrors of war, but there has been no detailed study regarding the trapped protagonists of Heller's novels and their harrowing spiritual void.

*Something Happened* (1974) has been evaluated by a number of writers from different aspects such as sick condition of the contemporary society (Smith 78), social and psychological disorder (Aldridge 18), empty life of Slocum (Bedient 377), materialistic society (Kennedy 18), chaos of the contemporary America (Ackroyd 542), rotten modern life (Grossman 82), excessive style of the novel (Mano 1364), fear and paranoia (Costa 1-2), dark humour (Stern 27-28), and Fear and power (Canaday 92-93).

Although it is undeniable that there have been studies focussed on the desolate post-war society, yet no detailed study has been done about the society's influence on the protagonist's psychical breakdown and consequently his spiritual eclipse.

Similarly, *Good as Gold* (1979) has also been interpreted from different literary angles such as society fast going insane (Aldridge), stylistic choices (Bradbury 37), disintegration of family (Bell 71) anti-semitism (Smith 74), and identity-crisis (Michaels 24).

Furthermore, Pearl K. Bell writes how Heller portrays the disintegration of family, and the hero's trapped condition within the family, while ridiculing the state of bureaucracy. Although Bell also talks about the trapped condition of the protagonist, but the trap he writes about is based upon family ties, which only depicts the microcosm of his reality. In contrast, the present research has explored a macrocosmic trap based upon society's greed for money and its ultimate disintegration of values.

Over the years, there have been multiple studies on *The Naked and The Dead* (1948) dealing with various dimensions such as realism (McConnel 65), structure of the novel (Hassan 96), stylistic choices (Vidal 96), existentialism (Wilson 164), dilemma of power (Leigh 2), writing style (Dempsey 6), use of language (Wasson 707), futility of war (Burgess 49), crisis in human values (Foster 9), tribulation of war (Bufithis 18), social and political aspects (Ehrlich 19), pursuit of power (Gutman 8), and the Oedipal context of the novel (Gordon 55). Though there have been studies concerning the power politics in the military, no detailed writing has been done upon the impact of this power hunger on the psyches of those involved as well as the rising spiritual decadence caused due to this brutal quest for prestige. Writers have mainly focused over the ruthlessness and futility of war, but there is a lacuna since spiritual void and the trapped nature of the protagonists had not been explored in detail in any of these studies.

*The Deer Park* (1955) has had multiple studies written about it, in which it has been analysed from myriads of perspectives like writing style (Korah 67), quest for self (Chanthiramathi 20), alienation (Tomar 99), absurdity (Dutt 87), corruptness of Hollywood (Deepa 152), and identity crisis (Jain 100). Although many writers and critics have written about the cut-throat landscape of Hollywood and the quest for self of the protagonists, no detailed study has been conducted on how the protagonists are trapped in the vicious glamour of Hollywood and how environment is spiritually

decadent and immoral. Furthermore, the effect of this environment on the psyches of the characters has also not been discussed by any writers. There is thus a clear lacuna between the past and the present research.

*An American Dream* (1965) has been analysed from various viewpoints such as search for authentic self (Korah 96), war theme (Srivastava 118), quest for self (Hemaprabha 8), lust for power (Chanthiramathi 146), Rojack as a psychopathic hero (Tomar 128), and new modes of perception (Jain 146). Although some critics have discussed the lust for power, they have mainly discussed the inner metaphorical struggle for power which Rojack represents. Chanthiramathi, for example, has not discussed in detail how this quest for power affects Rojack's psyche and traps him in power-politics, stripping his soul off his body. Therefore, there is a clear research gap between previous and the present study.

There are many research papers, books and journals published in the past and present times but most of the research material is focused on the themes, narrative techniques evolved by Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer. But in this study, the main focus is to explore the impact of two World Wars on the mind and sensibility of the protagonists who were haunted by the awareness of the spiritual void in their lives. The protagonists of Joseph Heller, Scott Fitzgerald, and Norman Mailer are trapped in a gloomy hell where there is no escape. The collapse of the American Dream which earlier had sustained their life disillusioned them. They experienced loss of self, growing isolation and growing cut throat competition in the American society.

**Chapter 1**  
**Brief Candle**  
**A Glimpse into the Life and Works of**  
**F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer**

The present chapter acquaints the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald and covers his various professions and works. Further, his works are viewed from the perspectives of an assorted collection of writers and critics. Then, the chapter illuminates about the life, occupations, and works of the second novelist Joseph Heller and how his novels are viewed by the vantage points of numerous writers and critics. Thirdly, the chapter also sheds light on the life, jobs, and works of the third selected novelist, Norman Kingsley Mailer. The chapter also explores about the analysis of Mailer's work by different critics. Furthermore, the chapter also details the research gap. Fourthly, the chapter introduces Sigmund Freud, fixating upon his life, including the decipherment of his various psychoanalytical theories that have been applied in the present study. Supplementarily, the chapter illustrates the concept of American Dream, elucidating the backdrop upon which it was based; Nihilism, its propagation and adoption; Existentialism, and the laying of its foundation, and conclusively, Spiritual Void and its causes and consequences.

A boy was born in St. Paul, Minnesota on 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1896. He was given the name Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, by his catholic parents, Edward Fitzgerald and Mary Fitzgerald. Scott attended St. Paul Academy from 1908 to 1911. From a very young age, he had a profound interest in writing. At the age of 13, he wrote a detective story titled *The Mystery of Raymond Mortgage*, which got printed in the school newspaper. Fitzgerald later attended New Man School from 1911 to 1913, where he did poorly in academics but got recognition in elocution and track. In 1913, he got admitted in Princeton University. Fitzgerald, in 1917, got recruited in the army and got the post of Second Lieutenant in the infantry. When Fitzgerald got assigned to

Camp Sheridan in June 1918, he met a beautiful 18-year-old girl, Zelda Seyer, whom he later married in 1920.

His debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*, Published on March 26, 1920, made the 24-year-old Fitzgerald successful overnight. Afterwards, Fitzgerald's select novels such as *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender is the Night* (1934), projected him as a popular literary figure. Fitzgerald also wrote *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) presenting the characteristics of Americans living in the Roaring Twenties. Apart from the novels, Fitzgerald also wrote 160 short stories and a play *The Vegetable or From President to the Postman* (1923). Notable short story collections are *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920), *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922), *All the Sad Young Men* (1926), *Taps at Reveille* (1935), *The Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (1951), *Afternoon of an Author: A Selection of Uncollected Stories and Essays* (1958), *The Pat Hobby Stories* (1962). He also wrote a series of essays about the 1920's, titled as *The Crack-up* (1936).

Scott Fitzgerald was the child of the "Roaring Twenties" the way William Wordsworth was the product of French Revolution. Wordsworth took up the ideals of French Revolution and Fitzgerald depicted the spirit of the 1920's in his short stories and novels. His personal life was full of challenges and contradictions that characterised the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald's marriage to Zelda Sayre proved to play a pivotal role in his life as he used her as a model for his women protagonists. Their marriage collapsed like the collapse of the American economy on Black Tuesday of 1929. In his life Fitzgerald was always fear ridden of poverty and failure. Fitzgerald wrote on the themes of moral decline of his American youth; he was raised as a Catholic and he felt guilty since he wrote about the hedonistic pleasures enjoyed by the people after the World War. His father Edward Fitzgerald built a wholesale hardware business but went bankrupt in 1880's; worked as a salesman and died in penury giving no crutches to Fitzgerald. He broke with Catholicism and began his journey of life as a writer with disillusionment and despair.

Scott Fitzgerald depicted the collapse of American culture projecting the war heroes trapped in the quagmire of love, sex and money. Fitzgerald was passing

through a period of financial crisis when he published *The Great Gatsby* (1925) depicting the growing spiritual paralysis of the age and the collapse of the American Dream. The plot of the novel depicts decayed moral values, lust for money, and growing nihilism. The young soldiers when returned from the war became disgusted to observe the growing prosperity of America; their relatives were rolling in wealth at a time when they were fighting and risking their lives for medals. People were crazy about the material possessions and sexual pleasure. On the surface, *The Great Gatsby* is a tragic love story between the golden girl and a poor young soldier going to war. But the plot of the novel is about a story of a whole generation, the story of a whole era, the Jazz era. The quest for American dream became a passion for every American. Fitzgerald also experienced his American dream that had no tomorrow: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 200).

Nick Caraway talks of discovery, individualism and the pursuit of happiness. It has become synonymous with materialistic values, greed and immoral behaviour. “Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us” (200). Gatsby in a way embodies the American dream. He spends money on lavish parties, has a Rolls-Royce, an expensive library, and a collection of shirts to seduce Daisy. He comes from nothing and becomes somebody. Gatsby uses affection and deception to fabricate his appearance from “old money.” Gatsby runs after Daisy who is a bewitching beauty; an illusion; a dream of Gatsby. Daisy represents in the novel the physical appeal of wealth, evoking a combination of eroticism and established money. Gatsby observes that her very voice is “full of money” (136).

Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night* (1934) is loaded with the imagery of war and battle depicting the mood of melancholy and pessimism. Dick and Nicole are trapped in post-war situation of America. Dick believes that war symbolises the loss of grace, honour and courtesy. His freshness of youth and sexual passions are symbolised by the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald gives the readers the inner turbulent world of Dick and Nicole who are caught in a post-war situation. The main protagonist Dick Diver is trapped in his own absurdities of life. Fitzgerald excavates the interior monologue of



his turbulent life. He is a shifty protagonist. Dick becomes victim of his own dilemmas and absurdities. In this study, all the forces that wreck the protagonist are fully explored. Fitzgerald used a mechanism of dream and daydream to depict the trapped situation of Dick. In this study, the nihilistic vision of the selected writers is the main focus as all their texts reveal the loss of identity, traumatic experiences of the protagonists and the moral and spiritual decay of the age.

Joseph Heller was born on 1 May, 1923. He was the product of a sick and depressing environment of the Roaring Twenties. Elenor Lester reported in New York Times that Joseph Heller was passing through a period of acute crisis when he wrote his novels. His father's death, The Great Depression and the brutalities of the World War II had the most pervasive role in shaping his mind, ideas and sensibility. It is not surprising to note that the image of death dominates in all his novels as the protagonists are suffering from inner chaos because of the spiritual void and emptiness. They look bewildered and confused as they struggle to escape from the grim existential reality. The image of flight is linked with the image of death. The plots of Heller are complex in nature as they reflect the absurdity, sense of loss and traumatic alienation. Heller's novels deal with the themes of the negation of values that gripped the psyche of war-torn American society as the general effect is often a nightmare or dreamlike atmosphere in which the protagonist is overwhelmed by the chaotic or irrational nature of his environment. Joseph Heller published seven novels, *Catch-22* (1961), *Something Happened* (1974), *Good as Gold* (1979), *God Knows* (1984), *Picture This* (1988), *Closing Time* (1994), and *Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man* (2000).

Joseph Heller evolved a new metaphor *Catch-22* which became famous in the literary circle depicting the spiritual decadence of the Roaring Twenties. Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) created a sensation in the world puncturing the myth of American Dream through his nihilistic frustrated Yossarian as his protagonist. Heller's new metaphor "Catch-22" sums up the trapped nature of the protagonists during and after the World Wars. In all these novels war is depicted as the unavoidable product of mad culture that prized dollar more than human life. Heller employed the typical tools

in his formless plot structure relying on paranoia, inter-textuality and pastiche. The title of the novel symbolises cosmic absurdity, a negative outcome of life. Man struggles in life but defeat and death are inevitable in his life. There are so many deaths in the novel as Heller presents an absurd world imitating Kafka, Albert Camus, and Samuel Beckett. Heller depicts a universe deprived of purpose, disjointed, and disoriented culture in his novel *Catch-22*. Joseph Heller uses novels such as *Picture This*, *God Knows*, and *Catch-22* to undermine the certitudes governing human life. David M. Craig argues, Heller "never accepts death. The endings of his novels virtually shriek about its inevitability, but death remains an opponent to be grappled with, even though it cannot be overcome" (Craig 252). Heller's novels *Catch-22*, *Something Happened*, *Good as Gold*, and *God Knows* puncture the myths of military, the American Dream, Christianity, and Western philosophy. Heller unravels the root of human sufferings, man's lust for power and money. He exposes the hidden malevolent motives of unfeeling cosmos. *Catch-22* is defined as a law that is ambiguous and paradoxical; its nature is malevolent. *Catch-22* law is illogical, confusing as it catches its victim to suffer. The *Catch-22* law in the novel entraps the characters and bulldozes their personalities.

In this study, three of his novels: *Catch-22* (1961), *Something Happened* (1974), and *Good as Gold* (1979) are examined and investigated from the perspective of their spiritual dereliction. Heller depicts the sick and decadent moral landscape of American culture during and after World War II. America emerged as a superpower in the world but the Americans were trapped in a situation where life was hellish and values fast eroding. The protagonists like Yossarian, Slocum, and Gold are such trapped characters leading a life in death. All are caught in the tangle of growing money culture in their quest for success dream. They run after making fast money as they are haunted by uncertainties and ambiguities of war-ridden American society. The protagonists are crazy about power, money, and sexual liberty. Their quest for all these values lead them to despair and the consciousness of void. Yossarian laughs at the death with a view to escape from the mysterious nature of death. Yossarian expresses his nihilism rejecting God sharing his loss of faith with Scheisskopf's wife:

“You don’t believe in the God you want to, and I won’t believe in the God I want to. Is that a deal?” (Heller, *Catch-22* 231). Yossarian makes a mockery of the existence of God observing that no God would have created phlegm and tooth decay. The main focus of this study is the spiritual paralysis of the protagonists; their traumatic experiences of death and destruction; their struggles with the inimical bureaucracy and army. Through the actions of Captain John Yossarian, Robert Slocum, and Bruce Gold, Joseph Heller examines the choices available to Americans. Yossarian is bewildered to know that his squadron is thrown into brutal combat and his life is in constant danger. He is haunted by the memory of Snowden who died in his arms in the war. The death of his friend taught him a lesson that there is one goal in life that is to stay alive. He believes that Snowden’s death revealed a secret to him: man is nothing but garbage and there is no God to protect anyone. The scene of gory death of Snowden constantly haunts him making him sick and neurotic: “Look. Nothing would please me more than to have the son of a bitch break his neck or get killed in a crash or to find out that someone else had shot him to death. But I don’t think I could kill him” (288).

Yossarian is victimised by the Catch-22 system and is always haunted by death but Milo sails in the turbulent waters successfully.

‘They’re to kill me.’ Yossarian told him calmly

‘No one’s trying to kill you.’ Clevinger cried.

‘Then why are they shooting at me?’ Yossarian asked.

‘They’re shooting at everyone,’ Clevinger answered.

‘They’re trying to kill everyone,’

‘And what difference does that make?’ (26)

Heller continued the theme of spiritual paralysis of the age and the struggle of the trapped characters in his next novels *Something Happened* (1974), and *Good as Gold* (1979). Each of Heller’s novels depicts the trapped nature of his protagonists and their fruitless struggles with the existential dilemmas in war-ridden America. Heller employed all the techniques of surrealism, black humour, bad jokes and harrowing scenes of betrayal. *Good as Gold* is the first novel projecting the Jew protagonist,

named Bruce Gold who is a college Professor of Literature. He has an ambition to write a book on Jewish experience. He is offered a government job giving an opportunity to know about the farcical working of American bureaucracy. Once again Heller depicts the atmosphere of disorder and chaos. The very title of the novel at once suggests the theme of duality of life; the word “gold” symbolises the quest for dollars of Bruce Gold. He is trapped in the “glittering new social circles awaiting him” (Heller, *Good as Gold* 275). Heller gives antagonism of two worlds and the scenes of the novel describe the conflict between man and matter, love and gold, sanity and insanity, truth and fantasy. The plot of the novel is loaded with wit, irony paradox and black humour reinforced by pastiche and paranoia and absurdity. Bruce Gold is trapped in a Catch-22 situation being torn between selfish lust for gold and duty to his family; between instincts and rational thinking. The prevailing symbol in the novel is gold which names both the hero and the symbol of his quest.

Heller planted the seed of spiritual void and hellish life in his famous debut novel *Catch-22* and the seed has come to bloom in *Something Happened*. Yossarian found everything rotten in the army and in life. Slocum continues the message of nightmarish absurdity. In his novel *Something Happened*, Heller shows his influence of Dostoyevsky. Like Dostoyevsky’s *Underground Man*, Slocum is a man drifting in vacuum. Bob Slocum is the main narrator; his six hundred pages narration is a long narration of rumination, memories, guilt, self-analysis and fears as he says: “I’ve got anxiety, I suppress hysteria” (Heller, *Something Happened* 78). The central metaphor in the novel is fear; fear is seen in the structure of society, at work and in the family too. The major themes of the novel are envy, fear, frustration and the trapped nature of Bob in the inhuman social system. Bob Slocum’s agony is not from something that happened to him but his monumental fears that in future something more serious will happen to him. Bob struggles to explore the cause of his fears, he wants to find out “all the things I was and all the changes and things that happened to me then will be lost...turned out to be me” (134). Eliot Fermont Smith in his article “Heller’s Hell” published in New York Magazine observes thus:

Slocum's agony is thus not a sickness that can be healed, but an appropriate response to his reality, to the way life now is. Something happened is like a dirge, a chant. It is Heller's diagnosis of the modern human spirit, which he says is living in hell, has got the willies, is near death. (Smith 78-79)

In this study, a close investigation has been done in the subsequent chapters about the nature of hell in which Bob is trapped where he feels lonely cut off from family, society, corporate office and all friends and relatives. Slocum is trapped in a godless universe as Heller depicts his hellish life in the capitalistic world of Post World War II America. Bob Slocum in the novel is engulfed in darkness-he is dying from anguish and despair. The awareness of the spiritual void is eating him every day. Slocum suffers from schizophrenic disorders as revealed in his attitude towards his nine-year-old son; "this son has served as the locus" (Heller, *Something Happened* 553). Being guilt-ridden and inwardly hollow, Heller has objectified his dark vision of life through the character of Bob Slocum.

Heller depicts the Jewish experience for the first time in his third novel *Good as Gold* exploring the metaphysical absurdity of the war haunted Americans. Bruce Gold is a divided self and Heller has depicted his ambivalent shuttling between New York and Washington. Heller depicts the quest of Gold for money, power, love and sex. He is shuttling cock in the novel commuting between Washington and Brooklyn. Washington is described as an illusory Eden but Brooklyn is a place of racial strife, prejudice, crime and violence. The plot of the novel is focused on the destruction of human life, sanity and existential despair. The novel *Good as Gold* exposes a society organised in absurd and destructive pattern. It promotes divisive competition over cooperation and trust. Society expects people to follow madness blindly, stifling their conscience. Continuing the theme of fear and hellish life depicted in *Catch-22* and *Something Happened*, Heller's novel *Good as Gold* is not about life but death given by society to Americans. Bruce Gold deserts his family in pursuit of happiness since he is fed up with anti-Semitism. He gives up his Jewish family and identity in quest for power, money and social fame. He is regarded as "outsider" and he struggles to

become an “insider” entering into the world of Protestant rule in Washington. This involves him into a very complex and comic quest for wealth and status. Bruce Gold is caught in the whirlpool of two cultures; two worlds and two set of values. His original Jewish identity gets fractured in false pursuit of wealth and so-called “Jewish experience.” Bruce Gold narrates his harrowing tale of life in five hundred pages. In this study, all the stages of the disintegration of the self of Bruce Gold and his quest for illusive power of money is portrayed effectively. He dreams of riches, power and prestige that he thinks will cure his alienation. Bruce is trapped in the same situation like Yossarian of *Catch-22*; he vacillates between his family responsibility and power ambitions; between man versus matter and between precious gold and values of life.

Norman Kingsley Mailer, born on 31 January, 1923, is another prominent novelist who portrayed spiritual derelicts in his novels. He achieved sudden fame with his first novel, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). He came under the influence of Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and William Faulkner and depicted the trapped characters. Mailer was a graduate from Harvard, joined army and he had first-hand experiences of the barbarities of the Second World War. Mailer didn't enjoy stable domestic life. He divorced his first wife and later entered into five marriages over three decades. His famous novel *The Naked and the Dead* depicts the trapped characters who suffer as conformists. The critics have interpreted the novel in a number of ways. Mailer himself observed that it is a tale about the motion of men in history. The plot of the novel unfolds degradation of man, his spiritual decadence and the consciousness of spiritual void in the mind of the protagonist. Corruption is rampant and the novel is a picture of bleak, pessimistic, and defeated outlook of man. Mailer depicts the conflict of individuals with the institutions representing power. The main conflict in the novel is between the mechanistic forces of the system and the potentiality of the individual. General Cummings is ruthless and aggressive representing the fascist forces to control and rule. Sergeant Croft represents ruthless power of machine. The protagonist is pitched against the depersonalisation forces of society. Mailer has introduced structure, character, imagery and symbolism to depict the pervasive vogue of corruption and inhuman cruelty of the war machine.

Cummings is the son of a great industrialist who taught him a “dog-eat-dog” business and ethics of hate and fear. Hearn is another soldier agonised by the cruel war machine. He revolted against the crude materialism of his father and joined the army with a hope to enjoy peace and stability of life:

Not love, not hate necessarily, but an emotion when he had expected none at all. Always there was the power that leaped at you, invited you. Hearn sighed, went out to the rail again. And all the bright young people of his youth had butted their heads, smashed against things until they got weaker and the things still stood. A bunch of dispossessed ... from the raucous stricken bosom of America. (Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* 338)

Mailer also depicts the mean and degrading self of General Cummings whose homosexual attitude creates ambiguities in the novel and Hearn discovers the lust for power and control in his General. Hearn emerges a bewildered and confused young American lost in the heartless war machine. General Cummings himself has become a heartless machine on the battlefield. He is coldly efficient and physically inexhaustible, working day and night and controlling and monitoring every situation as Mailer comments:

He had been on a phone almost all day long, composing his battle tactics off the cuff, as it were, and for five, six, eight hours he had directed the opening phases of the campaign without taking a halt, indeed without referring once to a map, or pausing for a decision after his line officers had given him what information they possessed. It had been a remarkable performance. His concentration had been almost fantastic. (77)

General Cummings is not an ordinary character but a lifeless computer who could grasp all the facts and worked like a machine day and night. Mailer appreciates his memory and concentration of mind-he uses all these mental faculties to oppress and kill his soldiers in pursuit of false glory and medals. No wonder Hearn is killed at the end; Croft is humiliated and subdued and defeated by the superior force of power

of Cummings: “He absorbs it all with the fantastic powers of memory and assimilation he can exhibit at times, absorbs it and immediately transmutes it into something else, satisfies the dominant warp of his mind” (420).

General Cummings delivers his lectures in the barren and sterile tent to Hearn expressing his machine mentality based on manipulation advocating the philosophy of hate and fear as he says:

Men in prison camps, deserters, or men in replacement camps are in the backwaters of the Army and the discipline has to be proportionately more powerful. The Army functions best when you’re frightened of the man above you, and contemptuous of your subordinates. (123)

In this study, the conflict between man and the heartless war machine and the brutal vision of the high officers has been investigated in detail with a focus on the loss of spiritual power. The plot of the novel unfolds the combat experiences of fourteen American soldiers who become victims of bureaucratic hegemony. Mailer presents members of the platoon as a microcosm of the American society. Mailer highlights the tensions of the characters imposing their will upon an inexorable universe .

Mailer’s *The Deer Park* (1955) is written under the influence of D.H. Lawrence as the plot of the novel depicts the moral depravity in love and sex. The Americans were sick of war and wanted a way of life to escape from the tensions and traumatic experiences. The plot of the novel deals with the sex lives of two couples; Charles Francis Eitel and his bedmate Elena Esposito and the movie star Meyers and her lover Sergius. Mailer depicts the perversion and moral depravity of the characters who think that sexuality can help them to come out of the rut of the society. The hedonistic approach of life is devoid of any moral and spiritual enlightenment; there is no moral force and no idealism in the life of the characters. They enjoy sexual liberty and are imprisoned in a room to have a “good time.” Mailer has exposed the moral perversions of the actors of the film industry who lead a hedonistic life in making love and enjoying unrestrained sexual pleasures. The spiritual void is a stark reality in all



the characters of the novel. In this study, a critical analysis of the text of *The Deer Park* has further highlighted the ideas of love and sex of Norman Mailer.

Mailer's famous novel *An American Dream* established him as a great novelist. The Americans were of the firm view that the individual can transcend evil and is capable of achieving success and perfection. The American Dream was visionary and idealistic. Showing a contrasting picture, Mailer's hero Stephen Rojack is a failure in life as he admits: "In fact, I had come to the end of a very long street. Call it an avenue. For I had come to decide I was finally a failure" (Mailer, *An American Dream* 15). The plot of the novel *An American Dream* is about the reinterpretation of the myth of American Dream from the perspective of the social, political and moral changes of the society of the sixties. Mailer is interested in narrating the idealism of the traditional American Dream but he depicts the anguish and frustrations of the protagonist caught in the web of socio-political forces. The plot unfolds the nightmarish experiences of Rojack, his confrontation with the dark and demonic aspects of life as he gets entangled with the all that is gloomy and depressing. Rojack has to undergo multiple experiences-he is a Professor, kills his wife Deborah who had sexual relationships with many men. He escapes from the net of the police and develops sexual relationship with Cherry who is a night club dancer. His wife is Deborah, who is the daughter of Kelly: a big business tycoon. Rojack says "I seduced a girl who would have been bored with a diamond as big as the Ritz" (9). But Deborah is described as "a stench of a sweet rot" (30). There is a sense of confusion in the mind of Rojack when he kills his wife as he broods over his cowardly deed after the murder of Deborah: "Rojack asked himself, after Deborah's murder, Am I now good? Am I evil forever?'-it seemed an indispensable question to ask" (123).

In this study, all aspects of the myth of American Dream and the depressing and gloomy vision of Norman Mailer have been investigated relying upon the psychoanalytical theories of Freud, Karen Horney and Cathy Caruth. Rojack is confronted with two choices in every situation: to stay or to leave, to jump or not to kill. His mind is divided as he says: "My will, divided against itself, quivered from the

effort of putting one foot forward on Kelly's parapet" (1). Rojack exhibits certain traits of the psychopath in the novel: violence and sexual gratification and has "the itch to jump" (9).

In order to profoundly evaluate the above novels, it is pertinent to discuss the American Dream which is the essence of the selected novels. Much ink has been wasted on the definition and meaning of American Dream and it will not be an exaggeration that the term American Dream has been an indispensable aspect of American life and culture. In political philosophy, the American Dream is perceived as the first political movement of the New World. The objective of the Puritans, when they first disembarked the Mayflower, was to become religiously free and materialistically sound. And to obtain the objective, it was their deep conviction that without the mercy and the sacred will of the God, it is not possible. American dream was built on an idea of success that comes from, firstly, having deep faith in God and virtue, and secondly, applying oneself with all his potential to transform opportunity into prosperity, to be an inventive and resourceful individual and becoming self-reliant. But, unfortunately, due to deaths, destruction, depression, and disillusionment rooted from the World Wars, Dollar became the God of America. No wonder American myth of success turned into American nightmares because of the forces of nihilism and spiritual decadence. The concept of American Dream has assumed the form of American myth and an American legend containing the ideals of the Revolution, the Declaration of political freedom of America, the Bill of Rights and the assumption that the Constitution of America will grant liberty, justice, and equality. Jefferson emerged as the prophet of the American dream; Emerson propagated the philosophy of American dream and Walt Whitman and Thoreau celebrated the beauty and grandeur of American dream in his poetry. But soon the cracks appeared in the myth of American Dream as Hawthorne in his *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Melville in *Moby Dick* (1851) highlighted the ambivalence of such a dream. The myth of American Dream further exploded when the American enslaved millions of blacks. William Bradford and Michael Wigglesworth found that America was not a Paradise but "a waste and howling wilderness"(qtd. in Deane 83). Stephen Crane also found

that “this Eden” didn’t exist in America by portraying the individual struggling in a hostile environment. With the coming of World War 1, the so-called New Eden degenerated into a “wasteland” and “a valley of ashes”. Many of the writers were so much shocked and disillusioned by the growing spiritual void that they exiled themselves from the American Dream to Europe. The decadent and nightmarish spirit of the age is reflected in the fiction of war novelists such as Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer.

Sigmund Freud was born on 6 May, 1856 in the Jewish family that lived at Freiberg in the Czech Republic. Freud qualified his doctorate in medicine from University of Vienna in 1881 and taught at the same university as a professor in neuropathology till 1902. Freud also set-up his psychoanalytical clinic in Vienna in 1886 and developed his psychoanalytical theories to treat the patients of hysteria and trauma. Freud emerged as a popular Austrian neurologist, psychologist, and psychoanalyst. Freud left Austria in 1938 because of the inhuman interrogation by the Nazis and took political stay in the UK where he died in 1939 (Sheehy 84).

Sigmund Freud is known as the father of psychoanalysis which is primarily a dialogue between a psychoanalyst and a patient to understand, analyse and treat the latter. Freud got influenced by Charles Darwin, Jean-Martin Charcot, Josef Breuer, and Friedrich Nietzsche, whereas he left his great impact on the life and the works of Alfred W. Adler, Carl Gustav Jung, Anna Freud, Jacques Lacan, Erik Erikson, Jacques Derrida, Dominik LaCabra and Zizek Slavoj (86).

Sigmund Freud developed some of his theories after he was influenced by Charles Darwin (1809-1882), who was an English naturalist, biologist, and geologist. Darwin is best known for his theory of Evolution that he developed in his book *On the Origin of Species* published in 1859. Freud differentiated himself from Darwin on the basis of instincts. Darwin opines that mental actions are governed by instincts (Darwin 185). Darwin exemplifies that instinct is a desire that “impels the cuckoo to migrate and to lay her eggs in other birds’ nest” (185). Darwin also accepts that he has “nothing to do with the origin of the primary mental powers” (185) of birds, animals and human beings. But Freud especially talks about the mental powers of humans and

categorises their instincts into life instincts and death instincts. In life instincts, Freud includes the Ego (self-preservation) and the Id (instincts and drive), whereas in death instincts includes human aggressive tendencies (Abel 1989). Friedel Weinert advocates Darwin, stating that “only an intelligent designer could have created the world and its beauty, order, and regularity”, (Weinert 102) but Freud proposes that the beauty, mental order and regularity of scheduled actions of a subject get affected when it is attacked externally. The subject becomes unconscious though it remains unconsciously active (Freud, *The Unconscious* 47). The author Talvitie states that in the pre-darwinian times, the process taking place in nature and in the traits of animals and plants were seen as designed by God (Talvitie 124), but Darwin revealed that species have developed themselves gradually from their ancestors. Darwin primarily focussed on the physical traits and behavioural dispositions of species from the historical and functionalistic perspective (128), whereas Freud implemented Darwinian philosophy but in the field of psychoanalysis. Freud studied the “psychical traits and behavioural dispositions” (128) of the patients of hysteria and trauma. After Charles Darwin, Freud also got influenced by Jean-Martin Charcot.

The connection between trauma and mental illness was first examined by the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), a french physician who worked with the traumatised women in Pitie-Salpetriere Hospital, Paris. During the late nineteenth century, the main focus of Charcot’s study was hysteria-a disorder, an extreme fear, anxiety, and anger that cannot be controlled (Ringel and Brandell 1). Charcot’s Study was based on the disorder, especially in women. Freud was actually influenced by Charcot’s research that if a patient is not convinced to release his/her repressed emotions or he/she is not hypnotised, hysteria turns into the psychological trauma. In his essay entitled *On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: A Preliminary Communication-A lecture*, Freud considers hysteria as a branch of psychological trauma (Freud, *The Standard Edition* 365). Freud further adds that “every case of hysteria can be looked upon as a traumatic hysteria in the sense of implying a psychical trauma” (Freud, *Complete Works* 34).

Josef Breuer (1842-1925) also influences Sigmund Freud. Breuer was an Austrian physician who “demonstrated the role of the vagus nerve in the reflex nature of reparation. This finding was a departure from the previous physiological understanding and changed the way scientists viewed the relationship between the lungs and the nerve system.” (Chowdhury and Schaller 40). Breuer distinguished himself by developing the ‘talking cure’ methodology to treat the patients of hysteria. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud in their collaborative work *Studies on Hysteria* write the original event was not traumatic in itself but only in its remembrance. Trauma is thus defined in relation to the process of remembering and as an event harbored within the unconscious that causes a splitting of the ego or dissociation. Freud says:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. (qtd. in Caruth 186)

Freud learnt some psychoanalytic techniques such as how to find symptoms of upsetting events of childhood in the wake of subsequent encounters from Josef Breuer while he was the protégé of the latter. In the essay *The Psychotherapy of Hysteria* Breuer and Freud state:

In our ‘Preliminary Communication’ we reported how, in the course of our investigation into the aetiology of hysterical symptoms, we also came upon a therapeutic method which seemed to us of practical importance. For we found, to our great surprise at first, that each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently disappeared when we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying affect, and when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and had put the effect into words. (Freud, Complete Works 227)

Both Breuer and Freud treated hysterics by identifying what revived their memory. The patients of hysteria could clearly express their harrowing past experiences when they encountered new identical exposures or when Freud and Breuer resuscitated their repressed past memories through deep hypnosis.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) also impacted Sigmund Freud through his works. Paul-Laurent Assoun writes that Freud acknowledges Nietzschean influence on his life when the former states, “I merely take Nietzsche where I would, I hope, find words for many things that remain mute inside me.” (Assoun 19). Nietzsche was a German philosopher, cultural critic, a philologist who developed the concept of Nihilism which rejects all religious and moral principles and emphasises that life is meaningless. Nietzsche declares that there is no God in the universe. He writes in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, “God is dead: of his pity for man hath God died.” (Nietzsche 47). The various forms of Nihilism are: Metaphysical Nihilism, which states that there is a possible world where there are no objects at all (Francis 4), Existential Nihilism, which marks that life has no intrinsic meaning or value, Moral Nihilism which clarifies that morality doesn’t exist, Epistemological Nihilism, which emphasises that all knowledge is dead, and Mereological Nihilism believes that nothing is a proper part of anything (5).

The Nietzschean interpretation of the unconscious is different than that of Freud. Nietzsche considers the unconscious as “a stake than a central concept. It is found somehow along the path to the capital problem...but a secondary degree” (Assoun 114). To Nietzsche, the unconscious is just a part of a problem; it’s not the whole problem. On the other hand, Freud proposes that the unconscious is the central concept. It creates a problem, and it is a matter of metapsychological codification which is very difficult to understand and treat (114).

Freud further adds that the unconscious is a systematic part of mind, like the other psychic co-systems, namely the conscious, the subconscious, and the preconscious. Freud proposes a psychological, vertical and categorised division of human mind: the conscious mind, the preconscious, and the unconscious- each lying beneath the other. In the Freudian psychoanalysis, the conscious is a part of the human

mind that holds what a person is aware of. A person can verbalise his/her conscious thoughts, experiences, and perceptions. A human can think about them in a logical way. Next, the preconscious is the state of mind that exists beneath the conscious, but above the unconscious mind. The preconscious mind is the storer of knowledge and memories which are not repressed and which can be easily recalled, unlike unconscious traumatic thoughts and memories. The unconscious mind holds repressed feelings, hidden perceptions, concealed phobias, automatic reactions, blocked memories, selfish thoughts, and unacceptable sexual desires that impact human behaviour (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 7). Freud has not talked succinctly about the subconscious part of the human mind. The subconscious is the part of the mind which remembers information when a person is not actively trying to do so, and which influences his/her behaviour although he/she is not aware of it.

Freud explicates that the Id and the Superego are the subparts of the unconscious. The Id contains the most basic natural human needs and emotions such as hunger, anger and the wish for pleasure. It is the source of libido, which according to Freud, is only a sexual desire, but Carl Jung associates the Id with spirituality, intellectuality, and creativity (Carducci 135). The Id operates in line with the pleasure principle which seeks the gratification of biological and psychological needs, when the “Id becomes very strong, it confines itself only to self-gratification and recklessness” (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 41). The Superego is also a part of the unconscious mind, but it controls objectionable functionality of the Id. It is also called the ethical and moral part of the mind. In other words, the Superego is a manifestation of parental and societal values because it enforces rules. It constantly strives for perfection, even though such a flawlessness is quite far from reality or possibility. The Superego is further categorised into two subsystems, Ego Ideal and Conscience. The Ego Ideal provides rules for good behaviour and standards of excellence towards which the Ego must strive. The “Conscience is a person’s moral sense for right and wrong” (55).

The Ego is the rational part of the conscious mind. It is a negotiation and a compromise between the Id and the Superego. The Ego decides that a person can not

always get what he/she wants. The Ego is related to the real world and operates in line with the reality principle, which is the ability of the conscious mind to assess the reality of the external world and to act upon it accordingly (19). The Freudian division of the human mind can be seen in the following image.



Image 1.1: The Freudian Structural Model of the Human Psyche

To Freud, when a subject is attacked externally, it becomes unconscious, but “it also remains unconsciously active” (Freud, *The Unconscious* 47). Freud further states that the “repressed doesn’t constitute the whole of the unconscious. The unconscious is more extensive” (47).

Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* writes that this repression is caused because an individual wants to achieve something which is pleasant to the mind and wants to forget occurrences which are unpleasant. Guilt inducing desires and traumatic events are relegated into the unconscious which emerge only at a particular



moment in the form of images, dream, and Freudian slips. This reaction in an evolutionary sense is beneficial for a person. It drives a person to pleasurable behaviours and thoughts. Freud and Breuer point out that memory of trauma seems to be far more detrimental to the psyche of individuals than trauma itself. The traumatic memory is hidden deep in our psyche so that retrieval becomes almost impossible. Our conscious mind never wants to access the unpleasant experiences as they are disturbing. But when major events and traumatic experiences are repressed by an individual, it can have an extremely detrimental effect on their psyche. It can later surface itself through neurosis and hysteria. The trauma is concerned with excitation, either obsessive or emotional, where the more intense the trauma, the more intense is excitation. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the subject to function pragmatically.

Cathy Caruth is Frank H. T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters at Cornell University and is appointed in the departments of English and Comparative Literature. She taught previously at Yale and at Emory University, where she helped build the Department of Comparative Literature. She received her Ph.D. from Yale University in 1988. She is the author of *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud (1991)* and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History(1996)*; she is also editor of *Trauma: Explorations in Memory(1995)* and with Deborah Esch of *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing(1995)*.

In Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, "trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flash-backs, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth 91). Trauma, according to Caruth, is not an event simply forgotten; instead, an inherent feature of trauma is the 'latency within the experience itself'(Caruth 8). The traumatic event, in other words, was not actually experienced at the time that it occurred and not until after the event is its reality realised for the first time. For Caruth, the central aporia of trauma lies in the impossibility of voluntarily accessing one's own traumatic past; this past belatedly imposes itself on the individual against their conscious will. She argues that a defining

feature of trauma is “the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – then returns to haunt the survivor later on”(Caruth 8). The impact of the traumatic event manifests after the fact of its occurrence in symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and other traumatic affects that have since been classified under the banner of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. As an event too overwhelming to be experienced at the time of its arrival, trauma continually re-emerges long after the initial traumatic scene.

Cathy Caruth points out that this repression and its later repetition can negatively affect the psyche of an individual.

As modern neurobiologists point out, the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashbacks can be itself re-traumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration. (Caruth 63)

Born on September 16, 1885, Karen Horney developed a theory of neurosis that is still prominent today. Unlike previous theorists, Horney views these neuroses as a sort of coping mechanism that is a large part of normal life. She identified ten neuroses, including the need for power, the need for affection, the need for social prestige, and the need for independence. She defines neurosis as the psychic disturbance brought by fears and defenses against these fears, and by attempts to find compromise solutions for conflicting tendencies. She also believes that in order to understand these neuroses, it was essential to look at the culture in which a person lived. Where Freud suggests that many neuroses have a biological base, Horney believes that cultural attitudes plays a role in determining these neurotic feelings.

Karen Horney in light of a person’s conflict states: “[Neurotics are] torn by inner conflicts ... Every neurotic ... is at war with himself” (Horney 11). She further describes this phenomenon of the shallow pursuit of money and power, showing a truly grotesque image of what the American dream had turned itself into. She writes:

The neurotic, as long as he must adhere to his illusions about himself, cannot recognise limitations, the search for glory goes into the unlimited. Because the main goal is the attainment of glory, he

becomes uninterested in the process of learning, of doing, or of gaining step by step — indeed, tends to scorn it. He does not want to climb a mountain; he wants to be on the peak. (Horney, *Neurosis* 38)

In her book *Self-Analysis* (1942), Horney outlined her theory of neurosis, describing different types of neurotic behaviour of the neurotic patients. Horney observes that the neurotic needs for power, prestige, and affection lead to neurosis. Horney further adds in her book *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) thus:

While he can succeed this way in creating a kind of artificial equilibrium, new conflicts are constantly generated and further remedies are continually required to blot them out. Every step in this struggle for unity makes the neurotic more hostile, more helpless, more fearful, more alienated from himself. (Horney 19)

In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that Freud co-authored with Breuer, he asserted that hysteria was caused by the patient's efforts to repress traumatic memories, according to Freud, external traumatic events coupled with internal impulses that are improperly repressed by the ego and that, therefore, find alternative expression are required for neurosis to manifest itself. The neurotic that needs treatment simply has more debilitating symptoms- formations that prevent enjoyment and active achievement in life. Neurotic Anxiety arises when the ego of an individual feels that it is going to be overwhelmed by the Id. Ego always tries to control the desires of Id, but since the desires of Id are more powerful, Ego is unable to do so. As a consequence, Id tries to fulfil its desires through irrational thoughts, fantasy, and abnormal behaviours. Dr Karen Horney opines that obsession becomes a major cause of depression.

The trauma, and the resulting obsession and hysteria of the protagonists made them vulnerable to the vices of the society and sowed the seeds of spiritual void in their minds. This spiritual eclipse ultimately led to the miserable downfall of all the protagonists and trapped them in the money and power culture of America.

At the outset of the thesis, it is pertinent to define and examine the term “spiritual void” since this concept is the nucleus of this thesis. The word “spiritual” is

linked with the spirit of man and not with the body or the matter existence in the universe. The word “Void” refers to spiritual sterility or emptiness of the soul. The notion of Void is affiliated with the metaphysics which has several branches including agnosticism, existentialism, monism and even nihilism propagated by Nietzsche in his famous book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883).

The awareness of spiritual void began with the emergence of anxiety and absurdity. In this thesis, the existential theories innovated by Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre are used as tools to explore the absurd situation of the trapped protagonists of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer. The consciousness of spiritual void brought about the absurdity and the theatre of absurd in America. Ionesco, Beckett and Albee rejected all the forms of realist drama and experimented in the absurd theatre. Beckett’s faith in God was shaken and he started questioning where God is because the wholesale massacre of the Jews disturbed his mind. His *Waiting for Godot* is an epoch-making drama articulating the mood of nihilism.

Albert Camus published his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1942 and declared in it that the human existence is more or less absurd and devoid of meaning. The Theatre of the Absurd became fame as a result of Martin Esslin’s writing named *The Theatre of the Absurd* which was published in the year 1961. Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter projected and redefined distressing vision of human civilisation struggling vainly to find a meaning and to control its destiny. The American war novelists such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller and Norman Kingsley Mailer have portrayed the humanity as feeling hopeless, bewildered, and anxious. The trapped protagonists of all these novelists are the victims of absurdity and anxiety of life.

The trapped protagonists of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer are the victims of psychological ailments. *Gatsby* suffers from psychological obsession; Bob Slocum is a bewildered American who is haunted by the past and the future. All the major protagonists are neurotics suffering from depression and hysteria. Dick Diver in the novel *Tender is the Night* is a psychological case study. The scholar has relied on the psychoanalytical theories of Freud, Karen

Horney, and Cathy Caruth. Schopenhauer wrote *The World as Will and Representation* (1865) and propagated the philosophy of pessimism. Alfred Nietzsche thoroughly studied Schopenhauer and wrote *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1883 declaring that “God is dead and we have buried him long long ago” (Nietzsche 47) and propagated skepticism, doubt, and despair. The phrase “God is dead,” doesn’t mean that Nietzsche believed in an actual God who first existed and then died in a literal sense. The phrase conveys the idea that the Christian God is no longer a source of moral principles. The death of God brought about nihilism in the world. The man became sick of divinity as he found himself rootless and alienated. David Riesman published his famous book *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) exploring the psychological problems of the modern man who has lost connection with the external forces and is pitted to lead a lonely life caught in the web of depression and neurosis. The protagonists of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer are seen bewildered and baffled unable to confront the existential reality.

The philosophers and theologians observe that man has an inner strength to explore its essence within his being, and the essence of man’s being is peace and contentment. The loss of peace and contentment inevitably leads to emptiness or void; it is a level of mind and consciousness working contrary to the urges of the spirit. St. Augustine was greatly impacted by Dante and his process of exploration of the causes and symptoms of the spiritual void of man in his book *The Divine Comedy*. Dante begins his quest with Virgil who is lost in darkness but portrays wisdom and reason. Virgil argues and guides Dante that the only way to get away from spiritual decadence is to follow the journey through Hell, Purgatory, and love. Augustine thus describes his spiritual void and inner emptiness stating, “And I perceived myself to be far off from Thee [God] in the region of unlikeness” (Augustine 79). St. Augustine confesses that his many sins with a “region of unlikeness,” cause him to wander aimlessly without direction or purpose, becoming hopelessly lost. The Buddhist sages talked of Vajra, contending that Vajra is the central axis of the universe- its seed is in the spirit of man. Spiritual awareness empowers man to feel the experience of the infinite space; to be a part of the “Eternal Consciousness” as postulated by Immanuel Kant.

He argued in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) that reason and human experience is interlinked. He rejected the skepticism of David Hume and put his faith in the transcendental power of the Soul of man. John Cottingham in his writing *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value* (2005) observe that quest for spiritual enlightenment leads to self-understanding and moral growth. Emerson in his famous essays on *Nature* (1836) and *Transcendentalist* (1841) published in *The Dial* (1849) explored the philosophy of transcendentalism which impacted the writings of Walt Whitman and Thoreau in the 19th century America. Emerson contended that when a man gazes at the stars he comes to realise his disconnection from the material world. The stars urge him to perceive the presence of the sublime and this consciousness brings spiritual awareness in him. Paul Brunton is a prominent British philosopher who published *The Wisdom of the Overself* (1943) in which he explored the doctrine of Oriental Mentalism. Brunton observes that the spiritual void is the state of mental vacuity; an awareness of emptiness of blue-black space present in the universe (Brunton 5). Werner Karl Heisenberg in his *Uncertainty Principle* (1929) also observes that “Void” can only be experienced and cannot be explained linguistically. On the other hand, Ken Wilber in *Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977) avers that the Void is an experience of nothingness and a feeling of nihilism. Christopher B Barret wrote *From Despair to Faith: The Spirituality of Soren Kierkegaard* (2014) exploring the mystery of spiritual void and its impact on the life and thoughts of the individuals. He maintains that man is free in this universe but his freedom also becomes the main cause of loss of faith and despair and engulfs him into the material puddle. The gulf between the material and the spiritual eventually results into the loss of “icons of faith and the experience of spiritual void.” The famous psychologist Stanislav Grof in his famous book *The Holotropic Mind* (1992) observed that the presence of the spiritual void in the life of man signifies his real death. The Void in the universe symbolises absolute emptiness that cannot be articulated in any form but its presence in human beings is the death of society. Ihab Hassan wrote *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary Novel* (1961), *The Literature of Science: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett* (1967) and *The Right Promethean Fire:*

*Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change* (1980). In all these books Ihab Hassan explored the growing changes of society and culture and the current of nihilism and spiritual decadence expressed in the contemporary literature. Wylie Sypher in his famous *Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art* (1954) talks about the dark abyss that separates man's thinking from his feeling in the modern world. Loss of self is linked with the spiritual decadence of man.

In the Greek tragedies, man was in harmony with Nature and God. He enjoyed absolute faith in God as his life was determined and conditioned by the forces of divinity. Plato and Aristotle's quest was for truth and faith in divinity. Aristotle observed that man has inner divine energy in him as he can explore the inexplicable. Shakespeare's Hamlet finds disorder and chaos in society but he devotes his life to bring order out of chaos. There is no spiritual void in the life of protagonists of Shakespeare. From Greeks to Shakespeare the writers portrayed life like characters and thus what happens to Oedipus and Lear is partly the result of what they are. In epics, the problem of man is linked with the destiny of the nation, for instance, the fate of Oedipus is linked with the destiny of Athens; he himself is a presence making history. Action and limits, violence and organisation, the individual and collective norms: these are the polarities that the epic hero has to experience. On the level of ritualistic pattern, his experience culminates in rebirth. He passes from guilt through suffering to purgation and emerges "a new man". But in the fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer the myth of rebirth and renewal has degenerated into a parody of the great Greek and Shakespearean tragedies. The heroes of the quest are transformed into absurd and lost protagonists. They are tattered and fallen beings suffering from eternal disillusionment and frustration. An absurdist "gives nothing we can envy or admire; no courage, no gallantry, no glamorous lovers, beautiful costumes, handsome settings or desirable furniture" (Hayman 4).

The conspicuous feature of the American novels of the Roaring Twenties is the awareness of spiritual void because the protagonists are seen struggling throughout the war novels. The novelists of the Roaring Twenties are faced with the confusing predicament of portraying a self that seems to have lost its reality.

Darwinism led to the creation of the idea of the machine-man, the image of the robotic and mechanical self. Kepler's laws and Freud's explorations of the unconscious brought home the understanding that humans are but an infinitesimal part of the matter that flows throughout the universe. In the age of Freud and Einstein, God ceased to exist, as it were to reveal Himself in man. Declaring that "modernism and tragedy are incompatible", Joseph Wood Krutch had aptly declared that modern malaise, nausea, angst, alienation, loss of identity, entropy, nihilism were forces that had "dehumanized and deflated the heroes" (Krutch 79). Truly, in the words of Fromm modern playwright lacks potential to realise "the awareness of the reality of death" (Fromm 245).

When the World War of 1914 ended, the new sense of uncertainty, anxiety, and pessimism, coupled with theological revolution, imparted a new awareness to the American war novelists. Therefore, spiritual void became an inevitable truth because this was an era in which existence came to enjoy precedence over essence. Truth became a life- sustaining the illusion. Mind, consciousness, soul became treated as elusive and meaningless things. For the existentialists like Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Karl Jaspers, failure is the fate of the man whose every project is doomed. In this situation action is futile and aspiration absurd. The existentialists thus gave eloquent expression to the current metaphysics of despair. A representative of the "lost intellectual," the hero of Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer is introspective, subjective, and tormented by doubt and despair. Being lost and fragmented, the war hero is like the neurotic characters of Kafka's novels, lives in a cosmos without direction, meaning or purpose. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a specimen of modern schizoid; the projection of a man who tragically caught in the web of false and illusive materialism and fails to discover meaning of life, a skeletal individual, a personality split by considering the problems of sincerity and hypocrisy, conformity and dissent, commitment and indecision, loneliness and complicity resulting from his tragic corrosion of self.

The Greek hero also suffered from isolation as his aristocratic self-urged him to revolt against fate and God. However, his identity crisis did not make him a



neurotic misfit; rather his quest for identity inevitably led to the age-old questions of meaning, salvation, and survival in a spiritual sense. On the contrary, the quest of Gatsby, Dick Diver, Yossarian, Bob Slocum, Bruce Gold, Croft, Cummings, Eitel and Rojack is futile, their despair grows in a degree of intolerable anguish because they “cannot get rid of their selfish pursuits of life and hence cannot become nothing” (Kierkegaard 110). Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1943) depicts the presence of irreconcilable contradictions in man. The war heroes of the Roaring Twenties are trapped in a solitude from which there is no escape. Therefore, the most conspicuous characteristic of protagonists is their spiritual void as Sartre observes: “man is always separated from what he is by all the breadth of the being which he is not” (Sartre 17). Man is the being who confers meaning on the world, but this meaning is never certain. Human reality is a perpetual becoming so that “what is not determines what is” (Sartre 87).

The war heroes of the contemporary America lead a helpless life in the universe. Albert Camus wrote *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), depicting the cause of helplessness of man in the universe. Sartre argues that everywhere man feels torn between infinities, between absolutes, and between odds. Man is bound to suffer intense despair in life. This despair being rooted in a sense of fundamental absurdity. Camus defines “absurdity” as the “disproportion between man's intention and the reality he will encounter” (Camus 28). Absurdity becomes a defiance of the universe, an extreme tension which will never permit the hero to rest, just as the tormented Sisyphus can never pause in his futile but never-ending task. Thus, the “emphasis is shifted from attainment to performance and in the process of sustaining his performance, of defending his passion for the absurd, the absurd hero achieves fulfillment simply by defending a truth” (qtd. in Bigsby 75). The fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller and Norman Mailer depict the spiritual vacuity of their war heroes and their trapped situation in the abyss of the absurdity of life.

In this thesis, the scholar has also relied on the psychoanalytical theories propounded by Freud, Dr. Karen Horney, and Cathy Caruth. In *The Divided Self* (1941) Laing observes “the embodied person has a sense of being flesh and blood and

bones, of being biologically alive and real: he knows himself to be substantial. To the extent that he is thoroughly in his body, he is likely to have a sense of personal continuity in time. He will experience himself as subject to the dangers that threaten his body, the dangers of attack, mutilation, disease, decay, and death” (Laing 47). Freud took a different approach in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1915) since he analysed that man is trapped in bodily desire and the frustrations and gratification of the body. A person thus has as his origin-point an experience of his body as a foundation from which he can be an individual with other human beings. In this place the person feels his self as being more or less detached or divorced from his physical self. The body is felt more as one object among other objects in the world than as the core of the individual’s own.

The trapped protagonists of these novels are sick and decadent and are spiritual derelicts and the socio-economic forces further led to the emergence of the anti-hero in American war fiction. Interestingly in the American novels of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer traditional hero has totally vanished. The American novelists are imitating Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce who presented lost souls lacking in heroic strength of character. Sean O’Faoláin expressed deep concern about the fate of the hero in a society where “most of the traditional certainties have become progressively less and less certain” (O’Faoláin 16). After examining the novels of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer we tend to believe that there is a virtual disappearance of “the conceptual hero”, O’Faoláin further observes that the American novelists are “anti-humanist and anti-heroic, highly skeptical about man's inherent dignity” (O’Faoláin 81). As early as the 1920's, the protagonist is more often than not a contemptible slave of his desires, and a cog in a cruel system. The American novelists projected him as a sorry product of social conditions. Thus, corrupt and soulless people are created by Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer. The surrealism of Strindberg, the psychic iceberg of Freud and philosophy of Bergson gave a new direction to the American war novelists.

There is emergence of the spiritual void in the turn of the 20th century in American war fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer. The scenes of death and destruction of the First World War (1914-1918), the Great Depression (1929-39), the Second World War (1939-1945), and the nihilistic ideas propagated by Nietzsche in his famous book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883) brought about a wave of pessimism and nihilism. Milton R Stein (1970) explores the themes of alienation in the novels of Fitzgerald. Matthew J. Bruccoli (1981) discusses in detail the impact of the culture of American Dream on the mind and sensibility of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Dan Seliters (1986) explored the stylistic techniques of Fitzgerald used in his war novels. Thomas Tanselle (1963) discussed in detail the historical and sociological significance of Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. The novel "marked the full-length flowering of the talent of Fitzgerald" (Tanselle 76). James E. Miller in his "F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and His Technique" discusses in detail the unconventional literary devices used by the novelist to articulate his pessimistic vision of life (Miller 27). Wayne C. Miller in his "Ethnic Identity as Moral Focus: A Reading of Joseph Heller's *Good as Gold*" discusses the identity crisis in the novels of Heller from the perspective of existentialism (Miller 3). Frederick C. Stern in "Heller's Hell: Heller's Later Fiction, Jewishness, and the Liberal Imagination" explores the Jewish consciousness of Heller. The learned critic opines that all the three major novels of Heller *Catch-22*, *Good as Gold*, and *Something Happened* reveal the Jewish culture and values since all the protagonists are trapped in the Jewish culture of America. Thomas Blues (1971) in "The Moral Structure 22" discusses in detail the moral issues depicted in the novel (Blues 64). There is a conflict between morality and existential reality in his novels. Gordon Andrew (1980) discusses the psychic pressures of the protagonists of Norman Mailer (Andrew 45). He has taken Freudian theories to examine and analyze the protagonists of Mailer. Laura Adams (1976) in this critical study, the learned critic explores Mailer's search for the new moral order in the War-ridden America (Adams 68). Mailer is battling against the plague of American society. He has discussed the cancerous growth of totalitarianism. Norman Podhoretz (1963) talks of the loss of consciousness in the novels of Norman Mailer. Podhoretz argues

that Mailer is a prophet of sick America to accept the Existential God (Podhoretz 60). It is argued that Mailer fears that the ultimate result of modern man's pursuit of safety will be self-destruction. Diana Trilling (1963) argued that Norman Mailer was a serious writer who depicted the war situation through his characters. But in this article, there is no reference to the trapped protagonists (Trilling 175). Barry H. Leeds (1969) discusses in detail the vision, the techniques to structure the plots and the approaches to American fiction of Mailer. He looks at Mailer from the modern perspective with the focus on themes and his vision of American life after the war. His critical analysis is done with heart and soul exploring all the aspects of American life (Leeds 24). Erik Grayson in his article "Remembering Norman Mailer" discussed in detail the existential stance of Norman Mailer. In all his novels Mailer depicts the struggle of the protagonists against the absurdity of life. When the soldiers returned home after the war they became the victims of anxiety and absurdity of life. Grayson discusses the existential problems of Mailer's heroes (Grayson 12). Harold Bloom published his *Joseph Heller's Catch-22* (2001). It was a collection of essays and Bloom insists that Heller's "time has passed" since his novels are nothing more than "sub-literary" Period Pieces (Bloom 1-2). Bloom's focus is on the stylistic techniques of Heller. In the past and in the present no critic has done intensive research on the topic "*Consciousness of Spiritual Void: The Trapped Protagonists in the Select Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer.*" There may be stray references but no full-length study has been done on this problem. The present thesis explores the causes of spiritual void and impact of spiritual decadence on the mind and sensibility of the protagonists of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer.

There are many research papers, books and journals published in the past and present times but most of the research material is focused on the themes, narrative techniques evolved by Joseph Heller, Scott Fitzgerald, and Norman Mailer. But in this study the main focus is to explore the impact of two World Wars on the mind and sensibility of the protagonists who were haunted by the awareness of the spiritual void in their lives. The protagonists of Joseph Heller, Scott Fitzgerald, and Norman Mailer

are trapped in a gloomy hell where there is no escape. The collapse of the American Dream which earlier had sustained their life disillusioned them. They experienced loss of self, growing isolation, and growing cut throat competition in the American society. The connection between man and man was lost as the wave of doubt and despair and absurdity afflicted the protagonists of American writers of Post War era. The following review of literature of past and present gives stimulus to the present study.

Stacey Olster (2009) stated that the universe reflected in post-modernist novels is one of chance and randomness, devoid of historical intelligibility. Stacey Olster contends this view by differentiating American post-modernism with respect to the views of historical processes that its practitioners share. Arguing that their experience of communism proved instrumental in shaping the historical perspective of novelists who began writing after World War II, Olster analyses their change in perspective in the 1950s after historical events forced them to acknowledge the failure of the communist ideal in Russia (Olster 52).

Jon Woodson (2001) calls Joseph Heller "an example of a writer whose work has been subjected to inadequate critical frameworks" (Woodson 36). Woodson argues that "thirty years of critical misinterpretation and misreading" necessitate the reassessment of Heller's fiction as part of the late twentieth century American canon (Woodson 35). Judith Ruderman in his book *Joseph Heller* (1991) notes that "most critics regard *Catch-22* as Heller's crowning achievement, with all subsequent productions as a falling away from glory" (Ruderman 178). David Seed (1989) in his book *The Fiction of Joseph Heller: Against the Grain* has examined in detail the various themes of Joseph Heller particularly exploring the *Catch-22* code its impact on the mind and sensibility of the protagonists (Seed 68). Stephen Potts (1989) stated that Heller is a contemporary war novelist describing the true spiritual decadence of war ridden American people (Potts 62). In the characters Captain Yossarian, Slocum, and Gold, Joseph Heller analyses the possible lifestyles available to the individual upon facing the absurdity of the human experience. Yossarian, Heller's most famous protagonist, embraces an attitude that, according to Jean Kennard, "is basically that of Jean Paul Sartre and the early Albert Camus" (Kennard 75).

Gertrude Stein wrote to Fitzgerald of the “genuine pleasure” the book brought her; she called it a “good book” and said he was “creating the contemporary world as much as Thackeray did his” (Fitzgerald, *Crack-Up* 308). Maxwell Perkins used the adjectives “extraordinary,” “magnificent,” “brilliant,” “unequaled”; he believed Fitzgerald had “every kind of right to be proud of this book” full of “such things as make a man famous”. However, with the publication of essays by William Troy and Lionel Trilling, Fitzgerald’s stock was beginning to rise, and the Fitzgerald “revival” may be said to have started. It continued at such an accelerated pace that in 1951 John Abbott Clark wrote in the Chicago Tribune, “It would seem that all Fitzgerald had broken loose” (Clark 227). The story of the changing critical attitudes toward *The Great Gatsby* is a study in the patterns of twentieth-century critical fashions.

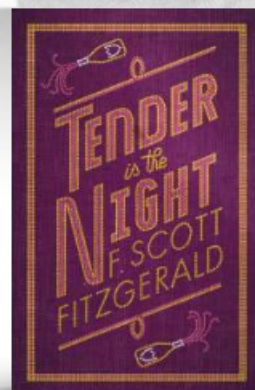
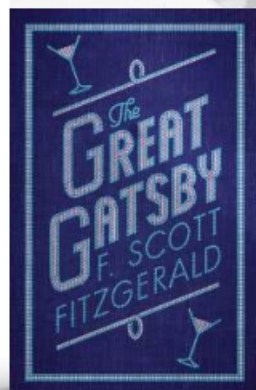
Jenny Edkins (2003) explores “the connections between violence, the effects of trauma that it produces, and forms of political community” (Edkins 9). In terms of political power, Edkins claims that with trauma “the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors: when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns against us or when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger” (Edkins 4). *Gatsby* can be interpreted as an exploration of a personal loss. A. William Fahey (1973) observes that *Gatsby*’s collapse is not accidental. The memory of the past and the attempt to reverse the past makes *Gatsby* a traumatized figure. A central aspect of his trauma is a longing for such an idealized woman as well as an ideal world that is preserved through emotionally saturated memories of the past, and *Gatsby* indeed most intensely encountered his trauma when he could not keep Daisy in his life.

Plethora of books of criticism and research papers were published on the war novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer, but there is no comprehensive research on the selected topic. The protagonists of the selected novels are depicted under the influence of contemporary political and social forces. Surrounded by the dark gulf of war and the changing scenario of the religious fields, these characters stood completely bewildered and confused.

## Chapter 2

### Trapped and Bewildered Characters of F. Scott Fitzgerald

F. Scott Fitzgerald  
1896-1940



Fitzgerald was the child of the “Roaring Twenties” the way William Wordsworth was the product of French Revolution. Wordsworth took up the ideals of French Revolution and Fitzgerald depicted the spirit of the 1920’s in his novels. His personal life was full of challenges and contradictions that characterised the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald’s marriage to Zelda Sayre proved a turning point in his life as he used her as a model for his women protagonists. Their marriage collapsed like the collapse of the American economy on Black Tuesday of 1929. In his life Fitzgerald was always fear ridden of poverty and failure. Fitzgerald wrote on the themes of moral decline of his American youth-he was raised as a Catholic and he felt guilty since he wrote about the hedonistic pleasures enjoyed by the people after the World War. His father Edward Fitzgerald built no wholesale hardware business but went bankrupt in 1880’s; worked as a salesman and died in penury giving no crutches to Fitzgerald. He broke with Catholicism and began his journey of life as a writer with disillusionment and despair. He wrote about the plight of the American people and “has come to be associated with the concept of the American dream more so than any other writer of the twentieth century” (Pearson 638).

Fitzgerald’s *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) established his name in the world of fiction. He got name and fame because he took keen interest in the evolution of flappers who brought Cultural Revolution in America. Fitzgerald became a spokesman for the younger generation and his early heroines like Daisy of *The Great Gatsby* became the role model of the younger generation of America. Fitzgerald depicted the poignant life of American men who found themselves trapped in the hypocrisy and mercantile culture of America. He got prominence for his creation of wonderful and enchanting flappers such as Rosemary, Nicole and Gloria who were trapped in the mercantile culture and suffered anguish and alienation because of their crazy mania of love, sex, fashion and quest for the material amenities of life. In his novels, he created war heroes and the flappers who become the victims of their lust for money and fashion and material things of life.





Fig. 2.1: Gatsby: A War Hero turned Schizoid

*“Civilization’s going to pieces”* (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 24).

Interestingly, after the success of *The Beautiful and Damned* Fitzgerald got encouraged and he published his famous novel *The Great Gatsby* to depict the collapse of American Dream and the lust of the Americans to amass wealth by foul means. The plot of the novel portrays the real self of the characters who were dehumanized in their mad race of making money. In this Age, Jazz music was sweeping the country; Fitzgerald depicted the cultural change of the new age in his essay “My Lost City” thus: “The parties were bigger, the pace was faster, and the morals were looser” (Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up* 23). Fitzgerald published *The Great Gatsby* in 1925 and the critics hailed it as his masterpiece depicting the transformation of culture of America after the World War 1. The main focus of the novel is the growing bankruptcy of faith of the characters and their lust for easy money. The novel is starting point of the collapse of the American Dream in America. The critics were

of the unanimous view that nobody has described the anguish and despair of the post-war generation better than Fitzgerald: “his fictions reflect all the contradictions as well as the dreams of his age” (Pelzer 16). Gertrude Stein praised Fitzgerald providing her “genuine pleasure” through the plot of the novel. T.S. Eliot called the novel “charming,” “overpowering,” and “remarkable” (Fitzgerald, *Crack-Up* 308). Maxwell Perkins hailed *The Great Gatsby* as a “magnificent,” piece of art. The structural design of the novel is better than his previous novels since he wrote under the influence of Joseph Conrad. Nick Carraway is introduced as the central consciousness that reports all events and is also involved in the events of the novel. Whatever happens in the novel is filtered through Nick’s perceptions. Nick enjoys authorial perspective as he remarks, “I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life” (qtd. in Bloom 6). Nick is a young man of Minnesota who is a moral interpreter in the novel. Nick is a control consciousness of the novel as he is an important part of the structural scheme. Nick is a moral commentator narrating his perceptions about the actions, thoughts and ideas of Daisy, Tom and Jordan. He stands as a link between the writer and his characters. *Gatsby* is a mighty achievement of Fitzgerald in the history of American fiction. Nick reports that he is the son of “shiftless and unsuccessful farm people” in North Dakota. Nick goes to the West Egg-the home of the new rich people who made money after war by fair and foul means. The West Egg people are very rich but lack the refinement and elegance of the East Egg people to which Nick belongs. *Gatsby* belongs to West Egg society; he is affluent but morally corrupt and his mansion is a symbol of Gothic monstrosity. The plot of the novel gives a fine juxtaposition of history, myth and personality illuminating Fitzgerald’s vision of America. He was aware of military supremacy, technological advancement and material affluence of America but at the same time he was aware of the failures of youth who returned from war and found American society cruel, oppressive and materialistic. The war-torn society was in the grip of insecurity and uncertainty. Nick recreates his experience in the novel as he narrates all the episodes step by step unfolding the chapters of American history as he says: “So we beat on, boats against the current, born back ceaselessly into the past”

(Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 200). Ironically, Gatsby tries his best to swim through the currents but history pulls him back. His cycle of life of dream and nightmare begins. Nick believes that Gatsby “represented everything for which [he has] an unaffected scorn” (12) for. At the age of seventeen Gatsby came in contact with Dan Cody who taught him all the evil ways to make fast money.

The majority of the critics such as Berman and Chase observe that Fitzgerald has depicted Daisy as a mythical Eve—a tempter characterising her beauty, glamour, and grandeur. The plot of the novel revolves around Gatsby-Daisy relationship. In Shakespearean comedies, there is always love at the first sight and Platonic love is depicted. In his novel *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald also takes the Platonic conception of love. Gatsby meets Daisy for the first time when he is a common soldier. The critics observe that Daisy is “shallow”, “foolish” and “unworthy” woman. She embodies conflicting values and expectations. Her priority is social security and social stature. Gatsby is overwhelmed by her youth, her beauty, and her wealth. Gatsby is a strong, masculine and brave man. Gatsby first comes to see Daisy in her house. Gatsby is excited and stunned to see Daisy’s colossal house:

Her porch was bright with the bought luxury of star-shine; the wicker of the settee squeaked fashionably as she turned toward him.... and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes.  
(167)

He tries to win beautiful and wealthy Daisy at that time. Gatsby is passionate to possess a wealthy and beautiful object but he belongs to a lower class. Gatsby is only “a penniless young man without a past” (166), with “no comfortable family standing behind him” (166). He naively “found her excitingly desirable” (165) and “felt married to her, that was all” (167). Gatsby “let her believe that he was a person from much the same stratum as herself” (166). Gatsby is selfish and self-centered and like a neurotic he tries to make Daisy believe that he is worthy of her. Daisy embodies all that Gatsby desires: beauty, purity and wealth. Furthermore, “it excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy—it increased her value in his eyes” (166).

Fitzgerald uses a flood of images to depict the enchanting beauty of Daisy. She is a powerful mysterious force that overwhelms Gatsby. Daisy seems to be “gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor” (167), an immortal object of Gatsby’s imagination. Daisy is an enigmatic witch goddess whose life is determined by the materialistic considerations of life. Gatsby loves her from the core of his heart and there is no ambiguity in his love for Daisy. But Daisy is not committed; she is worldly wise but Gatsby is a worldly fool. Gatsby writes a letter to Daisy expressing his sincerity and commitment to her love. Daisy is emotionally disturbed because she receives the letter of Gatsby just the night before her wedding. Gatsby appeals to her sincerely but Daisy is surprised by the million dollars pearl necklace gifted by Tom. Gatsby’s last fervent appeal goes waste as “She wouldn’t let go of the letter. She took it into the tub with her and squeezed it up into a wet ball” (91). Daisy is forced to take the ice-cold bath and the letter of Gatsby which she clutches has “crumbled like snow”. Daisy marries Tom. “Next day at five o’clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months’ trip to the South Seas” (91). There is a lot of confusion about Daisy in the novel. She is an image of a fairy, an enchanted object for Gatsby.

Gatsby feels sexually repressed when Daisy rejects him and marries Tom Buchanan. He makes up his mind to live near Daisy and West Egg ultimately becomes an emotionally significant place for him. Gatsby’s personal sense of grief and loss results from the desire to win Daisy. From Freudian perspective his failure leads to his regressive wish since “Daisy tumbled short of his dreams” (111). Gatsby creates a world of illusive fantasy and spends days and nights recollecting his memories of Daisy. Gatsby is not a rational human being: like a crazy and eccentric lover he worships Daisy’s shadow, Daisy haunts Gatsby for the rest of life. Symbolically, Daisy’s shadow is everything Gatsby values, but in reality her shadow brings his downfall and leads to his tragic death at the end of the novel. For Gatsby Daisy appears like “a green light that burns all night” (108), which has lured him into reinventing his identity and trying to recapture the past.

Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) observes that rich people enjoy in wasting luxurious goods to display their social status. Veblen's theory of the "leisure class" can conveniently be applied in the character of Daisy. Her extravagant life expresses the psyche of the vicarious leisure class. Veblen writes, "In the nature of things, luxuries and the comforts of life belong to the leisure class" (Veblen 70), Daisy leads a luxurious life; she enjoys wasting the sources at the time she falls in love with Gatsby. She marries Tom Buchanan because he can afford all the luxury of the world. Fitzgerald contrasts Daisy's "vicarious leisure" with Gatsby's poor social status. Daisy is rich and affluent; she belongs to the world of luxury and comfort, but her world is also full of decadence and corruption. For Daisy, social status is more important than futile romance of Gatsby. No wonder, "she vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby nothing" (167).

Gatsby is blinded by Daisy's beauty and wealth but he "had no real right to touch her hand" (166). Daisy rejects the marriage proposal of Gatsby simply because he has no financial heritage. Gatsby is so much mentally disturbed that her wealth becomes Gatsby's obsessions. He makes up his mind to gain "reputability" as a "gentleman of leisure". Evidently being penniless Gatsby could not keep Daisy at that time even though he loved her passionately. Nick is also impressed by the choice of Daisy. Daisy enjoys the aristocratic status by marrying Tom Buchanan. Gatsby's love affair with her teaches him a very bitter lesson of life. He suffers from inferiority complex because of financial insecurity and low social status. Gatsby realizes that being poor he could never participate in the arrogant, inherited old wealth of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby is compelled to change the course of his life; now his main objective of life is to accumulate money which will help him enter Daisy's class. Gatsby assumes a false identity as in the early days of his romance with Daisy he lets Daisy "believe that he was a person from much the same stratum as herself that he was fully able to take care of her" (166). A dream of money pollutes the sensibility of Gatsby and his dream of money destroys him. He gradually becomes "a tragicomic figure in a social comedy" (Hoffman and Chase 301). No wonder, Gatsby "does not know how to conform to the class to which Daisy belongs and to this class he seems

ridiculous” (301). Gatsby lacks the art of living like an elite class and soon stands exposed; he is never fully accepted as a man of the higher class: “Jay Gatsby had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 165). Nick even characterises Gatsby’s manners as having “sprang from the swamps of Louisiana or from the lower East Side of New York” (62) and “his parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people” (113). Gatsby couldn’t ignore the social realities. “the truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself” (113). With “his Platonic conception” he idealizes his world as well as his love. Gatsby wants to change his life through his garish money. Gatsby struggles to recapture an invented past with the new self-made identity of the present. Fitzgerald writes that James Gatz in the novel “invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to his conception he was faithful to the end” (113). He changes his name in hope of acquiring a new life. “Gatsby had no residual values to give his life direction except the values he created in inventing himself” (Lehan 31). Fitzgerald presents Gatsby as the model of “the Alger myth of the self-made man”, Callahan observes that: “the Adam and Eve myth becomes a fable of psychological idealism; Adam (Gatsby) creates Eve (Daisy) from his own flesh, from his vision, while sleeping; woman becomes not herself, but dream realized” (Callahan 15). Soon Daisy becomes his dream she becomes a cold, wealthy woman without any moral standards, leading to Gatsby’s disillusionment.

Daisy needs something permanent rather than a romantic moment. Gatsby could not give Daisy “a sense of security” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 166) because his life does not depend on materialism but rather on romanticism and idealism. When Daisy rejects him, Gatsby has no other alternative but to weave the romantic illusions wishing they could be together again. While Tom and Daisy were on their wedding trip, Gatsby made “a miserable but irresistible journey to Louisville on the last of his army pay” (170). He could not resist the hidden desire to recapture their past romantic moments. Illusions are false and deceptive but they give a unique pleasure and peace to him. He continues the “irresistible journey” and refuses to accept reality. His thinking “that if he had searched harder, he might have found her-that he was leaving

her behind” (170) motivates him to search for Daisy for the rest of his life. Gatsby is trapped in his money culture as he insists that “everything of value can be bought” (Callahan 21). Gatsby has built a wealthy life to nurture his idealism and romanticism, yet he is still regarded as socially inferior to Tom and Daisy. The turning point in Gatsby’s life comes with the loss of Daisy; now he transfers his disillusionments from the past to the present. In her book *Self-Analysis* (1942), Horney outlined her theory of neurosis, describing different types of neurotic behaviour of the neurotic patients. Horney observes that the neurotic needs for power, prestige, and affection lead to neurosis. Horney further adds in her book *Inner Conflicts* (1945) thus:

While he can succeed this way in creating a kind of artificial equilibrium, new conflicts are constantly generated and further remedies are continually required to blot them out. Every step in this struggle for unity makes the neurotic more hostile, more helpless, more fearful, more alienated from himself. (Horney 19)

Gatsby suffers traumatic experiences. In Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, “trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flash-backs, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (Caruth 91). Trauma, according to Caruth, is not an event simply forgotten; instead, an inherent feature of trauma is the ‘latency within the experience itself’ (Caruth 8). The traumatic event, in other words, was not actually experienced at the time that it occurred and not until after the event is its reality realised for the first time. For Caruth, the central aporia of trauma lies in the impossibility of voluntarily accessing one’s own traumatic past; this past belatedly imposes itself on the individual against their conscious will. She argues that a defining feature of trauma is ‘the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – then returns to haunt the survivor later on’ (Caruth 8). The impact of the traumatic event manifests after the fact of its occurrence in symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and other traumatic affects that have since been classified under the banner of Post-Traumatic

Stress Disorder (Caruth 8). As an event too overwhelming to be experienced at the time of its arrival, trauma continually re-emerges long after the initial traumatic scene.

Karen Horney would describe the persona of Jay Gatsby as his ‘idealised self’; in order for Gatsby to deal with his neuroses about his own insignificance and anonymity, he invents a perfect semblance of himself that is absent of his inherent flaws. It is toward this that he constantly strives, away from his true self, whilst simultaneously looking for validation from others that he is indeed the person he has successfully become. He therefore loses his own identity.

Gatsby is lost in his elusive endless dream and goes on hoping against hopes. Horney describes this quest for power saying “that such a striving usually develops only when it proves impossible to find reassurance for the underlying anxiety through affection”(Horney, *Personality* 163-64). He knows that Daisy is lost forever as she is married to Tom but he deliberately ignores the stark reality and derives pleasures in weaving false illusions about Daisy. His deceptive memories eventually deflate his self, making him a neurotic lover.

Freud and Breuer in *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication* (1893), while writing about hysterical trauma, describe it as “any experience which calls up distressing affects- such as those of fright, anxiety, shame, or physical pain-may operate as a trauma of this kind” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 8). “The psychological trauma-or more precisely the memory of the trauma- acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work”(8). Drawing from Freudian theory, the traumatic formulation relates to an analogy between psychic and physical trauma. Furthermore, Freudian theory also argues that for a traumatized person there is a conflict between the forces of sexuality and its repression. The sexual drives can be seen as impulses that sought immediate and unconditional satisfaction, defined in part as the elimination of unpleasurable tension from the psychic apparatus. Breuer and Freud (1893) also point out that trauma can be derived from both irreparable loss of a loved person and the social circumstances (Freud, *The Complete Works* 13). Relying on Freud’s notion of



trauma and trying to read *The Great Gatsby* in the light of his theory, it can be said that Gatsby is traumatized by the loss of his idealized love.

Daisy rejects the marriage proposal of Gatsby, simply because he has no financial heritage. He suffers from an inferiority complex because of financial insecurity and low social status. He realises that being poor he could never participate in the arrogant, inherited old wealth of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby is compelled to change the course of his life; now his main objective of life is to accumulate money which will help him enter Daisy's social class. Gatsby is so much mentally disturbed that her wealth becomes his obsession. He thus enters into a mad pursuit of social reputability. Gatsby feels sexually repressed when Daisy rejects him and marries Tom. Gatsby's personal sense of grief and loss results from the desire to win Daisy. From a Freudian perspective his failure leads to his regressive wish. Gatsby creates a world of illusive fantasy and spends days and nights recollecting his memories of Daisy. Gatsby is not a rational human being like a crazy and eccentric lover, he worships Daisy's shadow. Daisy haunts Gatsby for the rest of his life. His deceptive memories eventually deflate his self, making him a neurotic lover. His chronic problem adversely affects Gatsby's capacity of thinking resulting into his personality disorder. He is a war hero turned into a schizoid.

Gatsby seems to be unconscious of the changes in his life as he tries to live in his own fantasy world; in other words, it is a kind of escapism. Gatsby lives alone with just some servants in his colossal mansion. Drawing from Freudian theory, we can say that Gatsby tries to maintain his own loneliness. He wants to stay away from people and real situations in which he just feels emptiness. That is why Gatsby is there, alone, in West Egg, just to be near the woman he longs to meet and win her again. Drawing on Freudian theory, one can say the image of a Gatsby who "stretched out his arms toward the dark water" (26) may symbolise the subconsciousness poised against reality. He is not aware of the real world he is living in, and his existence is based on what destroyed his hope. Gatsby feels so tiny and so lonely in this world. The image of "the dark water" brings out a special symbol. Freudian theory suggests it may be used to symbolise rebirth and wishing for another life. Furthermore, this

dark water may be used as a dark mirror of his own mind. It may be called the latent content in the story, warning him and readers that the lost experience from his past life will remain with him until his death.

Loss of a relationship is the trauma of the horrible past that he has never recovered from. For Gatsby, “without Daisy, he is nothing; he is as worthless as the bonds passed illegally over the counter of his Chicago drugstore after his death” (Callahan 21). Gatsby is unable to disown his past, and he continually suffers in the world of trauma. Gatsby evidently suffers from the trauma that he had in the past when his relationship with Daisy was broken and he really wants to recapture their happy moments by recycling and mixing past events with present ones, and to jump back into a created past with illusory emotions. In his blind pursuit of wealth, status, and success, Gatsby follows a dream that ultimately becomes a nightmare. Undoubtedly, Gatsby has experienced a traumatic event in the past and a traumatic neurosis keeps him trapped in a fantasy world forever.

Gatsby is traumatised by both by his experience in the war and the loss of his idealised love. Brutalities of war left many soldiers unable to identify with the civilian world to which they returned. In the wake of the First World War, veterans were often left to rebuild their lives from the ground up, as physical and psychological trauma and poor economic conditions prevented men from reentering society as providers and citizens. The touch of War and Death dooms Gatsby, corrupting everything and everyone around him, and the gravest disease of the twentieth century turns out to be shell shock. By forging a new self hood, Gatsby tries to separate himself from the experiences of war and, consequently, the blame for wartime violence. He suffers from shell shock which is apparent from his isolation, his mute inability to feel, maladaptive behaviour and his restless movements. Daisy feels attraction towards Gatsby who is accomplished as an officer, but after his real self is revealed and his ambition of repeating the past is crushed, he is publicly humiliated and deprived of Daisy by the culturally and socially privileged Tom. Although not apparent, the war has a harrowing effect on Gatsby’s psyche. The death and destruction of the war acted

like the seed for Gatsby's spiritual void. Furthermore, it ultimately created the psychotic personality that Gatsby was.

Gatsby loses his rational thinking and psychic fantasy, trauma grip his consciousness. His chronic problem adversely affects Gatsby's capacity of thinking resulting into his ongoing personality disorder. Lehan observes that "Gatsby's love for Daisy is a pure impulse in a corrupt world" (Lehan 113). Gatsby's painful life begins with the physical loss of Daisy who for him is "the first 'nice girl' he had ever known" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 165). The life has no charm for him when she is lost and his perception of life and world changes with the separation from Daisy. Gatsby becomes morose and sullen and starts believing that there is only one power in this universe and that is power of money. No wonder, after his separation from Daisy he wholeheartedly devotes to earn money. For so many months he remains restless as he couldn't believe "a nice girl" like Daisy would betray an army officer who fought for the nation. His faith in nationalism, war medals, and army honour vanish as he is confronted by the reality of a money- driven world. Men like Tom Buchanan are the real winners and he is a loser. Since he is a soldier he cannot accept the defeat from Tom and recreates a world of romance and wonder to escape from the stark realities of the corrupt world of Daisy. His mythical journey begins with the loss of Daisy as he emerges a new man after the separation from Daisy.

Fitzgerald has depicted the mythical journey of Gatsby from innocence to eternal damnation. Nick meets him for the first time and found him lonely and depressed: "he was content to be alone. He stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way" (33). Loss of Daisy was a big shock to him as he lost all charm in life and in the activities of the world. He had no source of entertainment as he would spend days and nights thinking and dreaming of Daisy. Freud points out that "the motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality"(Freud, *The Complete Works* 146). When he goes along the streets in Louisville, "he stretched out his hand desperately as if to snatch only a wisp of air, to save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely for him" (170). Gatsby is unaware of what is actually happening to

him in the real world. The image of “the dark water” symbolises rebirth and wishing for another life. This dark water also acts as a dark mirror of his dark mind. Fitzgerald has depicted Gatsby as a mythical hero as Maurice Bewley opines: “Gatsby is a mythic character...he has no private life, no measuring or significance that depends on the fulfilment of his merely private destiny” (Bewley 131). Gatsby is projected as Everyman performing his role as a mythic character of the Roaring Twenties. Henry Dan Piper also supports the arguments of Bewley affirming that Gatsby “achieves the myth that creates and sustains him” (Piper 121). Ross Posnock is of the opinion that Gatsby embodies in his personality “multiple mythical dimensions” (Posnock 211) and he emerges as a myth himself at the end of the novel. Thomas Cornellier contends that Gatsby is a great mythical character of Fitzgerald embodying “escape and fulfillment” (Cornellier 15). Stephen Matterson (1990) observes that Gatsby is a symbol of “freedom, self-reliance and individualism” (Matterson 5). R.W.B. Lewis in his book *The American Adam* (1955) traces the history of Noble Savage of America who is a pioneer; a frontier and the mythical hero imbuing in him the superhuman traits of individuality; passionate love for freedom; dogged determination to fight with the external forces of nature. Gatsby has all the traits of a Noble Savage of America. Nick goes to the East digging out gentility, snobbery hypocrisy; he enters into the new world in the East to “the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailor’s eyes” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 199). Nick alludes to the Dutch sailors who came to America in a particular historical context. The Dutch sailors like Ulysses travelled to find a new land. Their journey is historical and adventurous like the journey of Gatsby. He joins the Great War like Ulysses and he has strong will to overcome his fate. Like Ulysses he leaves home to make more money since Daisy rejects him preferring Tom Buchanan who belongs to high class and has plenty money in his bank. Gatsby’s heart is broken and like Ulysses he determines to pursue his own life based on his own ideals. Unlike Ulysses Gatsby neither learns about himself nor about the world that surrounds him. Nevertheless, like Ulysses, Gatsby has an enormous “capacity for wonder” (200). The mythical hero is always a personification of the human consciousness and thus transcends the limits of human actions. Rose Adrienne

Gallo observes that Gatsby is under any pressure and has the potential to cross all barriers of life. Gatsby truly believes that “by his fiat the past can be recapitulated, the present reconstructed, the future guaranteed” (Gallo 39). Roger Lewis (1985) observes that Gatsby’s sense of the past “as something that he not only knows but also thinks he can control” (Lewis 47). Daisy is described as “Grail”. Gatsby spends his garish money for a worthless Grail but Doris Stephens avers that his quest for the Grail is spiritual in nature; it is “quest for his peace with himself and God” (Stephens 56). William Fahey (1973) objects to calling Gatsby as a mythic character and “calls him as a circus character” (Fahey 81). Gatsby resorts to all that is artificial, corrupt and dehumanizing. Gatsby emerges as a mixture of materialism and idealism leading him to failure. The major cause of the downfall of Gatsby is the dualistic nature of his materialism. His three major illegal ventures land him to difficulties as he stands exposed by Tom and Daisy abandons him forever. He is involved in betting on the World Series, smuggling of alcohol and dealing in prohibited oil stocks. Gatsby is trapped in his materialistic culture and romantic idealism. He forms his own independent image of himself but his dualism and contradictions ruin his life. The forces are so powerful that he is eventually crushed by the evil forces. John Chambers (1989) has commented that Gatsby, in spite of his death and destruction is “a man of tremendous potential who directs his energies towards an idea of happiness” (Chambers 100).

Jay Gatsby is a victim of fractured identity; he emerges as an enigmatic and mysterious protagonist, and he is a liar and a cheat as he assumes multiple identities to throw dust in the eyes of Daisy whom he loves so passionately. “His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was. ...” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 126) Gatsby lives in false dreams and is exposed by Tom for his confirmation of false values and beliefs. The clash of values of the East Egg and the West Egg is inevitable. Gatsby stands exposed by Tom Buchanan who is the husband of Daisy. Tom brings the curtain of love affair of Gatsby and Daisy down. In his conversation with Jordan he gives the following valuable information:

'About Gatsby.'

'About Gatsby! No, I haven't. I said I'd been making a small investigation of his past.'

'And you found he was an Oxford man,' said Jordan helpfully.'

'An Oxford man!' He was incredulous. 'Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit.'

'Nevertheless he's an Oxford man.'

'Oxford, New Mexico,' snorted Tom contemptuously, 'or something like that.'

'Listen, Tom. If you're such a snob, why did you invite him to lunch?' demanded Jordan crossly.

'Daisy invited him; she knew him before we were married—God knows where!'. (138)

Gatsby tries to maintain the image of Oxford man: he loves new clothes and cars and loves to converse in many languages. Tom is confused to know the real identity of Gatsby. He is an Oxford man, a killer, a German spy or a brave American war hero, a don of the alcohol trade, a billionaire and the owner of magnificent Gothic mansion whose Saturday parties are the centre of attraction of all rich people of the West Egg. At Gatsby's parties "people were not invited-they just went there" (53). In his parties, his guests are a crowd of lonely individuals suffering from the existential despair of life- they drink, dance and talk just to break the monotony of life. He hosts parties but his guests "came and went without having met Gatsby at all" (53). Gatsby has created so many illusions in his life that he himself is confused about his real identity. Thomas Stavola aptly avers that the entire novel is about the identity formation, confusion and illusion mongering of Gatsby. Ironically, Gatsby is not looking for his true identity but spends his time, garish money and energy in creating an artificial image of himself conceived in a world of illusions. He wants to take Daisy because he wants to ride on the wave of success. He believes that the possession of a rich and beautiful Daisy would help him to rise in society. Nick plays an important role in the novel who gives an insight into the real inner self of Gatsby.

Nick's flashbacks, analysis of his attitudes, his running commentary on the dreams and perceptions of Gatsby explore the real nature of Gatsby. Nick is also sometimes confused to observe the conflicting personality of Jay Gatsby: he is courageous self-made man, an honourable man of the West Egg, and generous and munificence known for his charities but a totally corrupt individual who amassed wealth through illegal means. Gatsby is trapped in his own false ideals and illusions as he forges a false identity in his voluptuous passion to get Daisy. Interestingly, Bryce J. Christensen (1991) calls Gatsby as a great romantic hero since he attempts to "bridge the gap between time and eternity, history and myth" (Christensen 157). Nick gives the right picture of the people surrounding Gatsby- they are "a rotten crowd" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 172). Ross Posnock takes a Marxist view observing that Gatsby is the product of a "destructive capitalist society founded on contradictions, he lives in a society where money deforms human life, provoking moral, emotional and spiritual chaos" (Posnock 202). Gatsby loves Daisy, and Nick refers to the mercantile nature of their journey alluding to the dream of Gatsby:

Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 199-200)

Nick depicts the images of "dreams" which determine the life of Gatsby. He uses the phrase "aesthetic contemplation" describing the beauty of the pre-colonial America. Nick Carraway goes to the New York to learn the bond business. He rents a cottage next to the big mansion of Gatsby. He is the second cousin of Daisy and the immediate neighbour of Gatsby and thus becomes an observer and participant of all the events. Nick feels his presence in the unknown world to which Gatsby belongs: a world of corruption, treachery, profligacy, evil, and moral degradation. Jay Gatsby is portrayed as the cultural symbol of the Jazz age and the embodiment of the collapse

of American Dream. Nick is so much fascinated by his idealism that he praises him and finds in his life “some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life” (12). He is a self-made man and has built a big empire by hard work and in pursuance of his own ideology of the American Dream. The problem with Gatsby is that he is full of contradictions- he is an exuberant dreamer but at the same time he is lost in hedonistic tastes of life. He becomes a big bootlegger and extravagantly spends money in parties for the false prestige and cheap popularity with a romantic hope that Daisy will meet her in one of his parties. He looks wistfully at the green light on Buchanan dock and has sleepless nights longing for the love of his dream girl Daisy.

Gatsby fails to comprehend the reality of the corrupt environment of Daisy who is no longer pure and innocent as he believes and dreams. She is the wife of Tom Buchanan living in corrupt, vicious and malevolent society. The pristine innocence of Daisy is destroyed by shoddy and plutocratic Buchanan society. Daisy Buchanan personifies artificiality and superficiality of her life and she confesses that: “I’m paralyzed with happiness” (19) and her “bright eyes and bright passionate mouth” (20) is erotic and deluding. The green light of Daisy is as artificial as Daisy but Gatsby fails to know the reality about the green light and the real inner self of Daisy. There is no fresh air in the world of Daisy, there is just the valley of ashes filled with “powdery air” (34). Fitzgerald depicts the mystery of Rousseau’s Noble Savage in his novel and the conflict is between society and individual as Tom foretells: “civilization’s going to pieces” (24).

Daisy Buchanan is an embodiment of false aristocratic snobbery and frivolity. She pretends that she is very happy but in reality, she is also a trapped protagonist-tied up in the marriage bond with Tom who has extra-marital relationships with Mrs. Myrtle. Gatsby weaves false and romantic illusions about Daisy quite ignorant of the “flesh-and-blood experience of the actual Daisy” (Brooks 163). No wonder, Daisy becomes the essence of “what preyed on Gatsby” a “part of that foul dust that floated in the wake of his dreams” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 12-13). Gatsby devotes all his potential to make money because he had a bitter experience of life. He couldn’t forget the scene when Daisy rejected him and Tom emerged as the winner in love. All



his tainted wealth and the financial manipulations are in tune with his so called “Platonic ideas”. Cleanth Brooks (1964) observes that Gatsby’s soul is not tainted at all and Gatsby “manages to preserve a kind of innocence which, in the total context, is simply not amusing and odd, but magnificent” (Brooks, *American* 163). Nick doesn’t use the word innocence for Daisy and Tom; he uses the word careless to characterize their careless approach to life:

They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 198)

It is pertinent to note that the dilemmas and conflicts of Jay Gatsby are an expression of Fitzgerald since he also suffered from ambivalence and duality. He was a Catholic but later shifted to other religion since he never felt part of the Catholic society. He longed for money and suffered from emptiness and spiritual void. Jay Gatsby is a lost Adam groping in darkness and living in the world of dreams and illusions. He belongs to a dream world characterized by wealth, romance, glamour and corruption. The plot of the novel is set in the prohibition era and an idealistic Gatsby is trapped in the money culture of America evolving his own values and false dreams to survive. Fitzgerald makes Gatsby a legendary figure who “sprang from his Platonic conception of himself” (113).

The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. (113)

Gatsby’s real name is James Gatz but his name according to his romantic ideals as he assumes the name of anglicized Jay Gatsby. He is an apprentice of Dan Cody, the great billionaire miner who teaches him debauchery; treachery, corruption and the values of money making culture. The penniless Jay Gatsby joins the army to

pursue his dream of future glory. Gatsby meets Daisy Fey for the first time in 1917 by an accident of war time, falls in love with her, takes her one October night and finds that “he had committed himself to the following of a grail” (166). Gatsby is spellbound by the glamorous beauty of Daisy and calls her “extraordinary” (167). But Daisy tortured him as “she vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing” (167). In Louisville Gatsby meets Daisy and soon he is transported into a romantic world of Keats’s *Nightingale*, free from the worries and cares of life. She is just eighteen and looks like a Queen of Paradise: “She dressed in white, and had a little white roadster, and all day long the telephone rang in her house” (89). Her voice is sweet and charming that “cymbal’s song” (136), the “deathless song” of a voice that “couldn’t be over-dreamed” (111). Gatsby is a mythical hero of wonder land: his miraculous birth, his mysterious background and his mythical quest for Daisy Fay “the golden girl” are interesting traits of his personality. Gatsby firmly believes that Daisy is all that matters in the universe. Fitzgerald gives an effective image of ladder to depict the longing of Gatsby to win Daisy:

Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees—he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder. (127)

Gatsby weaves wonderful illusions and think of Daisy day and night but luck was not in his favour. He only enjoyed the kiss of Daisy for the last time when he separated from her but he continued his quest for the golden girl after he returned from the war. He lives in his own fantasy world that he created:

His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy’s white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete. (127)

Gatsby is not an ordinary traditional hero of Fitzgerald, he is portrayed as a cultural symbol of the Jazz age: an embodiment of the materialistic values of the American society. He is trapped, dehumanised and is killed by the forces which he doesn't comprehend while living in the West Egg. Gatsby represents all that is corrupt and vicious in America as he is pursuing false illusions of materialism. Fitzgerald depicts the "most grotesque and fantastic conceits" of Gatsby that haunted him day and night.

Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing. (114)

Gatsby is charmed by the beauty and glamour of Daisy symbolised as the Eve. His focus is on "that vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty of the America" which Daisy the Goddess presides over. Gatsby is deluded by the false appearances against which Hamlet fights struggling to bring order out of chaos. Gatsby is trapped in money and love, in his idealism, and corrupted means to make millions of dollars. He lives in false illusion that with money he will be able to win the heart of Daisy. Daisy is a mythical fairy who makes false promises. Externally she is a gorgeous beauty but inwardly she suffers from emotional bankruptcy, and her physical beauty and vitality are deceptive:

Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered "Listen," a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour. (20)

Gatsby always observes her artificial voice which is "full of money" (136). Gatsby also knows the tastes of Daisy- her passionate love for money and materialistic things of life. Gatsby becomes a bootlegger to make money and to please

Daisy. He builds a big mansion in a place where he can watch Daisy's green light across the bay. Gatsby throws expensive parties in his illusive hope to meet her one day. He uses all fair and foul means to love and win over Daisy. He is known for his romantic smile, and he affects an English accent, calling everyone "old sport" to make fun of others expressing his romantic exuberance in his Saturday parties. Gatsby is very successful in his illegal business but he becomes a spiritual derelict, leading a life in death since he knows that he is building a house on the foundation of sand. He felt lonely and isolated completely cut off from Daisy and her world. His house is a prison house of loneliness and alienation:

A wafer of a moon was shining over Gatsby's house, making the night fine as before, and surviving the laughter and the sound of his still glowing garden. A sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell.(69)

Nick holds positive ideas about Gatsby in the beginning of the novel as he is not aware about the sense of loss of Gatsby. Nick thinks "if personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" (12), even though Nick had never seen Gatsby before. Nick's view of Gatsby is determined by the rumors spreading around Gatsby. Nick meets Gatsby who shares with him his past stories about love and life. Gatsby emerges as a complicated self. Nick believes that Gatsby has "an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again" (12). The readers know Gatsby through Nick: "what Nick values in Gatsby are qualities he himself lacks: spontaneity, sensitivity outward" (Callahan 33).

In the fifth chapter of the novel Fitzgerald stages the drama of reunion of two lovers after the span of five years. The scene is highly thrilling and is a wonderful piece of art by Fitzgerald. The chapter introduces two powerful images of light and rain symbolising new lease of life and freshness in Gatsby's life. Gatsby meets Daisy

after five years, and she once again becomes a mere “green light on a dock” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 108). Nick comes home from the city after his date with Jordan. He is stupefied to see Gatsby’s mansion “blazing with light” (95). It was raining outside. Gatsby firmly believes that past can be recapitulated as every dark cloud has a silver lining. His dream is fulfilled when Nick invites Daisy over tea. It is a great day for him. Gatsby meets Daisy after five years and is extremely excited. He is nervous as Nick reports his arrival:

An hour later the front door opened nervously, and Gatsby, in a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie, hurried in. He was pale, and there were dark signs of sleeplessness beneath his eyes. (98)

In nervousness Gatsby knocks Nick’s clock over to arrest time; he doesn’t want time to run away so long as Daisy is with him. Nick doesn’t like this unmannerly action of Gatsby but he keeps silent and doesn’t react. He goes out into the kitchen leaving the two lovers alone. Outside the rain has stopped and Gatsby shows Daisy his beautiful shirts and Daisy dissolves into tears: The entire scene of reunion is at once romantic and enchanting. Nick reports thus:

They were sitting at either end of the couch, looking at each other as if some question had been asked, or was in the air, and every vestige of embarrassment was gone. Daisy’s face was smeared with tears, and when I came in she jumped up and began wiping at it with her handkerchief before a mirror. (103)

Gatsby takes Daisy into his mansion; she is dazzled to observe the grandeur and magnificence of the mansion of Gatsby. Daisy also becomes emotional and expresses her longing to escape from the fever and fret of the world. “I’d like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around” (109). She has her own private story; when she meets Nick for the first time she exults: “I’m p-paralyzed with happiness” (19). She has allowed her to be shaped and regulated by the crude and boorish force of Tom’s money. Daisy is overwrought by the grandeur of Gatsby’s mansion since she is a luxury girl; in her mind she does compare Gatsby’s fortune with Tom’s property and financial security:

With enchanting murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky, admired the gardens, the sparkling odor of jonquils and the frothy odor of hawthorn and plum blossoms and the pale gold odor of kiss-me-at-the-gate. It was strange to reach the marble steps and find no stir of bright dresses in and out of the door, and hear no sound but bird voices in the trees.(105)

Gatsby boasts of his success in business and tells her that “it took me just three years to earn the money that bought it.” He tells her that he had been in the “drug business” and in the “oil business” and soon amassed huge money. His passion for Daisy revives and he wants Daisy to leave Tom. Gatsby wants Daisy to tell Tom she never loved him. She refuses:

'Oh, you want too much!' she cried to Gatsby.

'I love you now—isn't that enough? I can't help what's past.'

She began to sob helplessly.

'I did love him once—but I loved you too.' (149)

He once again desires to re-create his destiny. Veblen also points out that money can create power and social status when he argues, “property now becomes the most easily recognized evidence of a reputable degree of success as distinguished from heroic or signal achievement” (Veblen 29). Gatsby wants to buy everything with his garish money; he uses the language of Daisy and shows off all his material assets. Gatsby enlightens Jordan that he was aware of Daisy in Louisville in 1917 and is deeply in love with her. He spends multiple nights fixating at the green light at the end of her dock, directly across the bay from his mansion. He was transported to his romantic world of love and even didn't feel Daisy's hand touching his back:

Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one. (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 108)

All of Gatsby's opulent lifestyle and crazy parties are –simply put- an attempt to win over Daisy. Daisy is dazzled by his mansion and luxurious Saturday parties and his shirts. Gatsby's main objective is not only to win her love but to achieve status and high respectability. Gatsby wrongly believes that money can buy high status and honour from the community. But all his illusions are shattered as Tom exposes Gatsby and poisons the ears of Daisy against him. After an initially awkward reunion, Gatsby and Daisy reestablish their connection. The dream of Gatsby comes true though for a short time. His meeting with Daisy is brief but his long-cherished dream is fulfilled; the separation from Daisy brings him sadness:

There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. (111)

Gatsby loses no time in continuing his love affair with Daisy. Nick is amazed to observe the ecstatic reunion of Gatsby and Daisy: "I think that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn't be over-dreamed that voice was a deathless song" (111). Tom soon understands the mystery of his wife's relationship with Gatsby. At a luncheon at the Buchanan's house, Gatsby fixates on Daisy with wistful eyes filled with passionate love. Tom soon understands that Gatsby is in love with her. Though Tom is himself guilty of his extramarital affair with Mrs. Myrtle, he is angered by Daisy's flirtations with Gatsby. He goes to New York City, where he faces Gatsby in a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom wastes no time in exposing Gatsby and essentially destroying the love affair of Gatsby and Daisy. Daisy soon understands that her allegiance is to Tom, and Tom angrily sends her back to East Egg with Gatsby. The scene of Gatsby's reunion with Daisy, in which Gatsby knocks over Nick's clock, portrays that Gatsby wishes to stop present time and bring back the past. Gatsby's past is a temporal delay in time so that he escapes from the shock of past experience. Gatsby is devoured by his idealism; his friend advises him that what has

happened has happened, and that it is very difficult to repeat the past. But Gatsby cried out incredulously: “Can’t repeat the past? Why, of course you can!” (126). There are two important phases of Gatsby’s life. First phase begins when he meets Daisy and falls in love with her. He is an army officer at that time. The second phase begins with his reunion with Daisy after five years. During these five years Gatsby had been making experiment in his life; he earned his garish money, changes his life style; changed from an ordinary army officer to a big billionaire owning a big Gothic mansion.

Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. (111)

Gatsby gets a new identity since he has learnt to live in the mercantile America. He devotes all energies to change his poor status and emerges as a reputed capitalist with plenty money. He becomes a luxurious man with a heart full of love for Daisy. He longs to meet her and love her; his quest is for his true love with the very woman “whom he has loved and lost” (Hoffman and Chase 300). Daisy is for Gatsby “like a waking memory, yet returned, repeatedly, only in the form of a dream” (Caruth 152). In Louisville Fitzgerald depicts a ripe mystery about Daisy’s house that enchanted Gatsby.

There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms up-stairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender. (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 165-66)

Jay Gatsby is a psychological case study as his life is a continuous progression of psychic traumas. From the first chapter till the tragic death of his life Gatsby passes through many stages of disintegration of self. Gatsby is a dreamer. He has romantic



sensibility and loves to weave romantic illusions. He spends most of his time in the world of fantasy; he passionately tries to recreate the past and longs to win over the love of his beloved Daisy whom he had lost five years ago. He believes in Platonic idealized love and is lost in the old memories of his “golden girl”. Now such a romantic attitude inevitably leads to hysteria and neurosis as Gatsby fears losing Daisy. Daisy becomes the object of Gatsby’s romantic quest. The main aim of his life is to get back Daisy and for this goal he resorts to all forms of corrupt practices from bootlegging to fixing match series. Gatsby suffered for five years, and the sweet memory of Daisy always hunted him day and night. He wistfully looks at the green light of Daisy’s mansion and hopes to meet her once again. Gatsby is a trapped protagonist: he is trapped in Daisy’s ideal love and in garish money that he earned to please Daisy. He is a man in the grip of powerful illusions as he fails to understand that his ideal image of Daisy couldn’t survive for long. His flesh-and-blood Daisy betrays him as the reality is always bitter. This shocks Gatsby and leads to his disintegration of self. He had never imagined that reality could be so bitter and the world could be so full of corruption and moral degeneration. He fails to comprehend the reality about actual Daisy who marries rich and affluent Tom for security and stability of life. Daisy is a practical woman and her choice of Tom is determined by her consideration of money.

Gatsby falsely believes that Daisy can be won over by money and materialistic things. He is a victim of sexual repression. Gatsby is a sick character suffering from many psychological ailments which wreck his sensibility and deflate his self. Relying on the psychoanalytical theories of Freud, Horney and Caruth it can be fairly concluded that Gatsby embodies many notions of Freudian trauma theory such as sexual repression, the loss of a loved person, delusion, daydreams, identity loss, and romantic death consciousness. Gatsby struggles to reverse the process of time to retrieve the past. Gatsby is a self-made man, living with a void and to escape from the existential realities he creates his own fantasy world. It is “an attempt to determine that concealed boundary that divides the reality from the illusion, [and] the illusions seem more real than the reality itself” (Bewley 38). Jay Gatsby’s life on Long Island

is a poignant tale of a man who has been deserted by his beloved. Gatsby never recovers from the emotional pain even after five years of separation from Daisy. Using Long Island, New York as its setting, Fitzgerald depicts a microcosm of Roaring Twenties. The rise and fall of Jay Gatsby shows the different facets of materialism, greed and power. Caruth, Felman and La Capra have given their theories of psychic trauma originating from sexual repression. Gatsby's romantic illusions come in conflict with the external reality as illusions cannot sustain a man forever. He experiences a big gap between emotional violence and the past sweet memories of Daisy. Gatsby tries to repeat the past in vain. Gatsby in fact is in exile from his people and lives like an outsider drawing hedonistic pleasures in throwing away sumptuous parties. David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd* observes that man experiences psychological torture of alienation even in the crowd. Gatsby finds himself lonely even in his crowded parties. He is an Island living alone, building a fantasy world desperately trying to get artificial happiness through an extravagant life style- he has a home library, a Rolls-Royce, and a collection of shirts. In fact, Gatsby is rooted in his illusory dreams. Troy avers that Gatsby's entire life is a tale of failure and despondent struggles for futility leading him nowhere. Gatsby's life is distorted and fragmentary (Troy 226). Gatsby is a victim of his own false fears and illusions. Gatsby drifts around Europe to make money for he falsely believes that money alone can help him to win Daisy. Hunt for Daisy has become a neurotic mania with him. He thinks Daisy, talks about Daisy, develops friendship with Tom to meet Daisy and all the decisions of his life are directed to win over Daisy. What he desires after five years without Daisy is "to fix everything just the way it was before" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 126) using his money only. Gatsby's obsession is Daisy- she has overwhelmed his thoughts, ideas and feelings. Gatsby's obsession for Daisy confuses and bewilders him. Georg Simmel, who wrote *The Philosophy of Money* (1918) is a great German sociologist who has discussed the psychology of money. Simmel contends that money buys social status, and in fact, marriage too can be purchased by money (Simmel 30). Relying on Simmel's theory of money it can be concluded that Daisy was bought by Tom's money and fortune. Gatsby is betrayed by the materialistic world where love

and idealism are not adequate. In Daisy's world romanticism has no place. He loves Daisy, but his dream goes beyond flesh-and blood existence. Gatsby is betrayed by the forces of money and respectability. Miller is right when he contends that Gatsby "sacrifices his life on the altar of his dream, unaware that it is composed of the ephemeral stuff of the past" (Miller 20). Gatsby has become a billionaire but the emotional shock never ends in Gatsby's life. Lehan also opines that loss of Gatsby is real when he is trapped in "a world where the promises of the past have been betrayed and the future has been grotesquely mocked" (Lehan 112). Fitzgerald explores the symptoms and causes of Gatsby's loss as Stavola observes: "The psychological resistances Fitzgerald encountered while creating Gatsby are not surprising, since Gatsby embodied so many of the most painful experiences, fears, and desires of Fitzgerald's own life" (Stavola 125). Gatsby tries "to live in a world where past, present, and future are all one" (Stavola 131). This ambivalent attitude signifies Gatsby's psychic disorder. What is more, "it is not just Daisy Gatsby wants but something beyond her: he wants that moment when life seemed equal to his extraordinary capacity to wonder, and that moment is indissolubly wedded to Daisy herself, to materiality" (Moyer 218). The plot depicts Gatsby's idealization in which Daisy seems equal to the demands of Gatsby's transcendental imagination. Gatsby's passion for his garish money is certainly not for his personal comforts but is built upon the idealization of love. His illusion of money is transcendental in nature and can interpret in Freudian terms. The fantasy world of Gatsby is reflected in his luxurious parties "through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whispering and the champagne and the stars" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 51). Tom Buchanan is a reckless character in the novel who plays a vital role in ruining the happiness of Gatsby. As compared to Gatsby, Tom is a reckless profligate. He is hard and aggressive with no moral scruples and a representative of American corrupt culture. He expresses himself through his physicality. His speeches are full of lies and fallacies.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven—a

national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savors of anticlimax. (16)

Tom belongs to the aristocratic class and this is why Daisy rejected Gatsby and married Tom. His “family were enormously wealthy even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach” (16). Tom had bought Daisy gifting a pearl necklace of 350,000 Dollars. Daisy is almost a puppet in his hands and has no personal life and liberty. His relations with women are based on his sexual frenzy and self-interest and he considers Daisy his property. When Myrtle shouts his wife’s name he breaks her nose. His view of love is that when a man roams, the wife stays at home: “I always come back, and in my heart I love her all the time” (148). Tom and Daisy are “careless” and “reckless” people. Tom has extra-marital relationship with Myrtle Wilson. When Nick, Jordan, and Tom drive through the valley of ashes they discover that Gatsby’s car has struck and killed Myrtle Wilson. Gatsby tells the truth to Nick that Daisy killed Myrtle. Gatsby tells Nick that so long as he is alive he will not like Daisy to suffer for the killing. Gatsby’s idealism urges him to save his dream girl Daisy and he takes the blame on him. In the climax of the novel, Tom plays the role of a villain and insinuates Mr. Wilson that Gatsby had killed his wife. Tom has double benefit; he wants to get rid of Gatsby who is getting involved with his wife Daisy. He wants to implicate Gatsby to save Daisy from imprisonment. Myrtle’s husband, George came to the conclusion that the driver of the car that killed Myrtle must have been her lover. He finds Gatsby in the pool at his mansion and shoots him dead. Nick stages a small funeral for Gatsby, ends his relationship with Jordan. He is disgusted with the emptiness and moral decay of life among the wealthy on the East Coast. He is visibly upset by the tragic death of Gatsby who virtually became a victim of the corrupt and degenerating American culture. He is deeply moved by the idealism of Gatsby who emerged as a great character in spite of his bootlegging and vicious oil trade. He expresses his reaction thus: “They are a rotten crowd... You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together” (172).

In the novel, Fitzgerald depicts the consciousness of spiritual void through the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. These eyes are identified with the eyes of God- after Myrtle is killed in the car accident, Wilson relates them so in his conversation with Michaelis:

Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night.

‘God sees everything,’ repeated Wilson. (178)

The eyes stare down on Gatsby as he continues to commit immoral actions, knowing it well that he has lost his faith forever and therefore, doesn't hesitate to commit any sin in his mad quest to achieve material success. The lavish parties attended by his unethical guests reveal his consciousness of spiritual void as every act of immorality takes place at the parties hosted by him, and he continues to remain indifferent to these sinful acts since he has made dollar his God. It is because of his awareness of spiritual void that he remains eternally restless, and in his heart considers his own life absurd, saying “I tried very hard to die” (79).

To conclude, Gatsby represents the false illusions of American youth who flouted all the traditional values in pursuit of love, sex and money. The death of Gatsby symbolises the death of American Dream and Gatsby's life is a poignant tale of a trapped young man given to hedonistic pleasures and living with a void. Nick affirms that Gatsby's dream of Daisy was corrupted by money and dishonesty. Gatsby's fall is linked with the fall of American Dream of happiness and individualism.



Fig. 2.2: The Catastrophic fall of Dr. Dick Diver

*“He was so terrible that he was no longer terrible, only dehumanized”* (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 55).

Fitzgerald published his *Tender is the Night* when he was passing through a period of acute psychological trauma. He spent fifteen years to complete his *Tender is the Night* novel. His wife Zelda Sayre suffered from psychotic breakdown and was admitted in the hospital. This virtually shattered his mind. Like John Keats he grew pessimistic and came to the conclusion that happiness is always elusive in man’s life. Fitzgerald had witnessed the crash of the American market in 1929 and the disillusionment of the war heroes who returned from the war. Zelda’s mental breakdown gave a psychological shock to Fitzgerald who turned into an alcoholic and neurotic. While Hemingway and Faulkner created characters who exposed the cruelty of the war machine, Fitzgerald created spiritually bankrupt characters trapped in the vicious cycle of money culture. Fitzgerald traces the moral decline in his novel *Tender is The Night*. The men and women of the novel are no longer daring, fun

loving or adventurous but are lost and depressed. In the plot there are unsavoury couples with dissolving marriages. He wrote his essay *The Crack-Up* in 1936 to investigate the causes of his mental breakdown. Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* is a confessional novel as some critics have described the novel as a "a masked memoir." Fiction is used as a safety valve to release the anxieties of life by Fitzgerald. He suffered psychological wounds and he wrote in order to heal his wounds: the plot of the *Tender is the Night* in a way does achieve the cathartic effect. The main themes of the novel are emotional bankruptcy, trauma, alienation, incest, sense of loss and failure, mental breakdown and schizophrenia. Dick Diver is the central protagonist who is a psychiatrist by profession but ironically becomes the victim of mental disorder and neurosis. Matthew Bruccoli observes that Dick Diver "suffers a lesion of the spirit in consequence of giving too much of himself to his wife, friends, and patients" (Bruccoli 72). Fitzgerald has taken up the issues of failure, illusion and disillusion, dream and nightmare. He depicts the waves of new cultural transformation in his novel. He exposes the evil, hypocrisy, degradation of American society. Fitzgerald made seventeen drafts of the novel persevering very hard on the structure of the plot until the novel became the reflection of the "significant and strangling tie between Fitzgerald's life and wrenching memories of the good, gay, gone times" (Bruccoli 2).

Fitzgerald published his last novel *Tender is the Night* in 1934 depicting the trapped protagonists and the theme of human degradation, the collapse of all institutions and the disintegration of love and marriage in America. Failure consciousness haunts all his protagonists in the novel. Dick and Nicole struggle to enjoy for love but happiness remains elusive for them. They experience loss and failure and suffer from depression in their quest of happiness. Rosemary loses herself and behaves like a neurotic. This psychological state reminds us of Cathy Caruth's explanation about trauma. Fitzgerald's ultimate object in all his fiction is to depict the trapped nature of his protagonists. His *Tender is the Night* depicts the tragic vision of Fitzgerald and the hopelessness and appalling viciousness of the romantic ideals he

created in the fiction. He exposed the ugliness and the destructive tendencies of the American Dream.

The publication of *Tender is the Night* evoked great interest among the critics who interpreted and investigated the text of the novel from various perspectives. In this study the gradual process of collapse and disintegration of Dick Diver has been explored. The plot of the novel depicts all the stages of his collapse and the destruction of his family and friendships are thoroughly investigated. Freud observes that hysterical fantasy in men relates to either hidden sexual desire or ambitions in life. Dick Diver's downfall stemmed from both his hidden sexual desires and his high ambitions in his professional career. Critics of fiction such as Pamela A. Boker (1992) and Susann Cokal (2005) have investigated the incestuous relationship of Diver with Nichole applying Freudian theory of trauma. Burton (1971) and Boker (1992) also investigated the causes of breakdown of pathological love.

Fitzgerald has depicted Dick as the creative young American who is highly ambitious to achieve success in his profession. But unfortunately his European experience drives into disintegration. He is used as a metaphor for the American history and culture- like America with its new visions and transcendent promise, Dick disintegrated. In the plot of the novel there are two patterns: Dick's father represents the bygone days and his faith in the 'old virtues' of aristocracy, but Dick and the Warrens represent the decadence of those morals that led to the disintegration of Dick Diver. Dick goes to the beach in search of the lost father whose spirit rules the universe. Mary Tate in *Tender is the Night: The Broken Universe* (1994), emphasises that Fitzgerald saw a strange parallel between the story of Dick Diver, his own father and Ulysses. Mark Dolan (1996) in his book *Modern Lives: A Cultural Re-Reading of the "Lost Generation"* observes that *Tender is the Night* is "a chronicle of post-war loss of the kinds of identities" (Dolan 37). The story of Dick Diver is a microcosm of that history.

The plot of *Tender is the Night* is loaded with the imagery of war and battle depicting the mood of melancholy and pessimism. Both the protagonists Dick and Nicole are trapped in post-war situation of America. Dick believes that World War 1



symbolises the end of the period of grace, honour and courtesy. It brought the end of the American Dream. His freshness of youth and sexual passions are symbolised by the Jazz Age. Dick mournfully reflects the pre-war society as its loss makes him gloomy and restless. Dick's life is a touching tale of his deterioration: war, battle and violence engulfed his entire life and he found trapped in the malevolent forces. Fitzgerald gives the readers the inner turbulent world of Dick and Nicole who are caught in a post-war situation. The main protagonist Dick Diver is trapped in his own depression of life. The struggle is inward as Fitzgerald excavates the interior monologue of his turbulent life. He is a "shifty" protagonist as he plays multidimensional roles. He is a playboy, the symbol of youth and freshness:

His eyes were of a bright, hard blue...and there was never any doubt at whom he was looking or talking and this is a flattering attention, for who looks at us? --glances fall upon us, curious or disinterested, nothing more. (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 29-30)

Dick is virtually on the verge of disintegration. He is a psychiatrist, an evil manipulator and a neurotic American. Dick represents the youth of Post-War America, which was a period of rapid changes in technology and industrial growth. It was also a period when Jazz music, alcohol was flourishing. Dick is trapped by forces of change and his longing for the glory, honour and ideas of the Pre-War society. *Tender Is the Night* is a poignant story of Dick Diver who is a young and brilliant psychologist, and the trajectory of his mental disorder. The novel unfolds a poignant tale of Dick's loss of identity. The novel is structured around the triangle relationships between Dick, Nicole and Rosemary. There are elements of cannibalism and of vampirism in the novel. Dick is suffering from spiritual void below the level of despair. Dick is a doctor and Nicole is a patient; but soon the relationship changes. Nicole becomes his wife and a "gold mine" gifting him million dollars to enjoy sexual adventures with various young women including Rosemary. Their marriage hangs in balance- there is fear, antagonism and bitterness in their relationship. Dick struggles to save his soul but his every step leads to the loss of his soul as he is in the process of moral dehumanisation. Dick is continuing his journey of moral degradation as he turns

alcoholic and becomes crazy for money, liquor, wine and woman. All the characters Baby Warren, Abe North, Tommy Barban, Albert Mckisco and Rosemary Hoyt are victims of psychic depression. All these characters are just puppets and simply intensify the mood of despair. The plot of the novel unfolds the spiritual malaise of Dick Diver symbolising the sickness of a society and a culture. Dick is a remarkable protagonist of Fitzgerald but his journey remains a mystery for the readers. The question arises why is he heading towards his doom? The textual analysis reveals that he fails to handle the easy money that he gets from Nicole. The plot describes his moral bankruptcy, depravity and inner conflicts. Nicole has high opinion about Dick as she affirms: “Dick was a good husband to me for six years...All that time I never suffered a minute’s pain because of him, and he always did his best never to let anything but me” (366).

Fitzgerald uses imagery and the scenes of inner conflicts to structure the plot of the novel. The novel presents a confusing chronology, alternating unevenly between past and present. The plot is embedded with a series of textual flashbacks to provide the Dick and Nicole love affair. Robert Stanton in his article “Daddy’s Girl: Symbol and Theme in *Tender is the Night*” contends that “the novel contains a large number of incest-motifs.” The sexual activity of a mature person with an immature girl is characterised as incest by the learned critic. This incest forms the pillar of the novel since “it causes Nicole’s schizophrenia.” (Stanton 136). Furthermore, according to Freud, the “love relationship” that results is “illicit and...not intended to last forever” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 18). Dick is a therapist who transfers his love to his patient and gets trapped. Stanton further observes thus:

Nicole’s love for Dick is in part a “transference” caused by her mental disorder; the character of their marriage is dictated largely by the requirement of her condition. (Stanton 136)

The sentimental involvement of Dick with Nicole is the first step of his moral decadence and spiritual dissipation. His emotional exuberance is not an act of a professional doctor but an irrational act of a rash and impulsive soldier. Dr. Dohmler, the director of the clinic gives a warning to Dick and reminds him of his professional

values. As an experienced psychiatrist and chief administrator he advises Dick to restrain himself from his involvement with Nicole:

‘I have nothing to do with your personal reactions,’ said Dohmler. ‘But I have much to do with the fact that this so-called ‘transference,’ he darted a short ironic look at Franz which the latter returned in kind, must be terminated. Miss Nicole does well indeed, but she is in no condition to survive what she might interpret as a tragedy. (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 165)

It must be observed that his interest in Nicole is based on his self-interest. His ego is involved and his professional expertise is questionable. In the beginning his approach is positive as he is ambitious to be successful in his profession: “he used to think that he wanted to be good, he wanted to be kind, he wanted to be brave and wise, but it was all pretty difficult. He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in” (157). Dick is caught in the trap of Nicole’s beauty, youth, and money. Since he wants to be “loved” it is not surprising that he gets involved with Nicole’s sexualised transference. Although Freud warns that a transference-love relationship between patient and therapist is potentially harmful to the patient, in *Tender is the Night* it is Dr. Diver who experiences the consequences. Dick’s involvement begins with the letters of Nicole which need to be investigated in detail because they form the root of Dick-Nicole relationship. Nicole’s letters give insight into her state of mind; “reading her letters helped us here, they were a measure of her condition” (154). Nicole’s letters give valuable information to Dr. Franz and Dr. Dohlmer and Dr. Dick about the intensity of hysteria and neurosis. Dick notes that her “letters were divided into two classes, of which the first class...was of marked pathological turn, and of which the second class...was entirely normal, and displayed a richly maturing nature” (141). The first wave of letters reflects the depth of her mental state. Nicole writes of “a highly nervous state” (143). Nicole explains that nobody around her is explaining the incestuous violation she has experienced and what that means for her mental health. She writes, “the blind must be led” (143), and suggests that nobody is taking the initiative to cure her. Nicole compares her mental state to “blindness, a handicap,

crippling". Nicole's letters to Dick continue to venture into darker themes:

I write to you because there is no one else to whom I can turn.... I am completely broken and humiliated...pretending that what is the matter with my head is curable...nobody saw fit to tell me the truth about anything.... I am lone some all the time...in a half daze. (144-45)

In this letter Nicole openly talks of her emotional instability and alludes to her signs of dependence on Dick. In another letter she expresses her mental hysteria to excite the sympathy in the mind of Dick: "Dear Captaine: I think one thing today and another tomorrow. That is really all that's the matter with me, except a crazy defiance and a lack of proportion" (146). In another letter, she considers herself "too unstable" (146) to keep writing. These letters depict her mental state by introspection. The letters also act as a sort of talk therapy with Dr. Diver. Nicole realises rebirth in herself and in the world around her: "I am slowly coming back to life.... Today the flowers and the clouds..." (146). The letters of Nicole have psychological impact on the mind and sensibility of Dick who gets involved in her emotionally not as a doctor but as a human being flouting all the professional values. Diver explains to Franz that Nicole "seems hopeful and normally hungry for life even rather romantic" (155). Nicole is aware of her beauty and she uses it as a weapon to hook Dick because she needs his support desperately. Her sister Baby Warren feeds her with the idea that it will be very fruitful for her to marry the doctor who is treating her. In her first encounter:

Nicole took advantage of this to stand up and the impression of her youth and beauty grew on Dick until it welled up inside him in a compact paroxysm of emotion. She smiled, a moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world. (159)

When Nicole is alone with Dick she captures his attention. "Her very blonde hair dazzled Dick...her face lighting up like an angel's" (159). In her second meeting she uses her glamour to entrap Dr. Dick: "She smiled at him, making sure that the smile gathered up everything inside her and directed it toward him, making him a

profound promise of herself" (161). Nicole kisses Dick with a strong force: "Now there was this scarcely saved waif of disaster bringing him the essence of a continent" (161). Nicole brings the force of a continent to her intimate relations with Dick. She is inwardly weak, outwardly strong. Dick exhorts her to be happy and active in life: "You're all well," he said. "Try to forget the past; don't overdo things for a year or so. Go back to America and be a debutante and fall in love and be happy" (169). There is a difference of ten years in her age to Dick as he reminds her that she is young and the world is open to her. Nicole brought "everything to his feet, gifts of sacrificial ambrosia, of worshipping myrtle" (162). Nicole is starting to see him as rescuer, a saviour from her father and from the jail of her past. Nicole gives many gifts to Dr. Dick. In his detailed study of gift-exchange, Lewis Hyde explains how "a gift is consumed when it moves from one hand to another with no assurance of anything in return" (Hyde 9). Nicole's gifts of ambrosia and myrtle are described as being given in worship and in sacrifice. Her gifts also bear the promise of growth. Nicole's gifts eventually entrap Dr. Dick. She views Dick as a saviour. By giving him living objects, she demonstrates her will to develop a fruitful, romantic relationship.

The plot of the book starts on a beach on the Riviera during the off season. All of the characters including Rosemary enjoy the scenes of the sea beach; it is "the lull between the gaiety of last winter and next winter, while up north the true world thundered by" (17). Dick has created his own illusive world as Sklar says, Dick's "theater stage, his artificial world" (Sklar, 268). Dick has created the scene on the beach as his physical attraction has hypnotized Rosemary. Nicole calls it "Our beach that Dick made out of a pebble pile" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 21). And Abe North tells Rosemary, "They have to like it . . . They invented it" (18).

Fitzgerald's protagonists are illusioned with the world. It is a setting where as Amory says, "all Gods are dead," and "all faiths in man shaken" (Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* 282). The real world is one where George and Myrtle Wilson live in a valley of ashes. Fitzgerald's protagonists avoid this existence; they live where Daisy can gleam "like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 167). They dwell in places where they can follow the ambitions of

their youth. Fitzgerald's protagonists live, until their ambitions are destroyed and their illusions fade, in a place where they think that things can be as they want them to be. They expend heroic effort in their belief and their attempts to live their dreams and illusions. Dick Diver like Jay Gatsby is a marvellous creation of Scott Fitzgerald. He is a war hero of exceptional charm and talent. Like Gatsby he makes his own world based on the illusions of his past. Dick is introduced in the early chapters of the novel through Rosemary who falls in love with him and thinks him an ideal man.

I love him, Mother. I'm desperately in love with him I never knew I could feel that way about anybody. And he's married and I like her too it's just hopeless. Oh, I love him so! (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 23)

Dick's charm is irresistible. Nicole praises his magnetic personality having "the power of arousing a fascinated and uncritical love" (29). Rosemary hypnotised by his irresistible charm as she worships him. "He seemed kind and charming - his voice promised that he would take care of her, and that a little later he would open up whole new worlds for her, unroll an endless succession of magnificent possibilities" (17). In loving Dick, Rosemary also falls in love with his whole world, as Robert Sklar so aptly points out, "an atmosphere, a setting, and a time" (Sklar 268). Rosemary Hoyt is available to everyone but belongs to none, and is depicted in Fitzgerald's novel by that epitome of massive cultural desire, the movie star. Rosemary passionately starts loving Dick: "For three years Dick had been the ideal... She did not want him to be like other men, yet here were the same exigent demands, as if he wanted to take some of herself away, carry it off in his pocket" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 251). Baby Warren, Nicole's sister also praises Dick for his sociability in hosting parties like Gatsby: "That's something you do so well, Dick. You can keep a party moving . . . I think that's a wonderful talent" (257). What Dick realises too late is that he has exchanged his medical talent to live by what he has elsewhere called a "trick of the heart."

The history of the loss of self of Dick Diver furthers when he comes in contact with Rosemary in French Rivera. Dick is handsome young American boy who

believes in free life. He indulges in sexual adventures like Bob Slocum and Bruce Gold. He meets Rosemary and is enchanted by her innocence and erotic body. He loses no time to develop intimacy with her. Dick and Rosemary go to Paris where they experience, trickery, alcoholism, violence, jealousy, and loss of control: all problems which their society has to face. In Paris Dick and Rosemary come across a dead black man, Jules Peterson, on Rosemary's bed. Dick protects the movie star from a potential scandal because "her contract was contingent upon an obligation to continue rigidly and unexceptionally as 'Daddy's Girl'" (130). Following the chaos, Nicole has a breakdown and Dick hears "louder and louder, a verbal inhumanity that penetrated the keyholes...and in the shape of horror took form again" (131). Chazarenc's observes thus: "Fitzgerald uses Paris...to signal Dick's disorientation. His disorientation is obviously in...his relationship with Nicole and due to his affair with Rosemary" (Chazarenc 7). Rosemary has come in Riviera for relaxation after the success of her film. Her mother Mrs. Speers "felt that it was time she were spiritually weaned..." (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 13). When Rosemary first sees the Villa Diana, she feels it is the "centre of the world" (31). Dick has the power to make his world the center of the world for others. Rosemary does not know, that "the lush midsummer moment outside of time was already over," (193). Dick's world has already begun to crumble and collapse. Her mother Mrs. Speers persuades her to use Dick for her professional growth. She says: "You were brought up to work-not especially to marry. Now you've found your first nut to crack and it's a good nut [...] Whatever happens it can't spoil you because economically you are a boy, not a girl" (45). Rosemary virtually hypnotizes Dick who is caught in her snares for sex and adventures. Dick is "possessed" and totally controlled by Rosemary ignoring his wife Nicole. He is caught in the web of illusions and false dreams. He thinks that Rosemary can save him from the inner collapse as he tells Rosemary that his "relations with Nicole are complicated" (89).

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* has been investigated from a fresh perspective in this study. Freudian theory of hysteria has been used as a theoretical model to investigate all the circumstances, cause and effects on the actions of Diver

and his relationship with Nicole that eventually lead his deflation of self. Freud points out that “the motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 146). In Book II Dick is trapped and begins his journey of disintegration. At the starting of this flashback, he is a prodigious and promising young psychiatrist whose dream is to become an accomplished doctor. Dick is the son of a poor clergyman from Buffalo, New York with his moral idealism; he reaches Europe fired with his moral integrity. Dick has great hopes in life; he dreams to become a respected psychiatrist. He wants to make his American dream come true and with this serious mission he sets up his clinic in Zurich. Dr. Diver is a dynamic, educated traveling man at “a fine age” (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 134). Dick’s life is regulated by his father who believed that “nothing could be superior to good instincts, honor, courtesy, and courage” (242).

Dick Diver drifts from Oxford and Johns Hopkins to Vienna and Zurich. Furthermore, the novel says “of all the men who have recently taken their degrees in neuropathology in Zurich, Dick has been regarded as the most brilliant” (282). He settles down at Dohmer’s clinic, where he wants “to be a good psychologist—maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived” (156). But, he marries Nicole and little-by-little that ambition fades away. Nicole is undoubtedly a patient when Dick first comes across her, and within their relationship and marriage Dick is therefore always found taking care of her, making sure that she remains psychologically stable.

Dick even published his book about psychiatry *A Psychology for Psychiatrists* for his professional advancement. His clinic is described as “a gold mine” (207) and also “a refuge for the broken, the incomplete, the menacing of this world” (140-41). He is infatuated by Rosemary who is a beautiful actress. He plays various roles in his romantic love relationships; with his wife Nicole Warren and with patients. He is caught into his internal conflicts and emerges as an ambivalent protagonist. Diver was the wrong man for Nicole. Berman (2005) argues that “Fitzgerald used a mechanism of dream and daydream, and suggested layers of complexity beneath the human face” (Berman 50) to depict the trapped situation of Dick. He is sick as he is on the rack



everyday but like all neurotics he “conceals his neurosis from himself.” (146). Dick lives in a mansion with a rich and beautiful wife and two children. He is a lost self because the material affluence doesn’t give him happiness. There is a conflict and struggle in his psyche and his real trapped condition is discovered by his wife. Nicole can see when “one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement that swept everyone up into it and was inevitable followed by his own form of melancholy” (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 29). Dick is unconscious of the situation in which he is trapped, but Nicole digs out his neurotic instability. Dick is trapped in his harrowing past and insecure present. He goes on shifting his moods and love affairs in his quest to get freedom from the falling nerves. He shifts his love to Rosemary who loves and adores him. She symbolizes the Post-War mercantile culture of America. She wants Dick to be her lover in both films and life. She persuades Dick to try a “screen test” (81) to make him “her leading man in the picture.” (82). Once again Dick is trapped by the dynamic world of Rosemary who is strong and dominating.

Diver believes that he can play various roles in his romance with Nicole: a father, a husband and a psychiatrist. He tries to play the same role with Rosemary- he wants to be her lover and a father. However, he loses control over his relationships with both of them, Diver rationally believes that he was “the wrong person for Nicole” (256). The early part of the novel focuses on Rosemary who is a young and promising American movie star. Rosemary falls deeply in love with Diver and the pompous life he and Nicole live. Dick too falls for the young actress and they have a brief romantic affair:

Dick had gathered that he was in love with Rosemary in some curious way Dick could not have understood. [...] Only the image of a third person, even a vanished one, entering into his relation with Rosemary was needed to throw him off his balance and send through him waves of pain, misery, desires, desperation. (103-04)

Rosemary is passionately in love with Dick as she offers her body to Dick without any reservations. Her mother becomes a party to this love affair because she

knows her daughter is a money minting machine and refreshment of her mind is very essential to sign another film. She encourages her daughter to develop intimacy with Dick who is young and sexually potent as she says “If you’re in love it ought to make you happy. You ought to laugh” (23). Thus Rosemary and her mother are not at all serious about love affair, it is just another scene of a film. Rosemary is highly excited because she is young and wants to enjoy the sexual pleasures throwing all moral scruples in the wind:

‘Oh, no, now. I want you to do it now, take me, show me, I’m absolutely yours and I want to be.’

‘For one thing, have you thought how much it would hurt Nicole?’ ‘She won’t know—this won’t have anything to do with her.’ He continued kindly.

‘Then there’s the fact that I love Nicole.’

‘But you can love more than just one person, can’t you? Like I love Mother and I love you—more. I love you more now.’

‘the fourth place you’re not in love with me but you might be afterwards, and that would begin your life with a terrible mess.’ (75)

Dick’s passion for Rosemary was “not a wild submergence of soul, a dipping of all colors into an obscuring dye, such as his love for Nicole had been. Certain thoughts about Nicole, that she should die, sink into mental darkness, love another man, made him physically sick” (258). Dick is not enjoying the real fruit of love in his relationship with Rosemary who is a baby and like his daughter; he is entering into a world of guilt, uncertainty and dread. His romantic surrender to Rosemary depicts his inner void as he is sick of his wife Nicole. The French Riviera is obviously a trap that creates in Dick a split personality and makes him a self-destructive man. Rosemary is very intelligent she knows that Dick doesn’t love her honestly: “Oh! Don’t tease me – I’m not a baby. I know you’re not in love with me...I didn’t expect that much. I know I must seem just nothing to you” (76). Rosemary is quite independent to take her decisions as she is a strong woman as compared to weak Dick who is guilty and fear-ridden. Dick encounters a strong and dynamic and educated girl. She is very active in

choosing her lover as Fitzgerald comments: “She chose him, and Nicole, lifting her head, saw her choose him; heard the little sigh of the fact that he was already possessed” (21). Dick is really “possessed” and controlled by the two women he loves, Nicole and Rosemary. He frankly tells Rosemary that his “relations with Nicole are complicated” (89) and “Nicole and I [Dick] have got to go on together. In a way that’s more important than just wanting to go on” (88).

Diver’s professional goals and sexual desire are contradictory leading him into a hellish trap making him an ambivalent psychic wreck. He cannot clarify why he married Nicole, but it seems they have to continue together because they live depending on each other. Dick is seen sailing on two boats, he cannot live without Nicole but at the same time he is not satisfied with her. He confesses that he is only “half in love with her” (166). Nicole was raped by her own father when she was a teenager; the effects of an incestuous intercourse make her a mental patient. Freud (1918) observes that “the husband is almost always so to speak only the substitute, never the right man; it is another man – in typical cases the father who has first claim to a woman’s love, the husband at most takes second place” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 2358). Dick knows that she belongs to her father. He is consciously aware of Nicole’s circumstances. This creates anxiety in his mind as he grows neurotic every day.

Dick Diver’s collapse is related to Freud’s theory of hysteria. It is Diver’s hysterical fantasy and his unsatisfied wishes that drag Diver into uncertainty and a dead well. To Freudian Theory, Diver can be assumed to show “a conflict between [his] libidinal wishes and the part of his personality we call his ego, which is the expression of his instinct of self-preservation and which also includes his ideals of his personality” (3104). At the end of the novel, we see that Dick Diver is no longer the “fine man”, an ambitious psychiatrist as he used to be. Freud claims that “melancholia borrows some of its features from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to narcissism” (3048). It is of course not only Dick himself that suffers from hysteria and melancholia in the novel but also the importance of Diver’s case stems from his being one of the most important

representatives of ambiguous personality in the modern Western world. However, he was once a successful psychiatrist dealing with the reasons and solutions of the illness, but then Diver himself becomes a prey to illness in the later part of his life. So the decline of the promising psychiatrist Dick Diver to a schizophrenic mess can be considered as one of the most ultimate breakdowns among the characters in Fitzgerald novels. Diver lives in a luxurious place with a beautiful and rich wife and two children. So, as would be expected, these conditions make Dick happy, but unbelievably and sardonically, he also suffers from it, and shows his feelings are in fact contradictory and complicated. Dick Diver's contradiction comes from what we might simply call the frustrations of life in that he cannot find any enjoyment, and he begins bringing people both happiness and hurt. There is a conflict and struggle in his ego to attend people in his leading role and to assert his identity in this narrow world.

In the same essay, Freud (1916) also points out that:

people occasionally fall ill precisely when a deeply-rooted and long-cherished wish has come to fulfillment. It seems then as though they were not able to tolerate their happiness; for there can be no question that there is a casual connection between their success and their falling ill. (316)

In Dick's case, his so-called success and fall seem to be very close and it is not always easy for him to realise the gap between them. He seems to be successful in life and in particular in his professional career but he is collapsing unconsciously. Ironically, Dick cannot recognise his incoming downfall but Nicole can. The doctor-patient's role seems to be undergoing a reversal, and according to the narrator, Nicole can see when "one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement that swept everyone up into it and was inevitable followed by his own form of melancholy" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 36). Although Dick is unconscious of the situation in which he is trapped, his emotional state is observed by Nicole, who is both his wife and his mental patient. Fitzgerald took the name *Tender is the Night*

from John Keats' poem, "Ode to a Nightingale," in which the speaker complains of a heartache so intense he feels as if he has consumed poisonous hemlock. The toxic, destructive qualities of narcissistic self-absorption resonate in Dick Diver's disappearance into an abyss, a dive into death.

Freud, in his essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1918), explains that "the distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, and loss of the capacity of love" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 244). In Book I and II, one can say that Dick's life is embedded in "painful dejection"; for instance, "he [Dick] was hopeless" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 54) when he was in jail, and "what had happened to him was so awful that nothing could make any difference unless he could choke it to death" (254). Dick also wants "to go away alone" (213) "for a month or so, for as long as can" (212), definitely suggesting that Dick wants to escape from his world and his wife. While he is away, he goes out drinking and is beaten badly by the Rome police: "he [Dick] felt his nose break like a shingle and his eyes jerk as if they had snapped back on a rubber band in his head [...] Momentarily, he lost consciousness" (246).

Symbolically, Dick has suffered a trauma brought about by rejection. In another of Freud's essays, *The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis* (1929), we see that "neurosis does not disavow reality, it only ignores it; psychosis disavows it and tries to replace it" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 185), so "both neurosis and psychosis are thus the expression of rebellion on the part of the id against the external world, of its unwillingness – or if one prefers, its incapacity – to adapt itself to the exigencies of reality" (185). Here, Dick develops his own melancholia after his marriage to Nicole and then he suffers a broken relationship with a friend. As a result, he wants to avoid external reality. Psychoanalytic observation of the transference neuroses leads to the conclusion that "the keeping away from consciousness was a main characteristic of hysterical repression" (163). Dick clearly wants to run away from his real life with his hysterical fantasy.

Freud (1917) also claims that :

the melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning – an extraordinary diminution in his [the patient's] self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable [...] He abases himself before everyone and commiserates with his own relatives for being connected with anyone so unworthy. He is not of the opinion that a change has taken place in him, but extends his self-criticism back over the past; he declares that he was never any better. (246)

It is very true in Dick's situation that he cannot become a good husband and a psychiatrist. Furthermore, he lacks independence and is betrayed by the people he loves. Another essential point concerning melancholia which well illustrates Dick's case is Freud's claim that "he [the mental patient] is giving a correct description of his psychological situation. He has lost his self-respect and he must have good reason for this" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 247). Thus, it can be seen why Dick gets drunk and invites a terrible beating and arrest. Dick even falsely confesses when being drunk to raping and killing a five-year-old child (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 255). Dick totally loses his identity; Dick "had lost himself – he could not tell the hour when, or the day or the week, the month or the year" (220). There is no doubt about Dick's collapse and losses, and his life eventually becomes so dark and dim that he becomes incapable of finding his true personality.

Fitzgerald has depicted the doctor-patient's relationship in the plot of the novel as Nicole observes a gradual reversal in her personality. Her father raped her at a young age, and Nicole had been one of Dick's patients. Nicole's sister made a plan to buy a doctor of her own: "A burst of hilarity surged up in Dick, the Warrens were going to buy Nicole a doctor" (180). After marriage Dick uses Nicole's money to enjoy the materialistic pleasures. Nicole's money makes it easy for him to give up his work: "his work became confused with Nicole's problems; in addition her income had increased so fast of late that it seemed to belittle his work" (202). Dick trades his

profession for Nicole. He becomes hedonistic and grows worse to worse. He loses his self control but Nicole becomes a strong woman. She is a patient and the wife of Dick; as a wife she observes that when “one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement ... swept everyone up into it ... was inevitably followed by his own form of melancholy” (29). Dick’s emotional state is keenly observed by Nicole, who is both his wife and his mental patient. Dick cannot find his true identity and is trapped in Nicole’s world because she is also a mental patient like him. Dick struggles to break the trap indulging in sexual intercourse with Rosemary but the sexual adventures further bring “pain, misery, desire and desperation” (104). He is in the grip of melancholia and struggles to escape his obsessions but disintegrates as the novel progresses. Fitzgerald has depicted their inner void thus: Dick and Rosemary “are full of brave illusions about each other, tremendous illusions; so that the communion of self with self-seemed to be on a plane where no other human relations mattered” (86).

Dick believes that Nicole belongs to her father and whenever he goes to sleep with her he finds her father loving and kissing her in hallucination. On this situation Freud remarks that “the husband is almost always so to speak only the substitute, never the right man; it is another man in typical cases the father who has first claim to a woman’s love, the husband at most takes second place” (203). Dick is an intellectual giant and he is aware of the circumstances of Nicole but “the question of marrying her has passed through my [his] mind” (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 166). His decision proves disastrous as he tumbles into Nicole’s world without becoming a “fine man” and “good psychiatrist”, His choice is determined by his consideration of money as makes his “beautiful lovely safe world [blow] itself up here with a great gust of high explosive love” (66). Indeed, Dick Diver assumes the personality of Jay Gatsby who is “betrayed by his own ability to make the right distinction” (Troy 21). Dick cannot find his true identity and is trapped in Nicole’s world willingly and for his lust of money. Dick fails to cure her completely, in fact her condition is deteriorating but he realises that their relationship is built on mutual dependency: “Nicole and I have got to go on together. In a way that's more important than just wanting to go

on" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 166). This implies that Dick relies on Nicole despite the challenges in their doctor-patient relationship. Dick emerges as a gallant of the Restoration Age embarking on sex adventures and flirting with Rosemary who is a fifteen years old young and sexually vibrant American actress. Dick is carried away by her loveliness and voluptuousness. Dick's sexual dissatisfaction with Nicole pushes him into the world of Rosemary Hoyt. Dick knows that Rosemary idealises him but he rejects her completely. However he wants to know about her virginity:

‘Tell me the truth about you,’ he demanded.

‘I always have.’

‘Are you actually a virgin?’

‘No-o-o!’ she sang. ‘I’ve slept with six hundred and forty men—if that’s the answer you want.’ (250)

Freud points out, virginity is “the state in a woman of being untouched” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 193). Obviously, Dick feels insecurity in his love relationship with Rosemary since he is not the first man in her life. He can never possess her completely so his feelings are full “of pain, misery, desire, desperation” (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 104). Dick is fired by sexual passions and thus Dick and Rosemary are “full of brave illusions about each other, tremendous illusions; so that the communion of self with self seemed to be on a plane” (86). Rosemary Hoyt is a professional actress; her main role is acting in films and in life. Dick is deceived by her performance and suffers because he takes her seriously. Her profession is to add drama and glamour in life. All her romantic adventures in France are to pass time and to refresh herself since she has done a film already. She is in holiday mood but Dick is carried away by her false sentiments. She doesn't suffer at all as she looks fresh and ready to entrap another man in her trap and for her role in a new film. Rosemary is blessed with freedom, money and career. But Dick is dependent on Nicole's money, hence there is no threat to Rosemary. Her mother also exhorts her to continue the sexual adventures with Dick just for a change and refreshment:

Now you have found your first nut to crack and it's a good nut-go ahead and put whatever happens down to experience. Wound yourself



or him-whatever happens it can't spoil you because economically you're a boy, not a girl. (45)

The paternal relationship between Dick and Rosemary is apparent in the novel. Dick is aware of her young age as he says: "She's an infant" and "There's a persistent aroma of the nursery" (198). As much as he desires her, he cannot help but feel superior to her simply based on age. She discovers that Dick "was older enough than Nicole to take pleasure in her youthful vanities and delights"(164). Dick also describes her smile as "a moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world" (159). Soon he is in deep trouble as he feels guilty of incest since Rosemary is very young and he looks like a father figure. Dick is in deep trouble; he doesn't love Nicole but doesn't feel secure with Rosemary. He performs the role of a doctor, husband, care taker and a lover in case of Nicole but in his relationship with Rosemary he is like a father and a lover. According to Pelzer, Dick fails in all relationships. Dick, Nicole and Rosemary suffer from "the psychic disorder, they "mirror the chaos, disintegration, and sexual confusion of an increasingly violent and perverse world" (Pelzer 103). Rosemary wants to use Dick for her selfish motive. She wants him to be her lover both in films and in a real life. She tells Dick "we're such actors—you and I" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 123). She persuades Dick to try a "screen test" (81) so he will become "her leading man in a picture" (82). Rosemary "lived in the bright blue worlds of Dick's eyes eagerly and confidently" (20). Dick's further deterioration is brought about by his excessive drinking habits. His drinking creates a conflicted personality, an intellectual man run amuck. Alcohol creates a conflict with Dick's conception of himself at a fundamental level: he was "wanting above all to be brave and kind, he had wanted, even more than that, to be loved. So it had been" (356). Nicole has started hating Dick because of his excessive drinking habits:

The most unhappy aspect of their relations was Dick's growing indifference, at present personified by too much drink; Nicole did not know whether she was to be crushed or spared— Dick's voice, throbbing with insincerity, confused the issue; she couldn't guess how

he was going to behave next upon the tortuously slow unrolling of the carpet, nor what would happen at the end, at the moment of the leap.  
(328)

His ambitions are thwarted by his drinking habits, and he becomes a slave to his passions and his addiction proves disastrous. His partner Franz also observes Dick deteriorating and is compelled to warn him: “Dick, I must say frankly that I have been aware several times that you have had a drink when it was not the moment to have one. There is some reason” (299). Dick’s drinking negatively impacts his professional life. One of the parents took their son away from Diver’s eye because the son smelled liquor on his breath. Dick “blamed himself only for indiscretion” (298) but in reality “he was constantly inundated by a trickling of goods and money” (201). Dick understands how much of his self has been wasted up in Nicole's illness and her money. Nicole is also fed up with the aggressive and morose attitude of Dick. She decides to abandon him as the break in their relationship becomes inescapable. When she is consummating her rendezvous with Tommy, he asks, “When did you begin to have white crook’s eyes?” (343). She replies, “If my eyes have changed it’s because I’m well again. And being well perhaps I’ve gone back to my true self—I suppose my grandfather was a crook and I’m a crook by heritage, so there we are.” (343)

Nicole tells Dick that she must think about her wellness and does not mind presenting herself as a crook. Nicole’s inner identity becomes unlocked through her choices and actions. Dick understands that time is rushing him away from his youthful glory, his profession and dream, and Nicole. Dick wishes to be both a good psychiatrist and a good husband. He loves Nicole but he also uses Nicole’s money to satisfy his wishes. However, Dick’s wishes are not realized and he sinks deeper and deeper into his own romantic illusions and fantasies. He cannot be independent in his own life, and is “ruined” (313) by Nicole. She begins an affair with the martial Tommy Barban after sensing that Dick has changed for the worse. Upon earning her independence by leaving Dick, Nicole “wandered around the house rather contentedly, resting on her achievement. She was a mischief, and that was a satisfaction; no longer was she a huntress of corralled game” (352). The binary

between “corralled” and “mischief” plays on the fact that Nicole has newfound freedom: there are no longer any nurses or doctors to look over her, and she can now stand apart from her main caregiver. Gradually, he becomes a drunkard and is “no longer a serious man” (282). He sees her going away from him, growing stronger and more independent and he lets her go. Nicole is extremely upset when she discovers the growing intimacy of Dick with Rosemary. The jealousy results into her mental breakdown in the bathroom of her hotel suite: “and now Rosemary, too, could hear, louder and louder, a verbal inhumanity that penetrated the keyholes and the cracks in the doors, swept into the suite and in the shape of horror took form again” (131).

His increasing intake of alcohol propels his steady decline into an intensive crack-up. However, the most influential factor influencing Diver’s emotional bankruptcy is his relationship with Nicole. Furthermore, it is “the dual nature of his relation to Nicole, as husband and physician” (Adams 380) that leads to his own disintegration. As the plot progresses Dick becomes aware of his human limitations and his own psychological problems: “The weakness of this profession is its attraction for the man a little crippled and broken” (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 163). Dick becomes “crippled and broken” himself as he suffers from alcoholism and depression. In the last section of the novel Dick meets Rosemary in Rome and realizes that “Rome was the end of his dream of her” (262). Rome is an ideal place for love making but in Rome the cycle of his total disintegration is complete. His father dies, he breaks up with Rosemary. He is totally a lost soul:

Dick loved his father—again and again he referred judgments to what his father would probably have thought or done. Dick was born several months after the death of two young sisters and his father, guessing what would be the effect on Dick’s mother, had saved him from a spoiling by becoming his moral guide. (241)

In desperation he gets drunk, fights with a taxi driver. The Rome police beat him on the street. Dick is now mental as he falls in love with “every pretty woman he saw now, their forms at a distance, their shadows on a wall” (239). When Dick moves

to New York after his broken marriage, he even becomes “entangled with a girl who worked in a grocery store” (369). He is totally engulfed in his psychic trap and sinks deeper and deeper into his own fantasies. He is “ruined” (313) by Nicole. In jail he longs for death. In a scene Dick’s tainted image is depicted as he is seen sitting in a bar with Collis Clay, one of Rosemary’s boyfriends.

Dick tried to find a girl he had previously danced with and almost wandered into the women’s restroom instead. Dick becomes aggressive and impulsive and started an altercation with a cab driver over a taxi fare. He hurls abuses on him and is taken to the police station. Baby Warren takes a taxi and goes to the police station to save Dick. After being released, Dick fights with the man who took him to the station. He exhibits his “savage triumph” ironically; Baby Warren uses her money to make Dick her puppet. By the end of the novel Dick is no longer a man in control, or even apparently in control. Baby Warren has to get him out of jail after he has drunkenly struck a policeman and been hurt himself. He relinquishes his position at the clinic after being accused of drinking too much. He is so much depressed that he calls himself a Black Death: "I guess I'm the Black Death," he says, "I don't seem to bring people happiness anymore" (260). Nicole calls him "ruined" then says, "I didn't mean that. But you used to want to create things—now you seem to want to smash them up" (313).

When he is in trouble in Rome, Nicole declines to extend support to him and talks in a rude manner on the phone:

‘We can’t go on like this,’ Nicole suggested. ‘Or can we?—what do you think?’ Startled that for the moment Dick did not deny it, she continued, ‘Some of the time I think it’s my fault—I’ve ruined you.’ ‘So I’m ruined, am I?’ he inquired pleasantly.

‘I didn’t mean that. But you used to want to create things—now you seem to want to smash them up.’ (313)

In Book II of the novel Fitzgerald presents the “ruined” status of both Nicole and Dick who have become the victims of melancholy and acute depression. Freud contends that melancholia is “regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved

object. The object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love” (3043). Evidently, Dick loses both Nicole and Rosemary in his sexual adventures. Nicole is fed up with his infidelities and Rosemary concludes that Dick is no longer a valuable commodity that can be traded in the Hollywood market. Nicole recognises her critical situation as “she is not cured, has not worked out the original neurosis, but simply switched doctors, under the pretext that the new man is a more forceful father figure than the man she has used up.” ( Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 95). She married Dick in the hope that he would cure her. Dick was unable to cure Nicole and has paid the ultimate price for his failure. Freud further argues that the person who suffers from melancholia “extends his self-criticism back over the past; he declares that he was never any better” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3043). In Book I, Fitzgerald presents Dick as a man of “moral comment” (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 100) who can always give people excellent advice. But in the Book II Fitzgerald depicts Dick as the “Black Death” who cannot “bring people happiness now” (260). There is a gradual decline in the graph of Dick’s personality as “whatever Dick’s previous record was, the Warren family possessed a moral superiority over him for as long as he proved of any use” (278). Dick becomes another self in his world: “he would be a different person henceforward, and in his raw state he had bizarre feelings of what the new self would be” (276).

However, it is very true in Dick’s situation that he cannot become a good husband and a good psychiatrist. Dick lacks independence and is betrayed by the people he loves. He blames himself for his failure in his married life, as he cannot bring happiness to other people. He, just as Freud states, gives “a correct description of his psychological situation. He has lost his self-respect and he must have good reason for this” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3045). In depression, Dick gets drunk and invites a terrible beating and arrest. He even falsely confesses when being drunk to raping and killing a five-year-old child. Indeed, Dick has disintegrated completely as he has become a sick case having no identity in the world: he “had lost himself, he could not tell the hour when [he had done so], or the day or the week, the month or the year” (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 238). There is no doubt about his collapse

and his losses, and his life eventually becomes so dark and dim that he becomes incapable of finding his true personality.

War trauma plays a central part of Diver's spiritual void. For Dick Diver, the war is the defining event of his generation. He, Nicole, Rosemary Hoyt, Tommy Barban, and Abe North all live "in the broken universe of the war's ending," divorced from the social cohesion of the pre-World War I world for which Dick repeatedly longs. Though as a non-combatant during the war he has been prevented from experiencing the horrors of the war at first hand; yet he, too, views the war as creating an irrevocable severance from the past.

Dick awoke at five after a long dream of war, walked to the window and stared out it at the Zugersee...Presently there were fire engines, symbols of disaster, and a ghastly uprising of the mutilated in a dressing station. He turned on his bedlamp light and made a thorough note of it ending with the half-ironic phrase: 'Non-combatant's shell-shock.' (213)

His emotional decision to marry Nicole is not an act of a professional doctor, but an irrational act of a rash, impulsive, and traumatic soldier as the war changes his mentality. After coming back from the war, he neglects his ambition to become a psychiatrist and falls in love with a rich heiress. His quest for knowledge is substituted by his quest for easy money. The sentimental involvement of Dick with Nicole and her money results in his moral decadence and spiritual dissipation.

The cyclical journey of the disintegration of Dick's self is realistically portrayed by Fitzgerald in the plot of the novel. In the opening scenes on the beach he emerges strong and a charming personality full of charm and excitement and promise. As the plot progresses he loses control and is trapped in his love with his wife Nicole and Rosemary. He fails to manage both the women and the result is his disintegration of self. The world becomes ugly and destructive to him. Abe North involves him in a murder in Paris and this event precipitates Nicole's breakdown, and then North dies: "beaten to death in a speakeasy in New York. He just managed to crawl home..." (236) Dick is unable to help his patients as his reputation as a doctor is declining. In

Rome he is totally lost; Dick fights with the taxi driver and lands in the jail. Dick's journey back to America is symbolical in the novel; he goes back from Europe to regain his "honor, courtesy, and courage" (242). In Europe, Dick is consciously aware that "he had lost himself" (238) and he doesn't "seem to bring people happiness anymore" (260). Hysterical fantasy grips his psyche: "The day before Doctor Diver left the Riviera he spent all his time with his children. He was not young any more with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have about himself so he wanted to remember them well" (334).

In a stark and ironic anticlimax, Dick opens an office in Buffalo and then drifts back and forth in Geneva, New York. His American dream finally becomes the American nightmare. In Europe Dick Diver at last is isolated and separated in this world: He's not received anywhere anymore. Bhabha observes that the migrants who leave their homeland become hybrids as they lose their original identity. Dick also becomes hybrid in Europe and falls in the trap of Nicole and Rosemary. Dick Diver loses his American glamour and is no longer regarded as the "fine man". Freud argues that melancholia "borrows some of its features from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to narcissism" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3048). Freud further argues:

In melancholia, the occasions which give rise to the illness extend for the most part beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being slighted, neglected or disappointed, which can import opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence. (3048)

Dick is not only suffering from spiritual void but he is conscious of it as well. He is extremely close to his father, who is his moral guide, but his separation from his father proves disastrous: he loses all his morality and ethics. Aware of his immorality, he feels guilty and:

again and again he referred judgments to what his father would probably have thought or done. Dick was born several months after the death of two young sisters and his father, guessing what would be the

effect on Dick's mother, had saved him from a spoiling by becoming his moral guide. (241)

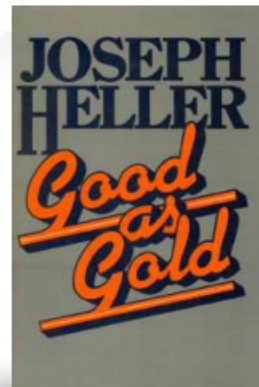
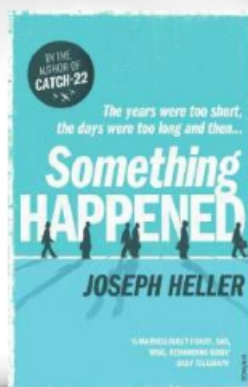
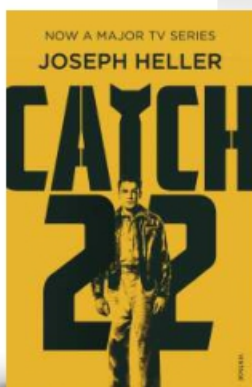
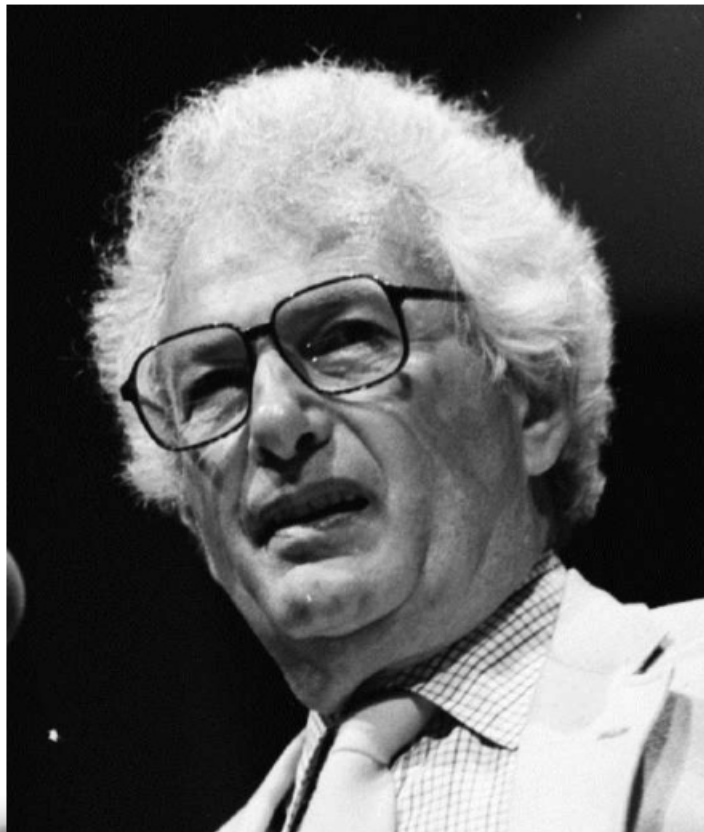
By losing his moral guidance, he becomes a pawn in the hands of rich Warrens and consciousness of his wrecked condition further throws him into an abyss of conflict and neurosis.

To conclude, the *Tender is the Night* is harrowing tale of a learned doctor who is betrayed by the women he loves. He fails to encounter with the realities of his profession and gets trapped in easy money, sex and alcohol. Dick desires to be loved and to be good, but he is betrayed by Nicole and Rosemary and suffers from the melancholia and hysterical fantasies.



**Chapter 3**  
**Spiritual Sterility and the Trapped Situation of Joseph Heller's Anti-heroes**

Joseph Heller  
1923-1999



Joseph Heller appeared on the literary scene of America at a time when America was passing from a period of social and cultural transformation. Heller's parents were Russian-Jewish immigrants, settled in Coney Island of Brooklyn, New York. Heller's father had fled from Russia during Revolution and migrated to America. He was an agonistic delivery truck driver. Joseph had a half-sister, Sylvia, seven years older than him, and a half-brother, Lee (originally Eli), fourteen years older and born in Russia; their mother had died. On the funeral of his father, people doted on him, served him with dishes. Heller couldn't understand the mystery; he learnt later on that day that Lee and Sylvia were his half-brother and half-sister and his father died of cancer. The loss of his father was a big shock to him because he was just five years old at that time. Heller grew angry with all members of his family who had betrayed him hiding the facts about his father.

He experienced the greedy and mean human nature very early in his life. Heller's "orphaning" resulted into his void and he remained cut off from his family forever in his life as he observed once: "I can't take too much friendliness." No wonder, Heller developed a strange, depressing attitude and melancholy temperament. He observed once thus: "Actually, I am a very morbid, melancholy person. I am preoccupied with death, disease and misfortune." (Heller and Sorkin, *Conversations* 48). Heller joined Navy after graduation. He had acute observation as his rich experiences in the army supplied him ample material for the plots of his novels. Interestingly, his thirty-seventh mission, a raid on Avignon became the basis of his story in *Catch-22* published in 1961. He was very fond of reading, and after the war he joined the University of California and later on got Fulbright Scholarship to study at Oxford University in London. In his novels *Catch-22*, (1961), *Something Happened* (1974) and *Good as Gold* (1979), the main focus of Heller is to explore reality about the moral landscape of American culture of the Roaring Twenties when America adopted the principles of power politics on a global scale.



Fig. 3.1: Effect of War on Yossarian's Inner Self

*"The spirit gone, man is garbage."* (Heller, *Catch-22* 554)

Joseph Heller is known for his *Catch-22* as its publication was a sensation in the world of American fiction. Heller clearly stated in *The Realist* that *Catch-22* is not about "the causes or results of World War II or the manner in which it was fought *Catch-22* is about the contemporary, regimented business society depicted against the background of universal sorrow and inevitable death that is the lot of all of us" (Heller, *Replies* 30). Heller uses the metaphor of Second World War to highlight the human degradation; sickness of society and trapped predicament of the protagonists. The critics and reviewers expressed their divergent views about the themes of the novel. Heller was little upset also when the prominent reviewer Richard G. Stern reported in *The New York Times Book Review* that the plot of the novel consistently lacks "craft and sensibility." (Stern 50) Stern even denied it the status of a novel. Despite a gestation period of more than a year, *Daedalus*, Vol. 92 (Winter 1963) showed no mercy. For this anonymous reviewer, the novel was derivative,

awkwardly fashionable, and without either story or interesting characters. "[I]ts author can not write," the critic concluded. He thought the book immoral, appalling, and completely lacking in propriety. The London Observer (June 17, 1962) alleged that the novel was long, repetitive, and "slick"; but its plot was "the greatest satirical work in English since Erewhon" of Samuel Butler. Nelson Algren expressed his positive views about the themes of *Catch-22* in *The Nation* and hailed it as an anti-war novel exposing the horror, greed and endless cunning of the higher army officers for the first time (Algren, *The Catch*). Since its publication many critics have shown their interest in reviewing *Catch-22*. "Paul Newman, Jack Lemmon, and Anthony Quinn were among the leading actors who saw possibilities in a film version and expressed interest in playing Yossarian. Heller is highly critical of the war psychosis of the army people depicting the inner wounds of the war heroes who looked hale and hearty but were sick and depressed inside of their heart. The novel proved to be one of the best sellers as eight million copies were sold. The phrase *Catch-22* became popular with the youth and *The Time* printed "Catch-22 on Film" on the cover page of June 15, 1970. The young soldiers of America condemned the bureaucracy raising the slogan: "Better Yossarian than Rotarian." The World War II is now a historical event; but Heller's comic vision of depicting the struggle for survival of Yossarian and Colonel Cathcart's greed and selfishness are relevant even today. Heller presented the war as the inevitable product of an insane culture that valued material gain more than human life. Brian Way talks about the experiments of Joseph Heller, who depicted the *Catch-22* situation of post-war America. He has highlighted the social, political and economical situation in America and talked about the pervasive vogue of discontentment. In his novel, Heller has depicted the war situation and the lust for power and money of American army leaders and the disintegration of non-conformists. In addition, he has also discussed the cruelty of the army and the air-force. In his paper, W.K Thomas talks about the mythic dimension of Yossarian who plays multiple roles in the novel (Thomas 189). The name Yossarian is mythical according to the writer. He has discussed, church, Christ and God from the metaphysical angle, but the author doesn't write about trapped protagonists and their

spiritual void. Daniel Green has used his analysis of the *Catch-22* to explore the various techniques of black humour used by Heller. He has given the theory of comedy and talks about the comic elements and destructive black humour techniques used in the novel (Green 186).

In his article, Louis Hasley explores Heller's use of black comedy, or the "humorous with the horrific" as he terms it. He writes about the irrationality of war inclusive of the irrational behaviour of man. According to Hasley, Heller uses humour to unveil the horror and corruption of war. He writes "The humor in *Catch-22*, we are forced to conclude, is only secondary. Where Heller comes through in unalleviated horror is where the message lies" (Hasley 197). Joseph Epstein in his article about the novel highlights the absurdity of war. He also writes about the trend of nihilism in war era. Epstein says that Heller in this novel is able to portray the absurd and chaotic world of war in a manner which is both entertaining while simultaneously being grotesque. Although he discusses the naked reality of war, he does not write about the trapped condition of the protagonists (Epstein 1). Pearl K. Bell also writes about the absurdity of war, and shows how sanity and insanity are relative in war. (Bell 17-18) But nowhere the pitiable and trapped condition of the protagonist is mentioned. John W. Aldridge writes about the nihilistic perspective of Heller in this novel and further adds that the novels are comic but this comedy is of the "bleakest and blackest kind." (Aldridge 18). Alfred Kazin says that *Catch-22* is not just about the Second World War, but about an endless war, capable of wiping the human civilisation itself instead of just a few nations. According to him, the theme of *Catch-22* is the complete absurdity and madness of war. He focuses more on the horror of the war rather than the black humour used by the author. Carol Pearson comments on the destructive use of language in the novel and how it presents the power of words (Pearson 30). He further adds how language is used by the army superiors to manipulate soldiers. According to him, *Catch-22* requires soldiers to be conformists, to do what their superiors wish.

Most of the critics have written about the black humour, the pitiable condition of soldiers in the war, the moral collapse of the system and the horrors of war, but

there has been no detailed study regarding the trapped protagonists of Heller's novels and their harrowing spiritual void. The present researcher aims to bridge the gap and elaborate how the War caused disillusionment and depression throughout America and how it led to trapped personalities with no morality and faith.

Heller begins the plot of the novel *Catch-22* in an Island of Pianosa situated between mainland Italy and Corsica. Yossarian is a bomber of 256th Squadron of the American Air Forces. Yossarian seeks escape from the madness and mortality of war as all the forces are against him. He thinks that the hospital is a haven for him as he struggles to survive. The novel begins in a very simple and natural manner; Captain John Yossarian is admitted in the army hospital, on the island of Pianosa during War. Heller introduces Yossarian and Chaplain Tappman, the "soldier in white," the Texan, Dunbar, Clevinger, and Appleby. His world is populated by whores, criminals, degenerates and atheists and drifters. In the army camp Yossarian leads a life in death; he is cut off from his family and feels nostalgic all the time. Yossarian is shocked to explore the cause of human degradation; he finds people crazy about power, money and sexual liberty. The plot of the novel is packed with collage of anecdotes, episodes and murky events depicting the spirit of defiance, subterfuge and subversion. Yossarian performs multiple comical and serious roles: he edits the letters of the soldiers, he feigns illness and even poisons food with soap. He is victimised by army, bureaucracy and war machine. Heller articulates the trapped situation of Yossarian thus:

Someone had to do something sometime. Every victim was a culprit, every culprit a victim, and somebody had to stand up sometime to try to break the lousy chain of inherited habit that was imperiling them all.  
(Heller, *Catch-22* 414)

The novel is a drama of human consciousness, of his degradation, his reliance on subterfuge and brutal killings in his unrelenting struggle to maintain the power structure. Yossarian symbolises the contemporary malaise, sickness and loss of spiritual values. The structure of the plot, the imagery, the black humour and the

language depict the control of the evil forces on all characters and the Catch-22 culture plays a dominant role.

At the outset it is very significant to comprehend the nature of the world of *Catch-22*. The present researcher feels that Heller has created another hell on the pattern of Dante's Hell using the techniques of inversion and subversion. The background of the novel is the involvement of the American Air Force in the World War II but as the plot progresses Island of Pianosa emerges as a microcosm of the modern world in which all human beings are trapped. Yossarian and his fellows are also trapped in the false and malicious culture of Catch-22 which warns that "they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing"(514). Human beings expect that all institutions are run by logic, order and meaningful relationship. In actual world life goes on smoothly and systematically but in the world of Heller's Catch-22 there is the rule of insanity, injustice and brutal oppression. Doc Daneeka is the worst victim of Catch-22; he is declared dead after he fails to bail out of a crashing plane in which he is listed as a passenger. Letters of condolence is sent to his wife who cries and his will is probated and even insurance claim is settled on the spot. In Yossarian's world all these events are magically reported without any paper work as they are the products of blind organisation.

Yossarian and his fellows are not free- all the time they look confused and bewildered as their personal will often clashes with the callous will of Catch-22. In Heller's world there are no certain rules, they are arbitrary and capricious subject to change and revision all the time depending on the will of the higher officers. Yossarian is trapped in a world where living and survival and work culture is not governed by justice but on the whims and fancies of the higher officers who can evoke the unwritten law of Catch-22 at any time for their facility and to constrain the freedom of the soldiers. *Catch-22* empowers them to scrap the rights and liberties of the American soldiers engaged in war. This unwritten law was based on the principle of absolute evil and no officer from top to bottom dared to oppose it. Justice is ridiculed and the innocents are victimised. Heller describes the nature of Catch-22 thus:

Yossarian was jubilant. 'Then I can go home, right? I've got forty-eight.'

'No, you can't go home,' ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen corrected him. 'Are you crazy or something?'

'Why not?'

'Catch-22.'

'Catch-22?' Yossarian was stunned. 'What the hell has Catch-22 got to do with it?'

'Catch-22,' Doc Daneeka answered patiently, when Hungry Joe had flown Yossarian back to Pianosa, 'says you've always got to do what your commanding officer tells you to.'

'But Twenty-seventh Air Force says I can go home with forty missions.'

'But they don't say you have to go home. And regulations do say you have to obey every order. That's the catch. Even if the colonel were disobeying a Twenty-seventh Air Force order by making you fly more missions, you'd still have to fly them, or you'd be guilty of disobeying an order of his. And then Twenty-seventh Air Force Headquarters would really jump on you.'

Yossarian slumped with disappointment. 'Then I really have to fly the fifty missions, don't I?' he grieved.

'The fifty-five,' Doc Daneeka corrected him. 'What fifty-five?' 'The fifty-five missions the colonel now wants all of you to fly'. (78-79)

All human relations become illusory as there are certain rules which are whimsical and capricious. The world of Yossarian is abstract, surrealistic, confusing and disoriented. Thomas Blues in his article: "The Moral Structure of *Catch-22*" observes thus: "*Catch-22* is an illusion that controls the minds of men by paralyzing their senses and their capacity to reason" (Blues 4). Yossarian knows that there is no such written law as *Catch-22*; he is aware that it does not really exist:



... but it made no difference. What did matter was that everyone thought it existed, and that was much worse, for there was no object or text to ridicule, or refute, to accuse, criticize, attack, amend, hate, revile, spit at, rip to shreds, trample upon or burn up. (Heller, *Catch-22* 516)

Yossarian is so much haunted by the insanity of the Catch-22 law that he loses his balance of mind; he becomes a victim of disorientation of mind. Dr Karen Horney opines that obsession becomes a major cause of depression. R.D. Laing observes that obsession results into disintegration of self. R.D Laing in his book *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960), suggests that when an individual is insecure, such people “experience themselves as primarily split into a mind and a body. Usually they feel most closely identified with the ‘mind’ ” (Laing, *The Divided Self* 65). The powerful force of Catch-22 is experienced by almost all the officers and soldiers. Doc Daneeka was also the victim of this inhuman rule. It operates everywhere empowering the bureaucracies to perpetuate themselves.

There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle. (62-63)

Alfred Kazin (1973) observes that the “horror” is other name of Catch-22 rule as Heller depicts the scenes of gags death; Yossarian and other bombers are terrified with the feeling and fear of buried alive in the plane. It is this experience or feeling of horror that makes them crazy. Kazin has described the monumental fear of being eviscerated thus: “ The psychology in *Catch-22* is that of a man being led to

execution, of a gallows humor in which the rope around one's neck feels all too real" (Kazin 85). Ihab Hassan contends that if there had been no *Catch-22*, the war wouldn't have been fought for all the soldiers realized that war was senseless:

Dealing with the attempts of Air Force Captain Yossarian to stay alive and sane through bombing missions without end, the book creates a surreal universe of drollery and death. The universe of death, boiling in chaos in which everything was in proper order. (Hassan 83)

The entire plot of the novel *Catch-22* is structured around the quest of Yossarian to avoid death and to survive the killing strategy of the monster of *Catch-22*. He is always haunted by death because he knows that he is in danger; he has seen the loss of many of his colleagues. He lives in a destructive Hell full of absurdity and uncertainty. Yossarian looks at the waves of the sea, the deep sea blocks out the human life process and activity. It is like a dark abyss of eternity that consumes life. Yossarian watches all the activities of Nature brooding over his trapped existence. He is aware of the mighty ocean sprawling before him as he was haunted and tormented by its limitless vastness. The lonely life intensifies his horror:

There was nothing funny about living like a bum in a tent in Pianosa between fat mountains behind him and a placid blue sea in front that could gulp down a person with a cramp in the twinkling of an eye and ship him back to shore three days later. (Heller, *Catch-22* 26-27)

Yossarian has come to the conclusion that the only way to escape death and destruction is to enter into the safe and secure world of hospital. No wonder, the army psychiatrist diagnoses the trauma of Yossarian and tells him, he has "a morbid aversion to dying" (384). Like a human seismograph, Yossarian reacts to the threatening world of *Catch-22* and is on the verge of breakdown. He is sick of the world outside and finds peace and comfort in the hospitals. As he observes:

They couldn't dominate Death inside the hospital, but they certainly made her behave. They had taught her manners. They couldn't keep Death out, but while she was in she had to act like a lady. People gave up the ghost with delicacy and taste inside the hospital. There was

none of that crude, ugly ostentation about dying that was so common outside the hospital. (213)

Yossarian is a weak character who is lost and bewildered as he always finds excuses to avoid flying by resorting to lies and subterfuge unlike the Greek and Shakespearean heroes who had the potential to challenge gods and the universe by the force of their personality. He is a parody of the great characters of the Classical and the Shakespearean Age. Yossarian is always diffident about his personality and identity. However, he feels that war has provided him a heroic mask. No wonder Yossarian has multiple identities, as a censoring officer, as Washington Irving. Interestingly he identifies with the mythical characters such as Tarzan, Mandrake, Flash Gordon, Shakespeare, Cain and Ulysses. But in fact his fracture of identity is a reality. In the hospital, doctor is also aware of the malignant role of the culture of Catch-22. There is no one in the plot who remains unaffected and all the officers and soldiers know the power of the Catch-22. The doctor also adds, “We're all in this business of illusion together. I'm always willing to lend a helping hand to a fellow conspirator along the road to survival if he's willing to do the same for me” (234). In the hospital the real self of Yossarian comes on the surface. He is horrified by the nightmarish dreams all the time. He feels tortured all the time as he cries out: “ I lost my balls! Aarfy, I lost my balls!... I said I lost my balls! Can't you hear me? I'm wounded in the groin!” (366-367). Heller explores the themes of absurdity of life, insanity, and oppressive forces of the war machine. Heller depicts the scene of hell in the chapter “Nights of Horrors”. Yossarian is seen lost in his surrealistic walk through Rome at night. Aarfy has raped a woman and thrown her out of the window. Heller has described the nature of his Hell in fifty pages narrating the episodes of violence, insanity and corruption.

Freud and Breuer in *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication* (1893), while writing about hysterical trauma, describe it as “any experience which calls up distressing affects- such as those of fright, anxiety, shame, or physical pain-may operate as a trauma of this kind” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 8). “The psychological trauma-or more precisely the memory of the trauma- acts

like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work”(8). Blood-shed of war makes Yossarian a neurotic misfit. The death and disappearance of his friends give so much trouble to his psyche that a soldier becomes a neurotic wreck.

Trauma means an injury, physically or emotionally inflicted. Medically a serious bodily injury, such a deeply shocking experience leaves permanent mental or emotional scars in the victim. Be it in individuals or societies, moments of trauma lead to the questioning of deep-ingrained values and eventually to deconstructing and denying them. Traumas commonly result in social aloofness, retreat to the self, transformation in the use of language and even suicide. Social conventions, religious convictions, faith, and language may lose meaning to such a degree that the victim starts living a life-in-death existence. Thus traumas bring about a re-assessment of value systems so far taken for granted and a subsequent loss of faith in them. Often traumatic, times of war have shaken veterans so deeply that the before and after of the war drastically differ for them. In Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), she writes, “trauma is describes as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flash-backs, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (Caruth 91).

Trauma bypasses conscious awareness at the time that it occurs only to manifest belatedly in intrusive and repetitive symptoms. Accordingly, the overwhelming immediacy of trauma gives rise to its belated uncertainty. A traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual’s ability to cope, and leaves that person fearing death, annihilation, mutilation, or psychosis. The individual may feel emotionally, cognitively, and physically overwhelmed. Trauma comes in many forms with vast differences among people who experience trauma. This includes responses to powerful one-time incidents like accidents, natural disasters, crimes, surgeries, deaths, and other violent events. Trauma also includes responses to chronic or repetitive experiences such as child abuse, neglect, combat, urban violence, concentration camps, battered relationships,

and enduring deprivation. In war, Yossarian's life becomes a series of trauma: death of Kraft, loss of tent mate Orr, disappearance of Dunbar, tragic atmosphere of war, Catch-22, cruel behaviour of his officers, death of Nately, greed of Milo, manslaughter of Kid Sampson, suicide of McWatt, and the most harrowing event of the violent death of Snowden in his own arms give trauma after trauma to Yossarian. All these episodes haunt his memory. The flashbacks of these catastrophic events make him restless. He suffers from a series of traumatic experiences. These intense traumas exert power over the psyche of the protagonist and it becomes difficult for him to work in a sensible and realistic way. He becomes obsessed with scenes of death because he has had an intimate experience with death. These experiences turn into paranoia. Yossarian becomes so much more aware of his own life, that he expectantly waits for the signs of death.

He wondered often how he would ever recognise the first chill, flush, twinge, ache, belch, sneeze, stain, lethargy, vocal slip, loss of balance or lapse of memory that would signal the inevitable beginning of the inevitable end. (222)

Yossarian is constantly aware of his own mortality. He becomes paranoid with the fact that he may die at any moment. It scares him that there are numerous things that could kill him. Heller writes: "There were billions of conscientious body cells oxidating away day and night like dumb animals at their complicated job of keeping him alive and healthy, and every one was a potential traitor and foe" (221).

A psychiatrist in the military hospital certifies him as having a "morbid aversion to dying" (384). Obsessed about his death, he wants to avoid combat mission and longs to escape. In the officer's club, Yossarian speaks about his fear and imagines that everyone is shooting at him and trying to kill him. War affects his psychological state as he spends each moment in fear of death.

‘They're trying to kill me,’ Yossarian told him calmly.

‘No one's trying to kill you,’ Clevinger cried.

‘Then why are they shooting at me?’ Yossarian asked.

‘They’re shooting at everyone,’ Clevinger answered. ‘They’re trying to kill everyone.’ ‘And what difference does that make?’ (26)

Soldiers often lose part of their humanity and sense of compassion as they witness and experience atrocities committed during war time. War invariably strips a man of his soul. Observing the atrocities of war ultimately transforms a man and forever changes his perspective of the world. It is apparent to Yossarian in that very instance that Snowden had already lost his soul and the only thing left to lose was his physical self, which was now broken apart by the horrors of war. Snowden changes everything for Yossarian. Mortality in all its horror stands right in front of his eyes. From that day on, he stops being courageous. Yossarian loses his mental stability on “the day of the Avignon mission when Yossarian climbed down the few steps of his plane naked, in a state of utter shock, with Snowden smeared abundantly all over his bare heels and toes, knees, arms and fingers” (330).

There is a direct relation between Snowden “losing his guts” and Yossarian “losing his nerve”. Snowden’s secret is so traumatic and thus initially repressed which later manifests itself in his madness. Repression in its essence is an unconscious type of forgetting the existence of something that brings us discomfort or pain. Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* writes that this repression is caused because an individual wants to achieve something which is pleasant to the mind and wants to forget occurrences which are unpleasant. Guilt inducing desires and traumatic events are relegated into the unconscious which emerge only at a particular moment in the form of images, dream, and Freudian slips. This reaction in an evolutionary sense is beneficial for a person. It drives a person to pleasurable behaviours and thoughts. Freud and Breuer point out that memory of trauma seems to be far more detrimental to the psyche of individuals and trauma itself. The traumatic memory is hidden deep in our psyche so that retrieval becomes almost impossible. Our conscious mind never wants to access the unpleasant experiences as they are disturbing. But when major events and traumatic experiences are repressed by an individual, it can have an extremely detrimental effect on their psyche. It can later surface itself through

neurosis and hysteria. The trauma is concerned with excitation, either obsessive or emotional, where the more intense the trauma, the more intense is excitation.

Therefore it become difficult for the subject to function pragmatically.

Cathy Caruth points out that this repression and its later repetition can negatively affect the psyche of an individual.

As modern neurobiologists point out, the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashbacks can be itself re-traumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration. (Caruth 63)

Yossarian wants connection desperately but is alienated by the large forces of bureaucracy, and power, and everyone else. They all live in their own islands of isolation within the island. His comrades think he is insane and call him “crazy”, and they don’t understand why he believes that people are trying to kill him. Sometimes, he finds his escape in sex and falls in love with every woman he meets.

Yossarian missed Nurse Duckett so much that he went searching hungrily through the streets for Luciana, whose laugh and invisible scar he had never forgotten, or the boozy, blowzy, bleary-eyed floozy in the overloaded white brassiere and unbuttoned orange satin blouse whose naughty salmon-colored cameo ring Aarfy had thrown away so callously through the window of her car. How he yearned for both girls. (444)

He is a womaniser with an oddly romantic bent, and treats woman primarily as an object of sexual gratification. The perfect girl for him is one who will have sex with him and not care about him after they are through. This shows his emotional bankruptcy. The cruelty of war makes a brave soldier a schizophrenic. Yossarian is trapped in a quagmire of conflicts. First of all, he is in conflict with his principles. If he follows his superiors and becomes a pawn, he can be sent home and live to a ripe age. But, this would come at the cost of betraying his friends, the soldiers who are ready to make the highest sacrifice for their nation, and most importantly by deceiving his own conscience. In his heart, he is fully aware that officers like Colonel Cathcart

and Colonel Korn care only about wealth and prestige, and have no consideration for the lives of the soldiers. Colonel Cathcart remarks: "It's not that I'm being sentimental or anything. I don't give a damn about the men or their airplane. It's just that it looks so lousy on the report" (179).

To make the situation even more complex, if Yossarian rejects to glorify these corrupt officials he will be court-martialed. Similarly he is at odds in respect to his participation in the war. If he continues to fight in the war even after "seventy goddamn combat missions" (561), there are chances that he might get killed by the enemy. On the other hand, if he leaves the battlefield and runs away, he will become a fugitive, a traitor and spend the rest of his life in the fear of getting caught by the military. He is in such a Catch-22 where any move that he makes, he is bound to suffer. Karen Horney in light of a person's conflict states: "[Neurotics are] torn by inner conflicts ... Every neurotic ... is at war with himself" (Horney 11).

This proposition further proves that Yossarian is inherently a neurotic. Yossarian, the war-hero, expresses the consciousness of his spiritual void and nihilism and rejects God, sharing his inner eclipse with Scheisskopf's wife: "You don't believe in the God you want to, and I won't believe in the God I want to. Is that a deal?" (Heller, *Catch-22* 231). He further makes a mockery of the existence of God, observing that,

Good God, how much reverence can you have for a Supreme Being who finds it necessary to include such phenomena as phlegm and tooth decay in His divine system of creation? What in the world was running through that warped, evil, scatological mind of His when He robbed old people of the power to control their bowel movements? Why in the world did He ever create pain? (230)

Aware of his void, he suffers from rootlessness, alienation and helplessness. He doesn't know to whom he has pray for help and safety. Consciousness of his void makes him an insecure and rash personality. Unable to find any saviour, he takes the immoral decision of running away from the battlefield.



Unlike the other protagonists, Yossarian is not involved in the pursuit for money and fame. Instead he is victim of the contemporary bureaucracy, for whom dollar has a greater value than the lives of the young soldiers. This provides a different perspective and shows how the social conditions of contemporary America lead to the spiritual decadence of the citizens and trapped those who were sane enough to realise the ongoing show of destruction and disaster. Yossarian as an individual was more susceptible to become a spiritual derelict because of his borderline personality. His neurosis and his sensitivity to the environment trap him in the cocoon of this system where he is unwillingly a pawn to those in power. Although it seems he has the authority to make a choice between leaving the war-machine or serving the heartless colonels, in truth, he has no say in these decisions as he is invariably trapped in a Catch-22. Though at the end of the novel he deserts the army and flees to Sweden, his psyche remains forever trapped due to the trauma and spiritual void that is created in him. It seems that he has escaped from the system, but in truth this “freedom” is only physical as his life will be marked with the fear of getting caught. When he makes the decision of leaving the army, he abandons the sliver of faith in him, as instead of confronting tyrannical and oppressive rule of the Army leaders, he leaves his friends and comrades behind, essentially leaving a unremovable stain in his conscience. The pathetic condition of the contemporary America comes to light when even the Chaplain, who is considered the messenger of God, starts doubting his faith.

Yossarian is trapped in the pursuit of wealth and prestige, not as a person but as a means. He has lost all faith and lives a life full of meaninglessness and absurdity. The spiritual void created in him makes him a trapped protagonist as he fails to realise that the only way to escape the quagmire of battle is to have faith and accept his reality. While the critics observe that Catch-22 is a deadly disease, the present researcher explored the nature of Catch-22 law and found it a deadly cancer. It is invisible but its presence is expressed through the eyes as Orr expresses his fears while looking into the eyes of Appleby: “They're there, all right . . . although he probably doesn't even know it. That's why he can't see things as they really are” (63).

Heller gives images of death, disease and fear. In all the novels Heller portrayed the moral and psychological dilemmas of his protagonists. No wonder, the critics have declared *Catch-22* as an apocalyptic masterpiece. Captain John Yossarian struggles to survive in a nightmarish world of greed, corruption and malignity and death. Heller has depicted a Hobbesian society where every man is against every man. General Peckem is always scheming to oust General Dreedle, Milo is busy in planning to build his vast cartel. He represents the myth of American success, power and money and believes that when money comes all becomes fair.

The American dream was based on ambition, industry and a well-defined rule of conduct. And, so long as the dream was allied with the religious motive, the impulse towards its attainment produced men of strength and character whose success contributed to the prosperity and greatness of the nation. But in *Catch-22*, the men represented were shallow and had no affinity to religion. To them prestige and wealth were of prime importance and in an attempt to achieve them they gave up their morals, essentially crumbling their conscience and eventually the American dream itself.



Fig. 3.2: Aspects of Slocum's Inner Void

*"I am a shit. But at least I am a successful one."* (Heller, *Something Happened* 200)

The era of the 1950s was the era of a new beginning of American writing. American literature gained a newfound maturity and a rich diversity in this period. Significant works by several major writers were published and established new dimensions in American literature. The radical changes in the field of science and technology and the changing climate of the political scene have affected the writers' minds. The works composed all through this milieu mirror the political and mental turmoil of the time. Under the shadow of nuclear war, human life became highly fragile and hopeless, and vulnerable minds looked upon it as a constant cause of anxiety. American writers turned increasingly to black humor and absurdist fantasy. The enormity of death, besides the sinister implications of the various techniques of wartime upheavals, left an indelible scar on the minds of the people.

The outcome of this indifference milieu has been reflected in the works of Joseph Heller, a popular and respected writer, who writes irreverent, witty novels in

which he makes extensive use of humour and satire. His rather tragic-comic vision of contemporary life focuses on the degradation of conventional values and morals and the growing absurdities of existence. Heller's penchant for anachronism, evident in all of his novels, reflects the disordered nature of contemporary existence.

After the wild success of his first novel, *Catch-22*, he began working on a subject that screamed at him daily: middle-aged men, veterans of the war, indistinguishable in their suits, trapped in the seemingly glorious but corrupt world of corporate America. In retrospect, the ancient man was born free and lived alone but slowly, the physical, psychological, economic, and other factors led him to form the first 'group'. These groups then turned into a tribe and tribes gradually transformed into societies. With his achievements in science, technology, and in every other branch of knowledge, man created various institutions for his benefit. Man was the master of these institutions in the beginning, but as the ages passed and civilisations developed, Man-who was born free-was chained everywhere by the organisations which he had created for his comfort.

Heller understood how the corporate American worker, who saw the cubicle as a place to realise his potential, was trapped rather than elevated by these evil enterprises. This was ironic since it defeated the entire purpose of these institutions: to help people live a secure and satisfying life. Instead of man's controlling these associations, they, in turn, influenced and controlled the lives of human beings. The individual became a puppet in the hands of these institutions.

The Macrocosm of America is what is reflected in the life of the corporate American- at least in the life of Joseph Heller's novel *Something Happened*'s narrator. It is to a frightening degree an exact social documentary that mercilessly captures some very real elements of the contemporary American situation. Heller spent almost a decade writing the novel and was so convinced of its genius that he stashed manuscripts throughout Manhattan, making sure that *Something Happened* would survive in the event his condo burned down. When he subsequently brought the finished draft to his agent, he insisted his daughter to accompany him on the trip — so

she could deliver the pages in the event he suffered a coronary or met with an accident.

Eliot Fremont-Smith in his article talks about the life of Bob Slocum, which is filled with fear and paranoia. Eliot writes “Fear is seen as the necessary webbing of the social order” (Smith 78). He further elaborates the sick condition of the contemporary society, where a lifestyle of fear is but a natural response to the protagonist's environment. He considers that the contemporary society is a mirror image of Hell. Walter Clemons writes that Heller in *Something Happened* has shown the true picture of the everyday life of the people of contemporary America (Clemons 116). John W. Aldridge says that through *Something Happened* Heller expresses his “greatly darkened vision of life” (Aldridge 18). He comments that *Something Happened* is a major work of fiction, the theme of which is social and psychological disorder. Aldridge describes Slocum as a man “raging in a vacuum” (Aldridge 20).

Calvin Bedient writes that Slocum is a middle-class man whose life, on the surface at least, is very well to do, but still he feels something is missing in his life, unaware of his void. He says that Slocum is “just enlightened enough to be ashamed of his life” (Bedient 377) and since his physical and egoistic needs are gratified, he doesn't try to change the status quo. William Kennedy describes Slocum as both a victim and a victimiser. He describes the contemporary society as a place in which people focused on fulfilling their immediate and meaningless goals, ignoring their personal and professional relationships. He says “It will be a rare man anywhere, but especially in America, who doesn't see something of his own soul in Slocum's disastrously honest confession” (Kennedy 18).

Peter Ackroyd talks about the miserable world of Bob Slocum, where “no god or prophet will interfere” (Ackroyd 542), symbolising the faithless landscape of chaos of the contemporary America. Edward Grossman writes that in *Something Happened*, Heller conveys the message that modern life is so rotten, that no consolation can make it otherwise. He says “not the war or the army was at fault, but modern life is the villain-in short, life -and people are its agents” (Grossman 82). D. Keith Mano

comments that the novel is excessive and reading it feels like running a marathon, he calls it “overlong” (Mano 1364).

Bob Slocum, the protagonist of the novel, is a middle-level corporate executive in his early 40s. He lives with his family in Connecticut. At work, Slocum is cynically prudent in coping with his superiors. At home, he is always aggressive and abusive towards his two older children, or he gets away from them to the aloofness of his study. He reminisces with joy his earlier, insatiable lust for his wife, however he feels threatened by her increasing sexual assertiveness, and he scrutinises her for signs of alcoholism and marital infidelity. Slocum himself is a philanderer who is joyless and emotionally numb with prostitutes and his girlfriends. He is preoccupied with death, disintegration, and fear of the unknown, and he ruminates obsessively on unresolved emotional experiences, such as his adolescent flirtation with a girl who later committed suicide and his neglect of his mother before her death in a nursing home.

In this 569-page "monologue of paranoia and self-pity" (Bell 38-39) Heller explores the insanely competitive corporate world, which encroaches into people's personal lives, corrupts them, and kills their finer emotions. In present day, the novel is possibly best remembered for Kurt Vonnegut's artfully unbiased appraisal in *The New York Times Book Review*, which called it as “one of the unhappiest books ever written” (Vonnegut).

Slocum, the book's saturnine narrator, is the best image of a successful corporate executive; He has an attractive wife, three children, and a comfortable position both in society and company. He has everything, but the real essence of the American Dream- Happiness- eludes him. Slocum despite his high position in the corporation makes the readers pity him and at times hold him in contempt. Though Heller does not equip his protagonist with the capacity to fight the institution and achieve his freedom, Heller through Slocum's depression reveals the state of all the men who are trapped in this vicious landscape. Through Slocum's acquiring high position in his corporate life, Heller presents an ironic satire on the contemporary so called American corporate success.

“I get the willies when I see closed doors.” (Heller, *Something Happened* 1). The beginning of *Something Happened*'s nine chapters starts with this phrase, the initial acceptance of fear from its protagonist, Bob Slocum. Richard Hauer Costa in his critical analysis of Bob Slocum's character says "No work of contemporary fiction is so keyed to fear as Joseph Heller's second novel, *Something Happened*" (Costa 1-2). Slocum tortures himself with the thought that what lies behind closed doors is out to get him. Perhaps people are conspiring to find out something about him that will mean the end of him, though he can't imagine what that something is.

He feels eternally fearful. To list but a few, he is frightened of closed doors, what's on the other side of closed doors, his wife, his children, his neighbours, his co-workers, the government, the army, the Pentagon, the police, demotion, divorce, abandonment, the three-minute speech that he has to present at his company's retreat in Puerto Rico, and death. He can never pin-point why he is frightened of any of these things, which leaves the novel to play as an inner monologue detailing his doomed quest for certitude.

We never really do discover whether fear is a thing that is all in Slocum's brain, or if fear is just an ordinary response every character has to the fact that at the end, Sixties America is a hollow, meaningless, dog-eat-dog place where being fearful is an apt response to the absolute oblivion of the so-called real world. All that Slocum is sure about is this: “Something must have happened to me sometime” (Heller, *Something Happened* 1).

The protagonist Bob Slocum experiences a kind of phobia at all times throughout the novel with every aspect happening in the external world. External incidents or accidents create a kind of internal phobia that drives an individual towards eternal psychological, physiological, and emotional devastation and desolation. These constant fears wreck his life and make him paranoid, leading him into a downward spiral of depression and anxiety.

I've got anxiety; I suppress hysteria. I've got politics on my mind, summer race riots, drugs, violence, and teen-age sex. There are perverts and deviates everywhere who might corrupt or strangle any

one of my children. I've got crime in my streets. I've got old age to face. My boy, though only nine, is already worried because he does not know what he wants to be when he grows up. My daughter tells lies. I've got the decline of American civilization and the guilt and ineptitude of the whole government of the United States to carry around on these poor shoulders of mine. (67)

Throughout the course of the novel, Slocum loses his mind. Frederick C. Stern remarks in his analysis of Heller's novels "If *Catch-22* was dark humor, *Something Happened* was even more so" (Stern 27-28). He bottles inside of him the things he wishes he could say aloud, to the point that he finds he has a hard time distinguishing between what he thinks and what he says. He becomes a perfect example of a hollow man. Even his comedy is a mask for alternating impulses of hostility and fear, as well as boredom, frustration, and discontent.

Despite his outward success, Slocum always has a nagging feeling of dissatisfaction and emptiness. Bob Slocum is a man dangling in the air without any root or foundation. There is neither depth nor transcendence in his life. When examining the form of Heller's novel, the Freudian Essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* stands as the most important text as it deals specifically with the ideas that dominate the form of *Something Happened*. The essay doesn't deal specifically with literature, but it does deal with repetition, loss, and creativity, which are three of the premises of Heller's novel. An unknowing victim of suburban disillusionment, Slocum is never happy. His work doesn't fulfil him, since he knows that what the company does is ultimately meaningless. "Most of the work we do in my department is, in the long run, trivial" (16).

Heller, through his attempt of portraying the meaningless nature of modern American Bourgeois life, blows a trumpet call to the world about the tyrannical part played by modernity and the modern way of life to caution the world of its downfall. He has used Slocum as a representative of the modern man, making him stand as an embodiment of the complicated modern man's struggle to lead a meaningful life in



midst of the modern forces. Slocum's struggle for finding meaning in life as a modern human spirit is in vain.

What would happen if, deliberately, calmly, with malice aforethought and obvious premeditation, I disobeyed?

I know what would happen: nothing. Nothing would happen. And the knowledge depresses me. (19)

Slocum's "rebellion" would not even cause a ripple, he admits. And he is saddened by the fact that whether he does good or bad for the company, he makes absolutely no difference in the end. Just Like the company, he too has no lasting effect. He is not satisfied with his wife and family either, so he seeks outlets for being happy outside his personal life. Nicholas Canaday remarks "Fear and power, the opposites of love and caring, characterise Slocum's family relationship" (Canaday 92-93).

Slocum experiences more freedom at the office than he would at home. He can fantasise about Jane in the workspace and go around with women in the town after work. But at the end, he is simply as sad at the workplace as he is at his house. Bored with his work, he is aware that nothing that he does truly matters in the end. "It's a real problem," he sulks, "to decide whether it's more boring to do something boring than to pass along everything boring that comes into somebody else and then have nothing to do at all" (Heller, *Something Happened* 33). Not only does Slocum's job itself not matter in the long run, but even the company itself seems not to matter in the long run. Not a thing that anyone does makes much of a difference.

When the hope of promotion appears, perhaps Slocum understands that he needs it because it's a sudden change. He feels frightened of standing still even with this newfound promotion, however at the end he ascends to his new position with poise and grace. And after that, the matters that were vital to him, such as delivering a speech at the convention, do start happening to him. Despite all of this, he remains dissatisfied, and to him, his life remains purposeless. Bob Slocum is trapped in the Corporate world to an extent that he doesn't realize it. Even in the hustle and bustle of the crowded workspace, he feels utterly alone and alienated. But sometimes, the truth

is so apparent that we tend to overlook it. He states: “I wish I believed in God” (496). The reason for Slocum’s misery is that there is a void in his life. Aply – Catch-22-ly – the void is that he does not know why he is depressed. What he doesn't realise is that ultimately it is his lack of faith and spiritual void that makes him eternally trapped and hollow. The plot of the novel somehow revolves around his attempt to confront and define his infantile desires and traumas. Slocum’s life is characterised by a series of different traumatic events.

At the outset of the novel, Bob takes us back to his initial job as a seventeen-year-old file clerk at an auto insurance agency. He spends most of his time in these reminiscences elucidating about a twenty-one-year-old voluptuous girl named Virginia, for whom he develops feelings of love. Throughout the novel, he is obsessed with her memories, and regrets the fact that he was never able to develop an intimate relationship with her. After returning from the war, which itself serves as a major traumatic event in his life, he gets shocked to learn that Virginia had killed herself a few years after he had left the company, perhaps due to her being single and depressed.

This event controls his behaviour and influences his life, and various Freudian theories have been applied to understand the effect of such traumatic event on his psyche. In Freud’s early work he argues “that traumatic hysteria develops from repressed earlier experiences”. Freud and Breuer emphasise in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that the “original event was not traumatic in itself but only in its remembrance”. Trauma is thus defined in relation to the process of remembering and as an event harboured within the unconscious that causes a splitting of the ego or dissociation. Freud says:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. (qtd. in Caruth 186)

Flashbacks of the death of Virginia haunt Slocum and such flashbacks occur again and again in various instances on the novel:

Look what she did to me. She killed herself before she was twenty-five, doing it with gas, as her father had done before her (and maybe his father before him — she didn't say — deserting me without two weeks' notice) and leaving me feeling destitute again in a phone booth in a train terminal. After a moment of utter shock, I found myself feeling like a foundling again, abandoned heartlessly in a soiled telephone booth in Grand Central Station (Heller, *Something Happened* 487)

Cathy Caruth also states that trauma, as it first occurs, is incomprehensible. It is only later, after a period of latency, that it can be placed in a narrative: “the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located” (Caruth 9).

Slocum is a part of the insidious war culture. Although he feels that being in the war gives him freedom, his psyche is fractured due to alienation and aloofness. He states:

I was often lonely and wished I had someone I could care for. I would have liked a pen pal, a pin-up girl in a cashmere sweater and chaste pleated skirt, a sweetheart I adored who photographed beautifully and mailed me snapshots. (Heller, *Something Happened* 427)

Furthermore the scenes of death and destruction of the war also leave his inner-self badly damaged and have far reaching consequences in his life, which is apparent in his monologue, “It was after the war, I think, that the struggle really began” (87). This also shows that he is somewhat conscious of the detrimental effect that war has had on him.

The death of his father and subsequently the lack of a father-figure left a deep imprint on his mind. This also led to the lack of his psychosexual development during his phallic stage. He believes that perhaps it was his father’s early death that gave him anxiety and says that he might have developed constant paranoia from “....the day [his] father died and left [him] feeling guilty and ashamed — because [he] thought

[he] was the only little boy in the whole world then who had no father”(1). In the chapter “My boy has stopped talking to me”, the most prominent hit to his psyche takes place: he murders his very own son. After his son meets with an accident, Slocum gets overwhelmed with emotions and embraces his son so tightly that his son dies of asphyxiation. This traumatic event completely shatters him. He is so filled with guilt that he requests the doctor to not “tell [his] wife” (562).

Freud’s work on war neurosis and the problem of traumatic repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) extends and adapts his earlier theories on the defence mechanisms of the ego as well as the origin and effects of trauma upon the psyche. “The mind as an organism”, according to Freud, “contains outer and inner layers, with the outer layer having a protective shield against harmful external stimuli” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3731). However, when “fright” occurs, that is “the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it” (3718), the lack of anxiety coupled with the external stimuli cause neurosis. Such is the “fright” that Slocum faces when he gets the shocking news of Virginia’s death and the news that he himself killed his son by suffocating him. His anxiety, which acts as a protection mechanism against traumatic neurosis, carries no defence against these unexpected situations. These external stimuli rupture the barrier and enter his inner psyche without the adequate internal defence. Freud writes: “We describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield ... with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli” (3732). Trauma is imagined as both an external agent that shocks the unprepared system and an internal action of defence against overstimulation.

In the traditional trauma model pioneered by Cathy Caruth, trauma is viewed as an event that fragments consciousness and prevents direct linguistic representation. The model draws attention to the severity of suffering by suggesting the traumatic experience irrevocably damages the psyche. Trauma is an unassimilated event that shatters identity and remains outside normal memory and narrative representation. In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that Freud co-authored with Breuer, he asserted that hysteria was caused by the patient’s efforts to repress traumatic memories, similar to

what Bob Slocum does. According to Freud, external traumatic events (like the death of a loved one, war trauma) coupled with internal impulses that are improperly repressed by the ego and that, therefore, find alternative expression are required for neurosis to manifest itself.

In the case of Slocum, external events such as the news of Virginia's death, mistakingly murdering his son, war and death of his father, combined with internal repression like the inability to make love with Virginia cause him to become a neurotic. The neurotic that needs treatment simply has more debilitating symptom-formations that prevent enjoyment and active achievement in life. "But this feeling of failure, this depressing sense of imminent catastrophe and public shame, persists even here, where I do good work steadily and try to make no enemies" (Heller, *Something Happened* 15).

Further showing his state of dissatisfaction he states: "I never became what I wanted to be, even though I got all the things I ever wanted, including two cars and two color TV sets" (341).

Slocum always feels paranoia and anxiety. He states "I can never make myself believe I am safe" (15). These bouts of fear are nothing but the surfacing of his neurotic anxiety. Neurotic Anxiety arises when the ego of an individual feels that it is going to be overwhelmed by the Id. Ego always tries to control the desires of Id, but since the desires of Id are more powerful, Ego is unable to do so. As a consequence, Id tries to fulfil its desires through irrational thoughts, fantasy, and abnormal behaviours. Slocum himself says: "My id suppurates into my ego and makes me aggressive and disagreeable" (393). This anxiety supplants itself in his brain and he starts to panic even in non-threatening situations: "I have a feeling that someone nearby is soon going to find out something about me that will mean the end, although I can't imagine what that something is" (16).

According to Karen Horney, Neurotic individuals combat basic anxiety by trying to be first, to be important, or to attract attention to themselves. They evaluate all things— ideas, people, possessions, groups—in terms of their prestige value. Furthermore, she says that Neurotics often have a strong drive to be the best—the best

salesperson, the best bowler, the best lover. They must defeat other people in order to confirm their superiority. By striving relentlessly for perfection, neurotics receive “proof” of their self esteem and personal superiority. They dread making mistakes and having personal flaws, and they desperately attempt to hide their weaknesses from others. Bob Slocum exhibits all the symptoms of a neurotic.

He experiences mood swings that highlight the effects of his previous traumas. He lets minor events make him extremely miserable. He is emotionally unstable. In some points of the novel, he expresses his unending love for his son, while in other instances, he shows his desire to kill him. Similarly, he states that he loves his family and his friends, but he contradicts himself by saying: “There are times I wish everyone I know would die and release me from these tender tensions I experience in my generous solicitude for them” (343).

He is also unable to develop healthy relationships with his family:

I have an impulse often to strike back at the members of my family, even the children, when I feel they are insulting me or taking advantage. Sometimes when I see one of them in the process of doing something improper, or making a mistake for which I know I will be justified in blaming them, I do not intercede.....It horrifies me; it is something like watching them back fatally toward an open window or the edge of a cliff and offering no warning to save them from injury or death. (111)

He is obsessed with the memories of Virginia, and throughout the novel we find him coming back at the same thought: Virginia’s death. Ever so often, he discusses the details of her death, until they are ingrained in the minds of the reader. All these behaviours demonstrate his neurotic condition. As he is a neurotic and internally hollow, he tries to fill this ceaseless void with money and power.

In the mad pursuit of minting money, he rides on the wave of false American Dream. To get money and power, he forgets everything which is truly valuable to live a contented and happy life. In this horse-race, he has left love, which is the essence of life, far behind. Friends, family and parents have lost their meaning in his eyes as he

is blinded by achieving high-status in society. Slocum ignores Derek as completely as he can, he competes with his daughter when he talks to her at all, and he pushes and browbeats his son. He constantly reprimands his children, fantasies about divorcing his wife, and even hopes to back-stab his friend to make his ambitions come true. Nobody in the world is more dear to him than dollars: "I want the money. I want the prestige. I want the acclaim, and congratulations" (136). The irony is that he doesn't even enjoy the objects and the activity because he doesn't really interact with or participate in it: His eyes are always on the status, the abstraction. To fulfil his desire to gain status and fill his inner lacuna, he sacrifices his morality. This loss of morality is symbolised by the death of his son, who is a representation of virtues.

His son is like a sensitive part of Slocum that he can't completely control; therefore, as long as his son lives, he will be subjected to feelings beyond his management. And as long as there exists this uncommodified part of himself, Slocum cannot attain the escape he seeks from his inner void. The only solution left is his son's death, a solution that is made possible by Slocum himself: When the child is superficially hurt in a traffic accident, he embraces him to his breast and kills him. Although Slocum is in panic and acts without thinking when he murders his son, the son's death is not the kind of authentic mishap many critics claim it is: Slocum does not accidentally kill "what he most wants to save" (LeClair 80). Although the protagonist does not plan the act, his execution of it is a result of his wish for his boy's end. Slocum's obsessive fear throughout the novel that his son will be killed and his inability to picture the boy beyond the age of nine reveal that he wishes, if only unconsciously, for the boy's death. Heller plays with this idea throughout the novel, as when Slocum tells us, "Poor Oedipus has been much maligned. He didn't want to kill his father. His father wanted to kill him" (Heller, *Something Happened* 336), and when Slocum muses about his disappointment in his son's inability to adjust to life's difficulties as other children do: "Maybe I am disappointed in him...Maybe that's way he's sacred I want to take him somewhere strange and dangerous and leave him there. Maybe I do" (341).

In a sense, the killing of the son is a suicide of Slocum's morality : He kills the part of himself that refused to be co-opted and commodified. Now, he is freed from the burden of feelings that are too painful or difficult to deal with. Now, he can successfully repress his emotions and become the perfect corporate image inside as well as outside: He is calm, in control, and very, very cold-blooded- an excellent corporate strategist in all phases of his life. However, these changes do not represent, as Stephen Potts would have it, "Slocum's self-healing" (Potts 44). Rather, all these actions indicate the successful repression of the protagonist's emotional vulnerability. He finally can tell his wife he loves her because he is no longer emotionally vulnerable to her. Because the admission no longer has any meaning for him, he relinquishes no power in making it. He can get the behaviour he wants from wife and daughter simply by buying it. He no longer feels the need to institutionalise his brain-damaged son, Derek, because he is no longer disturbed by the child's condition. And he can eliminate the people at work he used to feel sorry for- or force them into jobs they don't want- because their plight no longer touches him.

Slocum is emotionally and spiritually bankrupt. Having killed his ethics and morals, he leads a purposeless life, with no faith in God. Slocum exhibits the consciousness of his spiritual void by stating "I wish I believed in God"(Heller, *Something Happened* 496). Aware of his inability to have faith in God, he feels empty, helpless, discontented, alienated, miserable and utterly alone. All his fears and paranoia root from his awareness of his spiritual void. Conscious of his faithlessness, he finds no saviour to save him from his miseries. For Slocum, God is not omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, but rather a dispensable entity, who is a subject to the whims and wishes of humans. "We'll let the Lord be our shepherd readily enough, but there's plenty we'll want, no matter how much we've already got. Otherwise we'll fire Him, retire Him, or ease Him aside" (Heller, *Something Happened* 511). Being conscious of his spiritual bankruptcy, Slocum is a devotee of money, power, and sex: "Green is more important to me than God" (210).

By making the choices he makes throughout the novel, he discards virtues and commits sins, without the realisation of the power of faith. By disrupting the value



system, Slocum shows us that in Corporate America, “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him” (Nietzsche 47).

Slocum leads an artificial life, deprived of true emotions and meaning.

Perhaps, the protagonist's new ability to handle emotionally charged situations with no emotional engagement is best illustrated by his handling of the office typist's nervous breakdown, the event that closes the novel. Martha's problem had been obvious for months, and Slocum had lived in fear of her breaking down at work- what would he do? Now, however, he says,

I took charge like a ballet master.

‘Call Medical,’ I directed with an authority that was almost musical. ‘Call personnel. Get Security...’

‘Be gentle with her,’ I adjure. ‘She's a wonderful girl.’ I

hear applause when she's gone for the way I handled it...

Everyone seems pleased with the way I've taken command.(568-69)

Slocum's tone in this passage bespeaks a consciousness that consists of complacency in his lack of feelings, in the fact that he finally can number himself among the upper- echelon executives who “seem dead” (13).

Although the Bible proclaims that God is our saviour, Slocum has no value for these words and takes them as just ink on paper.

I am especially good on suicides and breakdowns. I can see them coming years in advance. Kagle is close to his breakdown now; his God won't save him, but maybe his boozing and whores will. (388)

Trapped in a vicious grip of America's money culture, Slocum suffers from spiritual void, and his life is miserable in the true sense. Instead of escaping this trap, he entwines himself further and further into the depths of this fatal web.

“Something must have happened to me sometime” (1) says Bob Slocum. He frequently revisits formative moments of his past, though the reader has the realisation that the only reason they are primary moments is because they have been circled so often. Even these tend to center on family and work – his mother's last words; his teenage flirtations with a previous colleague called Virginia, and her

shocking death. He cannot fathom what is wrong with his life because in reality nothing is wrong: he is successful and wealthy. He lives in affluence and peace, which itself is a part of the problem. He has no true rivals, and so he creates enemies for himself. Being a part of the upper regions of society, near the summit of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, he can observe from the peak that there is nothing of real significance there and nothing more to live for.

*Something Happened* is a prime example of how the Americans have become disillusioned with the reality of American Dream. In this book, Heller uses the character of the American male who lives in modern society, who remains hollow, depressed, and is continually discontent despite the rich life that he leads, living the "American dream".

Heller's hope behind the depiction of his protagonists is to portray the real situation Heller finds himself in as American society strives towards yet another century of materialistic development and moral degenerations. There are no right or wrong principles, only relative rights, and wrongs, which are dependent on us. Thus, Heller's Bob has become a part of the prevailing immoral society of modern times, with a shattered faith and an insidious void.



Fig.3.2: Gold's selfish desires for money and prestige.

*"If you've got money, come out and buy. Got no money, stay home and cry"*  
(Heller, *Good as Gold* 322).

Ever since Aristotle stated that the "true forms of government, therefore, are those in which the one, the few, or the many govern with a view to the common interests" (Aristotle 137), political philosophers have been apprehensive about corrupt governments: those perverted ones that reign with a view to the personal interest. Similar to the corrupt institutions of war and corporations in America, the Government, which started as a means to "establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility", and to "promote the general Welfare" ("Constitution of the United States," Preamble) of the citizens, gradually became a force that oppressed and exploited them. The American Government favoured not people with integrity and principles but people who could switch positions overnight on any issue the government wanted them to. It aided aggressive people who could push their way in, rather than people who could be true representatives of the citizens. Ironically, government officials did not care for the welfare of the people but for hanging on to their jobs. Such is the government observed in Joseph Heller's third novel, *Good as Gold* (1979).

*Good as Gold* appeared at a transitional time when many once-liberal Jews were turning "upside down," preparing to endorse Ronald Reagan. This alliance

would give Norman Podhoretz and others like him the political influence they sought. During this era, Jewish humour, formerly marginalised in places like the Catskills, had reversed its fortunes to become perhaps the dominant mode of American entertainment, on television, in movies, comic books, satirical magazines. By 1979, the Jewish-American novel, with its deflationary humour, could legitimately be called one of the most important literary developments in the second half of the twentieth century. *Good as Gold*, Heller's first openly Jewish novel traffics in parent jokes, banal realities, and did so with gusto.

Written in record time for him- three years- Joseph received a nearly two-million-dollar advance for *Good as Gold*, a "first for the publishing world," said New York: the "biggest advance for a novel in history." For years afterward, nothing would be the same in the "show biz" book world, and Joe was a key figure in the industry's transformation. *Good as Gold* is also about Jewish families from Coney Island. It marked a turn in Joe's writing toward a straightforward, nostalgic autobiography. There are vivid and sensitive descriptions of Coney Island's decline since Gold's childhood, the crumbling infrastructure, abandonment of youth to joblessness, listlessness, and drugs—the neglect of the public good that comes from a bad government concerned only with perpetuating rituals, and people more interested in social climbing than caring for their own families.

Heller established these tonal clashes to convey a clangorous culture into which it is finally impossible to integrate, for it is coming apart. From region to region, profession to profession, social class to social class, no one speaks the same language. Before writing the novel, he immersed himself in Charles Dickens to grasp the English master's sweep and whimsical satire. Heller was particularly impressed with *Bleak House* and adopted its strategy, contrasting Gold's family dinners with his public experiences in Washington; the leap from literary realism to absurdity was too much for many readers.

Moisheh Kapoyer, a person who does everything in reverse: Mr. Backwards, Mr. Yes for No. Moisheh Kapoyer was also the name of a character in a cartoon feature in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, alongside letters in the "Bintel Brief."

Like Socrates, his specialty was tossing off upside-down remarks. In *Good as Gold*, Heller used the expression to describe Jewish contrariness. He used it to deride Henry Kissinger: Here was a Jew seeking success in Christian Washington. In the deepest chill of the Watergate scandal, he fell on his knees to pray beside Richard Nixon, a man he considered anti-Semitic. For Heller, Moishe Kapoyev captured the paradox of the integrated Jew—and, more broadly, of all Americans, living in a wealthy culture often inimical to moral principles. *Good as Gold* earned Heller a record advance and became a national bestseller.

The protagonist of the novel, Bruce Gold is a member of a large Jewish family (a father, step-mother, five sisters, and a brother) which makes him feel lost and frustrated with its meetings of reunion. He is a professor of English, essayist, and writer with considerable fame. He plans to write a book on the Jewish experience which is delayed till the end of the novel. The book that Bruce Gold has planned to pen-down may be seen as the very novel that his fictional presence dominates. His life as a Jew, loved and trapped by his large family, tempted and frustrated by the myth of Kissinger, is the drama of *Good as Gold*. His review of the president's book 'My Year in the White House' attracts the attention of the White House and the President is especially pleased with his phrase "Nothing succeeds as Planned". As a result, Gold's schoolmate Ralph Newsome who holds office in the White House as an 'unnamed source' offers Gold several possible choices ranging from Ambassador to the Court St James to the post of Secretary of State - the one post Gold craves to hold to out-wit his most hated rival - Henry Kissinger. But there is a 'catch' which obstructs Gold. To occupy any prominent position in these offices, Gold needs to divorce his present wife Belle and marry Andrea, the daughter of P.B. Conover, a dying career diplomat with tons of money and the best connections in the government, whose influence Gold can use to attain whichever position he wants in the government. On one hand, Conover agrees to do these things only if he marries his daughter first. But Andrea declares that she will only marry him if he gains a prominent position in the government.

Ralph Newsome says that whichever job Gold decides to take, he will be able to do anything he wants as long as it is everything the Washington people tell him to

say and do in the support of their policies whether he agrees with them or not, but Ralph assures Gold "You'll have complete freedom" (50). Though Gold moves back and forth between Washington and New York, Andrea and Belle, and dangles between the thrall of government position and his family, he finally, when he fully understands the real nature of the government policies, sheds his naivety, and retains his pseudo-dignity. As he attains the knowledge and material for his book on Jewish Experience from his personal experience being a Jew, he rejects the White House offer and settles down to write his book at the end of the novel. Not that he will remain "good" from now on; not that difficulties, questions, ambition and lust for money and women will not continue.

In a review of the novel in *The New Republic*, Jack Beatty wrote, "*Good as Gold* is a cultural event. A major novelist has taken on our greatest celebrity with all the power of wit and language at his command.... [P]erhaps not since Tolstoy eviscerated Napoleon ... has a central historical figure been so intimately castigated by the Word. Score one for literature." More sombrely, John W. Aldridge, reviewing the book for Harper's, remarked, "It is all about a society that is fast going insane, that is learning to accept chaos as order, and unreality as normal. The horror is that the time may soon come when the conditions Heller depicts will no longer seem either funny or the least bit odd" (Aldridge 18). Malcolm Bradbury praises Heller's stylistic choices made in the novel. According to him, *Good as Gold* highlights two worlds, the agonies of living in the most "anguishing of all fictional Jewish families," and of the absurdist world of corrupt American politics. He writes that the novel is set in an "atmosphere of political disintegration and social decay" (Bradbury 37). Pearl K. Bell remarks that the novel is an amalgam of three different types of fiction: a novel about Jewish Family, a political satire, and a tale about "superman demythologized" (Bell 2). He writes how Heller portrays the disintegration of family, and Hero's trapped condition within the family, while ridiculing the state of bureaucracy. Although Bell also talks about the trapped condition of the protagonist, but the trap he writes about is based upon family ties, which only depicts the microcosm of his reality. The present researcher seeks to explore a macrocosmic trap based upon society's greed for money

and its ultimate disintegration of values. Eliot Fremont-Smith remarks that *Good as Gold* paints a true picture of the White house, similar to how Heller's *Catch-22* described the corrupt military practices in World War II. He also claims that the novel at its core is anti-semitic, writing "The Jews in *Good as Gold* are uniformly portrayed as snivelling, deceitful, self- aggrandising, and ambitious beyond their worth" (Smith 74). Leonard Michaels says that *Good as Gold* describes Gold's failure to identify with himself. According to him, Gold yearns to escape from what he is, while simultaneously exploiting his true identity by taking advance on a book about his Jewish experience. He further attacks Gold by showing his ambivalence, as he wants to run from his true self, which is precisely what he despises (Michaels 24).

The protagonist of the novel *Good as Gold* is trapped in a labyrinth of vicious circle of money. Outwardly, the novel seems to be a novel about a Jewish family, but inwardly it reflects the entire image of contemporary America. Gold's obsession for money and power, and his ultimate disintegration of values, stems from his childhood traumas and social alienation. Cathy Caruth, stating the detrimental effect of trauma on a persons life, writes: "The story of trauma [...] as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality – the escape from a death, or from its referential force – rather attests to its endless impact on life"(Caruth 7). Trauma breaches the psyche and cannot be registered through ordinary mechanisms of experience and cognition. The traumatic event defies conscious awareness and experiential frameworks as it occurs; it bypasses consciousness as the initial event unfolds. Caruth thus refers to trauma as an unclaimed experience, a phrase which she also uses as the title of her 1996 monograph. Cathy Caruth also states that trauma, as it first occurs, is incomprehensible. It is only later, after a period of latency, that it can be placed in a narrative: "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located" (Caruth 9).

Freud along with Breuer in their *Studies on Hysteria* (1893) say "The disproportion between the many years' duration of the hysterical symptom and the signal occurrence which provoked it is what we are accustomed invariably to find in traumatic neuroses" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 7). They observed that it was

usually some childhood events that triggered severe symptoms of neurosis that reflect later in a person's life. Near the beginning of the novel, Gold expresses such an event where his elder brother, Sid, once deliberately left him alone at a place where Gold as a child felt helpless and miserable. Heller remarks that this event "never ceased to pain him" (Heller, *Good as Gold* 18). There are many such traumatic events in Gold's childhood which act as a trigger to his neurosis later in his life. As a child, he was a misfit. His friends used to avoid him, and considered him an embarrassment. Due to his weak eyesight, he was given the name four-eyed. Even in his music class, he was singled out as a listener, and was the only child prohibited to sing. Heller, describing Gold's childhood writes that he "spent much of his childhood on the fringe of exile" (59). He was rarely allowed to play and none of his friends ever like to confide in him. He feels that the rest of the world also stands ready to make fun of him. It is clear that these events played a functional role in development of his neurosis.

Furthermore, the family unit acts as a foundation of moral values in a person. When the equilibrium of a family is broken, the environment of the character descends into disorder and chaos, and exemplifies the effects of Murphy's Law. Early experiences play a pivotal role in an individual's personality development and continue to influence their behaviour later in life. Every stage of development is marked by conflicts that can aid to building growth or stifling development, based upon how they are resolved. If all of the psychosexual stages are completed successfully, it leads to a healthy personality. If certain issues are not resolved at the appropriate stage, fixations can occur. A fixation is a constant focus on a previous psychosexual stage. Unless this conflict is taken care of, the subject will remain "stuck" in this stage. In his adult life, Gold engages himself into adultery which shows the affect that the family surrounding has had on his mind.

The post-war landscape of America is one where family ties and relationships are eroding. A lack of attachment with one's blood relations and the continuous pursuit of materialistic belongings takes one far from his roots, creating a void in his psyche. The absence of catharsis with the loved one's leads to repression, which can



have far reaching consequences upon one's mental state. This repression, according to Freud, is what leads to Trauma.

In *Good as Gold*, the family is throughout portrayed as a Jewish American dwelling afflicted strongly from anxiety in which even the members become islands, devoid of any understanding, unity or purposeful and emotional relationships. As a modern Sisyphus, Gold also feels detached with his Jewish family. His alienation from his family also disturbs him and affects his psyche. "So many fucking faces, Gold thought. So many people. And all of them strange. Even Belle, these days" (25).

For Gold, it is the growing mental gulf which irks at his mind as he continuously believes that there is no one within his family who can match his caliber and academic intelligence. Gold's feeling of hatred, alienation and anger within his family attains alarming proportions. The mediocrity, which hurts Gold as a constant wound, alienates him further from his wife and children. Despite his family's size and the abundance of their food, Gold never truly feels at home. He often thinks that his entire family has joined forces to hatch a conspiracy against him and that the rest of the world too stands ready to make fun of him. It was no secret to anyone that his father considered Gold a schmuck. The family individuals who contribute to his personal problems are as Gold himself says: "five sisters, one brother, three children, a wife, father, stepmother and more in-laws and nieces and nephews than he can keep track of" (85). All these individuals, put together, personify intellectual and academic impoverishment. The problem of the hero's ill-adjustment within his own family goes to this extent that he desires for a "blast of arctic air to come howling down for the weekend" (19). Gold considers family parties "gruelling and monotonous tests of fealty to which he submitted with sorrow and anxiety whenever he was left with no civilized alternative" (15).

Each family party serves to wreck the nerves of the protagonist, who cannot understand how his relatives are having such a good time. Comic impotence, blind fury, or sullen restraint, none of these responses of Gold save him from the torture of his relatives. It is not only Gold, but the thinking of every household member of

Gold's family members is such that each of them becomes an island separated from the others and they remain at loggerheads with each other. Bruce says "I've got lots of close relatives and I have no one I can talk to either" (164), thereby indicating that even in the midst of the domestic crowd, he feels lonely and miserable. Gold's alienation from his family attains such a height that he sends money so that his sons remain away to spend their vacations with their friends and don't come home and become vexatious for their father.

Gold's gross lack of understanding and his inability to connect with his family, becomes pretty akin to the situation of other Hellerian heroes, for example, like Slocum in *Something Happened*, Gold detests his daughter's aggressive and sullen personality and enjoys outsmarting her in arguments and battles of wit. All the same this barely adolescent girl easily envisions that her father nurses some hidden ulterior designs vis-à-vis his family :

'You're moving out, ain't you?' She charged, with acumen rare in one so fresh in years.

'No, I'm not.' He made a face at the scornful laugh she discharged.

'I'm merely packing things I'll need at my studio for my work and have to take with me to Washington.' 'Don't shit me', said Dina.

'You're getting a divorce.'

'That's no way for a little girl to talk' (226-227)

The total annihilation of family bonds becomes quite visible in this conversation between father and daughter, a quintessential attribute of the deculture that the ethos of mass society perpetuates and proliferates. Irony, absurdity and comic apocalypse combine to present Gold as a dehumanized mass society denizen desperate to neutralize his daughter's hostility toward him. Whether as a father or as a husband, Gold now clearly understands his existential family status as devalued and dismantled, unless a miraculous turn of events would undo the damage.

The Gold family in terms of the hero's maladjustment within it, can metaphorically be defined as a "hard crust" on the surface of which the hero continues to lose his balance and slip awfully into the misleading lanes of his own spiritual

labyrinth. The protagonist isn't just alienated from his family, but due to his ethnic identity, finds it difficult to assimilate with the upper-refined society of WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Puritans). Gold faces racial discrimination, which makes him suffer from an inferiority complex, and further traumatises him. Heller has an acute sense of the Jews forever alien to the places in America where the real power resides. Heller's achievement in this novel is monumental because he captures some of the levels and intensities of ambivalence that characterise the members of minority groups in their relationships to the ruling class. "He was out of place and understood with potent prescience that he would always be. Amidst all the people filling the crowded, bustling dining room he was "solitary as an oyster" (376).

"If you ever forget you're a Jew, a gentile will remind you": The second epigraph to the present novel begins thus. All of Bruce Gold's encounters in Washington are such reminders. He constantly feels restive and smothered by a surfeit of Jew-Gentile collisions. His friend at the White House talks to Gold about and "your kind," advises him to finish his book on the Jewish experience "while there's still time." Conover calls him Goldberg, Goldfarb, Finegold, Goldfedder, Goldenrod, Manishevitz, Schwartz, etc. And the silver-haired former of governor Texas tells Gold that a Jew always needs friends in Washington, because he doesn't really belong there.

When he goes to Conover, an influential person in Washington, the latter openly insults and expresses his hatred for Jews. Despite this, Gold has to keep his temperament and not offend Conover, though he feels miserable. Similarly, Ralph bluntly declares on his face that the fact he is Jew will be good for the party because it was easy for the party to get rid of Jews when the need arrived, and they were now welcomed by both the public and the office. Gold has to tolerate this blow to his dignity as well just for the sake of his ambitions: "Be at the white house at eleven. Use the servants' entrance" (203). Throughout the novel, he is observed to be suffering from inferiority complex, while simultaneously having glimpses of superiority. This shows a dichotomous view of the protagonist, further proving the hypothesis of his neurosis: "Is there something about me, something in my makeup

perhaps, that causes people to want to make fun of me? Is there something that inspires humor in other, am I of a type that encourages sport?" (387).

Karen Horney in *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* states that Neurotics: have gone through a series of humiliating experiences in childhood, experiences that may have had to do either with the social situation in which they grew up such as belonging to a minority group, or being themselves poor but having wealthy relatives... Often experiences of this kind are forgotten because of their painful character, but they reappear in awareness if the problems concerning humiliation are clarified. (Horney, *Personality* 178)

All dreams are inspired and manifestations of desires according to Freud. Dreams of food and drink when hungry or thirsty, are the direct expressions of wishes arising from an individual's organic needs.

Comfort dreams and overtly sexual dreams also are the direct fulfillments of wishes. But the majority of dreams are the indirect or disguised expressions of repressed and therefore unconscious wishes. Gold is frequently seen as day-dreaming, and most of these dreams are of him attaining a reputable position in the society. This is a direct expression of his repressed memories of past trauma, where he was alienated from his peers, and where he always felt like an outsider with no respect or position. In Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he remarks that dream life is capable of extraordinary achievements-at any rate, in certain field. This behaviour of Gold where he fantasies about living a life of respect and prestige, is observed frequently throughout the novel. He wishes to work for the president with Ralph, marry Andrea and become an overpaid professor of Urban Studies. All this further affirms his hollow quest for money and power. "Gold's mind was shimmering with fantasies of approaching eminence as the car descended. Secretary of State? Head of CIA?" (122). Gold never does get to Acapulco, but one of the great scenes of the novel is his fantasy of trying to please the two women in the adjoining hotel rooms. Even the fantasy proves so exhausting that Gold collapses and has to be taken to the

hospital, where for ten days his mistress and his fiancé and his wife do not miss him at all.

Gold is not satisfied with his current position. He wants to attain great heights, and wishes to become a semi-god. His desire is so strong that he is ready to leave his family and his job. He has a perfect wife, who is well aware of his philandering, but still is willing to put up with him. She takes all the decisions regarding their children and takes good care of them. Gold's parents are having more cordial relations with her than Gold himself. Gold too knows of her qualities, but he is ready to give her up just for a position in the government office. Describing their relationship, Heller writes: "There was distance between them now that neither made attempt to deny" (37).

He considers his family as an existential prison, dungeon of morons, virtually an abyss of nothingness and meaninglessness from which the hero must escape. Gold's over-ambitious mind finds it hard to refrain from the ultimate rebellion: leaving the family environs becomes the only key for a successful realisation of personal obsessions and desires. "He had no doubt he would be disowned by his father, brother, and sisters and rejected by his children. The future looked bright" (384).

He has a well-paying job in a field he is good in, but still he is completely dissatisfied. Bruce Gold is in disgust of his teaching profession, as he considers the universities syllabi as absurd. Heller comically describes that Gold prefers students who drop his course before even the term starts, than the studious ones. This goes on to show his hatred for the status quo. He says:

I don't love Belle. Family life is a bore. So is writing and teaching. My kid sister in California is forty-five and I think I may still be in love with her. I don't feel close to anyone in the world. Everything I do now is boring. I want to marry money.  
(154-155)

Gold is obsessed with money, power and sexual liberty. Freud observes that hysterical fantasy in men is related to either hidden sexual desire or ambition in life. Gold is ready to put everything at stake for glittering money. He feels irresistibly

attracted towards rich and glamorous women. As Heller writes, “Whenever he was at leisure, he fell in love” (397). Bruce Gold’s extra-marital flings are limitless. In spite of being married to a devoted self-effacing wife, he still engages himself with a rich and glamorous woman named Andrea Conover, besides his amorous relationship with his daughter’s teacher, Linda. Gold's appetite for sex and food and money is only surpassed by his ambition for a high post in Washington. It is not really power that Gold desires, but rather the respect of all the people who are prone to make fun of him. His family and friends will stop laughing at him, Gold imagines, if only he can become Secretary of State. The hero not only enjoys sexual escapades but also nourishes calculated motives to get a higher position in the White House scenario through Andrea’s father, a man with tons of money and high connections. He is so blinded by the aura of Washington that it appears to him that it is the only heaven in the whole universe.

He glanced out the window at official Washington and caught a glimpse of heaven. Through the doorway, the view of the open office space was a soothing pastoral, with vistas of modular desks dozing tranquilly under indirect fluorescent lighting that never flickered.(119)

Gold’s ironic tryst with White House Politics in Washington, is sought to be a perfect path of escape by the hero. Unfortunately, American hard-core politics at the highest level proves to be Gold’s Gordian Knot which he can neither unravel nor negotiate. The irresistible magnetism of White House high-profile politics becomes Gold’s Waterloo. The city of Washington awes him because it stands as a symbol of power. He is constantly made a fool by his anti-Semitic friend Ralph Newsome, because Gold is so entrapped in his obsession that he fails to realise that he is being used. The weight of Gold's desires, which necessitate his attempt to comply to the social norms of Washington, take their toll on his physical and mental health. By the end of the novel, Gold collapses from the anxiety of imagining to take his beloveds Linda as well as Andrea, whom he must wed for achieving his political ambitions, on the same Acapulco vacation. Gold's ambitions are a type of death wish and consequently make him appear older than his father is indicated by an ambiguity in

the phrase, "it's to die," which portrays the effect Gold's desires have on him. He is completely trapped in a mad pursuit for wealth and prestige. "He was losing his taste for mankind. There was not much he did like. He liked goods, money, honors" (71). All his neurotic and obsessive ventures and dreams subconsciously revolve around fitting in with the society and being respected rather than being an "outsider", as one of his older friends describes him as. Gold is subconsciously aware of this fact, but instead of coming in terms of this reality and accepting himself as he truly is, he represses these traumatic memories and events.

In *Studies On Hysteria*, the authors assert that neurosis is caused by the patients efforts to repress a traumatic memory. This is to say that it results from the patient's efforts to forcefully refuse to acknowledge in a conscious state of mind the memory of a past trauma. Since he is not terms with his true reality, and he represses his trauma, his quest for money and power is shallow and his feeling of dissatisfaction is ubiquitous in the novel. This looming sense of discontent is summed up perfectly when Heller remarks "All were successful, and felt like failures" (64). Similarly, "Gold needed no inner voice that he was courting trouble. All his life he had hated trouble. Now, it seemed, he was distressed he might succeed" (403).

Karen Horney describes this phenomena of the shallow pursuit of money and power, showing a truly grotesque image of what the American dream had turned itself into. She writes:

The neurotic, as long as he must adhere to his illusions about himself, cannot recognise limitations, the search for glory goes into the unlimited. Because the main goal is the attainment of glory, he becomes uninterested in the process of learning, of doing, or of gaining step by step — indeed, tends to scorn it. He does not want to climb a mountain; he wants to be on the peak. (Horney, *Neurosis* 38)

Gold, being a neurotic, shows similar behaviour. He doesn't believe in his own ability and his own faith and instead of doing hard work he runs after powerful people like Conover and his daughter in a pursuit to reach the peak overnight. Throughout the novel he procrastinates writing the book, which is what would actually help him

grow as an individual and continues to follow this shallow path despite realising that it too would not make him content: "Gold found himself with an immense unwillingness to admit that the closer he drew to marrying Andrea and serving as secretary of state, the deeper he fell into doubt that he wanted to do either" (389).

Similar to the other protagonists, he chooses to ignore morality and disrupts the value system as is observed in his pursuit to the position of Secretary of State. This disruption splits his psyche and he is in conflict regarding his choices.

His blessings were one with his tribulations: he was about to effectuate a painful divorce from Belle; he was about to enter into a painful marriage with Andrea, a woman at once submissive and weirdly independent, who both frightened and bored him; and he was about to embark on a vulnerable new career in government and politics whose fate at least initially, would be largely dependent on the patronage and goodwill of an inhumanely selfish and malicious father-in-law, who disliked him intensely and sadistically. (394)

These conflicted desires are shown by the discrepancy between his speech and his actions. Despite his apparent dislike, he is transforming into the very individuals he hates. Gold hates his comrade Lieberman for his readiness to always be on the government's side of a matter: "I can switch positions overnight on any issue they want me to" (168); and his fascistic conservatism which steers him to advise "a totalitarian plutocracy, backed by repressive police actions" (44). But Gold too is becoming similar to Lieberman, and he is equally dubious when he gives the same speech to college students and wealthy businessmen but through shifts of emphasis and tone managing to appear a champion to each group (43). When Lieberman is called to a White House dinner in display for his support of the Vietnam war, Gold writes, but does not publish, an irate tirade in which he reprimands "craven, watchful opportunists" (284). But Gold himself becomes such an opportunist. The statement makes this irony clear: "Gold was no longer keen to publish his Invite a Jew to the White House (and You Make Him Your Slave). If he did, he might never again be invited to the White House" (284). Bruce fails to realise his resemblance to



Lieberman. But the two characters are similar enough to make the reader recognise that Bruce is becoming as morally appalling as the morally and physically repulsive Lieberman. Bruce's true urge in the tirade against Lieberman is filled with envy, and in multiple places it is hinted that Bruce is even more resentful of the successful Kissinger.

Bruce's moral resentment, while often having relevant targets, is thus marked by his jealousy of the very accolades he deprecates, a jealousy that represents Bruce's own desire for power. Bruce despises Kissinger for his subservience to the powerful and wealthy, his duplicity, and his abuse of power and of those who helped him attain it. But Bruce fawns in front of Ralph (129), is capable of the duplicity in his speeches, and fantasies how, once his prospective father-in-law has helped him into a powerful position, he will crush Conover (267). Bruce seeks a tall second wife in Andrea the way Kissinger found one in Nancy. He seeks help from Conover the way Kissinger sought it from the Rockefellers. Much is made of Kissinger's willingness to kneel with Nixon to pray. The ex-governor from Texas who served on the commission on education with Gold suggests that Kissinger abandoned his god to serve an idol: "Make war, said Nixon, and [Kissinger] made war. Pray to God, said Nixon, and he prayed to God. Seems to me his God was Nixon" (469). In an exchange with Conover, Bruce Gold also is seen to be suing to an idol for a government position:

'Do Jews always kneel when they pray?' I thought they merely whimpered ."

'I wouldn't know' Gold said tersely. 'I don't pray.'

'You're praying today, though, aren't you?' Conover retorted in mockery.

'What position in government are you praying for?' (402-03)

Comparison of these two excerpts suggests the resemblance between Kissinger and Gold and that both are worshipping fraudulent gods, having deserted Jewish ethics for the values of money and prestige. Gold is an alien to his own religion as he indulges in heavy drinking, adultery and considers divorcing his wife, all of which is looked down upon in Jewish culture.

Roger Kaplan feels that no values are in evidence and that the novel demonstrates Heller's "painful and unrelenting streak of nihilism" (Kaplan 60). John W. Aldridge considers that Heller depicts the fall of values in both family and government.

How much lower would he crawl to rise to the top? He asked himself with wretched self-reproach. Much, much lower, he answered in improving spirit, and felt purged of hypocrisy by the time he was ready for dinner. (Heller, *Good as Gold* 376)

According to Aldridge, the family members are caring only so long as circumstances require, and come together just because they are pressured into it by their maniacal father. Gold's own self becomes akin to a fractured mirror which reflects no coherent image or any meaningful pattern.

Within a structure that brings to mind the pattern of a Morality Play in which the Protagonist, in the face of Death, chooses between various delegates of Good and Evil, Gold dithers between, on one side, the moral and spiritual death of public success with its prestige and, on the other side, the prospects of a personal alternative that he barely comprehends. Gold's psychological manifestations operate contrary to the Jewish code of human behaviour.

Although he returns to his home at the end of the novel, he has not become a person who really appreciates or values morality. He does not come back to his family because he really values them but because his experience in Washington makes him realise that he is being used and is considered an outsider. He understands that his grandiose vision of becoming a Secretary of State is mere illusion. Unlike the traditional hero, his experiences and sufferings have not transformed him into a better man, but a worse individual with a broken heart and shattered dreams. Coming back is a compulsion for him since he has no other logical choice. It thus cannot be considered as an act of redemption as he lacks the heroic qualities of making his quest meaningful.

A journey symbol is present as Gold oscillates between the mostly realistic portrayals of the family circumstances in Brooklyn and the often exaggerated, overly

extended presentations of national leadership in Washington. Heller contrasts the environments successfully throughout: Washington as an delusory Heaven where, seemingly, Gold, as the Secretary of State, can be sheltered from the harsher realities of American life; Brooklyn as the concretisation of those realities, a place of racial conflict, prejudice, violence, crime, a place that Gold understands because he was brought up there. Along the way, his inner conflict is not only central to the narrative of this novel related to the American Jewish experience; it also suggests patterns of behaviour and adjustment in the general ethnic and racial minority experience in America. Gold is thus a man between- competent enough to reach towards an identity determined by the ethics of the dominant culture but divided in his opinions toward such prosperity, recognising the achievement of it as death even while compelled to pursue such achievement. To achieve success overnight, he revokes the value system and in doing so he indulges in cardinal sins and vices. He becomes a part of the devil's party by drowning in the Slough of Despond, revelling in philandering, greed, and envy. Like Faustus, by following the great evil, Gold casts away his creator and in doing so he gives up his morality and makes the dollar his God. Gold becomes a shallow being who is conscious of his spiritual void. "I have no faith" (429), he declares, showing his spiritual bankruptcy. Aware of his absence of faith in any dimension of spiritual energies, he feels rootless and isolated. Gold is an alien to his own religion and has knowingly deserted Jewish ethics for the pursuit of Dollar and Power. Due to his awareness of his spiritual dereliction, he is unable to find solace in anything, and feels eternally alone and miserable. The moment he throws all virtues in the wind, he gets trapped in the money culture of America.

Gold knew something no one else did, but was not going to reveal it: He knew there was no longer anything legal to be done under the American system of government to discourage crime, decrease poverty, improve the economy, or nullify the influences of neglect, and when he got to Washington he wouldn't even try. Why should he be the exception? (323)

In the selected novels Heller examines the effects of the operation of power morality, one during wartime in Italy, one immediately after war in New York, and one during peacetime in Washington. Heller defines his values negatively in that his protagonists move away from the family, the origin of moral law, toward a larger social organisation in order to gain power, prestige and wealth. They do so either for all of the novel, as in *Something Happened*, or for part of it, as in *Good as Gold* or *Catch-22* (where Yossarian initially believes he can benefit from the catches by manipulating them to his advantage).

In all the selected novels—*Catch-22* (1961), *Something Happened* (1974), and *Good as Gold* (1979)—Joseph Heller has investigated the moral landscape of American culture during the era in which America emerged as a superpower in the Western world and fully embraced the principles and regulations of power politics on a world-wide scale. His protagonists—Yossarian, Slocum, and Gold—all struggle with the web of temptations that United States, at the time of its ascendance, presented. All try to come to terms with themselves in a system wherein the power morality of the nation-state, that tangle of ever-shifting alliances founded on personal interest, has trickled down through the corporate environs to personal relationships. In *Catch-22* Heller dealt with the basic values of the profit system and presented the war as the inevitable result of an absurd culture that valued materialistic possessions much more than human life and whose morality was based on the effects of power and the operation of the free market, a combination that defines human beings as commodities among other commodities. In *Something Happened* he depicted the psychological and moral dilemmas of a hero living within that culture at the zenith of its power—within a cocoon that both protects and deadens, presenting the protagonists many assets and pleasures but depriving him of any sense of vital human connection, even within the family. And finally in *Good as Gold*, Heller shows a dichotomous world, where people divided between relationships and ambitions, love and power, man and matter, invaluable gold and morals of life—a pandemonium where government suffocates its citizens into silence and misery. The protagonists share responsibility with their oppressors for their debasement and suffering because they don't reject

their oppressors or the system that perpetuates torment. No matter how humorous Heller's talent, his works will ultimately be rooted in tragedy.

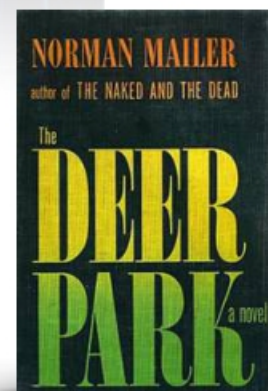
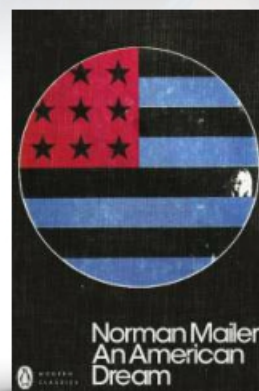
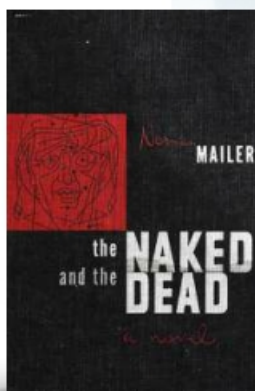
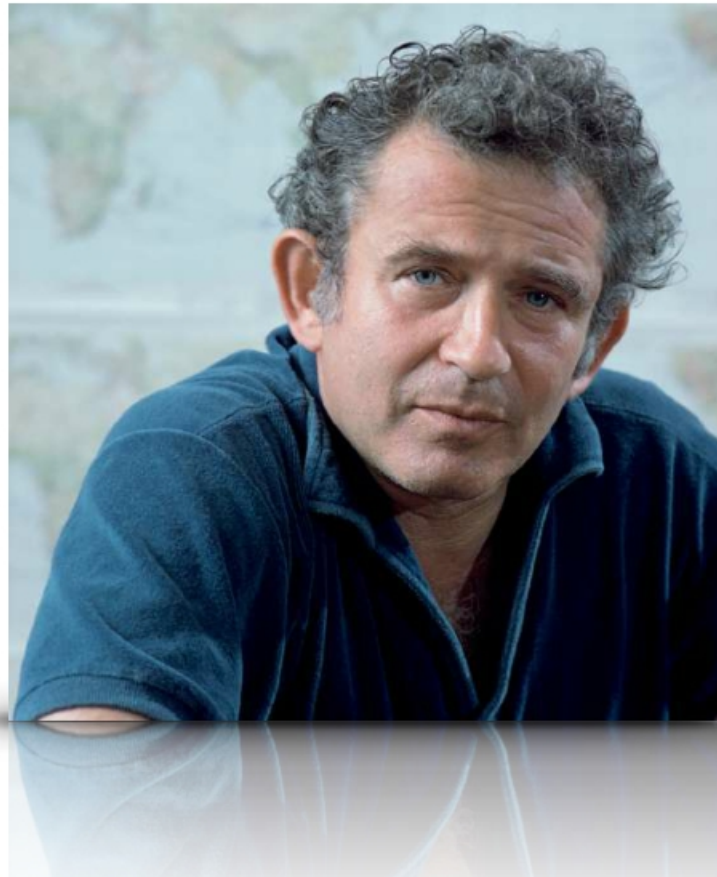
The World Wars created a void which engulfed almost every American. People felt so suffocated in this new money culture of America that they lost their sanity and rationality and became trapped and miserable neurotic denizens. By losing their spirituality, they lose the real meaning of life. Though almost every protagonist of Heller has all the facilities of life, still they are in need of something which can make them happy and give them the solace which they crave for. They are like a deer who listlessly wanders in search of musk, unaware of the fact that the fragrance for which it seeks is in fact inside it. Likewise the protagonists are those shattered beings who are unaware of the reality that the true happiness lies within them, rooted in their faith. They fail to realise that every comfort of life seems useless when we discard virtues and disconnect ourselves from our roots. In reality, the very crux of their well-being and happiness is faith.

The American Dream was to be religiously free and materialistically sound. It was built on the idea of success that comes from firstly, having virtue and deep faith in God, and secondly, applying oneself with all his potential to transform his opportunity into prosperity, to be an inventive and resourceful individual and self-reliant. But unfortunately, due to death, destruction, and disillusionment stemmed from the world wars, Dollar became the God of America. No wonder American myth of success turned into nightmare due to the forces of nihilism and spiritual decadence. With the coming of world wars, the so-called New Eden disintegrated into a hellish wasteland.

Joseph Heller has portrayed the humanity as feeling hopeless, bewildered, and anxious. The trapped protagonists of his novels are the victims of absurdity and anxiety of life. They are sick and decadent and are spiritual derelicts. Socio-economic forces further led to the emergence of the anti-hero of his novels. They are lost souls lacking in heroic strength of character. The protagonists are slaves of their desires and cogs in the cruel system. Heller projects them as a sorry product of social conditions.

## Chapter 4 Norman Mailer's Trapped Protagonists and their Spiritual Void

Norman Kingsley Mailer  
1923-2007



Norman Mailer became a very popular literary figure among contemporary writers with the publication of his debut book *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). He has been considered as one of America's most prolific writers. Most of the critics believed that he produced remarkable works in which he depicted the true picture of contemporary America. Throughout his career, Mailer's work became more and more radical. *Barbary Shore* (1951) and *The Deer Park* (1955) started the social assault which characterises Mailer's later works. In the late part 1960's, the Vietnam Conflict was the center point of Mailer's most renowned argument in the New Journalistic Style, *The Armies of the Night* (1968) earned both the Pulitzer Prize in fiction and a National Book Award in 1968. In this novel, he recounted his participation in contemporary occasions from a third person standpoint, addressing to the main character as "Mailer." In his novels, Mailer investigates the inconsistency that seems to occur between the individual and the universe: the incongruity between ethical choice and political practicality or between the artist and the corrupt and tyrannical exterior energies. Mailer tries to solve this predicament by creating the thought that the self is always a fiction in so far as it depends upon a continuously altering environment for its meaning.

Mailer's debut novel, *The Naked and the Dead* is a far-reaching, insightful, strongly painted and true-to-life novel. This novel skillfully arouses the brutality of war: the hotness, the wetness, the stench, the horror, the foolishness, the decadence, and the non-redemptive hell of the battlefield.

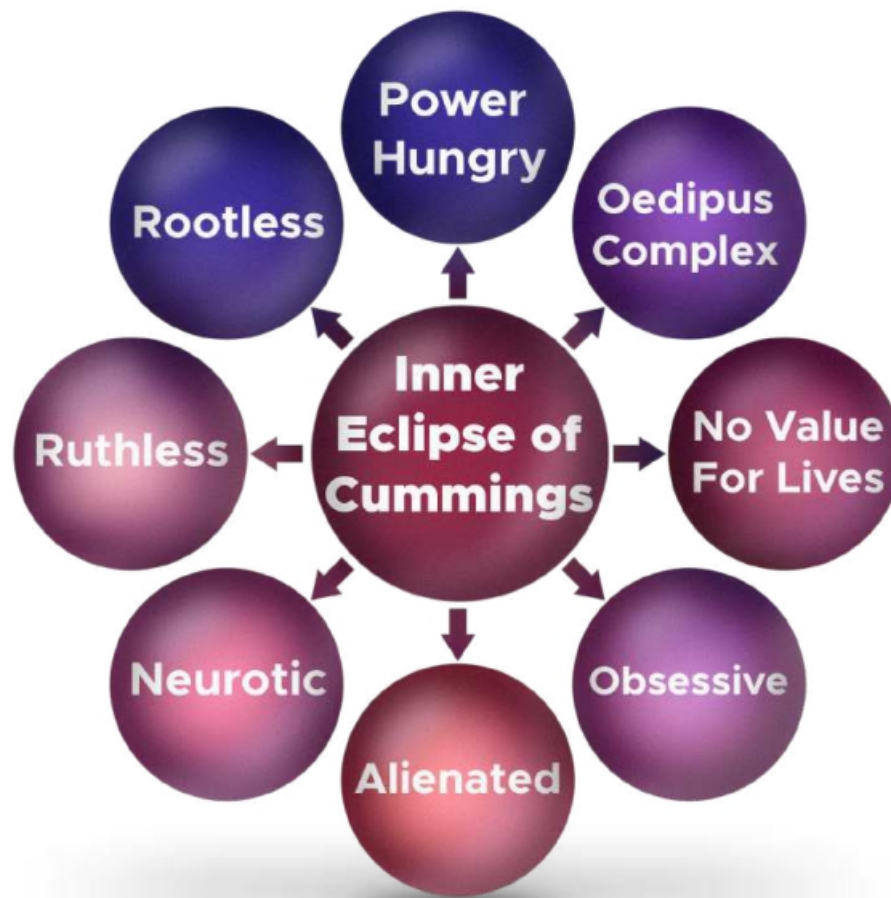


Fig. 4.1: Neurotic and Trapped Self of Cummings

“‘No, but why is Croft that way?’

... It is because he has renounced God’” (Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 165).

Mailer was merely twenty-five years old when *The Naked and The Dead* (1948) it was released but it “immediately established itself as the best American novel about World War II and a masterpiece of realism” (McConnell 65). The work presents a petrifying panorama of men at war, and the war, as the reader observes it in the novel, is used as a “mirror of vaster social and historical issues, issues that pertain to the kind of world men must live in when the battles are finally won or lost” (Hassan 92).

Mailer himself had been in the military after passing out from Harvard with the resolution to compose an epic war novel. By observing battles and understanding the fundamentals of the military organisation, he could discover a true setting for his



composition. He participated intentionally as a private even if - as a Harvard graduate - he could have effortlessly become an officer, but he was reluctant to be put behind a desk in an office and never observe combat (Mills 76). The novel is grounded fundamentally on the letters he wrote to his spouse at the time of the war and the characters of the novel were based upon real men in Mailer's platoon. As one of his fellow soldiers remarked, when asked whether he could recall any of the details in the composition: "I recognised all of it. Some characters, he didn't even bother to change their names" (Mills 83).

The character Lieutenant Hearn has been thought to be based on Mailer himself. Hearn - a liberal Harvard man - hates the other officers. The instance when Hearn gets disgraced by the General- by having to pick up a cigarette butt from the ground - represents a real-life circumstance in Mailer's life when he found himself "crawfishing" before his own superiors and experienced similar self-hatred that Hearn does in the novel (Mills 80).

The novel is split into four parts. Number one is called "Wave" and it introduces the soldiers of the platoon. It begins from the starting of the occupation to the very first slaughter on the beach. The following part is called "Argil and Mold". This is the that segment shows the maturation of the disputes between the soldiers within the military hierarchy. The men, symbolised as "argil" are prey of the "mold", which is the conflict and war (Vidal 97). Part three, named "Plant and Phantom" houses the climax of the story, the tale of the recon platoon. The last part of the novel, "Wake", is a very concise epilogue about the "mopping up", the ending of the campaign, with the last remark given to the most improbable of all characters, the vapid Major Dalleson.

When *The Naked and the Dead* was released in the year 1948, the composition gave Norman Mailer immense critical and commercial fame. In fact, it gained the highest position on The New York Times Bestseller List for 11 continuous weeks. Most critics, like C. J. Rolo, an Atlantic reviewer, regarded the composition to be "the most impressive piece of fiction to date about Americans in the Second World War" (Rolo 114). Critic Raymond J. Wilson III has discussed about Control, Freedom and

Existentialism in *the Naked and the Dead* remarking that the novel “presents a complex interaction of opposites: pessimistic naturalism forming the backdrop for the emergence of existential assumptions containing a strong element of hope” (Wilson 164).

Nigel Leigh has highlighted the dilemma of power in the novel says that “*The Naked and the Dead*, and the repressed, though deeply felt, mythic concern with styles of vitalism and voluntaristic conceptions of self and power” (Leigh 2). David Dempsey remarked in *The New York Times* that it is “undoubtedly the most ambitious novel to be written about the recent conflict, it is also the most ruthlessly honest and in scope and in integrity compares favourable with the best that followed World War I” (Dempsey 6). Richard Match asserted in his review in the *New York Herald Tribune*, “With this one astonishing book ... [Mailer] joins the ranks of major American novelists” (Match 3). Several reviews focused on the novel's realistic account of the war. Some commentators deemed the language and subject matter shocking.

Donald Wasson states: “This is an exceptionally fine book ... the language employed is very strong and so accurately reported that it probably will offend many and may create problems in handling” (Wasson 707). While on one hand critics express contempt on the book’s verbosity, most admire what Ira Wolfert states as Mailer's “remarkable gift for storytelling.” In addition, Wolfert claims that the novel exhibits that Norman Mailer has “poetry in him and ideas” (Wolfert 722).

Dempsey states that the publication of Mailer’s debut novel “bears witness to a new and significant talent among American novelists”(Dempsey 6). Norman Podhoretz admiring the book wrote “*The Naked and The Dead* ... shows an exceptionally gifted young writer in the years immediately after the war...” (Podhoretz 179). Burgess wrote “..*The Naked and The Dead* is the most massive picture America has given us of the futility of war, ...” (Burgess 49) saying that it is Kafkaesque and filled with mysterious symbols and intrigue. Richard Foster observed that war is an external theme of the novel, the internal subject matter being “crisis in

human values-identity, humanity, man, and the nature of enemies in our time” (Foster 9).

Philips H. Buftis notes that Norman Mailer in *The Naked and the Dead* “conveys the tribulations of war with almost scathing objectivity” (Buftis 18). Alfred Kazin declared *The Naked and the Dead* as “Probably still the best novel about Americans at war” (Kazin 27). Ihab Hassan writes “ Rigid, even static, the surface of *The Naked and the Dead* conceals violent life underneath” (Hassan 97). The critic Stanley Gutman describes *The Naked and the Dead* as “an attempt to present a dilemma of power from a variety of perspectives” (Gutman 17). Robert Solotaroff notes that *The Naked and the Dead* is a “tangle of stale borrowings and exhilarating discoveries, obligations and assertions, shrewdnesses and gaucheries” (Solotaroff 3). McConnel discusses how the novel represents the haunting sense of inauthenticity that is the besetting disease of the twentieth-century man (McConnel 28).

General Cummings is the leader in the American army attempting to defeat Japanese troops on the fictitious Pacific island of Anopopei. Cummings is a West Pointer, a career soldier who believed that America is fated to become the next imperial authority and that the Army, which will play a significant part in the subsequent years, can be his track to the prestige he needs. As a little boy, Cummings was under the influence of his mother, who taught him how to sew and took him for walks outside the town so that he could watch her paint. His father, however, sent him to a military school to “let him git some jism in his system”(Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 407), and it seems that the military routine does the work, as he loses interest in the “watercolours, the books like *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *Ivanhoe* and *Oliver Twist*” (407). The strongest drive in Cummings’ life is a compulsive urge to become omnipotent. Cummings fixation on having absolute control over his troops and on knowing how best to employ them becomes a compensation for his inability to prove his healthy heterosexual drive in the relation with his wife Margaret. He tries to overcome a deep-seated sense of helplessness by becoming so powerful that he will be impervious to attack. His obsession indicates a man whose most fervent desire is

for victory over the father figure. On a visit to the front during the first World War, he becomes interested in the potential power of his career in the army:

...There were all those men, and there had been someone above them, changing perhaps forever the fiber of their lives. In the darkness he looks blankly at the fields tantalised by the largest vision that has entered his soul. There were things one could do. To command all that. He is choked with the intensity of his emotion, the rage, the exhalation, the undefined and mighty hunger. (739)

By the time of the second World War, Cummings has achieved the rank of General and has gone far in his quest. Cummings seeks the concentration of power in the military. He is driven by deep ambition; each step up the military ladder gives him more control over men and material. He is far more than a simple-minded military man; he realises that power, and the quest for power, is the most significant element in modern events. For him the Second World War is not a struggle between forces of right and wrong or even a competition between differing alien ideologies: "You're misreading history if you see this war as a grand revolution. It's power concentration" (186).

Cummings' deepest desire is to emerge from the war in a position to manipulate this immense and consolidated power; the Army is a vehicle for gaining this objective. Both Cummings and Croft are men captured by a vision of power; they believe that the man who has power has the freedom to remake the world, to control his own destiny as well as the destiny of others. Their dreams, their fantasies, their hopes, their aspirations- all yearn for omnipotence. Cummings verbalises what Croft only feels:

'There's that popular misconception of man as something between a brute and an angel. Actually man is in transit between brute and God.' 'Man's deepest urge is omnipotence?'

'Yes... To achieve God. When we come kicking into the world, we are God, the universe is the limit of our senses. And when we get older,

when we discover that the universe is not us, it's the deepest trauma of our existence.' (337)

An essay on *The Naked and the Dead* by Andrew Gordon calls attention to the Oedipal meaning of the passage (Gordon 55). Although such interpretation is undoubtedly valid, the passage also reveals the pre-Oedipal layer of the General's conflicts. Cummings is actually saying that the deepest trauma is the one an infant experiences when he discovers that he and the universe, the infant's equivalent of the mother, are not the same. Cummings uses intellectual defences to hide from his own life-long trauma at the separation from his mother. The infantile trauma and the fear of the castrating father induce a sense of helplessness in Cummings which he retains in his adult life. In Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), she writes, "trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flash-backs, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth 91).

Trauma bypasses conscious awareness at the time that it occurs only to manifest belatedly in intrusive and repetitive symptoms. Accordingly, the overwhelming immediacy of trauma gives rise to its belated uncertainty. A traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual's ability to cope, and leaves that person fearing death, annihilation, mutilation, or psychosis. The individual may feel emotionally, cognitively, and physically overwhelmed. In her book *Self-Analysis* (1942), Horney outlined her theory of neurosis, describing different types of neurotic behaviour of the neurotic patients. Horney observes that the neurotic needs for power, prestige, and affection lead to neurosis. Horney further adds in her book *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) thus:

While he can succeed this way in creating a kind of artificial equilibrium, new conflicts are constantly generated and further remedies are continually required to blot them out. Every step in this struggle for unity makes the neurotic more hostile, more helpless, more fearful, more alienated from himself. (Horney 19)

The fantasy of becoming God is his unsatisfactory attempt to compensate for Cummings' nagging sense of inadequacy. In relation, Karen Horney states: "The neurotic striving for power, however, is born out of anxiety, hatred, and feeling of inferiority. To put it categorically, the normal striving for power is born of strength, the neurotic of weakness"(Horney 63).

Cummings' utterance, "Man had to destroy God in order to achieve Him, equal Him" (Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 411), is merely another expression of the General's wish to supplant the father, thereby having the mother for himself.

So great is Cummings' desire for omnipotence that any frustration is perceived as emasculation. When he realises that a war attack is not going the way he wishes, his feelings are quite revealing:

The shock cut deeply into the General's confidence. The process at most times was unbelievable to him, and he was suffering the amazement and terror of a driver who finds his machine directing itself, starting and halting when it desires. He had heard of this, military lore was filled with such horror tales, but he had never imagined it would happen to him... No matter how he folded them now the men always collapsed into a sodden resistant mass like dishrags, too soft, too wet to hold any shape which might be given them. At night he would lie sleepless in his cot, suffering an almost unbearable frustration; there were times when he was burning with impotence of his rage. (314-15)

The dominant imagery of the passage is sexual. Although Cummings is thinking about the campaign, his unconscious feelings suggest his inability to control his erection. The shock "cuts deeply" implies the castration feelings he is experiencing while the reference to the driver who, in his "horror," finds his "machine directing itself," expresses the General's failure to maintain his erection. This is developed further when the General thinks of troops as "an extension of his own body," which suggests that men under his control are part of his gigantic phallus. However, he finds that he has "lost his sensitive control" over his penis. The

“extension of his body” has now “collapsed,” and like “dishrags,” it has become “too soft.”

The General’s sexual failure is stated explicitly when he burns “with the impotence of his rage.” Although impotent, he tries to control his erection through masturbation, “his hands clasping and unclasping endlessly.” The intent is more evident when the author describes Cummings as looking at a ridgepole of his tent as he performs masturbatory hand motions. The passage points up the General’s basic conflict. In his impotent rage against the father, he turns to the army as an outlet where he might gain power. Obsessed with unconscious fantasies of phallic power, he hopes to be able to achieve an erection far greater than his father’s. When he fails, he regresses to an emotionally infantile state where the only power can be achieved through masturbation. On another level, it may be questioned whether the General actually wants the omnipotence he so strenuously searches for. In hoping to depose God, he is presenting himself with an unattainable goal. Paradoxically, he desires to replace God, but his guilt feelings assure his failure, thus reinforcing his self-induced impotence.

In his hunger for power, Sergeant Croft is the enlisted man most similar to Cummings. Staff Sergeant Sam Croft, a tough Texan who rules the I and R platoon until Hearn is assigned to it. He has matured in the tough life of small-town West Texas and discovered his greatest delight in fighting and in hunting. He murdered his first man while on strike-breaking mission with the National Guard and found it exciting. He rules the platoon with an iron hand, cowing everyone but Valsen, whom he recognizes as a natural leader.

The “time machine” biography states that Croft “hated weakness and loved practically nothing” (165). An early incident in his life serves to illustrate a vital trait in his make-up. On a hunting trip with his father, the boy tracks a deer into the woods and is about to shoot when it is killed by Croft’s father. The boy flies into a rage, even trying to strike his father, while the sadistic man laughs at his son’s helplessness. From childhood on, the competition with the father figure is so activated that he cannot “stand to have anyone beat him in anything” (166).

Croft's desire for power makes him a natural leader who is deeply feared by the men in the platoon. When General Cummings thinks up a plan for the reconnaissance mission deep into the rear of the Pacific island they are on, Croft's platoon is assigned, but Croft must relinquish the leadership to Hearn. What follows is a subtle struggle for power between the two men. Ultimately Croft withholds information about the enemy's position from Hearn, who then leads the platoon into danger and is himself killed.

The reader is introduced to Croft on the second page of the novel, where he is engaging in a card game just prior to the invasion on Anopopei. As he plays the game, he "knows" he is going to win: "Somehow, he knew he was going to pull a seven or a ten for a full house. Croft didn't question it. A certainty as vivid as this one had to mean something" (18). Consequently, he is bewildered when he finds that he is wrong. Later on, after the invasion, Croft leads the men while they are on beach patrol. He notices Hennessey, one of the platoon members, and comments to himself that the "boy is too careful" (38). Suddenly, with a passionate certainty he thought, "Hennessey's going to get killed today" (39). This time Croft is certain. Later that day when Hennessey is killed during the Japanese attack, Croft broods over the event:

His reaction was similar to the one he felt at the moment he discovered his wife was unfaithful. At that instant, before his rage and pain had begun to operate, he had felt only a numb throbbing excitement and the knowledge that his life was changed to some degree and certain things would never be the same. He knew that again now. Hennessey's death had opened to Croft vistas of such omnipotence that he was afraid to consider it directly. All day the fact hovered above his head, tantalising him with odd dreams and portents of power. (49)

Croft's quest for omnipotence is perceived most clearly on the reconnaissance patrol, especially after Hearn's death. Before his death, Hearn had promised the men he would go back to base by heading for the shore and awaiting patrol boats. As soon as Croft takes over, he disregards the Lieutenant's orders, telling the men they must scale the forbidden Mt. Anaka in order to get back to headquarters. Croft's decision is



worthless from a military standpoint, but he is driven by the attraction the mountain has for him.

Croft's desire for omnipotence has the same oedipal origins as Cummings'. In its size, the mountain represents the father's phallus which Croft, feeling deprived of, wants for himself. Only by scaling the mountain can he engage in primitive battle with the father. Croft is inhumane most of the time, he has an immense hunger for power, and he is a man driven by the neuroses that, like those which motivate most of the other characters in the novel, are predominantly sexual in origin. Time and again he shows no compassion for the men in his platoon, for their weaknesses, their weariness, their anxiety, their pain. This is most evident in his maniacal effort to push the platoon up the mountain, as if his sheer will were enough, and in his wanton display of power and cruelty he crushes the bird Roth had discovered and tried to take care for. The Time Machine passage devoted to Croft emphasises that Croft's desire for power grows out of his feeling of sexual inferiority and impotence: "There's one thing you ain't best in, she screams. Croft stands there trembling and then wrenches out of the room. (Goddam whore)" (172).

He revels in combat-"I tell you Croft loves combat, he loves it" (27)- because it gives him a sense of control, over himself and the men he commands, and the men whom he must face. "Leading the men was a responsibility he craved; he felt powerful and certain at such moments" (38). After Croft realises that warfare offers an opportunity to exercise power, he seeks it: "He hungered for the fast taut pulse he would feel in his throat after he killed a man" (153).

Thus Croft decides he must climb Mount Anaka. The mountain symbolises for him the limits of the natural world and by extension all the limits that govern human existence, social and natural. Karen Horney states that

the neurotic striving for power serves as a protection against the danger of feeling or being regarded as insignificant. The neurotic develops a rigid and irrational ideal of strength which makes him believe he should be able to master any situation, no matter how difficult, and should master it right away. This ideal becomes linked with pride, and

as a consequence the neurotic considers weakness not only as a danger but also as a disgrace. He classifies people as either "strong" or "weak," admiring the former and despising the latter. (Horney 166-67)

Croft decides that he must attack and conquer the peak; to this end he sets up Hearn's death, allows Wilson and Roth to die in the process of his personal confrontation with the mountain, exerts all his power and will to move the men, afflicted with the inertia and fear of all soldiers, up the steep slopes.

Like Ahab from *Moby Dick*, Croft has a monomania, an obsession :

Behind him Mount Anaka bored into his back as if it were a human thing. He turned around and stared at it soberly, feeling again the crude, inarticulate thrill it always gave him. He was going to climb it; he swore to himself ... And they had to get up. (Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 661)

These compulsions aren't heroic; they reveal Croft's descent into the depths of his neuroses and obsession. According to Horney, "the neurotic will desire to have control over others as well as himself" (Horney 167).

He flouts madness, he confronts those fearful tensions which lie buried beneath the layers of human psyche. Hearn recognises this but chooses to avoid the ambiguities that Croft's actions arouse :

The face was consecrated for that instant, the thin lips parted, the nostrils flared. For an instant he felt as if he had peered into Croft, looked down into the abyss... You couldn't trust Croft. Somehow there was reassurance in stating it so banally. (Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 514-15)

Despite apparently ample sexual prowess, Croft cannot satisfy his wife, who is depicted in the midst of the sexual act as saying in boldfaced capitals "I'LL KILL YOU IF YOU STOP" (Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 170). The impossibility of Croft's task is revealed by the exchange of conversation that follows her statement. Croft asks, "Who's your man?" (170). His choosing the word "man" implies the limitations of his humanity; but she insists that he be a "fuggin machine" (170). Under

the American ethos, Croft must verbally acquiesce, but no one could meet this mechanistic standard. Thus frustrated, Croft appears to be following the same pattern as all the other characters, turning toward a social hierarchy and serving its end-violence in the case of the wartime army. When his wife leaves him, Croft joins the National Guard because “they'll be some women hangin' round the uniforms, an' ya git to do a lot of shootin'. . . . The first time Croft ever killed a man he was in a National Guard uniform. There was a strike on at Lilliput in the oil fields” (169). With a gun in his hand Croft could feel like a giant despite the fact that his wife had made him feel small, sexually. There is no Lilliput, Texas, listed in the Rand McNally Road Atlas, nor even in the Handbook of Texas, which lists hamlets and ghost towns, so we can assume that Mailer, half-jokingly perhaps, meant to evoke Swift's Gulliver to dramatise that Croft's "main cast of mind was a superior contempt toward nearly all other men" (165).

Croft's situation is also similar to the General's in the ambivalence he felt about his success. In setting his sights so high, Croft can only thwart his own aspirations. On an unconscious level, this is what he wants, since success would be tantamount to the fulfilment of his deepest incest wishes. When the platoon is picked up by the patrol boats, Croft takes one last look at the mountain: “Deep inside himself Croft was relieved that he had not been able to climb the mountain. . . . Croft was rested by the unadmitted knowledge that he had found a limit to his hunger” (Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 720).

*The Naked and the Dead* depicts the naked reality of contemporary America, especially the themes of moral decadence and spiritual void. Through the novel, Mailer conveys the quintessential message of life: The immoral quest for power and prestige has created a pandemonium which has made the human condition miserable. The propagators and leaders of the war had lost their morality and thus discarded the idea of God. They had killed God in search of becoming omnipotent themselves. Cummings, who is the commander of the division, is supposed to guide the soldiers is himself a neurotic trapped in this race for omnipotence. His actions are not fuelled by care for his men or their lives, but simply for the purpose of cultivating power. When

he learns that Hearn might disobey him, he threatens to have him court-martialled. In his hunger for power, he has denounced God, patriotism and morality. By this, a void is created in him, which eats him up from the inside. Despite the power he already possesses, he doesn't feel a moment of true happiness in his life. Alienated from all, he is stuck in his own labyrinth since his pursuit is fake, corrupt and immoral because it lacks the very essence of the American Dream: To achieve greatness with hard- work, faith, and morality. The army men for him are nothing but fodder to feed his desires for prestige. Similarly, Croft is so obsessed with his ambition for power that in order to gain complete control of the platoon, he gets Hearn killed by passing the wrong information to him. His unquenchable thirst for power makes him a neurotic. He too like Cummings has no value for God and goodness. He seems to be possessed by the Devil; a person who can put anything on stake for his will to have power. Human life- the most precious thing in this world- has no value in his eyes as he doesn't hesitate to sacrifice it to fulfil his whims and fancies. Since he goes on working against virtues and morality, he gets trapped in the cycle of power politics. His hunger for prestige takes him far from spirituality and makes him a psychopath: having no value for love, emotions and life. His callousness towards the members of his platoon and his neurotic condition stand to prove his spiritual void. The cunning plan of getting Hearn killed, the brutal killing of an innocent bird and the cold- blooded murder of a Japanese prisoner by him, show his bloodthirsty and psychopathic traits.

This pursuit of power without morals which had originally led to the war, further became widespread as the common man too was dragged into misery, leading him to denounce God as well. Thus a vicious circle of immorality and faithlessness was created in and by the war, leading to death, destruction and depression.

Almost all members of the platoon have lost their faith in God, owing to the hellish landscape created by the World War and The Great Depression. Most of the soldiers join the army in hopes of becoming war heroes as they “wanted to do big things” (Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 103), but when they face the ugly realities, they are traumatised and suffer from depression and shock. The island of Anopopei,

which presented itself as a bright vision, proves to be a nightmare. It is the mysterious world in which men live, working in unfathomable ways to confuse, terrify, and destroy them:

He had had vague dreams about being a hero, assuming this would bring him some immense reward which would ease his life and remove the problems of supporting his mother and himself. He had a girl and he wanted to dazzle her with his ribbons. (143)

Although they are accompanied by thousands of fellow soldiers, all of them become loners, starving for positive human relationships. The already fragile faith which they were having prior to the war is shattered like bone china by the explosions of war. The void thus created annihilates their true self. They become afflicted with pessimism and nihilism and are driven by fear rather than patriotism or virtue.

Upon analysing the novels, the present researcher finds that all the characters are suffering from a void. It has been observed that almost all the characters and protagonists are conscious of their spiritual void. Roth, a soldier, says “God is a luxury I don’t give myself” (Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* 61). Red Valsen declares “...I don’t believe in God” (233). As the sceptical and trivial racketeer Polack answers to the inquiry, “Listen, Polack, you think there's a God?” (623) which the young, immature Wyman blurts out to him as they are about to resume their climb of the mountain, “If there is, he sure is a sonofabitch” (623). Cummings doesn’t believe in a God, instead he thinks that humans themselves are capable and wish to become omnipotent. God in his eyes is not the epitome of morality and ethics, but merely an illustration of omnipotence that he wants to achieve.

When we come kicking into the world, we are God, the universe is the limit of our senses. And when we get older, when we discover that the universe is not us, it’s the deepest trauma of our existence. (337)

All of these proposals of an inimical paranormal deity receive their harshest articulation in a passage of intensely ironic juxtaposition. As Red sees the battleground debris of broken tanks appearing like lizard skeletons and of decaying cadavers without limbs and heads, he contemplates to himself, “The way a bunch of

ants would kill each other” (226). Simultaneously in the battalion region Wyman is busy in troubling a caterpillar, which he has killed with a twig and then subjected to the burning heat of a cigarette near it. The religious and simple-minded Southern deprived farmer, the uneducated Ridges, informs him that is no way to treat a "bug," and they get involved in an argument about killing "bugs" and murdering Japanese.

Ridges points out that the Japanese, as idolaters, can be murdered by Christians, but he is disturbed by the inquiries that are raised until he gets an idea that, although beside the point, is soothing, and the following conversation takes place:

‘You believe man got a soul?’ he asked Wyman. I don't know. What the hell is a soul?’ ... "The soul's what leaves a man after he dies--that's what goes up t' heaven ..." ‘Who the hell knows,’ Wyman said. He felt philosophical. The insect was dying under the last handful of earth he had poured over it. (228)

Red's contrast between armies of men and that of ants, the philosophical discussion about the killing of insects and the killing of men, like the scholarly dialogue on a higher rank between Cummings and Hearn as Cummings sent soldiers to their demise, or like those which might happen on a still higher rank among an all-powerful General Cummings and his second, the writhings of the caterpillar infliction by Wyman and the corpses on the battleground "frozen in the midst of an intense contortion” (219) all forcibly remind one of the words in *King Lear* of the blinded Gloucester in his pain, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;/They kill us for their sport” (Shakespeare, *King Lear* 4.1.37–38).

Due to the absolute death and destruction of the war, God for these soldiers, had become a cruel practical joker whose only reason for making men suffer is his own sport.

The novel makes clear the fact that men cannot or will not triumph over nature: Croft fails to climb Anaka, Cummings is thwarted by a storm. These personal defeats are, in some measure, required by the naturalistic viewpoint from which the novel is written. This goes on to show that when the harmony between Nature and

Man is destroyed by Man, the one to suffer is man himself since the idea of God ceases to exist in his heart and eventually the society.

In *The Naked and the Dead* there is no more, only less. There is either Hearn, a failure, or Cummings and Croft, both trapped in the pursuit for power. Thus Mailer concentrates, in the later stages of the novel, on two ordinary human beings, Ridges and Goldstein, who respond with courage to the difficult situation that confronts them. They, like the other protagonists are trapped as well, but unlike them, their trapped nature is not a product of their own actions but of the spiritually decadent environment of the war. Ridges is the son of a poor white southern farmer, and Goldstein emerged from a protected existence in an urban Jewish Ghetto. What they have in common is their willingness to do what must be done, to accept suffering with courage, to endure bravely what they cannot conquer.

It is Red Valsen who most clearly realises the value of endurance. "In the war you keep on moving.... But if you stop and quit moving you die" ( Mailer, *The Naked and The Dead* 244). Red has kept moving all his life, but in doing so he has crippled himself. He is so accustomed to moving with the current that he is unable to find the courage and stamina to resist Croft effectively. Red frames a metaphor of existence which is similar to Camus' conception of Sisyphus and his rock, but he ultimately fails to keep pushing and gives up. " You keep rolling along and you never know what the hell the score is. When you're a kid they can't tell you a damn thing, and when you ain't a kid no more there's nothing new for you. You just got to keep pushing it, you don't look back" (245).

Ridges and Goldstein, less perceptive than Red, instinctively do what should have been done: they resist the power that threatens them; they seek to endure whatever the world will bring to bear on them. Four men are picked to carry the wounded Wilson back to safety; they must carry their burden over miles of ground on a makeshift stretcher, and then flung through almost impenetrable jungle before they can reach their destination. Brown and Stanely drop off along the way, and Ridges and Goldstein must struggle on with their burden, alone. Both men feel they have a

task to perform, and despite their exhaustion and the physical obstacles which confront them, they strive to perform it.

In the end they fail. Wilson dies, the body they have carried so diligently lost in the river, and they stagger onto the beach exhausted and unsuccessful. But both continue. And in their continuation, in their resistance and endurance, they offer something of value: if not success, at least endurance. This does not really solve the trapped nature of the protagonists or the dilemma of power which Mailer writes about, it does not promise control over one's own life and environment. Mailer's protagonists never win; they survive. Yet there is a small core of strength and consolidation to be found in men who carry their burdens, suffer with courage, and persist in their efforts to endure.

The American society is an inchoate form of the Army. *The Naked and the Dead's* narrator says that initially free people "breathe the American fables," an action which begins a process that prepares the characters to accept controlling situations. "Breathing" is an apt metaphor because the attempt to reduce the complicated process to concise statements resembles an attempt to grab that very air. Yet there exist illuminative myths in the writings's depiction of American community which state that anyone can be successful- sexually and materially; like the way oxygen in a living person's body, those myths diffuse the minds of the compositions's characters, penetrating their fundamental personalities. However, according to the novel's pattern, the myths demand the unattainable and thus give rise to exasperation in humans who do not know how to face the unattainable, creating a crisis that leads many Americans into obtaining their sense of self from their stand on a competitive promotion ladder. *The Naked and the Dead* shows the army as such a hierarchical structure, and the novel proposes that the army is not an remote aberration but rather a prototype, a prophecy of the direction American community is taking, driven by the myth of success.





Fig. 4.2: Eitel: Eclipsed and Divided Self

*“The essence of spirit, he thought to himself, was to choose the thing which did not better one's position but made it more perilous”* (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 257).

The fictional world of Mailer's third novel, *The Deer Park* (1995), presents mankind drifting downwards into moral darkness. Desert D'or, modern counterpart of deer park which was Louis XV's orgiastic playground, reveals a counterfeit paradise concealing a hell on earth. Nathan A. Scott says, “the novel wants, of course, to suggest that this infernal playground of Louis XV may be taken as a metaphor of the Deer Park, or jungle, which America has itself become, now that its moralities and patterns of life are rooted in a malaise -of agnes and calenture - not unlike that long ago prevailed at Versailles” (Scott 65). The desert actually serves as a metaphor for the spiritual and sexual wasteland that the resort really represents.

*The Deer Park* was begun in the spring of 1952 in a rented studio room in an old building of Ovington Studios, on Fulton Street in Brooklyn, about half a mile from the rooming house where he wrote *The Naked and the Dead*. Drawn from his Hollywood experience two years earlier when McCarthyism was strong and Mailer's political radicalism was acute, the novel has a political framework. In December 1952

Mailer handed in the manuscript to Stanley Rinehart with subtitle “A Search for the Obscene.” But most of the editors who read it were not pleased. Then in May 1954, after a year of strenuous work on the second draft of the novel, Mailer again showed it to his publisher. Rinehart’s reception was almost as chilly this time as it had been earlier. The book was rejected for its sexual frankness. Stanley Rinehart, however, had no choice. He had entered into a contract according to which Rinehart and company had to pay Mailer his ten thousand dollar advance whether they published the book or not. By November, the first advertisement for *The Deer Park* was given to Publisher’s Weekly. Then, with less than three months before publication, Stanley Rinehart told Mailer he would have to delete six lines of the vague description of fellatio between Herman Teppis and the call girl. Since Mailer wanted the original words to be retained, Stanley Rinehart stopped publication of the book and broke Mailer’s contract. Describing Mailer’s ordeal, Hilary Mills says:

...the celebrated author of *The Naked and the Dead* was undergoing this humiliating Odyssey through a total of seven publishing houses - including Harper and Row, Simon & Schuster, and Harcourt Brace - G.P Putnam’s Sons suddenly voiced interest in the novel” (Mills 156). It was finally G.P Putnam’s Sons which published the book. Mailer himself says that “the eighth house was G.P Putnam’s. I didn’t want to give it to them, I was planning to go next to Viking, but Walter Minton kept saying “Give us three days. We’ll give you a decision in three days.” So we sent it over to Putnam, and in three days they took it without conditions, and without a request for a single change. (Mills 198)

Recounting his ordeal while trying to publish *The Deer Park*, Mailer says:

...taking *The Deer Park* into the nervous system of eight publishing houses was not so good for my own nervous system, nor was it good for getting to work on my new novel. In the ten weeks it took the book to travel the circuit from Rinehart to Putnam, I squandered the careful energy I had been hoarding for months; there was a hard comedy at

how much of myself I would burn up in a few hours of hot telephone calls I had never had any sense for practical affairs, but in those days, carrying *The Deer Park* from house to house, I stayed as close to it as a stage-struck mother pushing her child forward at every producer's office. (198-199)

Mailer felt vigorously hysterical beyond his expectations immediately after the publication of *The Deer Park* :“ I had laughed like an old pirate at the indignation I had breezed into being with an equation of sex and time” (211).

The reviews it received were mixed. John Brooke writing for The New York Time Book Review remarks that he “found *The Deer Park* considerably more wholesome than a good many popular movies” (Brooke 5). According to Mailer, the strongest statement was made by John Hutchens in The New York Daily Herald Tribune:

...the original version reputedly was more or less rewritten and certain materials eliminated were deemed too erotic for public consumption. And with that, a book that might at least have made a certain reputation as a large choker wound up as a cipher... (qtd in Mailer, *Advertisements* 235)

Orville Prescott came out with a hostile statement in The New York Times: “*The Deer Park* in the last analysis is only a dreary story about the noisome affairs of a group of degenerate characters... Rarely have I been so glad to finish a book as I was when I finally reached the last page...” (qtd in Mailer, *Advertisements* 239). John Brooke wrote in favour of the novel for The Times Book Review : “though it is not a wholly successful novel, it is studded with brilliant and illuminating passages and , by and large, it is good reading...Mailer would seem to have the instincts of the artist, which is to say, among other things, that his approach to his material is at bottom moral” (Brooke 5). In spite of the adverse criticism, the book finally rose to number six on The New York Time best-seller list and sold over fifty-thousand copies.

*The Deer Park* has had multiple studies written about it, in which it has been analysed from myriads of perspectives. V.I. Korah has written about Mailer's writing

style in *The Deer Park* remarking that it is “Mailer’s search for a prose style which would measure up to his new stature as the founder and originator of a new genre in novel writing” (Korah 67). V. Chanthiramathi has discussed the Quest for self in the novel stating that “*The Deer Park* is a novel about growth and courage. In this novel Mailer poses the problem of how a man should live the real world, a world of suffering, cruelty, violence and death” (Chanthiramathi 20).

Devendra Singh Tomar has highlighted the alienation of the characters in the novel and written that the novel “re-examines the corruption and hypocrisy that characterise the phenomenon in modern American society” (Tomar 99). Hari Dutt has talked about absurdity in the novel, writing that Mailer “becomes the American Sisyphus, who possesses the ability to see the absurd in all situations which may liberate a man from his environment, a debased environment which otherwise would tailor his conscience and consciousness, including his hero’s into conformity with itself” (Dutt 87). R. Deepa has given a critique of *The Deer Park* in reference to Hollywood and its corrupt practices writing that “People cannot predict anything in the land of illusions, that is Hollywood” (Deepa 152). Anju Jain has elucidated upon The Quest for Self in *The Deer Park*, writing that “...in *The Deer Park* Mailer explores more fully the psychological aspects of human experience, the need for an intense exploration of the self” (Jain 100).

Although many writers and critics have written about the cut-throat landscape of Hollywood and the quest for self of the protagonists, no detailed study has been conducted on how the protagonists are trapped in the vicious glamour of Hollywood and how environment is spiritually decadent and immoral.

*The Deer Park* was originally conceived as the first book of an enormous eight-part novel. But even before he could finish it, he gave up the larger project and the novel was finally written in the present form. The novel is set in Desert D’or, a fictional resort town. It is a resort for Hollywood film colony in the Californian cactus wild, a couple of hundred miles from Hollywood. It is this region that Mailer chooses as his microcosm of the American society. The Desert D’or is an imitation of the “deer park” which was the name of Louis XV’s retreat. Sam Slavoda in “The Man

Who Studied Yoga” which was originally written as the prologue to the eight-volume novel thinks of the deer park of Louis XV as follows:

There they (the most beautiful maidens of France) stayed, dressed in fabulous silks, perfumed and wagged, the mole drawn upon their cheek, ladies of pleasure awaiting, the pleasure of the king. So Louis had stripped an empire, bankrupt a treasury, prepared a deluge, while in his garden on summer evening the maidens performed their pageants, eighteenth-century tableau of the evil act, beauteous instrument of one man’s desire, lewd translation of a king’s power.

(Mailer, *The Man who Studied Yoga* 162)

Mailer’s deer park is the favourite spot of certain Hollywood celebrities and their hangers-on. Mailer considered Hollywood as the modern version of the deer park of Louis XV “that gorge of innocence and virtue in which were engulfed so many victims who when they returned to society brought with them depravity, debauchery and all the vices that naturally acquired from the infamous officials of such a place” (qtd. in Thompson). The corruptness of this deer park says Jerry H. Bryant, “lies in its violation, not of innocent origins, but of the spontaneous self” (Bryant 377). Like Fitzgerald’s *The Last Tycoon*, which describes the corruption and decadence which permeate the American film industry, *Desert D’or*, the movie colony in *The Deer Park* suggests its desolation and artificiality.

Mouffle D’Angerville, quoted by Mailer in the Preface to *The Deer Park*, says: “Everything in this place is other than what it appears to be.” The harsh realities of that world go on outside the enclosed park and O’Shaugnessy, Faye, Eitel and Elena are the characters with the passion and consciousness to see through the appearances of *Desert D’or* to a reality which distinguishes sex from love, commercialisation from creativity and actions from sentiment.

Mailer describes :

It was a town built out of no other obvious motive than commercial profit and so no sign of commerce was allowed to appear. *Desert D’or* was without a main street, and its stores looked like anything but

stores. In those places which sold clothing, no clothing was laid out, and you waited in a modern living room while salesmen opened panels in the wall to exhibit summer suits... There was a jewelry store built like a cabin cruiser; from the street one peeped through a porthole to see a thirty-thousand-necklace hung on the silver antlers of a piece of driftwood. (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 2)

Desert D'or suggests its desolation and artificiality. It is "a place where no trees bear leaves... the bars, cocktail lounges, and night clubs, were made to look like a jungle, an underwater grotto, or the lounge of a modern movie theatre" (3,14). There was a sense of unpredictability in everyone's discussions and drinking in that air that one never knew whether it was night or day. Once inhabited by prospectors for gold who were looking for instant riches, the place is now an outgrowth of this earlier materialistic venture. The streets are now filled with the modern-day counterparts, "small sharp prospectors for pleasure" (4).

"Running along the heavy boat of a third-rate promoter trying to raise money, there would come the solo shriek of one hysterical blonde or another"(4). Andrew Gordon says that "sex and money are entwined in the rhetoric as both "the heavy boat" and "the solo shriek" are suggestive of intercourse" (Gordon 5). In *The Deer Park*, sex is the axis around which revolve all the characters, It is the yardstick used to gauge the talent of the people; it is the driving force which gives impetus to the creative urge and it is the means of escape from the irksome drudgery of work. The themes of sexual power and delight become a labyrinthine world in itself for the characters. In short, sex is the panacea for all the maladies of the characters. By depicting Desert D'or, Mailer discusses at length the death of morality in the postwar American society.

It is to this place that Sergius O'Shaugnessy arrives wearing his flying wings and first lieutenant's uniform with fourteen thousand dollars won at poker in a Tokyo hotel room just before he was flown home. He is a young, prospective writer with no roots. While Lovett in Barbary shore had suffered from amnesia, Sergius is an orphan. As a flier, he loved combat and boxed in the men's tournament. His temporary

impotence, like the amnesia of Lovett, is a war wound. In a tactical mission, he realised that he was only burning innocent men and women alive. The shock precipitated in a breakdown led him to impotence. The hour of dumping jellied gasoline did not affect him until he saw a Japanese K.P, a boy who had burned his arm in spilled soup. The boy with the burned arm continued to haunt him, aggravating his sense of guilt until he had a breakdown. He lay in a hospital bed for seven weeks and when he recovered, he was given medical discharge because his reflexes were blunted. With nowhere to go and “no family to visit” as he was orphaned in early childhood, Sergius comes to Desert D’or, diminished and spent. Here he poses as the product of a wealthy family from the East and that he even had a broken marriage “and drank to get over it” (5). This story which he tells about himself reflects the artificial environment.

O’Shaughnessy narrates the story, and the plot revolves around his experiences and encounters in the secluded desert city. He befriends former Hollywood director Charles Eitel and other celebrities. Supreme Studios blacklisted Eitel after he was uncooperative in front of a Senate Subversive Committee regarding his alleged communist ties. Like O’Shaughnessy, Eitel is at a crossroads in his life. He is in progress of creating a new script but is hesitant of his capabilities to create eloquent work. At the time Sergius meets him, Eitel is living in Desert D’or and is just beginning an affair with Elena Esposito, a dancer of great sensuality but little talent. As the novel progresses, the affair becomes increasingly important to Eitel, who realises he is in the midst of a fight against not only the powers of Hollywood, but also encroaching middle age. The demands he and Elena make on each other grow progressively more painful, and they finally separate. Eitel eventually agrees to testify before the congressional committee, Elena’s affair with the hipster Marion Faye leaves her in a hospital, and finally, in an act of resignation, Eitel and Elena marry.

The novel portrays three areas of institutional control: the military, the bureaucratic state, and the mass media-the last represented by Hollywood and the film industry. Mailer explores the media for the first time, using the film capital as his focus. Hollywood allows him to point to the trapped tendency in all areas of modern

life and moves the locus of social control away from the strict confines of the military-industrial-governmental establishment. By examining Hollywood, Mailer is also able to deal with the corruption of modern American myths as revealed in the celluloid dream fabricated by Hollywood. In this sense the novel is a precursor of *The American Dream*, which explores in detail the deterioration of the American myth.

The military appears in the novel only in the early pages. Sergius has been in the Air Force, but after many bombing missions, the sight of a child with the burned arm makes him realise the horror of what he is doing. "Fighting an enemy plane was impersonal and had the nice moves of all impersonal contests" (45), but Sergius suddenly realises that the result of this contest is personal suffering and pain. Here, once again, is Mailer's main concerns. In the modern age violence is impersonal, detached, and petty rather than heroic. The impersonal violence of the military forces Hearn to make a futile decision to change his life, Lovett to lose his memory, and Sergius to become impotent.

*The Deer Park* is a product of the McCarthy era and, more specifically, the dramatic investigation of Hollywood. Congressman Richard Selwyn Crane is thinly veiled Joe McCarthy, and the investigation that looms so importantly in Eitel's career is a fictional example of what was, for the Hollywood of the early 1950's, a common occurrence. Eitel's antagonistic stance in his appearance before the committee caused the unemployment and poverty with which he must currently cope, and his changing relations with the committee are an accurate barometer of both the state of his soul and the weakness of liberalism in America. This committee, as Mailer portrays it, powerfully influences all aspects of American life; its interest is not in security or safety or truth, but in the suppression of the independent will of American people.

Hollywood is the centre of the American Dream. It creates myths, and its life is the culmination of the dream it creates. The dissonance between the myth and the reality, between the illusion of film and the reality of the film industry, has been a major theme in modern American literature.

*The Deer Park* is filled with the moral decadence of life in Hollywood and with the impossibility of love and ethics. Sexual heat and the smell of orgy inundate



its setting. The society portrayed in the novel teeters on the brink of apocalypse, and the object of the narrator in the novel is to depict and attempt to understand, this apocalyptic atmosphere. *The Deer Park*, in many respects, is a panel from the painting of Hollywood: a canvas of moral ambiguity, spiritual void, and greed, with flames of incipient destruction swirling around the contorted faces of the inhabitants of the mythic land of film. Mailer focuses on the fringes of the film industry, concentrating on the no man's land where the illusion of Hollywood and the corruption behind it intersect with the common life of America. It portrays the bitter commentaries on the unheroic and perverted of that life. Hollywood, if one examines it as a whole, and not just its cinematic products, is America in microcosm: it manifests the competition, violence, chaos, and the spiritual void of the American society.

Mailer's novel reflects the real story of the investing committee and the entertainment industry during the war and post-war era. Here, Eitel has to surrender to the committee to enter the world of Herman Teppis, the head of Supreme Pictures who manipulates people and events to his own liking. Teppis sees people merely as objects. In order to gain publicity for his production he plans to marry Lulu Meyers, the matinee goddess to Teddy Pope, a homosexual and an idol of the American public. Teppis tries to arrange this to further his own end. But he turns into an autocrat when he encounters resistance from Lulu and Teddy. He also sees Bobby, a call girl and an aspiring actress simply as a "frightened female mouth, facsimile of all those smiling lips he had seen so ready to serve at the thumb of power" (284). After being relieved of his sadistic lust for mastery and forcing Bobby to commit fellatio on him and left alone in his office, he tells loudly to the empty room "there's a monster in the human heart" (285). It is thus the perverse nature of Teppis that dominates Hollywood. Jean Radford rightly says, "In the scene featuring Herman Teppis we are shown how behind the friendly co-operative facade at Supreme Pictures, lies a rigidly authoritarian business organisation whose manipulation of its "staff" extends beyond the screen to their personal lives" (Radford 20).

Collin Munshin, the producer and perspective successor of Teppis is endearing and predatory in his business operations. Eitel calls him a "pirate," (Mailer, *The Deer*

*Park* 50) and tells Sergius that when Munshin gets some idea of a story he would talk to half a dozen writers and when he finally gets a story he would use “one of the peons he keeps locked in a hole to write the thing” (50). Being clever, scheming and tenacious, he would do anything to achieve power and success.

Though Teppis has no redeeming characteristics, Munshin's ambition and rapacity are offset by more endearing traits. Munshin, a fusion of egoism and concern, hatred and love, comedy and threat, is a caricature made human by Mailer's sensitivity to the depths and contradictions in his nature. The reader finds himself laughing at Munshin's mannerisms, feeling with and for him; but beneath this acceptance in the reader's realisation that Munshin is indeed a terrible figure, one who will lie, pander, and sacrifice anyone in order to achieve power and success.

Munshin's friendship with Eitel, which sometimes appears so generous, is actually a devilish contract which causes Eitel to lose his soul. One of the reasons Munshin is so often comic when he appears with Eitel is that the reader cannot quite believe that his manipulating and scheming are real. But despite Munshin's protestations, they are an integral part of his nature.

Though Munshin is an important part of the novel from start to finish, his father-in-law has only one scene. Herman Teppis' hypocritical attitude towards his employees and towards his professed morality is revealed with comic brilliance as he tries to force a marriage between Teddy Pope, a homosexual, and an equally unwilling partner, Lulu Meyers. It is, after all, the perverse nature of Teppis which rules Hollywood. Those who oppose him, he crushes. For Mailer the catastrophe of modern society is that Teppis is right. The methods of power, of psychological, financial, and physical violence, are frighteningly successful, and ensure that all those smiling lips are ready to serve.

Gutman says that in the characters Munshin and Teppis, the novel “reexamines the corruption and hypocrisy that characterise the centralisation of power which is increasingly the major phenomenon in modern American society” (Gutman 51). He further says that the personalities of Teppis and Munshin aren't to be blamed because the power apparatus present in the institutional framework is such that those who try

to achieve power must take on the characteristics that the movie industry demands. According to him “The measure of this power is that the industry-in the persons of Teppis and Munshin-always wins” (53).

Similar to Nick Carraway and his development as a character by observing Gatsby, Sergius develops as a man through the experience of knowing Eitel. Eitel serves as a model or hero to Sergius. Sergius is drawn to Eitel because of his honesty, which stands out in the hypocrisy and the play-acting of this modern Deer Park. With the possible exception of Elena, he is the most human character in the novel; he comes alive and his life and the reader’s become intertwined.

But society and its institutions have trapped Eitel. The Norton Committee and the shoddy standards of the film industry have ripped away all the external supports from his life. He has been a marionette so long that he is, despite himself, used to feeling Teppis pull the strings, and in his heart, courage battles with his desire to return to the security of the puppet show. His talent has been prostituted, his integrity seduced, his moral nature raped, by the monster that is Hollywood.

He submits himself to the lure of Hollywood wealth and status. As a commercial director his career continues and his salary increases but he never succeeds in making pictures which are “art”. The artist, he believes, “was always divided between his desire for power in the world and his desire for power over his work” (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 124). But in choosing the former Eitel unwittingly compromises not only his principles but his talent also. He has knowingly lost his integrity to the demands of a congressional investigating officer.

Mailer is always for those men who live in a world of “spargamos”, indeed they must accept what they do, but they must eventually triumph over it. In this sense, Eitel is, as Robert Ehrlich maintains, “a failed hipster” because he gives up and admits defeat. He ceases to grow. His failure is not so much a failure of vision as it is a failure of energy, a failure of his capacity to marshal his renewed sense of energy to conquer the forces of defeat in the world arrayed against him.

The failure of Eitel’s art is paralleled by the failure of his love for his wife, the simple and passionate Elena. Eitel tries to avoid an entangling and permanent

relationship without hurting her simple, trusting and dependent nature. But her sexual adventures with Marion Faye, Collie Munshin and Don Beda, and her letter to Eitel indicate that she is not simple. It becomes evident from the letter that Elena has had very little opportunity to develop intellectually. The terrible loneliness is revealed when she derives childish delight of being “the center of attention” (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 296) while the Bedas and Marion perceive it as the core of her character. Her loneliness deprives her of the chance to act on her very decent insights. She had also seen that she and Eitel wanted the others to solve all of life’s problems. The prospect of losing Eitel and being lonely once again makes Elena remain silent and she allows this sickness to grow until it becomes too late for them to truly change each other. Stanley T. Gutman comments that “she is Eitel’s feminine parallel. She craves love and also power, and eventually gives up both for security. In the process she stops growing, becomes middle class and middle-aged and begins the slow slide toward spiritual death” (Gutman 56).

Eitel is a disappointment in love too. His affair with Elena, in part, embodies the suppressed self in Eitel and his transformed vigour. When Eitel was in love with Elena, “he had a faith these days that they would continue to change together” (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 123). But the growth is short-lived. While it lasts, this energy of renewed life creates new circuits of body and consciousness:

Eitel felt changes in his body race beyond the changes in his mind as though all those nerves and organs which had tired almost to death were coming back to life, carrying his mind in their path, as if Elena were not only his woman but his balm. (122)

As the affair progresses, and Eitel’s youthful spirit and dynamism return, Eitel is faced with another problem. He must cope with the encroaching middle-age. He set out believing that “I could make, something of this girl” (107) and he felt “the substance of his pride to depend upon exactly her improvement as if she were finally the only human creation in which he taken part” (372). He had indeed helped Elena to mature, but he has also hurt her incalculably. If growth is the main function of the human organism, then prevention of growth is one of the cardinal sins. He, out of the

needs of his ego, his desire for security, and his hunger for freedom, denies Elena a chance to grow. He admits this when he calls her stupid, and it is from this point on that their relationship begins to disintegrate. He is terrified of oldness and uncertainty. He who said “Everything you learn is done by fighting your fear” (102), adheres himself to Elena, as Faye perceives, “because you’re scared” (187).

No longer does Eitel have bravery to face life, and depends upon Elena to live it for him. Even so, he is scared even of her, for with her animalistic soul and her craving for knowledge. This wobbly basis of need and fear poorly supports the love Eitel feels for Elena and causes it to fluctuate through envy and detestation:

Because all the while he loved, he knew that he dare not love her.

Young as she was, he had heard experience in her work, which was beyond his own experience, and so if he stayed with her, he would be obliged to travel in her directions, and he had been feeling that for all of his life. (257)

Untying himself from Elena, he murders not only life in himself, but refuses “Elena a most valuable opportunity to grow” (296). He becomes a Colin Munshin at the end seeing Elena as Colin did. And when Sergius asks Eitel, how it feels to be submissive to the government, Eitel wisely, if powerlessly, states his downfall:

You see, after a while I know they had me on my knees, and that if I was not ready to take an overdose of sleeping pills, I would have to let myself slide through the experience, and not try to resist it. So for the first time in my life, I had the sensation of being a complete and total whore in the world, and I accepted every gratuitous kindness.... and now I just feel tired, and if the truth be told, pleased with myself, because believe me, Sergius, it was dirty work....in the end that’s the only kind of self respect you have, to be able to say to yourself that you’re disgusting. (306)

Eitel’s trap is defined by his breakdown of nerve in art and in love. In both quests, Eitel is unable to follow his own perceptions for growth: “The essence of

spirit... (is) to choose the thing which didn't better one's position but made it more perilous" (257).

Eitel is neither blameless nor guilt-ridden. He is innocent because what happens to him is far larger than anything he has done incites. He is to blame because he is living in a world where such unjustness are inevitable. These facts never associate; they remain fatefully away. He is a born loser, for although his losses are often self-implicated, he is a part of a world that is moved by forces beyond his control. His initial rejecting of the investigating committee is heroic, but the return for his valor is the solitary, uninteresting, and unheroic life he is forced to live. As a consequence, he revokes his earlier boldness when he returns before the committee to answer their questions. He is caught in trap: being a hero means giving up his dream of being an artist and also means thinking of himself as a failure; being a coward means exactly the same thing. Therefore he has no real choice and is trapped in a Catch-22. The only dissimilarity is that the prior makes his situation more risky. This, of course, is the way to growth but Eitel is ironically caught up in the middle-age. Finally he yields to "the sad frustration of his new middle-age" (374), and tries to sustain what he has rather than risk it to develop into something novel. His failure to grow is the beginning of his spiritual void.

Eitel's behaviour and thus his vulnerability to the trappings of the Hollywood landscape can be analysed using Freud's theory of drives: Eros and Thanatos.

Sigmund Freud's theory of drives evolved throughout the course of his life and work. He first described a form of drives called the life instincts and considered that these drives were accountable for much of our conduct. Finally, he came to the conclusion that life instincts by themselves could not justify all human behaviour. With the release of his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud deduced that all instincts belong to one of two prominent forms: life instincts or death instincts. Sometimes called sexual instincts, the life instincts are ones which deal with fundamental procreation, satisfaction, and survival. These tendencies are necessary for supporting the existence of a person as well as the existence of the kind.

The idea of the death instincts was first elucidated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in which Freud suggested that “the aim of life is death” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3740). Freud considered that individuals usually direct these death instincts into the environment. For example, Anger emerges from the death instincts. Sometimes these tendencies towards annihilation can be channeled inwards, however, which can lead to suicide or self-harm.

Supporting this theory, Freud remarked that individuals who live through a traumatic occurrence would often repeat that event. From this, he came to the conclusion that individuals have an unconscious wish to die but that the life instincts greatly hinder this desire. In Freud’s perspective, the obligation to reenact was “something that would seem more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it overrides” (3727). He went on to suggest that the “death instincts were an expansion of that urge wherein all organisms have an intuitive “pressure toward death” that holds up in staggering dissimilarity to the instinct to live, reproduce, and fulfil impulses.”

For Eitel, sex is violent because it serves as a sublimation for other drives. It is the outlet for the violence he conceals within himself, a violence growing out of his failure to become the artist he should have been, out of his wasted years, and out of his failure to find love. This violence is the manifestation of his thwarted love and his thwarted drive for creation and success. Eitel is filled with violence which he directs against himself. He torments himself with jealousy over Elena. He hurts her so that he can hurt himself. He punishes himself by needlessly antagonising other persons, such as Teppis and Dorothea and Munshin. And finally, he destroys the mainstays of his life, his relationship with Elena and his own integrity and principle.

Eitel directs this violence toward himself because of the utter futility of levelling it against the institution that prostituted him, robbed him of his individuality and virility, and left him stranded on the shores of middle age with little to look back on with pride. His heroic resistance to the committee is futile, for a while a single man can stand up against the power of an immense institution, he cannot conquer it. His impotence in directing his violence against the outer world leads Eitel to direct it

towards himself. Horney states that “if guilt feelings are carefully examined and are tested for genuineness, it becomes apparent that much of what looks like feelings of guilt is the expression either of anxiety or defense against it” (234-35).

Eitel is a patient of anxiety and exhibits all symptoms of Neurosis. Karen Horney writes that Neurotic individuals are filled with self-contempt and loathing. As a means of avoiding these painful feelings, they are driven to create an idealised image of themselves. In addition, Neurotics are generally not risk takers. They are afraid of expressing their wishes for fear of disapproval and ridicule. People with a neurosis, according to Horney, can never be happy with themselves because when they realise that their real self does not match the insatiable demands of their idealised self, they will begin to hate and despise themselves. Eitel, like a neurotic, has self destructive tendencies and channels hatred inwardly.

He is traumatised by his divorce and his blacklisting, and these events rupture his psyche lead to his downfall. For Caruth, the central aporia of trauma lies in the impossibility of voluntarily accessing one’s own traumatic past; this past belatedly imposes itself on the individual against their conscious will. She argues that a defining feature of trauma is “the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – then returns to haunt the survivor later on”(Caruth 8). The impact of the traumatic event manifests after the fact of its occurrence in symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and other traumatic affects that have since been classified under the banner of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Caruth 8). As an event too overwhelming to be experienced at the time of its arrival, trauma continually re-emerges long after the initial traumatic scene.

Eitel makes continuous efforts to fulfil his desire to make himself both decent and heroic, but each attempt he makes is fated to be a repeat of his past failure. To some degree he is a contemporary everyman, facing a changing world in which all human efforts, even those which are temporarily successful, eventually become defeats. There is a two fold cause for Eitel’s failures. American society, particularly corporate capitalism and centralised power, make individual fulfilment nearly



impossible, and secondly, his own self-destructive tendencies, which act as a final blow to his tranquility and ultimately lead to his spiritual death.

*The Deer Park* extends Mailer's exploration of political-economic and psychological-moral patterns of conduct, centering on the American tendency to identify man's acquisitive and erotic instincts and on the debilitating effect of this confusion of values for a whole society. Eros is the totem of Hollywood; its directors, producers, actors, and hangers-on buy and sell love as readily as they contract to make a movie. Under the tyranny of such contempt for life, the buried nature of man-"the noble savage" (121). Eitel calls it "changed and whipped and trained by everything in life until it [is] almost dead" (121). The chief eunuch of this "deer park" is the film mogul Herman Teppis, who connives, for example, to marry his top sex goddess Lulu Meyers to his leading matinee idol-but notorious homosexual, Teddy Pope, because the marriage would give Supreme Pictures "a royal couple, the Number One married lovers of America" (273) and hence be good for business. A widower, he derives sexual satisfaction from demeaning young girls, Hollywood hopefuls supplied regularly from the stockroom by his son-in-law and producer Collie Munshin. Motherhood, sex, compound interest, religion, and patriotism are hypocritically jumbled in his thought and speech until they lose all value. In the contrapuntal structure of the novel, the apparent opposite of Teppis's sentiment is Marion Faye's hard-boiled existential idealism that has only scorn for the "self-swindles" of Hollywood. A "religious man turned inside out" (147) by his distaste for the human race, he sees himself as a Baudelairian "saint in Hell" (329), bent on purifying his soul through "some black heroic safari" (328) of complete submission to sin. His motto is that "There is no pleasure greater than that obtained from a conquered repugnance" (146). Since he most detests people, he systematically occupies himself with love-of all varieties and degrees of perversion-until, guided by his misanthropy, he drifts into the role of professional procurer. Thus, in his pursuit of nobility, he succumbs to the same vice of commercialised love that Teppis does, and in his private life becomes an ironic confirmation of his belief that nobility and vice are "the same thing" viewed from different directions.

*The Deer Park*, then, depicts the failure in human spirit of the Horatio Alger dream. In one way or another the transients of Desert D'Or find themselves permanent occupants of the treadmill of a self indulgence-whether economic power as with Teppis or erotic power as with Eitel-that is infernally sanctioned as the goal of their society, the moral experience of the novel is directed toward the dismal round of life that has submitted to mass commercial values. Love is treated in this context as an expedient way of cashing in on people, of using them for one's own ends. The movie industry exploits love as a commodity, idealising it, ironically, into the ultimate expression of individual sincerity and morality. The circularity of the cash sex nexus portrayed here is only too apparent. And in the symbolism of place and time as well as in the narrative of events this tautology of existence is emphasised. Unlike the transient world of *Barbary Shore*, the ethos of *The Deer Park* is without hope, fixed in the windless lee of stopped time. Parched for nine months of the year, Desert D'Or burns without surcease from a sulphurous sky that blasts every living thing and from the lusts of the flesh that enthrall every inhabitant. It is an analogue of "that second circle of sad Hell," where, Keats tells us, "in the gust, the whirlwind, and the flow Of rain and hailstones, lovers need not tell Their sorrows" (Keats, lines 10-12).

Like those living in the Valley of Ashes in *The Great Gatsby*, the sojourners of this desert community are indistinguishable in appearance and spirit from the landscape. They are exiles, renegades, ex-movie stars, has-beens, temporary and permanent refugees from the film capital, drifters-the damned and the defeated-all reminiscent of the lost souls of Sartre's *The Flies* and of the Paris expatriates of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Self-loathing is only second to hatred of others as the principal emotion. Eitel sums up the response to life in words that sardonically reverse those of Brett Ashley at the end of *The Sun Also Rises*: "In the end that's the only kind of self respect you have. To be able to say to yourself that you're disgusting" (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 306)

Eitel is very much aware that the world of Hollywood is built on the foundation of materialism, where spirituality and divinity have no value at all. Conscious of his own spiritual void and that of his surroundings, he takes the decision

to cooperate with the Subservience Committee. This consciousness makes him self destructive and he goes on working against morality just to earn dollars. He frankly says, "I don't approve of the church"(210). Church, which is considered the abode of God, has lost value in his heart and soul. On the contrary, Hollywood-which worships Dollar- is the place of his profession and ambition. Consciousness of spiritual void slowly but surely corrodes his true self, and he becomes an artificial and disintegrated personality.

The infernal reference to life in Desert D'Or is only too self-evident. For like hell, the desert metropolis exists in a state of suspended time. The horror of unending sameness of existence has been vividly evoked by poets from Greek myth onwards. The Struldbrugs of *Gulliver's Travels* and the Tithonus of Tennyson convey with considerable pathos this dilemma of man's experience of time. Life in Desert D'Or consists of moribund activities performed without hope of surcease by way of what Blake calls the "production of time." Its inhabitants, the "middle-aged desperadoes of the corporation and the suburb" -have lost their past, living in an "airless no-man's-land of the perpetual present." In his opening description of the place, Mailer is at considerable pains to make this clear. "Everything," Sergius tells us, "is in the present tense" (2). "Built since the Second World War," he adds, "it is the only place I know which is all new" (1). Drinking in the "air-cooled midnight of the bar," he remarks:

I never knew whether it was night or day . . . afternoon was always passing into night, and drunken nights into the dawn of a desert morning. One seemed to leave the theatrical darkness of afternoon for the illumination of night, and the sun of Desert D'Or became like the stranger who the drunk imagines to be following him. (4)

Writers are fond of imagining love as a means of capsuling time (and space) into momentary experiences of eternity (and infinity). Contrariwise, love is naturally associated with the temporal rhythms of life: with the sequences of fertility and the periods of gestation. Through its generative connection with life, love links man to past and future. In this sense God's fancied answer to Sergius that sex is time, and time the connection of new circuits, is meaningful. But when the Delphic assertion is

used as a lens through which to see and measure Desert D'Or and the "life" of its people, it becomes an acrid summary of what has transpired in the story. Trapped by the stifling commerce of their egos, their lives endlessly the same, Eitel, Elena, Lulu, Dorothea O'Faye, Marion Faye, and the others seek to escape into the outer world of sentience. Sex offers them the semblance of life, but they chew only the dry husk of lust. *The Deer Park* Mailer thus explores the nightmare world of emotional totalitarianism and spiritual void.

Whether he is fully aware of his pattern is unknown, but in the selected works Mailer has composed a Divine Comedy of the American Dream. *The Naked and the Dead* depicts the purgatory of declining morals and hopelessness in contemporary life; *The Deer Park* describes the hellish "depths of the dead" into which commercial onanistic man descends, when he turns inward and in the dark terror of his soul prays money instead of God, until they come out, absolved of morality and ethics, in the ever-increasing continuum of life and death.

*The Deer Park* consolidates much of what the previous selected novels have suggested. In the characters of Munshin and Teppis, it reexamines the corruption and hypocrisy that characterise the centralisation and immoral quest for power which was an increasingly major phenomenon in the contemporary American Society. It examines in depth, in the character of Charley Eitel, the failure of the liberal spirit, a failure rooted in cowardice and the inability to cope with the immense powers which seek to dominate the modern. For despite his many admirable qualities, much like Jay Gatsby, Eitel is ultimately unable to sustain himself and his integrity in a hostile social world.

In *The Deer Park*, Mailer returns to the founding ideals of America as a nation and exposes the hypocrisy of The Dream. Outwardly, American Dream provides everything but inwardly it makes man hollow, suffering from spiritual void and desperate to have a drop of tranquility.



Fig. 4.3: Rojack's tale of Misery and Void

*"My personality was built upon a void"* (Mailer, *An American Dream* 7).

The American Dream has been in existence almost as long as America. From the puritans desire for the "City on the Hill", to today, Americans have been convinced that the individual can transcend earthly evil and decadence, and attain a state of perfection. The American Dream is the visionary ideal that is represented in social form by utopian thinking. A personalised ideal would appear easier to attain than a social one because of its apparent relative simplicity, yet this is not the case. Personalisation does not simplify the American Dream. There is a certain irony in any version of the dream, in that each individual attempting to attain its beliefs that others definition of the Dream was responsible for their failure, that this time it will be done, for usually one understanding this adventure believes that he has divine support or guidance. A classic example of an individual who spent his life attempting to

behave in accordance with his concept of the American Dream, is Benjamin Franklin. Franklin in his Autobiography described how he sought to live a life of rationality and moderation as an avenue to material success and the political power necessary for the preservation of that success, The American dream is, for Franklin, simply stated: “be prosperous”.

Whereas Franklin only required power in order to safeguard his economic interest, Mark Twain, in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, interpreted the American dream as the quest for power: “I would boss the whole country inside of three months; for I judged I would have the start of the best educated man in the kingdom by a matter of thirteen hundred year's and upward....” said Hank Morgan, Twain's protagonist. The schemes that Morgan, “Sir Boss,” conceived involved the acquisition of material goods, but only in order to increase his power. Morgan believed that knowledge is power. He set out to prove that education is, in modern parlance, the key to the future.

Twain's portrayal of the American Dream differs from Franklin in that Twain saw the quest for material wealth as being subordinate to the Americans' desire for power. That is a reversal of Franklin's view of power as the protector of wealth. The two views are similar though, in their emphasis on values that reflect social worth. The social is here distinguished from the personal in that the former term refers to the interaction of an individual with others; the latter term refers to interaction on the one-to-one or in any case, private level. Man's personal values, such as the success of one's marriage, or one's feelings of personal worth based on internal criteria, are then not seen to be within the primary domain of the American Dream by Franklin or Twain.

Writers continued to portray the American Dream as a striving for worth by externalisation means through the first half of the twentieth century, with Miller's *Death of a Salesman* being a notable example.

This trend was not uniform. *The Great Gatsby*, written before *Death of a Salesman*, described a tycoon who was obsessed with the love for a woman whose voice was “full of money” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 136). Though *Gatsby* was

not as honest as Ben Franklin, he was nevertheless a success in Franklin's manner. Gatsby had a list of "General Revolves" that he had tried to follow as a boy that would make Franklin beam with pride. Gatsby, later in life, did not exactly lead a life of moderation and prudence. Though he didn't act rationally because of his frustrated love for Daisy, he was- as Nick, the narrator, noted- an unhappy man. Money is no replacement for love, Gatsby found.

With *An American Dream*, Norman Mailer continued the Fitzgeraldian view of the American Dream. As Jay Gatsby measured his worth by Daisy's love, and not by the amount of money he had, so too does Stephen Rojack care little for his professional success:

I was now at a university in New York, a professor of existential psychology with the not inconsiderable thesis that magic, dread and the perception of death were the roots of motivation; I was a personality on television and an author of sorts: I had had one popular book published, *The Psychology of the Hangman*, a psychological study of the styles of execution in different states and nations-death by guillotine, firing squad, by rope, by electric chair, by gas pellets - an interesting book. I had also - as i indicated- become the husband of an heiress, and I had been most unsuccessful at that. In fact, I had come to the end of a very long street. Call it an Avenue. For I had come to decide I was finally a failure. (Mailer, *An American Dream* 8)

Rojack declared himself a failure on the basis of his marriage. His Professional achievement would certainly make a Willy Loman jealous. Mailer is portraying, then, the American Dream of 1965, as being the desire for experiences that reinforce one's sense of personal worth. Thus, marriage, or the fulfilment of one's goals developed from internal values becomes more important to the individual than one's job.

To some extent, *An American Dream* is an illustration of one way of resolving the tension in the Dream. On another level, it is an ironic reinterpretation of the traditional American Dream. The title suggests that the reader will find the American

Dream to be the main subject of the novel. When one learns that the book is about a man of a murderous and sexual escapade, another irony is perceived. This irony involves the “American Nightmare,” which is the dark, demonic counterpart of the American Dream. The American Nightmare is the triumph of the “dark” figure.

To the Puritans, the American Nightmare was their fear that the forest would become large and gloomy, and entrap them. More simply, it was fear of losing their divine guidance, which would result in a loss of purpose for their mission. *An American Dream* then, is written in a context of irony and paradox. Ironic in that the traditional concept of the dream is inverted into the Fitzgeraldian tragic mode, where materially successful protagonist is emotionally wanting. Ironic also in that the protagonist, in either mode of the dream, believes his dream to be attainable. The context is paradoxical in that the American Dream and the American Nightmare are at times difficult to identify, as they are reactions to the same phenomenon. This paradox had one wondering if it is to God’s word or the Devil’s that the protagonist is subject.

Norman Mailer’s fourth novel, *An American Dream* (1965), started as a “serialised publication in Esquire magazine” (Manso 385-88). Mailer’s imaginative thriller was a huge hit: during its serialisation, “Esquire’s sales jumped to a record 900,000” (Lennon 339), numbers driven, no doubt, by the composition’s controversial nature (Rollyson 177-73). Joan Didion praised Mailer's insight into what she called “the essence of things”. Like Scott Fitzgerald, Mailer she argued was a chronicler; he too had “that great social eye. It is not the eye for the brand name ... it is rather some fascination with the heart of the structure, some deep feeling for the mysteries of power.” (Didion 11).

One of Mailer's critics, Frank D. McConnell, has seen the crucial significance that Kennedy's assassination has for a true appraisal of Mailer's achievement in *An American Dream*.

For if the nightmare forces of repressed violence were unleashed, against his will, against the radiantly successful Kennedy, Mailer gives us, in the fable of Rojack, a picture of an equally successful man's



willing descent into the same spiritual maelstrom - which, implicitly, is the maelstrom beneath all our lives. (McConnell 65)

Rojack is sometimes referred to as Mailer's version of the hero America looked for in Kennedy and never found, but McConnell's judgement is more accurate - Rojack's is a narrative reflecting the national discord and agon ensuing from the fall the true American Dream.

There have been myriads of studies done on *An American Dream* analysing the novel for multiple vantage points. V.I. Korah has discussed the search for authentic self present in the novel, in addition to analysing the American culture. He writes that Rojack is the “embodiment of American regeneration and radical culture” (Korah 94). Priya Srivastava has elucidated the war theme in the novel, stating “*An American Dream* is a prophetic book in many ways” (Srivastava 118). Hemaprabha has written about the quest for self in the novel, writing that “Rojack’s actions seem supremely illustrative of those national problems which lead to violence, alienation and confusion” (Hemaprabha 8).

V. Chanthiramathi has discussed the lust for power in the novel and states that “The core of the novel is the conflict between creative and destructive power” (Chanthiramathi 146). Although the critic has discussed the lust for power, he has mainly discussed the inner metaphorical struggle for power which Rojack represents. Chanthiramathi has not discussed in detail how this quest for power affects Rojack’s psyche and traps him in power-politics, stripping his soul off his body. Devendra Singh has analysed Rojack as a psychopathic hero, declaring that “Rojack is no stereotyped, square-jawed, unfaltering Hollywood hero, but a man who is weak, frightened and unsure in the face of challenge” (Tomar 128). Anju Jain has analysed the novel in light of new modes of perception, and has stated that “Rojack quite clearly embodies the code of hipster” (Jain 146).

In *An American Dream*, the protagonist Stephen Rojack returns from the war as a decorated war-hero. He gets thrown into the public eye at a young age, and being traumatized by the scenes of gory casualty and devastation of the war, he commits political suicide by running for office on the progressive ticket. After his return from

the war, he marries Deborah Kelly, who is the daughter of a multimillionaire, who he hopes will one day finance his presidential campaign. Later though, he murders her when she taunts him with stories of her sexual adventures.

The rest of the story revolves around his journey through the New York City, where he carries out various menacing and immoral actions in hope to get redemption: he deceives the police, develops a romantic relationship with a nightclub singer, defeats her lover, and ultimately comes face to face with her wife's father, the multimillionaire, Barney Kelly.

Man is a creation of the atmosphere in which he lives; as a result, war does not create heroes but criminals. An example of this is Rojack, a graduate from Harvard, an athlete and an excessively bright student, who learns how to kill for the first time during the War. That specific event in the hills of Italy where the eyes of the four Germans were staring at him has been engrained in his mind all through his life. He becomes trapped by their thoughts even when he kills his wife. This does not justify Rojack's actions but, on the other hand, it serves to show the type of Man that society is producing after the World War. In Rojack's own words:

I had learned to speak in a world which believed in the New York Times... I had lost my faith in all that by now: now I swam in the well of Deborah's intuitions; they were nearer to my memory of the four Germans than anything encountered before or since. (36-37)

According to Cathy Caruth, "the impact of the traumatic event manifests after the fact of its occurrence in symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and other traumatic affects that have since been classified under the banner of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As an event too overwhelming to be experienced at the time of its arrival, trauma continually re-emerges long after the initial traumatic scene", similar to the way Rojack could not escape from the memories of the four German soldiers. Similarly, Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* also write "Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 10). Rojack is a product of war and post-war society, and like the protagonist of the other selected novelists, is vulnerable to the trap of the false American Dream due to the

effect of War on his psyche. Dr. Karen Horney believes that neuroses are personality disturbances which inevitably arise when an individual develops a feeling of "basic anxiety" in the face of an environment that threatens to engulf him. This is similar to the "anxiety" that is felt by Rojack when he encounters the four Germans in the battlefield: "Suddenly it was all gone, the clean presence of it, the grace, it had deserted me in the instant I hesitated" (5).

Freud and Breuer in *On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication* (1893), while writing about hysterical trauma, describe it as "any experience which calls up distressing affects- such as those of fright, anxiety, shame, or physical pain-may operate as a trauma of this kind" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 8). "The psychological trauma-or more precisely the memory of the trauma- acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work"(8). Drawing from Freudian theory, the traumatic formulation relates to an analogy between psychic and physical trauma. Furthermore, Freudian theory also argues that for a traumatised person there is a conflict between the forces of sexuality and its repression. The sexual drives can be seen as impulses that sought immediate and unconditional satisfaction, defined in part as the elimination of unpleasurable tension from the psychic apparatus. Breuer and Freud (1893) also point out that trauma can be derived from both irreparable loss of a loved person and the social circumstances (Freud, *The Complete Works* 13).

Rojack also suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can be observed from his reminiscences of the War: "I have been suffering from blackouts ever since the war. I had a blackout then" (86). The premier condition for PTSD is that the person has experienced, witnessed, or been confronted with an event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself for others, and his/her response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Combat or War related trauma is dissimilar from other types of PTSD, in that it includes not only what occurred to you, but also what action you undertook. Maguen et. al. (2009) found that murdering, in contrast with subjection to standard combat experiences, is linked with more extreme functional impairment. The

intent to kill and destroy is what makes combat-related trauma not only a psychological disorder, but also a psycho-spiritual disorder. War wounds the soul. In combat, our general idea of morality is reversed, and what is meaningful during war—maybe even is necessary in war—may not hold true once one comes back to everyday life. Morality is the core of all other values, and damage to it may affect any or all of the other value-dependent area of our existence, e.g., love and intimacy, the capacity to admire beauty and enjoyment, and our spiritual selves.

Rojack too suffers from moral damage. He is unable to differentiate between good and evil and continues to make psychopathic decisions. He murders his wife, Deborah, he rapes her maid Ruta, and constantly indulges in drinking. Rojack is addicted to sexuality just as much as he is addicted to alcohol and violence. Furthermore he is unable to experience love and intimacy. There is no love even in the relationship between Cherry and Rojack. As Rojack says: “We did not meet as lovers, more like animals in a quiet mood, come across a track of the jungle to join in a clearing, we were equals” (126).

Similarly, “Nothing was loving in her; no love in me... I had some distant awareness that my breath could hardly be good and her lungs breathed back an air of ashes and the tomb...” (127). The stress and anxiety of war brings out his animalistic instincts. He feels spiritually empty and soulless as he remarks “ My personality is built upon a void ” (7). In addition, Rojack’s feelings of dissatisfaction and worthlessness are firmly rooted in his World War II experience. From the above instances, it can be concluded that war has had a significant effect on his psyche and subsequently the actions he performs in the novel. Not only does the War directly impact him, but also, it effects him negatively through the hellish spiritually decadent post-war landscape of America. We read in the Epilogue: “Nobody knew that the deserts of the West, the arid empty wild blind deserts, were producing again a new breed of man... I was part of the new breed” (269).

Rojack’s psyche has been split by the events of the war and as a result he develops psychopathic tendencies. Rojack is himself a professor of “existential psychology,” and seemed keenly aware of his own homicidal and suicidal tendencies.

Understanding his dilemma was no help in resolving it. Rojack felt as though his actions were motivated by strong external forces, represented by the voices he heard from the moon, or from his brain, or by a “field of force” (41). For almost every action, Rojack is faced with two choices: to stay or to leave, to jump or not to, to kill or not to. Just as Rojack was balanced on the parapet, so was his mind balanced on a fine edge, ready to totter toward either side with the slightest gust of wind.

In *An American Dream*, Mailer had relied heavily upon Robert Lindner, author of *Rebel Without a Cause*, for a definition of the Psychopath. According to Lindner:

...the psychopath is a rebel without a cause, an agitator without a slogan, a revolutionary without a program: in other words, his rebelliousness is aimed to achieve goals satisfactory to himself alone; he is incapable of exertion for the sake of others. All his efforts, hidden under no matter what guise, represent investments designed to satisfy his immediate wishes and desires....The psychopath, like the child, cannot delay the pleasures of gratification; and this trait is one of his underlying universal characteristics. He can't wait upon erotic gratification which convention demands should be preceded by the chase before the kill: he must rape. He can't wait upon the development of prestige in society: his egoistic ambitions lead him to leap into headlines by daring performances. Like a red thread, the predominance of this mechanism for immediate satisfaction runs through the history of every psychopath. It explains not only his behaviour, but also the violent nature of his acts. (Lindner 58)

The psychopath then, externalises his problems while the psychotic internalises his. The psychopath “explodes,” the psychotic withdraws. That is why, as Lindner mentions, that “no psychopath ever commits suicide”(58). Mailer elaborated upon Lindner and wrote:

Now for reasons which may be more curious than the similarity of the words, even many people with the psychoanalytical orientation often confuse the psychopath with the psychotic. Yet the terms are polar. The

psychotic is legally insane, the psychopath is not; the psychotic is almost always incapable of discharging in physical acts the rage of his frustration, while the psychopath at his extreme is virtually as incapable of restraining his violence. The psychotic lives in so misty a world that what is happening at each moment of his life is not very rare to him, whereas the psychopath seldom knows any reality greater than the face, the voice, the being of the particular people among whom he may find himself at any moment. (qtd. in Grana 190)

Mailer's psychological dialect then is the psychopathic and the murderous versus the psychotic and suicidal. Rojack exhibits certain characteristics of psychopath: violence, immediate sexual gratification, and observation of details. He also seems to exhibit psychotic qualities at other times, as when he has "the itch to jump." (Mailer, *An American Dream* 9)

The question of the parapet, to jump or not to jump, is therefore implicitly also asking, "murder then, if you don't jump?" For Rojack is a driven man. He has to do something extreme. His course of action narrows to murder or suicide. Only by experiencing one, will he be able to avoid the other, and subsequently find a middle road. As with the God-Devil dipole, Rojack will not find a resolution within the timespan of the novel allows.

The murder-suicide dialectic is a choice among non-choices in actuality. These choices in reality, are nothing but a Catch-22 since no real choice is offered. Each act would have Rojack listen to a different voice. Throughout the novel, Rojack is a man compelled. He felt compelled to go to Harlem to ensure a blessing for Cherry. He had to walk "all three sides" (248) of Kelly's parapet twice, the second time was for Cherry.

In the taxi on the way to Kelly's, Rojack hears two voices, one bidding him to Harlem, the other to Kelly's. "Which was true?" (203) asked Rojack. This further shows his inner conflict and split personality. Karen Horney observes "neurotic human beings have instead the most contradictory of feelings. Alternately or simultaneously, they are driven by a neurotic craving for affection, by neurotic needs

for power and domination, or by a neurotic need for flight and isolation. They want to eat their cake and have it too.” This behaviour further shows the neurotic nature of Rojack as a character.

Rojack’s escape from New York in the final chapter of the novel is not in itself a final resolution for him. It does, however, alleviate the pressure that urban life had sustained against him. In the jungle of Yucatan, far away is the place that believes in the New York Times. Not to be seen are the cars, concrete buildings, bars, and other familiar signs of what Americans call civilisation, urban living must have been a burden to Rojack. He must not have been comfortable in his Sutton Place apartment if he had to flee to the jungle. Surely London or Los Angeles would have been as anonymous. He had to escape society, in short. It may be that society not only delineates one’s options for behaviour under specified, but that society totally determines, so far as some are concerned, one’s entire behaviour.

Rojack could not function in society. He is thus a Psychopath. He may have found outward salvation in jungle, but in truth his flight to Yucatan represents a triumph of the animalistic instinct. His psyche has been shattered by the events that have taken place in the novel and thus he is entrapped by the void created in him. There is no indication that it will be a permanent arrangement.

Mailer, using a realistic setting, and elements of the novel and romance explored the spiritual, psychological, and social nature of the contemporary American, personified by Stephen Rojack. Rojack, a pawn in the struggle of great forces, opposing absolutes, symbolised man’s and society’s plight. The American Dream is thus personified in Rojack whose struggles and fall depict the degradation of the American Dream into the American Nightmare.

For Mailer’s readers, Mailer seems to infuse a sense of irony in Rojack’s perception that despite his status as a war hero and recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, his Ph.D in psychology, his term as a Congressman, and his popularity as a television personality, he “had come to decide” that he “was finally a failure.” Rojack’s sense of discontentment bring to light the essentially soul sucking and aimless landscape of contemporary America. In terms of American cultural

conceptions of success, Rojack has achieved more than most individuals dream of- he is a famous war hero and intellectual who has political power and wealth. Yet this “dream” is just that ; it is the inauthentic dream of others, a general consensus of success and happiness advanced and reinforced by the society in which Rojack is absorbed.

In Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream*, the American dream of success and happiness transforms into a hellish nightmare. The novel tells us to what extent class, money and power can control our ideas. Cancer is present everywhere in the novel. However, we do not see anybody in the sickbed dying of this disease, only the man in the Epilogue and he had already died. Death takes the form of murder; therefore cancer is a metaphor for the spiritual void of the society: “She felt that as your soul died, cancer began. She would always say it was a death which was a death not like other deaths” (65).

In this light, the novel could be read as an extension of Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22*. The spiritual decadence of the society that Heller conveys in his work, has become evident in *An American Dream*. Mailer is not talking literally about cancer; he is not talking about a society that is going mad as in *Catch-22*; he is talking about a society that is already suffering from a spiritual vacuum and the subsequent madness. Rojack says:

In some, madness must come in with breath, mill through the blood and be breathed out again. In some it goes up to the mind. Some take the madness and stop it with discipline. Madness is locked beneath. It goes into tissues, is swallowed by the cells. The cells go mad. Cancer is their flag. Cancer is the growth of madness denied. In that corpse I saw, madness went down to the blood... some of the real madness went into me. The stink of the dead man went along the dry lands of Oklahoma and northern Texas, through the desert bake of New Mexico, Arizona, on into the valleys of the moon. (267)

This paragraph shows that Mailer is using cancer as a metaphor. It is precisely madness arising from the moral decay with which he is concerned, not



cancer. And it is not surprising that this paragraph appears at the end of the novel, in the Epilogue. It appears to be a form of moral allegory for what Mailer is hoping to depict.

Rojack's rejection of American culture as a false basis for personal meaning, his internal and external struggles to free himself from the pervasive force of America's myth of freedom and limitless possibilities, and his repeated need to face up his own death, has led the present researcher to conclude that Rojack's perspective is bound to his World War II experience, an experience that leaves him death-obsessed and traumatised. In fact, critics continually cite Rojack's admission of his "frightened romance with the phases of the moon" and his conversation with the moon in particular, an indicative of Rojack's descent into madness.

Another common existential idea that marks Mailer's fiction is alienation. A cerebral approach to existence in the style of the computer keeps alienating man in various degrees, from God, from nature, from society and from himself. Protagonist like Rojack struggles most against total alienation- because to be alienated from oneself is to lose the instinct to survive. It is that belief that prompts Mailer to explore the roots of violence, murder, suicide and other things that show the stuff of alienation to be emotion turned off.

For Mailer, just as The American Dream embodies the historical consciousness of America to his present day and beyond, America's religious history persists in his present American culture. American money, for example, claims "In God we trust." They pledge their allegiance to nation and God as they are "one nation under God," but indivisible, "with liberty and justice for all" (The Pledge of Alligence). Their democracy is one with and endorsed by God; their economic viability is entrusted to God; their nation, their collective and individual identities as Americans are "indivisible" from God. Thus the true American Dream is inseparable from God. But the America portrayed in the selected novel is one where "God is Dead," where morality has been sacrificed and where people are living hollow and meaningless lives for the pursuit of power and prestige.

Conscious of his own spiritual void, Rojack declares “My personality is built upon a void” (Mailer, *An American Dream* 7). Although he has achieved material success in his life, he feels soulless because of his spiritual void, which he is keenly aware of, since he knows that in reality, he is a failure: “In fact, I had come to the end of a very long street. Call it an avenue. For I had come to decide I was finally a failure”. Rojack knows that post-war American culture is producing a new breed of man, who suffers and is conscious of his inner eclipse: “Nobody knew that the deserts of the West, the arid empty wild blind deserts, were producing again a new breed of man... I was part of the new breed” (269).

This is the vision Mailer presents throughout *An American Dream*: he shows us what America once was, what it is in his present moment, and through Rojack’s extreme and violent response, Mailer shows us what could soon come to be. Mailer, in fact, does not promote violence as many critics believe: he merely shows us the possibilities for the future if Americans and America, itself, continues to fall deeper into the void of spiritual decadence. It is through Rojack that Mailer expresses his view that if society stifles an individual, smothers him in conformity, then he cannot act in any moral way. For Mailer, the increasing violence and oppression visited upon the individual by the culture at large in his historic moment will either lead to the complete annihilation of the individual, of individualism, and the vitality of the human spirit, or, as he shows through Rojack, it will lead to a violent response from the individual. Through Rojack, Mailer shows one how urgent the need to reform Americans and America’s culture is. As individuals, they must accept their responsibility to strive to discover a more authentic way of living for their own futures as well as for the future of their nation. For Mailer there is much at stake. On a nationalistic level, what is at stake is the future possibilities of and for the individual American as well as the nation as a whole; on a spiritual and religious level, what is at stake is the soul of humanity and the existence of God, all of which Mailer envisions—past, present, and future—as bound to the existential experience that is unique to being American. One must, Mailer suggests, recover the existential possibilities for Americans and America and they must strive to discover a more authentic way of

living for themselves and their culture. This is Mailer's "American Dream," if he has one: that authentic individuals will contribute to the formation of an authentic community, an authentic culture, and an authentic American experience that will free them from the collective and individual violence of the past and present. In Mailer's view, the future of the individual, the nation, and God depends on it.

Norman Mailer, like Joseph Heller, is trying to say that "*Something Happened*" to the American nation. In *An American Dream*, Rojack is therefore the personification of the American dream and its ensuing collapse into a chain of nightmares. Mailer has depicted the postwar spiritual vacuum that Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* and Heller in *Catch-22* portray so efficiently. What all of them hope to convey is the despondency and desolation of America. Unfortunately -like in Milton's *Paradise Lost*- Satan is everywhere. And the society portrayed in *An American Dream* is hellish, parched, hollow and vain.

## Chapter-5

### Imprisoned and Eclipsed: A Comparative Analysis of the Selected Novels

The present chapter sheds light on the comparison of the selected novels: *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night*, *Catch-22*, *Something Happened*, *Good As Gold*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Deer Park* and *An American Dream*. The selected novels are compared firstly from the aspects of the various reasons for trauma leading to Spiritual Void and the trapped conditions of the protagonists. Secondly, the novels are compared focussing on the Psychosis or Neurosis of the protagonists- a mental illness resulting in high levels of anxiety and unreasonable behaviour. Thirdly, the novels are contrasted concentrating on the various obsessions of the protagonists of the selected novels. Fourthly, the selected works are compared keeping in mind the *Catch-22* of the protagonists. Finally, the novels are compared from the aspects of the immoral tendencies of the protagonists that lead them to the trap of money culture and spiritual void.

Trauma is the total deterioration of the psyche of the victim. Lacan writes that trauma is “the divided kingdom, that any conception of the unity of the psyche, of the supposed totalising, synthesising psyche, ascending towards consciousness, perishes there” (Lacan 51). Another psychoanalyst, Ian Parker observes that trauma is the “breaches of the body and by implication also of the mind...” (Parker 29). In *On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication* (1893), Breuer and Freud state “any experience which calls up distressing affects, such as those of fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain may operate as a trauma of this kind” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 8). In addition, Freudian theory also states that for a traumatised person there is a conflict between the forces of sexuality and its repression. The sexual drives can be observed as impulses that sought immediate and unconditional satisfaction, defined in part as the elimination of unpleasurable tension from the psychic apparatus. Breuer and Freud (1893) also point out that “trauma can

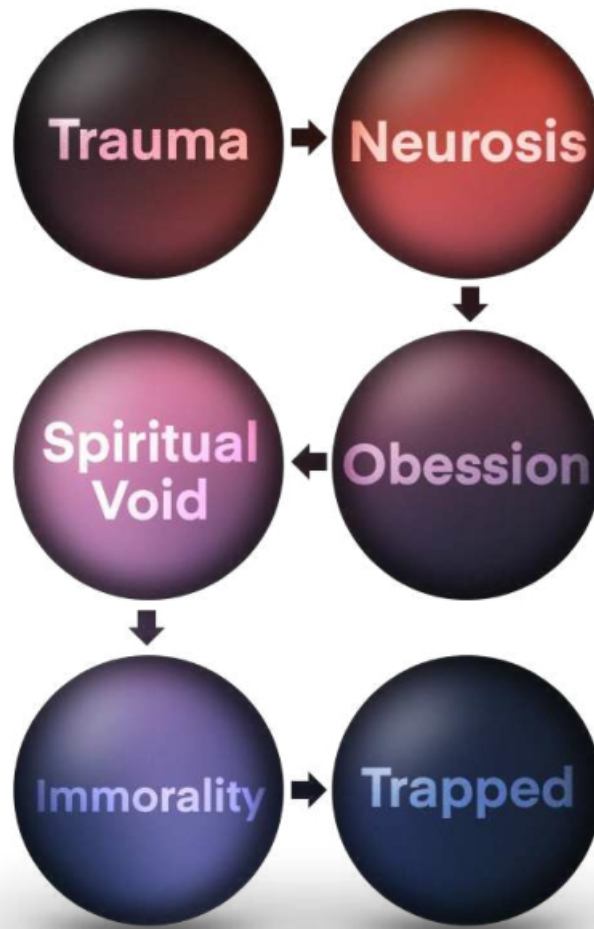


Fig. 5.1: Protagonists' spiral into the abyss of Spiritual Void

be derived from both irreparable loss of a loved person and the social circumstances” (13).

Relying on Freud's notion of trauma and trying to read *The Great Gatsby* in the light of his theory, it can be said that Gatsby is traumatised by both by his experience in the war and the loss of his idealised love. Brutalities of war left many soldiers unable to identify with the civilian world to which they returned. In the wake of the First World War, veterans were often left to rebuild their lives from the ground up, as physical and psychological trauma and poor economic conditions prevented men from reentering society as providers and citizens. The touch of War and Death dooms Gatsby, corrupting everything and everyone around him, and the gravest disease of the twentieth century turns out to be shell shock. By forging a new self hood, Gatsby tries to separate himself from the experiences of war and, consequently, the blame for wartime violence. He suffers from shell shock which is apparent from

his isolation, his mute inability to feel, maladaptive behaviour and his restless movements. Daisy feels attraction towards Gatsby who is accomplished as an officer, but after his real self is revealed and his ambition of repeating the past is crushed, he is publicly humiliated and deprived of Daisy by the culturally and socially privileged Tom. Although not apparent, the war has a harrowing effect on Gatsby's psyche. The death and destruction of the war acted like the seed for Gatsby's spiritual void. Furthermore, it ultimately created the psychotic personality that Gatsby was.

Gatsby encountered his next trauma when he couldn't keep Daisy in his life, whom he loved the most in the world. The main object of his life is to get back Daisy, and for this goal, he resorts to all forms of corrupt practices, from bootlegging to fixing match series. Gatsby suffered for five years; the sweet memory of Daisy always haunted him day and night. With great longings, he looks at the green light of Daisy's mansion, and hopes to meet her once again. Gatsby gets trapped in Daisy's ideal love and in garish money, that he earned to please Daisy. He is a man in the grip of powerful illusions. He fails to understand that his ideal image of Daisy could not survive for long. His flesh and blood Daisy betrays him, and this shock leads to Gatsby's disintegration of self. He had never imagined that reality could be so bitter, and the world could be so full of corruption and moral degradation. He fails to comprehend the reality about actual Daisy, who marries rich and affluent Tom for security and stability of life.

Daisy is a practical woman, and her choice of Tom is determined by her consideration of money. Gatsby falsely believes that Daisy can be won over by money and materialistic things. He is a victim of sexual repression. Gatsby is a sick character suffering from many psychological ailments which wreck his sensibility and deflate his self. Relying on the psychoanalytical theories of Freud, Karen Horney and Cathy Caruth, it can be fairly concluded that Gatsby embodies many notions of Freudian trauma theory, such as Sexual Repression, the loss of a loved person, delusion, day-dreams, and identity loss. Gatsby struggles to reverse the process of time to retrieve the past. Gatsby is a self-made man, he is living with a void, and to escape from the existential realities, he creates his own fantasy world. Jay Gatsby's life on Long Island

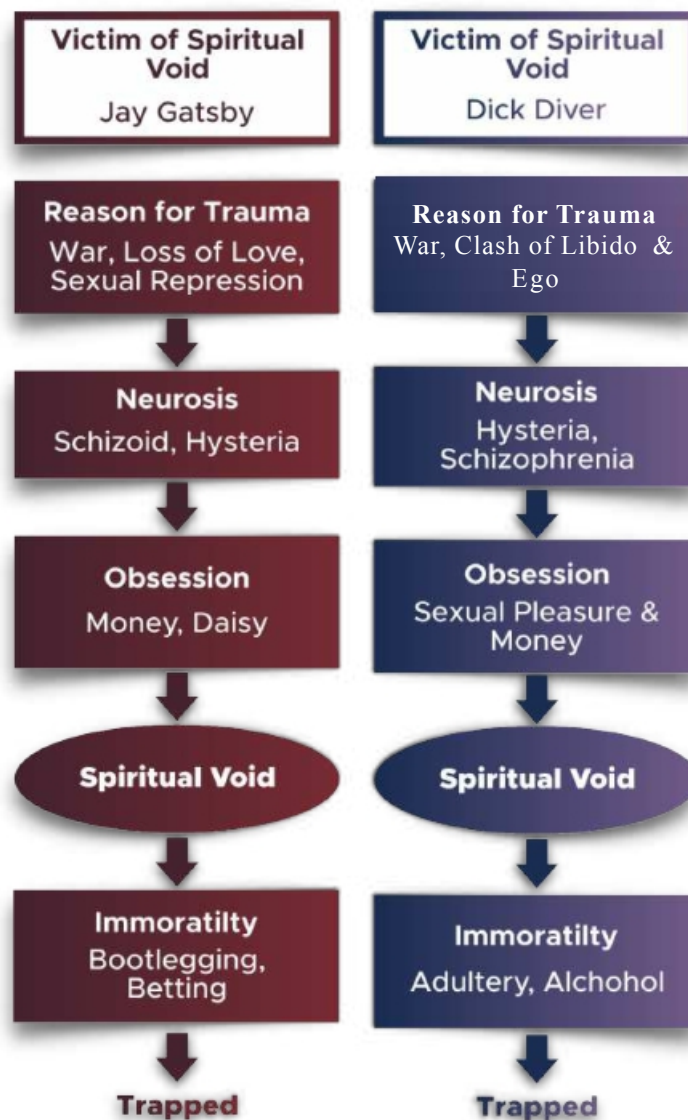


Fig. 5.2: Comparative Analysis of Gatsby and Diver

is a poignant tale of a man who has been deserted by his beloved. Gatsby never recovers from the emotional pain, even after five years of separation from Daisy. Gatsby's romantic illusions come in conflict with the external reality as illusions cannot sustain a man forever.

David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd* observes that man experiences psychological torture of alienation even in the crowd; Gatsby finds himself lonely even in his crowded parties. He is an island, living alone; building a fantasy world desperately trying to get artificial happiness through an extravagant lifestyle; a big

home library, a Rolls-Royce and a huge collection of shirts. Gatsby's life is distorted and fragmentary and he is a prey of his own false anxiety and delusions.

Gatsby "had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 194). While standing outside the Gatsby mansion, looking across the bay, Nick realises that Gatsby's death, like his life, was a product of an elusive, outlived subconscious illusion. Despite all his efforts, Gatsby is unable to disown his past, and he continually suffers in the world of trauma. Gatsby is visibly afflicted from the trauma that he had in the past when his relationship with Daisy was ended and he really wants to recapture their jolly memories by mixing and recycling previous occurrences with present ones, and to leap back into a manufactured past with delusory feelings. In his mindless chase of money, prestige, and success, Gatsby shadows a dream that finally becomes a nightmare. Undoubtedly, Gatsby has experienced a traumatic event in the past and a traumatic neurosis keeps him trapped in a fantasy world forever.

*Tender is the Night* is like *The Great Gatsby* in that it tells of a traumatised man in a corrupt society. Gatsby was surrounded by the Eastern materialists, and Dick Diver found himself among glamorous, but equally degenerate, materialistic upper-class people of the post-war civilisation of America. In this respect the novel operates at two levels: an exploration into Dick Diver's spiritual degeneration through dissipation as a tragic hero, and an examination in detail of the sickness of a society and a culture built in materialism. The main themes of *Tender is the Night* are emotional bankruptcy, trauma, alienation, sense of loss and failure, mental breakdown and schizophrenia.

Dick Diver, who starts as an up and coming psychiatrist ironically becomes the victim of mental disorder and neurosis. Dick's life is a touching tale of his deterioration; war, battle and violence engulf his entire life, and he finds himself trapped in the malevolent forces. Representing the youth of post-war America, Dick is ensnared by the forces of change and his longing for the glory, honour and the ideas of the pre-war society.



Diver's disaster is also strongly connected to his beginning to show a tendency to be part of the upper class with the help of his relationship with Nicole. On one side, as he attempts to create for himself a position as a potential psychiatrist, on the other side, liquor plays a fundamental place in destroying his marriage, career, sanity, and friendships by leading him to illusions and also makes him forgo his capacity to command of his existence and happiness in it. For example, in the book, one of the comrades of his condemns Diver saying "your friends still like you, Dick. But you say awful things to people when you've been drinking" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 455), which depicts Diver's debilitating social relationship with his companions.

The character Rosemary in the novel is also another factor that leads to Dick Diver's collapse. Although possessing emotions and feelings are widely regarded as a affirmative trait for excessive vitality in one's life such as occurred to Dick: his wish for women and youth leads him to the triumph in his public existence and job, and it also recuperates Nicole from her psychological disease who was usually forced to live in a mental asylum. But it is Diver's bad luck that his enjoyment and pleasure drives him to annihilation at the end. He feels attracted to the two pretty young women Rosemary and Nicole, and their worshipful traits are fundamental components for Diver to fulfil his inward sexual hunger for the vitality but these sexual desires disrupt the equilibrium in his life and cause Diver's vexation and destruction. When we think about the relation between Diver and Rosemary, he experiences "something blooming" in himself against her (33). Though Dick feels that he can recover the vitality and happiness in his life with love for Rosemary, it only makes his existence bitter. His failure to manage his senses and feelings in both his working and social environment ruins Diver both socially and professionally.

Freud observes that historical fantasy in man relates to either hidden sexual desire or ambitions in life. Dick Diver's failure resulted from both from his hidden sexual desire and his excessive ambition in his professional career. He is a creative young American, who is highly ambitious to achieve success in his profession. He indulges in sexual adventures, like Bob Slocum and Bruce Gold.

Dick's initial trauma was his separation from his mother. His mother is largely absent from the story. An unnamed woman who lost two daughters a few months before giving birth to her only son, Dick's mother is mentioned just once, and only in relation to the death of her two daughters. We may analyse this textual non-attendance of his mother as a symbol of her emotional unavailability. It seems very likely the death of her daughters led to a lack of ability to sufficiently care and nurture her newborn son. Dick's father, worrying about the harmful consequences of his wife's sorrow upon his son, took it on upon his shoulders to "save his son from spoiling by becoming his moral guide" (242). He brought up Diver to regard that no other thing was finer than "good instincts, honor, courtesy, and courage" (242). This is a precise protocol of conduct more related with military discipline than child upbringing. Nowhere is there any mention of affection or love. To Freudian theory, Dick Diver's frustration after achieving some comfort and wealth in his life is neither a unique case nor a common phenomenon for many psychiatrists. Freud believes "people occasionally fall ill precisely when a deeply-rooted and long-cherished wish has come to fulfillment. It seems then as though they were not able to tolerate their happiness; for there can be no question that there is a casual connection between their success and their falling ill" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3104).

Another fundamental vantage point that has been analysed by the present researcher about Diver's breakdown is related to Freud's theory of hysteria. It is Diver's hysterical fantasy and his unsatisfied wishes that drag Diver into uncertainty and a dead well. To Freudian Theory, Diver can be presumed to exhibit "a conflict between [his] libidinal wishes and the part of his personality we call his ego, which is the expression of his instinct of self-preservation and which also includes his ideals of his personality" (3104). In the ending pages of the novel, we see that Dick Diver is no longer the "fine man", an ambitious psychiatrist as he used to be. Freud believes that "melancholia borrows some of its features from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to narcissism" (3048). It is of course not only Dick himself that suffers from hysteria and melancholia in the novel but also the importance of Diver's case stems from his being one of the most

important representatives of ambiguous personality in the modern Western world. However, he was once a successful psychiatrist dealing with the reasons and solutions of the illness, but then Diver himself is caught to illness in the later part of his life. So the decline of the successful psychiatrist Dick Diver to a character of “nobody” can be considered as one of the most ultimate breakdowns among the characters in Fitzgerald novels.

To compare the two novels, one can recognise a repetitive compulsion for creating a new self by forgetting the past. Both protagonists have the same kind of problem in relation to the past or memory which can't be incorporated into their imagined new self. Therefore, they are forced to reenact the memory in their life because they can't locate it as a memory in the past. Gatsby has to lose Daisy twice, while Dick has to lose his own self twice; first he loses himself in the other's image through transference and second he loses the half of his self that is Nicole through separation. Both Gatsby and Dick are traumatised by the events of war, and they are victims of shell shock.

Both *Tender Is the Night* and *The Great Gatsby* trace the process in which the protagonists' disguises are gradually unveiled and depict how they are diminished from strong subjects into weak subjects. The two novels expose the forgotten memory rather than hide it. The texts revealed that, for success-obsessed America, failure or breakdown is non-American, and that there are always possibilities of failure behind the realisation of American ideals. Similarly, there is fear of failure or collapse behind the romantic, idealistic mask or image of Dick Diver and Gatsby. The negative features that are repressed, unvisualised, and expelled out of their personality contradictorily strengthen and foreground the myth of success, but on the other hand, they can also control and hold down excess by opposing the myth. However, the protagonists are charged with a composite of ideals so excessively that they are destined to collapse suddenly due to their blindness to the negative aspects.

The selected works of Fitzgerald are similar to the selected works of Heller in the respect that they both trace back the trauma of protagonists to the World Wars. Just as Gatsby and Dick are traumatised by the war, so is Yossarian.

Freud and Breuer in their book *Studies on Hysteria* while writing about hysterical trauma, describe it as “any experience which calls up distressing affects- such as those of fright, anxiety, shame, or physical pain- may operate as a trauma of this kind” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 8). “The psychical trauma- or more precisely the memory of the trauma- acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work”(8). Blood-shed of war makes Yossarian a neurotic misfit. The death and disappearance of his friends give so much trouble to his psyche that a soldier becomes a neurotic wreck. In war his life becomes a series of traumas: death of Kraft, loss of tent mate Orr, disappearance of Dunbar, tragic atmosphere of war, *Catch-22*, cruel behaviour of his officers, death of Nately, greed of Milo, death of Kid Sampson, suicide of McWatt, and the most harrowing event of the violent death of Snowden in his own arms give trauma after trauma to Yossarian. All these episodes haunt his memory. The flashbacks of these catastrophic events make him restless. He suffers from a series of traumatic experiences.

It is clear to Yossarian in that very moment that Snowden had already lost his spirit and the only thing left to lose was his body, which was now torn apart by the atrocities of war. Snowden changes everything for Yossarian. Mortality in all its horror lies right in front of him. From that day on, Yossarian stops being brave. Yossarian loses his mental stability on “the day of the Avignon mission when Yossarian climbed down the few steps of his plane naked, in a state of utter shock, with Snowden smeared abundantly all over his bare heels and toes, knees, arms and fingers” (Heller, *Catch-22* 330). There is a direct relation between Snowden “losing his guts” and Yossarian “losing his nerve”.

Snowden’s secret is so traumatic and thus initially repressed which later manifests itself in his madness. Repression in its most primitive form is an unconscious type of forgetting the existence of something that brings us pain or discomfort. Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* writes that this repression is caused because an individual wants to achieve something which is pleasant to the mind and wants to forget occurrences which are unpleasant. Guilt inducing desires and traumatic events are relegated into the unconscious which emerge only at a

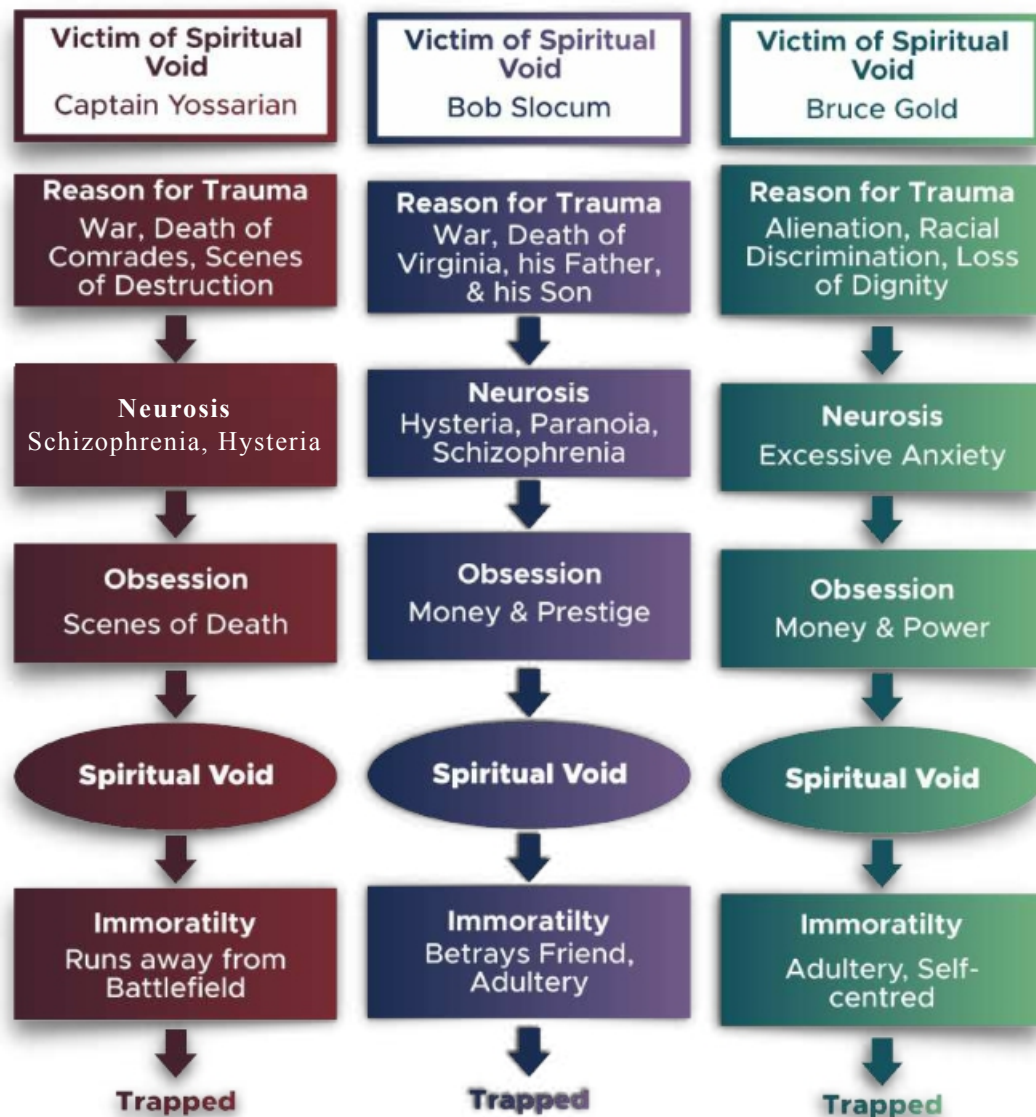


Fig. 5.3: Comparative Examination of Yossarian, Bob Slocum, & Bruce Gold

particular moment in the form of images, dream, and Freudian slips. This reaction in an evolutionary sense is beneficial for a person. It drives a person to pleasurable behaviours and thoughts. Freud and Breuer point out that memory of trauma seems to be far more detrimental to the psyche of individuals than trauma itself. The traumatic memory is hidden deep in our psyche so that retrieval becomes almost impossible. Our conscious mind never wants to access the unpleasant experiences as they are disturbing. But when major events and traumatic experiences are repressed by an individual, it can have an extremely detrimental effect on their psyche. It can later

surface itself through neurosis and hysteria. The trauma is concerned with excitation, either obsessive or emotional, where the more intense the trauma, the more intense is excitation. Therefore it becomes difficult for the subject to function pragmatically.

Yossarian is directly enslaved by the forces of military, and is traumatised by it. Like him, Slocum too has been affected and traumatised by the war. But this trauma is further deepened by the oppressive forces of corporate America.

The plot of *Something Happened* somehow revolves around Slocum's attempt to confront and define his infantile desires and traumas. Slocum's life is characterised by a series of different traumatic events. After returning from the war, which itself serves as a major traumatic event in his life, he gets shocked to learn that Virginia had killed herself a few years after he had left the company, perhaps due to her being single and depressed. This event controls his behaviour and influences his life, and various Freudian theories have been applied to understand the effect of such traumatic event on his psyche. In Freud's early work he argues that traumatic hysteria develops from repressed earlier experiences. Freud and Breuer emphasise in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that the "original event was not traumatic in itself but only in its remembrance. Trauma is thus defined in relation to the process of remembering and as an event harbored within the unconscious that causes a splitting of the ego or dissociation." Freud says:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychological and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. (qtd. in Caruth 186)

Flashbacks of the death of Virginia haunt Slocum and such flashbacks occur again and again in various instances on the novel:

Look what she did to me.  
She killed herself before she was twenty-five, doing it with gas, as her father had done before her (and maybe his father before him — she

didn't say — deserting me without two weeks' notice) and leaving me feeling destitute again in a phone booth in a train terminal. After a moment of utter shock, I found myself feeling like a foundling again, abandoned heartlessly in a soiled telephone booth in Grand Central Station. (Heller, *Something Happened* 487)

Slocum is a part of the insidious war culture. Although he feels that being in the war gives him freedom, his psyche is fractured due to alienation and aloofness. Furthermore the scenes of death and destruction of the war also leave his inner-self badly damaged and have far reaching consequences in his life, which is apparent in his monologue, “It was after the war, I think, that the struggle really began” (87). This also shows that he is somewhat conscious of the detrimental effect that war has had on him.

The death of his father and subsequently the lack of a father-figure left a deep imprint on his mind. This also led to the lack of his psychosexual development during his phallic stage. He believes that perhaps it was his father's early death that gave him anxiety and says that he might have developed constant paranoia from “...the day [his] father died and left [him] feeling guilty and ashamed — because [he] thought [he] was the only little boy in the whole world then who had no father” (1). In the chapter “My boy has stopped talking to me”, the most prominent hit to his psyche takes place: he murders his very own son. After his son meets with an accident, Slocum gets overwhelmed with emotions and embraces his son so tightly that his son dies of asphyxiation. This traumatic event completely shatters him. He is so filled with guilt that he requests the doctor to not “tell [his] wife” (562).

Freud's work on war neurosis and the problem of traumatic repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) extends and adapts his earlier theories on the defence mechanisms of the ego as well as the origin and effects of trauma upon the psyche. The mind as an organism, according to Freud, contains outer and inner layers, with the outer layer having a “protective shield” against harmful external stimuli (Freud, *The Complete Works* 3731). However, when “fright” occurs, that is “the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it” (3718),

the lack of anxiety coupled with the external stimuli cause neurosis. Such is the “fright” that Slocum faces when he gets the shocking news of Virginia’s death and the news that he himself killed his son by suffocating him. His anxiety, which acts as a protection mechanism against traumatic neurosis, carries no defence against these unexpected situations. These external stimuli rupture the barrier and enter his inner psyche without the adequate internal defence. Freud writes: “We describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield ... with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli” (3732).

In the book *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that Freud co-authored with Breuer, he asserted that hysteria was caused by the patient’s efforts to repress traumatic memories, similar to what Bob Slocum does. In the case of Slocum, external events such as the news of Virginia’s death, mistakingly murdering his son, war and death of his father, combined with internal repression like the inability to make love with Virginia cause him to become a neurotic. The neurotic that needs treatment simply has more debilitating symptoms formations that prevent enjoyment and active achievement in life: “But this feeling of failure, this depressing sense of imminent catastrophe and public shame, persists even here, where I do good work steadily and try to make no enemies” (Heller, *Something Happened* 15).

Further showing his state of dissatisfaction he states: “I never became what I wanted to be, even though I got all the things I ever wanted, including two cars and two color TV sets” (341).

Slocum always feels paranoia and anxiety. He states “ I can never make myself believe I am safe” (15). These bouts of fear are nothing but the surfacing of his neurotic anxiety. Neurotic Anxiety arises when the ego of an individual feels that it is going to be overwhelmed by the Id. Ego always tries to control the desires of Id, but since the desires of Id are more powerful, Ego is unable to do so. As a consequence, Id tries to fulfil its desires through irrational thoughts, fantasy, and abnormal behaviours. Slocum himself says: “My id suppurates into my ego and makes me aggressive and disagreeable” (393). This anxiety supplants itself in his brain and he



starts to panic even in non-threatening situations: “I have a feeling that someone nearby is soon going to find out something about me that will mean the end, although I can't imagine what that something is” (16).

Bob Slocum exhibits all the symptoms of a neurotic. He experiences mood swings that highlight the effects of his previous traumas. He lets minor events make him extremely miserable. He is emotionally unstable. In some points of the novel, he expresses his unending love for his son, while in other instances, he shows his desire to kill him. Similarly, he states that he loves his family and his friends, but he contradicts himself by saying: “There are times I wish everyone I know would die and release me from these tender tensions I experience in my generous solicitude for them” (343).

He is also unable to develop healthy relationships with his family.

I have an impulse often to strike back at the members of my family, even the children, when I feel they are insulting me or taking advantage. Sometimes when I see one of them in the process of doing something improper, or making a mistake for which I know I will be justified in blaming them, I do not intercede.....It horrifies me; it is something like watching them back fatally toward an open window or the edge of a cliff and offering no warning to save them from injury or death. (111)

Unlike the previously discussed protagonists, Gold has never himself been a part of the combat. In similiarity though, he too has been deeply affected by the environment created by the war. Similar to the way a butterfly flapping its wings in one part of the world causes a storm in another, the effects of World Wars and The Great Depression continued to affect American generations. The alienation that he felt from his family was directly related to the fact that his brother was a part of the war. As a result of this, the expectations on him greatly increased, and although he sought to meet them, he was continually chastised by his father. In fact, Gold's obsession for money and power, and his ultimate disintegration of values, stems from his childhood traumas and social alienation. Freud along with Breuer in their *Studies*

on *Hysteria* (1893) say “The disproportion between the many years duration of the Hysterical symptom and the single occurrence, which provoked it is what we are accustomed invariable to find in traumatic Neurosis” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 7). They observed that it was usually some childhood events that triggered severe symptoms of neurosis that reflect later in a person’s life. Near the beginning of the novel, Gold expresses such an event where his elder brother, Sid, once deliberately left him alone at a place where Gold as a child felt helpless and miserable. Heller remarks that this event “never ceased to pain him” (Heller, *Good as Gold* 18). There are many such traumatic events in Gold’s childhood which act as a trigger to his neurosis later in his life. As a child, he was a misfit. His friends used to avoid him, and considered him an embarrassment. Due to his weak eyesight, he was given the name four-eyed. Even in his music class, he was singled out as a listener, and was the only child prohibited to sing. Heller, describing Gold’s childhood writes that he “spent much of his childhood on the fringe of exile” (59). He was rarely allowed to play and none of his friends ever like to confide in him. He feels that the rest of the world also stands ready to make fun of him. It is clear that these events played a functional role in development of his neurosis.

Furthermore, the family unit acts as a foundation of moral values in a person. When the equilibrium of a family is broken, the environment of the character descends into disorder and chaos, and exemplifies the effects of Murphy’s Law.

The post-war landscape of America is one where family ties and relationships are eroding. A lack of attachment with one’s blood relations and the continuous pursuit of materialistic belongings takes one far from his roots, creating a void in his psyche. The absence of catharsis with the loved one’s leads to repression, which can have far reaching consequences upon one’s mental state. This repression, according to Freud, is what leads to Trauma.

In *Good as Gold*, the family is throughout portrayed as a Jewish American household suffering acutely from an aesthetics of anxiety in which even the family inmates become individual islands, bereft of any understanding, cohesion or meaningful productive relationships. As a modern-day Sisyphus, Gold also feels

disenchanted within the environs of his Jewish family syndrome. His alienation from his family also disturbs him and affects his psyche. "So many fucking faces, Gold thought. So many people. And all of them strange. Even Belle, these days" (25). For Bruce, it is the yawning intellectual gulf which nibbles at his mind as he chronically thinks that there is none within his family who can match his intellectual calibre and academic charisma. Gold's feeling of disgust, alienation and angst within his family context attains alarming proportions. The functional mediocrity, which hurts Gold as a constant scourge, alienates him further from his wife and children.

"If you ever forget you're a Jew, a gentile will remind you": The second epigraph to the present novel begins thus. All of Bruce Gold's encounters in Washington are such reminders. He constantly feels restive and smothered by a surfeit of Jew-Gentile collisions. His friend at the White House talks to Gold about and "your kind," advises him to finish his book on the Jewish experience "while there's still time." Conover calls him "Goldberg, Goldfarb, Finegold, Goldfedder, Goldenrod, Manishevitz, Schwartz," etc. etc. And the silver-haired former of governor Texas tells Gold that a Jew always needs friends in Washington, because he doesn't really belong there.

When he goes to Conover, an influential person in Washington, the latter openly insults and expresses his hatred for Jews. Despite this, Gold has to keep his temperament and not offend Conover, though he feels miserable.

Similarly, Ralph bluntly declares on his face that the fact he is Jew will be good for the party because it was easy for the party to get rid of Jews when the need arrived, and they were no more unwelcome by both the public and the office. Gold has to tolerate this blow to his dignity as well just for the sake of his ambitions. "Be at the white house at eleven. Use the servants' entrance" (203). Throughout the novel, he is observed to be suffering from inferiority complex, while simultaneously having glimpses of superiority. This shows a dichotomous view of the protagonist, further proving the hypothesis of his neurosis: "Is there something about me, something in my makeup perhaps, that causes people to want to make fun of me? Is there something that inspires humor in other, am I of a type that encourages sport?" (387).

All dreams are inspired and manifestations of desires according to Freud. “Dreams of food and drink when hungry or thirsty, are the direct expressions of wishes arising from an individual’s organic needs. Comfort dreams and overtly sexual dreams also are the direct fulfillments of wishes. But the majority of dreams are the indirect or disguised expressions of repressed and therefore unconscious wishes” (Freud, *The Complete Works* 561). Gold is frequently seen as day-dreaming, and most of these dreams are of him attaining a reputable position in the society. This is a direct expression of his repressed memories of past trauma, where he was alienated from his family and peers, and where he always felt like an outsider with no respect or position. In Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he remarks that dream life is capable of extraordinary achievements- at any rate, in certain field. This behaviour of Gold where he fantasies about living a life of respect and prestige, is observed frequently throughout the novel. He wishes to work for the president with Ralph, marry Andrea and become an overpaid professor of Urban Studies. All this further affirms his hollow quest for money and power.

“Gold’s mind was shimmering with fantasies of approaching eminence as the car descended. Secretary of State? Head of CIA?” (122). Gold never does get to Acapulco, but one of the great scenes of the novel is his fantasy of trying to please the two women in the adjoining hotel rooms. Even the fantasy proves so exhausting that Gold collapses and has to be taken to the hospital, where for ten days his mistress and his fiancée and his wife do not miss him at all.

Gold is not satisfied with his current position. He wants to attain great heights, and wishes to become a semi-god. His desire is so strong that he is ready to leave his family and his job. He has a perfect wife, who is well aware of his philandering, but still is willing to put up with him. She takes all the decisions regarding their children and takes good care of them. Gold’s parents are having more cordial relations with her than Gold himself. Gold too knows of her qualities, but he is ready to give her up just for a position in the government office. Describing their relationship, Heller writes: instead of coming in terms of this reality and accepting himself as he truly is, he represses these traumatic memories and events.

In *Studies On Hysteria*, the authors assert that neurosis is caused by the patient's efforts to repress a traumatic memory. This is to say that it results from the patient's efforts to forcefully refuse to acknowledge in a conscious state of mind the memory of a past trauma. Since he is not terms with his true reality, and he represses his trauma, his quest for money and power is shallow and his feeling of dissatisfaction is ubiquitous.

The spiritual bankruptcy of the superiors in *Catch-22* is greatly similar to the inner eclipse of both Cummings and Croft. Like Gold who is both an oppressor and oppressed, both Cummings and Croft of Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* are simultaneously oppressed and oppressors by and in the American military. Similar to the way Nicole in *Tender is the Night* suffers from Oedipus complex, so do Cummings and Croft. Cummings believes that the deepest trauma is the one an infant experiences when he discovers that he and the universe, the infant's equivalent of the mother, are not the same. Cummings is actually saying that the deepest trauma is the one an infant experiences when he discovers that he and the universe, the infant's equivalent of the mother, are not the same. Cummings uses intellectual defences to hide from his own life-long trauma at the separation from his mother. The infantile trauma and the fear of the castrating father induce a sense of helplessness in Cummings which he retains in his adult life. The fantasy of becoming God is his unsatisfactory attempt to compensate for his nagging sense of inadequacy. Cummings' utterance, "Man had to destroy God in order to achieve Him, equal Him" (Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*, 411), is merely another expression of the General's wish to supplant the father, thereby having the mother for himself.

So great is Cummings' desire for omnipotence that any frustration is perceived as emasculation. When he realises that a war attack is not going the way he wishes, his feelings are quite revealing:

The shock cut deeply into the General's confidence. The process at most times was unbelievable to him, and he was suffering the amazement and terror of a driver who finds his machine directing itself, starting and halting when it desires. He had heard of this,



Fig. 5.4: A Comparison between Croft's & Cummings' Trapped Condition

military lore was filled with such horror tales, but he had never imagined it would happen to him... No matter how he folded them now the men always collapsed into a sodden resistant mass like dishrags, too soft, too wet to hold any shape which might be given them. At night he would lie sleepless in his cot, suffering an almost unbearable frustration; there were times when he was burning with impotence of his rage. (314-15)

The dominant imagery of the passage is sexual. Although Cummings is thinking about the campaign, his unconscious feelings suggest his inability to control

his erection. The shock “cuts deeply” implies the castration feelings he is experiencing while the reference to the driver who, in his “horror,” finds his “machine directing itself,” expresses the General’s failure to maintain his erection. This is developed further when the General thinks of troops as “an extension of his own body,” which suggests that men under his control are part of his gigantic phallus. However, he finds that he has “lost his sensitive control” over his penis. The “extension of his body” has now “collapsed,” and like “dishrags,” it has become “too soft.”

The General’s sexual failure is stated explicitly when he burns “with the impotence of his rage.” Although impotent, he tries to control his erection through masturbation, “his hands clasping and unclasping endlessly.” The intent is more evident when the author describes Cummings as looking at a ridgepole of his tent as he performs masturbatory hand motions. The passage points up the General’s basic conflict. In his impotent rage against the father, he turns to the army as an outlet where he might gain power. Obsessed with unconscious fantasies of phallic power, he hopes to be able to achieve an erection far greater than his father’s. When he fails, he regresses to an emotionally infantile state where the only power can be achieved through masturbation. On another level, it may be questioned whether the General actually wants the omnipotence he so strenuously searches for. In hoping to depose God, he is presenting himself with an unattainable goal. Paradoxically, he desires to replace God, but his guilt feelings assure his failure, thus reinforcing his self-induced impotence.

In his hunger for power, Sergeant Croft is the enlisted man most similar to Cummings. The “time machine” biography states that Croft “hated weakness and loved practically nothing” (165). An early incident in his life serves to illustrate a vital trait in his make-up. On a hunting trip with his father, the boy tracks a deer into the woods and is about to shoot when it is killed by Croft’s father. The boy flies into a rage, even trying to strike his father, while the sadistic man laughs at his son’s helplessness. From childhood on, the competition with the father figure is so activated that he cannot “stand to have anyone beat him in anything” (166).

Croft's desire for power makes him a natural leader who is deeply feared by the men in the platoon. When General Cummings thinks up a plan for the reconnaissance mission deep into the rear of the Pacific island they are on, Croft's platoon is assigned, but Croft must relinquish the leadership to Hearn. What follows is a subtle struggle for power between the two men. Ultimately Croft withholds information about the enemy's position from Hearn, who then leads the platoon into danger and is himself killed.

The reader is introduced to Croft on the second page of the novel, where he is engaging in a card game just prior to the invasion on Anopopei. As he plays the game, he "knows" he is going to win: "Somehow, he knew he was going to pull a seven or a ten for a full house. Croft didn't question it. A certainty as vivid as this one had to mean something" (18). Consequently, he is bewildered when he finds that he is wrong. Later on, after the invasion, Croft leads the men while they are on beach patrol. He notices Hennessey, one of the platoon members, and comments to himself that the "boy is too careful" (38). Suddenly, with a passionate certainty he thought, "Hennessey's going to get killed today" (39). This time Croft is certain. Later that day when Hennessey is killed during the Japanese attack, Croft broods over the event:

His reaction was similar to the one he felt at the moment he discovered his wife was unfaithful. At that instant, before his rage and pain had begun to operate, he had felt only a numb throbbing excitement and the knowledge that his life was changed to some degree and certain things would never be the same. He knew that again now. Hennessey's death had opened to Croft vistas of such omnipotence that he was afraid to consider it directly. All day the fact hovered above his head, tantalising him with odd dreams and portents of power. (49)

Croft's quest for omnipotence is perceived most clearly on the reconnaissance patrol, especially after Hearn's death. Before his death, Hearn had promised the men he would go back to base by heading for the shore and awaiting patrol boats. As soon as Croft takes over, he disregards the Lieutenant's orders, telling the men they must scale the forbidden Mt. Anaka in order to get back to headquarters. Croft's decision is



worthless from a military standpoint, but he is driven by the attraction the mountain has for him.

Croft's desire for omnipotence has the same oedipal origins as Cumming's. In its size, the mountain represents the father's phallus which Croft, feeling deprived of, wants for himself. Only by scaling the mountain can he engage in primitive battle with the father. Croft is inhumane most of the time, he has an immense hunger for power, and he is a man driven by the neuroses that, like those which motivate most of the other characters in the novel, are predominantly sexual in origin. Time and again he shows no compassion for the men in his platoon, for their weaknesses, their weariness, their anxiety, their pain. This is most evident in his maniacal effort to push the platoon up the mountain, as if his sheer will were enough, and in his wanton display of power and cruelty when he crushes the bird Roth had discovered and tried to take care for. The Time Machine passage devoted to Croft emphasises that Croft's desire for power grows out of his feeling of sexual inferiority and impotence: "There's one thing you ain't best in, she screams. Croft stands there trembling and then wrenches out of the room. (Goddam whore)" (172).

He revels in combat—"I tell you Croft loves combat, he loves it" (27)- because it gives him a sense of control, over himself and the men he commands, and the men whom he must face. "Leading the men was a responsibility he craved; he felt powerful and certain at such moments" (38). After Croft realises that warfare offers an opportunity to exercise power, he seeks it: "He hungered for he fast taut pulse he would feel in his throat after he killed a man" (153). Like Gold, Eitel too has never been a part of the World Wars, but is deeply impacted by them. His affliction of materialism is a direct result of the post-war money culture of America.

In his paper titled "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud postulates that there are two types of responses to loss, which he named mourning and melancholia. Both responses appear to be similar as far as expression or mood, because they both are related to grief. But while mourning, according to Freud's, is a transforming and finite event, melancholia is a persistent condition, and takes root just outside the borders of an individual's conscious understanding.

Eitel has two major traumatic instances in his life: His black-listing by the Subversive Committee and his divorce with Lulu Meyers. Instead of externalising his pain and allowing himself to feel and process these changes, internalises the pain and directs the negative feelings towards himself. Freud stated that in melancholia, a loss is so unendurable that it gets moved to the unconscious, where the grief exists but can't get processed by the conscious mind. And therefore, the person gets stuck: the pain is felt internally, and without the specificity that the conscious mind could give it, the pain very often becomes directed towards the self.

Similar to Yossarian, the scenes of death and destruction play a fundamental role in Rojack's breakdown.

Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* writes "Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (Freud, *The Complete Works* 10). Rojack is a product of war and post-war society, and like the protagonist of the other selected novelists, is vulnerable to the trap of the false American Dream due to the effect of War on his psyche. Dr. Karen Horney believes that "neuroses are personality disturbances which inevitably arise when an individual develops a feeling of "basic anxiety" in the face of an environment that threatens to engulf him" (Horney 46). This is similar to the "anxiety" that is felt by Rojack when he encounters the four Germans in the battlefield.

"Suddenly it was all gone, the clean presence of it, the grace, it had deserted me in the instant I hesitated" (Mailer, *An American Dream* 5). He also suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can be observed from his reminiscences of the War: "I have been suffering from blackouts ever since the war. I had a blackout then" (80). The stress and anxiety of war brings out his animalistic instincts. He feels spiritually empty and soulless as he remarks "My personality is built upon a void." (Mailer, *An American Dream* 7)

In addition, Rojack's feelings of dissatisfaction and worthlessness are firmly rooted in his World War II experience. From the above instances, it can be concluded that war has had a significant effect on his psyche and subsequently the actions he performs in the novel. Not only does the War directly impact him, but also, it effects

him negatively through the hellish spiritually decadent post-war landscape of America. We read in the Epilogue: “Nobody knew that the deserts of the West, the arid empty wild blind deserts, were producing again a new breed of man... I was part of the new breed” (269).

Rojack’s psyche has been split by the events of the war and as a result he develops psychopathic tendencies. Rojack is himself a professor of “existential psychology,” and seemed keenly aware of his own homicidal and suicidal tendencies. Understanding his dilemma was no help in resolving it. Rojack felt as though his actions were motivated by strong external forces, represented by the voices he heard from the moon, or from his brain, or by a “field of force” (41).



Fig. 5.5: An cross-examination of Eitel and Rojack

Therefore, it has been observed that in all of the selected novels, the traumas of the protagonists can directly or indirectly be traced back to war and the post-war American environment. *Gatsby*, *Diver*, *Yossarian*, *Slocum*, *Gold*, *Cummings*, *Croft*, *Eitel* and *Rojack* all are influenced by the wars in one negative way or another: It results in the disintegration of promising individuals to neurotic wrecks. Like a red-thread, war is present in all novels in one way or another, executing the beginning of the end of the protagonists.

Secondly, all the novels are compared on the various Neurosis and Psychosis of the protagonists. The aforementioned traumas lead to the disintegration of the psyches of the protagonists. Without an exception, all of the protagonists of the selected novels suffer from one neurotic ailment or another.

Jay Gatsby is an indisputable schizoid. He is a psychological case study as his life is a continuous progression of psychic traumas. From the first chapter till the tragic death of his life Gatsby passes through many stages of disintegration of self. He has romantic sensibility and loves to weave romantic illusions. He spends most of his time in the world of fantasy; he passionately tries to recreate the past and longs to win over the love of his beloved Daisy whom he had lost five years ago. He believes in Platonic idealised love and is lost in the old memories of his "golden girl". Now such a romantic attitude inevitably leads to hysteria and neurosis as Gatsby fears losing Daisy. Daisy becomes the object of Gatsby's romantic quest. The main objective of his life is to get back Daisy and for this goal he resorts to all forms of corrupt practices from bootlegging to fixing match series. Gatsby suffered for five years; the sweet memory of Daisy always hunted him day and night. He wistfully looks at the green light of Daisy's mansion and hopes to meet her once again. Gatsby is a trapped protagonist; he is trapped in Daisy's ideal love and in garish money that he earned to please Daisy. He is a man in the grip of powerful illusions; he fails to understand that his ideal image of Daisy couldn't survive for long. His flesh and blood Daisy betrays him as the reality is always bitter. This shocks Gatsby and leads to his disintegration of self. He has never imagined that reality could be so bitter and the world could be so

full of corruption and moral degeneration. He fails to comprehend the reality about actual Daisy who marries rich and affluent Tom for security and stability of life. Daisy is a practical woman and her choice of Tom is determined by her consideration of money.

Gatsby falsely believes that Daisy can be won over by money and materialistic things. He is a victim of sexual repression. Gatsby is a sick character suffering from many psychological ailments which wreck his sensibility and deflate his self. Relying on the psychoanalytical theories of Freud, Horney and Caruth, it can be fairly concluded that Gatsby embodies many notions of Freudian trauma theory such as sexual repression, the loss of a loved person, delusion, daydreams, and identity loss. Gatsby struggles to reverse the process of time to retrieve the past. Gatsby is a self-made man; he is living with a void and to escape from the existential realities he creates his own fantasy world.

Gatsby feels sexually repressed when Daisy rejects him and marries Tom Buchanan. He makes up his mind to live near Daisy and West Egg ultimately becomes an emotionally significant place for him. Gatsby's personal sense of grief and loss results from the desire to win Daisy. From Freudian perspective his failure leads to his regressive wish since "Daisy tumbled short of his dreams" (116). Gatsby creates a world of illusive fantasy and spends days and nights recollecting his memories of Daisy. Gatsby is not a rational human being; like a crazy and eccentric lover he worships Daisy's shadow, Daisy haunts Gatsby for the rest of life. Symbolically, Daisy's shadow is everything Gatsby values, but in reality her shadow brings his downfall and leads to his tragic death at the end of the novel. For Gatsby Daisy appears like "a green light that burns all night" (112), which has lured him into reinventing his identity and trying to recapture the past. The turning point in Gatsby's life comes with the loss of Daisy; now he transfers his disillusionments from the past to the present. He is lost in his elusive endless dream and goes on hoping against hopes. He knows that Daisy is lost forever as she is married to Tom but he deliberately ignores the stark reality and derives pleasures in weaving false illusions about Daisy. His deceptive memories eventually deflate his self making him a

neurotic lover. Gatsby loses his rational thinking and psychic fantasy, trauma grip his consciousness. His chronic problem adversely affects Gatsby's capacity of thinking resulting into his ongoing personality disorder.

The Warrens like the Buchanans are a wealthy Chicago family. However Fitzgerald does not make Dick Diver merely the victim of Nicole and her wealthy family. Dick is complicit in his own decline.

The story of Dick Diver's long descent, or "dying fall," from his initial eminence into ultimate obscurity repeats a pattern of disillusion and decline already firmly in place by the time Fitzgerald began writing *Tender is the Night* in 1925. The pattern is most immediately apparent, of course, in *The Great Gatsby*, where Gatsby enacts in his material obsessions and sordid downfall. However, while the origin of Gatsby's tragedy resides in the intensity of his dream, Diver's lies in his being side-tracked by the very rich and by his own weakness, which was to feel needed and to be the centre of attention and his idealism.

Dick exhibits symptoms of mania: increased sociability and intense excitement, if not euphoria, in anticipation of the party. However, what follows is always a depressive mood, one he masks from Nicole. Dick Diver's depression is certainly correlated with his alcoholism. His depression results in a loss of self. Although Dick is unsure of when he lost his sense of self, he is conscious of it happening. Like his marriage and personality, his profession is empty, without meaning, deteriorated.

The final scenes in Fitzgerald's novel illustrate the inverse relationship between Nicole's mental health and Dick's. Dick speaks of his deterioration as if it were a sinking ship. He tells Nicole, "I can't do anything for you any more. I'm trying to save myself," to which she responds, "From my contamination?" (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 301).

Similar to Gatsby, Yossarian is also a psychotic. In schizophrenia, the leading psychotic disorder, individuals are afflicted from communication and thought breakdown. A prominent theory concerning the development of schizophrenia relates it to system of pathological communication within the family. The protagonist of

Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* (1961) finds himself in an extended relationship teeming with the characteristics of schizophrenia. Indeed, the present researcher regards the entire novel as an inventory of the major pathologies of thought and communication. The atmosphere has additional schizophrenogenic ingredients. Yossarian reacts to a crazy world, where double binds rule: "...the only people permitted to ask questions were those who never did" (36). Similarly: "She ordered Yossarian to get right back into his bed and blocked his path so he couldn't comply" (300). The novel shows other symptoms of schizophrenia, such as Circular Reasoning (142), Non Sequitur (372), and real and apparent contradictions (9). He contemplates murdering Orr and finds the idea a relaxing one. It is this thought alone that allows him to tolerate his roommate prattling. And, of course, at last we encounter the major Catch. The paradox inherent in the twisted logic of Catch-22 type regulations seems analogous to schizophrenogenic double binds. Toward the end of Heller's book its protagonist has a schizophrenic breakdown: His hallucinations have distinct paranoid ingredients (406-407). His spiritual decadence thus transforms him from a hopeful soldier to a schizophrenic mess.

Like the above discussed protagonists, Slocum too suffers from mental ailments: He is a neurotic. At his office, Slocum is frightened and cynically prudent in coping with his superiors. At his home, he is regularly aggressive and abrasive towards his two older children, or he gets away from them to the isolation of his study. His mind is busy with thoughts of death, disintegration, and fear of the unknown, and he contemplates obsessively on unresolved emotional experiences, such as his adolescent flirtation with Virginia and his ignoring of his mother before her ultimate death in a nursing home. The protagonist Bob Slocum experiences a kind of phobia at all times throughout the novel with every aspect happening in the external world. External incidents or accidents create a kind of internal phobia that drives an individual towards eternal psychological, physiological, and emotional devastation and desolation.

These constant fears wreck his life and make him paranoid, leading him into a downward spiral of depression and anxiety:

I've got anxiety; I suppress hysteria. I've got politics on my mind, summer race riots, drugs, violence, and teen-age sex. There are perverts and deviates everywhere who might corrupt or strangle any one of my children. I've got crime in my streets. I've got old age to face. My boy, though only nine, is already worried because he does not know what he wants to be when he grows up. My daughter tells lies. I've got the decline of American civilization and the guilt and ineptitude of the whole government of the United States to carry around on these poor shoulders of mine. (67)

Throughout the course of the novel, Slocum loses his mind. Frederick C. Stern remarks in his analysis of Heller's novels "If *Catch-22* was dark humor, *Something Happened* was even more so"(Stern 27-28). He bottles inside of him the things he wishes he could say aloud, to the point that he finds he has a hard time distinguishing between what he thinks and what he says. He becomes a perfect example of a hollow man. Even his comedy is a mask for alternating impulses of hostility and fear, as well as boredom, frustration, and discontent.

Despite his outward success, Slocum always has a nagging feeling of dissatisfaction and emptiness. An unknowing victim of suburban disillusionment, Slocum is never happy. His work doesn't fulfil him, since he knows that what the company does is ultimately meaningless: "Most of the work we do in my department is, in the long run, trivial" (16).

He is not satisfied with his wife and family either, so he seeks outlets for being happy outside his personal life. Nicholas Canaday remarks "Fear and power, the opposites of love and caring, characterize Slocum's family relationship" (Canaday 92-93). Slocum experiences more freedom at the office than he would at home. He can fantasise about Jane in the workspace and go around with women in the town after work. But at the end, he is simply as sad at the workplace as he is at his house. He feels frightened of standing still even with this newfound promotion, however at the end he ascends to his new position with poise and grace. And after that, the



matters that were vital to him, such as delivering a speech at the convention, do start happening to him.

In the case of Slocum, external events such as the news of Virginia's death, mistakingly murdering his son, war and death of his father, combined with internal repression like the inability to make love with Virginia cause him to become a neurotic. The neurotic that needs treatment simply has more debilitating symptoms formations that prevent enjoyment and active achievement in life. "But this feeling of failure, this depressing sense of imminent catastrophe and public shame, persists even here, where I do good work steadily and try to make no enemies" (Heller, *Something Happened* 15).

Further showing his state of dissatisfaction he states: "I never became what I wanted to be, even though I got all the things I ever wanted, including two cars and two color TV sets" (341).

Slocum always feels paranoia and anxiety. He states "I can never make myself believe I am safe" (15). These bouts of fear are nothing but the surfacing of his neurotic anxiety. Neurotic Anxiety arises when the ego of an individual feels that it is going to be overwhelmed by the Id. Ego always tries to control the desires of Id, but since the desires of Id are more powerful, Ego is unable to do so. As a consequence, Id tries to fulfil its desires through irrational thoughts, fantasy, and abnormal behaviours. Slocum himself says: "My id suppurates into my ego and makes me aggressive and disagreeable" (393). This anxiety supplants itself in his brain and he starts to panic even in non-threatening situations: "I have a feeling that someone nearby is soon going to find out something about me that will mean the end, although I can't imagine what that something is" (16).

Bob Slocum exhibits all the symptoms of a neurotic. He experiences mood swings that highlight the effects of his previous traumas. He lets minor events make him extremely miserable. He is emotionally unstable. In some points of the novel, he expresses his unending love for his son, while in other instances, he shows his desire to kill him. Similarly, he states that he loves his family and his friends, but he contradicts himself by saying: "There are times I wish everyone I know would die and

release me from these tender tensions I experience in my generous solicitude for them” (343). He is also unable to develop healthy relationships with his family. He constantly reprimands his children, fantasies about divorcing his wife, and even hopes to back-stab his best friend to make his ambitions come true.

Gold suffers from Neurotic Anxiety: he displays all the symptoms associated with it. Firstly, he constantly exhibits feelings of nervousness and restlessness. By the end of the novel, Gold collapses from the anxiety of imagining to take his beloved Linda as well as Andrea, whom he must wed for achieving his political ambitions on the same Acapulco vacation. Furthermore, he felt “sorrow and anxiety” (Heller 19) at family parties. Secondly, he constantly day-dreams. He wishes to work for the president with Ralph, marry Andrea and become an overpaid professor of Urban Studies. All this further affirms his hollow quest for money and power: “Gold’s mind was shimmering with fantasies of approaching eminence as the car descended. Secretary of State? Head of CIA?” (122).

Thirdly, he shows contradictory behaviour. Despite his apparent dislike, he is transforming into the very individuals he hates. Bruce hates Kissinger for his subservience to the wealthy and powerful, his duplicity, and his abuse of power and of those who helped him attain it. But Bruce is obsequious in front of Ralph (129), is capable of the deceitfulness in his speeches, and dreams how, once his prospective father-in-law has helped him into a powerful position, he will crush Conover (267). In addition, he suffers from an inferiority complex: “He was distressed from the outset by how little attention his presence excited, and his powers of speech were vitiated by his dread of being considered inferior” (190). Finally, he shows various signs of anxiety throughout the novel: he has contradicting feelings (403), and he even admits being nervous and neurotic (219).

Cummings and Croft, are afflicted by the Oedipus complex in similar to Nicole in *Tender is the Night*. General Cummings suffers from Oedipus Complex. His Oedipus complex becomes clear in the following passage. When he realises that a war attack is not going the way he wishes, his feelings are quite revealing

The shock cut deeply into the General's confidence. The process at most times was unbelievable to him, and he was suffering the amazement and terror of a driver who finds his machine directing itself, starting and halting when it desires. He had heard of this, military lore was filled with such horror tales, but he had never imagined it would happen to him... No matter how he folded them now the men always collapsed into a sodden resistant mass like dishrags, too soft, too wet to hold any shape which might be given them. At night he would lie sleepless in his cot, suffering an almost unbearable frustration; there were times when he was burning with impotence of his rage. (314-15)

The dominant imagery of the passage is sexual. Although Cummings is thinking about the campaign, his unconscious feelings suggest his inability to control his erection. The shock "cuts deeply" implies the castration feelings he is experiencing while the reference to the driver who, in his "horror," finds his "machine directing itself," expresses the General's failure to maintain his erection. This is developed further when the General thinks of troops as "an extension of his own body," which suggests that men under his control are part of his gigantic phallus. However, he finds that he has "lost his sensitive control" over his penis. The "extension of his body" has now "collapsed," and like "dishrags," it has become "too soft."

The General's sexual failure is stated explicitly when he burns "with the impotence of his rage." Although impotent, he tries to control his erection through masturbation, "his hands clasping and unclasping endlessly." The intent is more evident when the author describes Cummings as looking at a ridgepole of his tent as he performs masturbatory hand motions. The passage points up the General's basic conflict. In his impotent rage against the father, he turns to the army as an outlet where he might gain power. Obsessed with unconscious fantasies of phallic power, he hopes to be able to achieve an erection far greater than his father's. When he fails, he regresses to an emotionally infantile state where the only power can be achieved

through masturbation. On another level, it may be questioned whether the General actually wants the omnipotence he so strenuously searches for. In hoping to depose God, he is presenting himself with an unattainable goal. Paradoxically, he desires to replace God, but his guilt feelings assure his failure, thus reinforcing his self-induced impotence.

Croft's quest for omnipotence shows his neurosis. Croft loves combat, he gets Hearn killed by passing the wrong information to him. His unquenchable thirst for power makes him a neurotic. He too like Cummings has no value for God and goodness. He seems to be possessed by the Devil; a person who can put anything on stake for his will to have power. Human life, the most precious thing in this world, has no value in his eyes as he doesn't hesitate to sacrifice it to fulfil his whims and fancies. Since he goes on working against virtues and morality, he gets trapped in the cycle of power politics. His hunger for prestige takes him far from spirituality and makes him a psychopath: having no value for love, emotions and life. His callousness towards the members of his platoon and his neurotic condition stand to prove his spiritual void. The cunning plan of getting Hearn killed, the brutal killing of an innocent bird and the cold-blooded murder of a Japanese prisoner by him, show his bloodthirsty and psychopathic traits.

Eitel, like Slocum, is a neurotic. His trauma has been repressed and leads to his self-hating tendencies. For Eitel, sex is violent because it serves as a sublimation for other drives. It is the outlet for the violence he conceals within himself, a violence growing out of his failure to become the artist he should have been, out of his wasted years, and out of his failure to find love. This violence is the manifestation of his thwarted love and his thwarted drive for creation and success. Eitel is filled with violence which he directs against himself. He torments himself with jealousy over Elena. He hurts her so that he can hurt himself. He punishes himself by needlessly antagonising other persons, such as Teppis and Dorothea and Munshin. And finally, he destroys the mainstays of his life, his relationship with Elena and his own integrity and principle.

Eitel directs this violence toward himself because of the utter futility of levelling it against the institution that prostituted him, robbed him of his individuality and virility, and left him stranded on the shores of middle age with little to look back on with pride. His heroic resistance to the committee is futile, for while a single man can stand up against the power of an immense institution, he cannot conquer it. His impotence in directing his violence against the outer world leads Eitel to direct it towards himself. Eitel makes continuous efforts to fulfil his desire to make himself both decent and heroic, but each attempt he makes is fated to be a repeat of his past failure. To some degree he is a contemporary everyman, facing a changing world in which all human efforts, even those which are temporarily successful, eventually become worthless. There is a two fold cause for Eitel's failures. American society, particularly corporate capitalism and centralised power, make individual fulfilment nearly impossible, and secondly, his own self-destructive tendencies, which act as a final blow to his tranquility and ultimately lead to his spiritual death.

Rojack has aspects of both Gatsby and Slocum. Like Gatsby, he is a psychotic, and like Slocum, he has psychopathic tendencies. Rojack's psyche has been split by the events of the war and as a result he develops psychopathic tendencies. Rojack is himself a professor of "existential psychology," and keenly aware of his own homicidal and suicidal tendencies. Understanding his dilemma is of no help in resolving it. Rojack felt as though his actions were motivated by strong external forces, represented by the voices he heard from the moon, or from his brain, or by a "field of force."

For almost every action, Rojack is faced with two choices: to stay or to leave, to jump or not to, to kill or not to. Just as Rojack was balanced on the parapet, so was his mind balanced on a fine edge, ready to totter toward either side with the slightest gust of wind. In *An American Dream*, Mailer had relied heavily upon Robert Lindner, author of *Rebel Without a Cause*, for a definition of the Psychopath. The psychopath "explodes," the psychotic withdraws. That is why, as Lindner mentions, that "no psychopath ever commits suicide" (Lindner 58). Rojack exhibits certain characteristics of psychopath: violence, immediate sexual gratification, and observation of details.

He also seems to exhibit psychotic qualities at other times, as when he has “the itch to jump” (Mailer, *An American Dream* 9). The question of the parapet, to jump or not to jump, is therefore implicitly also asking, “murder then, if you don’t jump?” (9), for Rojack is a driven man. He has to do something extreme. His course of action narrows to murder or suicide. Only by experiencing one will he be able to avoid the other, and subsequently find a middle road. As with the God-Devil dipole, Rojack will not find a resolution within the timespan of the novel allows.

In the taxi on the way to Kelly’s, Rojack hears two voices, one bidding him to Harlem, the other to Kelly’s. “Which was true?” (203) asked Rojack. This further shows his inner conflict and split personality. Karen Horney observes that neurotic human beings have instead the most contradictory of feelings. Alternately or simultaneously, they are driven by a neurotic craving for affection, by neurotic needs for power and domination, or by a neurotic need for flight and isolation. They want to eat their cake and have it too. This behaviour further shows the neurotic nature of Rojack as a character. Rojack could not function in society. He is thus a Psychopath. He may have found outward salvation in jungle, but in truth his flight to Yucatan represents a triumph of the animalistic instinct. His psyche has been shattered by the events that have taken place in the novel and thus he is entrapped by the void created in him. There is no indication that it will be a permanent arrangement.

Hence, the mental illness in the form of Psychosis or Neurosis finds its presence in all of the selected novels. This further highlights the detrimental effect of the post-war and war culture of America on the psyches of Americans. Irrespective of the age, participation in war, or race, the effects of the money culture found its impact on the minds of all American citizens.

Thirdly, the novels are contrasted concentrating on the various obsessions of the protagonists of the selected novels.

Gatsby is obsessed with earning money and eventually marrying Daisy. Money becomes a power symbol for Gatsby. He thinks that Tom could win Daisy over from Gatsby because of Tom’s abundant wealth. So, in order to compete with Tom’s money, penniless Gatsby becomes obsessed with minting dollars. The main

objective of his life is to get Daisy back and for this goal, he resorts to all forms of corrupt practices, from bootlegging to fixing match series. Nick affirms that Gatsby's dream of Daisy was corrupted by money and dishonesty; to have Daisy back in his life, he casts morality away in the wind and consequently gets trapped in the money culture of America. As he wishes to increase his power and prestige through money, he is inadvertently oppressed by the forces of power-politics prevailing during the post-war American Era.

Dick, an ambitious young man, a promising psychiatrist and an intelligent doctor, becomes trapped in the money culture of America when he marries a rich but neurotic heiress. After his marriage with Nicole, he starts ignoring his professional pursuits and indulges himself in Warren's parties and alcohol. Unable to handle the easy money that belongs to his wife, he goes on deteriorating himself and thus his self-image and integrity. Ultimately, he becomes a neurotic wreck who is mad after bodily pleasures. Money culture of America engulfs his true-self and the fragile self finds it impossible to emerge from this trap, losing everything to it. Instead of going through the moral route of becoming successful through his academic prowess, he instead chooses easy money, and thus becomes a victim of power-politics.

Yossarian, after observing the death and destruction of war, becomes obsessed with scenes of death. Joseph Heller illustrated how precious he values life through his main character's obsession with death. After facing multiple tragedies, Yossarian becomes obsessed with his own mortality, fighting hard to stay alive. One of the greatest reasons Yossarian is so aware of his own mortality, is the fact that he goes through many terrible tragedies. He has had an extremely close experience with death. These experiences ultimately turn into paranoia. He becomes so much more conscious of his own existence that he expectantly waits for signs of death. Obsessed about his death, he wants to avoid combat missions, and longs to get out of war. It is his fear of death that eventually leads him to flee. In the officer's club, Yossarian speaks about his fear and imagines that everyone is shooting at him and trying to kill him. War effects Yossarian's psychological state as every moment he lives in fear of death.

Yossarian's obsession is starkly different from the obsessions of the other protagonists in its nature: where all of their obsessions are for money and power, Yossarian obsesses about death. That said, the origin of his obsession is exactly the same as that of the other protagonists: it arises out of the death and destruction and eventually out of spiritual void.

Bob Slocum is a person for whom money is all powerful. In order to procure wealth and prestige, he is ready to make any sacrifice. As a result of his undying lust for money, he has lost all his personal relationships. He considers dollar his God, his companion and his saviour. His mind has become a marketplace, as a consequence of which he falls further down into the trap of corporate America and its money culture. In order to pursue wealth, he is ready to betray his friends and his family, and eventually betray his own humanity.

Bob Slocum's obsession with money is similar to Gatsby in the regard that both are pursuing wealth in order to achieve satisfaction and happiness. Ironically enough, in both the cases, the mad pursuit for money has devastating consequences for both of them: Slocum loses his son and Gatsby his life.

Gold believes that money plays the most important role in one's life. He doesn't think twice while making the decision to leave his children, wife and parents to pursue his political and monetary ambitions. Due to his desire to become the secretary of state, he lets his inner self and integrity to be broken into pieces by the antagonistic bureaucracy. The post-war money minting culture of America has such a deep impact on his psyche that for earning dollars, he doesn't even hesitate to sacrifice his own self. He goes on flouting his religion for political power, but doesn't realise that doing so, he is slowly being entrapped by the materialistic world of Washington.

Similar to how Dick Diver oscillates between his profession and his marriage, so does Gold jump between New York and Washington. Their conflict further leads to their spiritual decline.

Croft and Cummings represent the rotten state of society and the army of contemporary America. Both these protagonists are a product of the money and war



ridden society. Both these men want to achieve power to gain position and inadvertently wealth. For this hunger for power and prestige, they are willing to put human lives at stake, which shows how deep they have drowned in the pool of the greed and lust for money and power. They symbolise the money culture at its true ruthlessness, showing the corruptness and viscousness that came out of the post-war era. They too, are thus trapped in money culture since their sinful actions are a direct result of the money ridden contemporary America.

Croft's and Cummings' obsession has the same roots as that of the other protagonists: the spiritually decadent landscape of war and post-war America. In order to gain power and prestige, they are willing to go to any lengths.

Eitel is a part of the Hollywood film industry, where money is considered the strongest pillar of the society. For the sake of power and money, Eitel puts his integrity, and thereby his soul on stake. After being blacklisted for his stance against the committee, he loses his courage and takes decision against his will, just to regain his position in the superficiality of Hollywood. This decision taints his inner self, as he starts living an artificial life of celluloids. The moment he forgoes his art for the sake of financial gains, his growth as an individual stops, and becomes just another puppet of the money minting culture of Hollywood.

Like Dick Diver, Eitel sacrifices his art and his true purpose for materialistic pursuits. In this process, both the protagonists loss their integrity and their self.

Rojack embodies the spiritually decadent post-war money culture of contemporary America in its true sense. Lust for power is central in the novel *An American Dream*, because Rojack once had the ambition of becoming the President of the United States. This desire led him to marry Deborah Kelly, the daughter of a multimillionaire Barney Oswald Kelly, who has connections to the highest circles of political power. The plot the novel thereby traces Rojack's downward spiral as he tries to extricate himself from this trap. Rojack's quest for power and money aligns him with the forces of evil. In his thirst to attain power and prestige in society, he loses his soul and becomes trapped in the prevalent money culture.

Therefore, all the protagonists are obsessed with one thing or another, as they try to fill the lacunae inside them, the emptiness that eats them from inside-out: their spiritual void. Ironically, their obsessions drive them further away from the happiness and satisfaction they so desperately crave, leaving them significantly hollower than the status quo.

Fourthly, the selected works are compared keeping in mind the Catch-22 of the protagonists. Gatsby with his desire to become rich like Tom, tries to ride on the wave of American Dream, which apparently ensures success. But he falls in a Catch-22 situation. There are two ways for him to achieve his objective: to work hard and ethically earn money, that is, to follow true American Dream, or, to earn money by fraudulent means and become rich overnight; to follow the false American Dream. He believes that if he chooses the former, it will take a lifetime to become rich like Tom, and hence his dream would remain unfulfilled. On the other hand if he follows the unethical path and chooses the latter, he can become rich overnight. Thus, mirroring his society that values only money, he becomes a bootlegger in order to earn easy money. Although he becomes a millionaire, ironically, he is still unable to have Daisy back in his life as his fraudulent activities are exposed by Tom. Therefore, in reality, he has no real choice as he doesn't win over Daisy and remains a loser in each scenario. By choosing the unethical mode to fulfil his desire, not only does he lose Daisy, but his own self as well. Thus, no matter which move he makes, he is bound to suffer.

Dick Diver aims to become a renowned psychiatrist in addition of being a good husband. But similar to Gatsby, he finds himself trapped in a Catch-22 situation. Either he could work towards becoming a great doctor and spend time and effort to improve his skill and knowledge, or spend quality time with his wife, who is neurotic and thus requires care and attention. If he gives his time towards his profession, it would sever his relationship with his wife and consequently deteriorate her mental state. And if he chooses his wife over his dream of becoming a famous doctor, he would thus have to sacrifice his ambition and talent and therefore his own self image and integrity. Influenced by the prevalent money culture, he decides to prioritise

time with his rich wife. In his efforts to make his wife happy, he loses his own happiness, as he goes further away from his purpose and self. By choosing the latter, he consequently loses his wife, his talent, his profession and even his sanity. Thus, his Catch-22 leaves him without escape and he too has no real choice presented to him.

Both Gatsby and Dick are unable to choose between their love and their self, and in the end fail to hold on to any of them.

Yossarian is invariably trapped in a Catch-22 situation, as the novel's title heavily implies. If Yossarian rejects to glorify the corrupt official he will be court-martialed, and if he doesn't, he will still suffer at their hands. Similarly he is at odds in respect to his participation in the war. If he continues to fight in the war, there are chances that he might get killed by the enemy. On the other hand, if he leaves the battlefield and runs away, he will become a fugitive, a traitor and spend the rest of his life in the fear of getting caught by the military. He is in such a Catch-22 where any move that he makes, he is bound to suffer.

Bob Slocum is also trapped in a Catch-22 situation. He dreams of success and security and this quest occupies a central position in his life. In order to achieve this goal, he can walk two paths: He can follow the moral path and grow himself while helping those around him succeed as well, that is, he can play a positive sum game in his company by helping his friend Andy Kagle. Or, he can choose the disruptive road and deceive and betray his close friend for the sake of promotion in the office. Influenced by the power hungry environment of corporate America, he chooses to cheat Andy to climb up the power ladder. By doing so, he kills his own humanity and gets trapped in the vicious circle, which makes him evermore dissatisfied and thus truly unsuccessful. Therefore, whatever road he chooses to ride on, he feels a loser either outwardly or inwardly.

Similar to Gatsby, Slocum must choose between morality and immorality, and in the end, by choosing the latter, he loses everything that really matters. Although he doesn't die like Gatsby, but in a similar trend, he dies an inward death, which appears to make his existence even more wretched.

Bruce Gold wants recognition and respect in his life through the procurement of wealth and power. He too has two choices laid in front of him for the attainment of such objective: he can stay with his family and work hard to gain respect in the society, or he can take the offer to go to Washington and attain power through dishonesty while leaving his family behind. As he too is the product of the materialistic post-war generation, he selects the immoral path and betrays his children by leaving them and his wife by trying to marry Andrea. In doing so, he digs a grave for his integrity and falls into the trap of false American Dream. By choosing the latter option, he feels alienated, and the loss of his integrity takes him further away from his real goal: gaining respect. In being immoral, not only does he lose respect from the outside, but loses his self respect as well. Thus, he has no real choice as whatever decision he makes, he is bound to face humiliation in the society.

Both Slocum and Gold are torn between selfish lust for money and power and duty towards their families, between instincts and rational thinking.

General Cummings has only one desire in life: to be all powerful. He is willing to do anything to attain this power as he is a neurotic. In order to gain this illusory omnipotence, he is provided with two alternatives. Either he can be humane and earn respect among his men through acts of bravery and intelligence, or he can be inhuman and ruthless to arouse fear among the soldiers and attain power. If he chooses the former, it would pose a threat to his life and he may die and thus forgo his dream. Due to his void and his environment, he adopts the latter approach. In doing so he loses his humanity and therefore the power he gains is worthless. Therefore, he is trapped and has no real choice as his dream of power is corrupt. Whatever choice he makes, he will not gain the illusive omnipotence that he hopes to attain.

Croft is crazy over gaining control over his platoon. If he wishes to achieve this goal, he has two courses of action to pursue this objective. He can lead by example and gain control through skill and efficiency. But in case he chooses this alternative, it would be very much possible for Hearn to take command and thus make Croft lose control over the men. Therefore, he would be unable to command the soldiers at his will. On the other hand, he can become immoral and gain control by

becoming cunning and ruthless. Being in the power hungry environment, he chooses the second option and gets Hearn killed. But by doing this, not only does he kill his humanity and make the power achieved thus worthless, but he also evidently loses his power over his platoon who consider him a psychopath. His plan to climb Mount Anaka becomes a failure and his cunningness thus becomes futile. By choosing the immoral means, not only does he fail to achieve control, but also becomes a shallow man with no real humanity left in him.

In their trap, Croft and Cummings are identical to Rojack. In order to achieve their objectives, all of them are willing to backstab, hurt, and even kill.

Eitel wants to become a successful artist. But he is trapped in a Catch-22 because if he doesn't cooperate with the committee, although he would uphold his principles and thus become an artist in the true sense, he would be blacklisted and wouldn't be able to release his work to a wider audience. On the other hand, if he agrees to cooperate with the committee he would be able to become a successful director. When he chooses the latter out of greed for money and fear of middle-age, he fails both as an artist and as an individual. Thus he has no real choice as whatever decision he makes, he would never be able to become a famous artist. Furthermore, in choosing the latter, not only does he lose as an artist, but he also loses his own self.

Like Gold, Eitel is torn apart between his struggle for his art and self, and the quest for money.

Rojack aims to live a happy and successful life. He can do so by pursuing two choices: he can follow the individual and personalised American Dream, by working hard, with faith in God. Or, he can take the shortcut to attain the collective and false American Dream, which says that one should attain power and prestige by hook or by crook. If he chooses the former, he would be invariably considered to be a failure by the society, because it would take him a lifetime to become successful. Therefore, as he is a part of a materialistic money minting society, he chooses the latter. But, this too has its dire consequences. When he chooses the collective American Dream, he loses his own identity and though he is conventionally successful, he feels discontented and utterly unhappy at the core of his heart. Therefore, both the

approaches leave him stranded on an island of dissatisfaction. He has no real choice as he is left without peace of mind in both of the cases.

Therefore, it can be concluded that all of the protagonists are trapped in a Catch-22 as whatever choice they make, they are bound to fail. Although the choices, circumstances and timings differ, all proceed to make immoral choices which drowns all of them in the Slough of Despond, dragging them mercilessly away from achieving inner satisfaction and happiness.

Finally, the novels are compared from the aspects of the immoral tendencies of the protagonists that led them to the trap of money culture and spiritual void. Gatsby refuses to accept his biological parents as his true parents; he thinks that he is the son of God and is destined to be a great personality. In the novel, Gatsby is very ironically compared to “Christ, the Son of God who is regarded as the prime example of a morality and virtues. Jesus is considered as the redeemer of sins and savior of the people. He gave his life up to save humanity, as an act of utmost selflessness while Gatsby stands in stark contrast of Jesus because of his materialism and having selfish ambitions in life. Hence it can be concluded that he is clearly not the Son of God from the point of view of morality.

In addition, Gatsby lies both about his identity and past. His true name is James Gatz; his biological parents were poverty-stricken farmers from North Dakota and he deserted his family for the sake of money and prestige.

Furthermore, he had obtained his money and prestige through illegal and immoral actions. He was a Bootlegger and friends with Wolfsheim, an infamous gambler that fixed the world series in 1919. Gatsby achieves great fortune through immoral and sinful actions while Jesus is recognised by his moral and virtuous life. This depicts how the society’s opinion of what is right and wrong was distorted by the post-war landscape. Even Gatsby’s goal is materialistic and corrupted: Daisy. Daisy’s voice is “full of money” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 136) and the words used to describe her is similar to the words used to describe money “It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy — it increased her value in his eyes” (166). She symbolises the final piece of the puzzle to complete Gatsby’s American dream, but

Gatsby's goal is hollow and materialistic at its core. Also, Gatsby commits adultery. He maintains a relation with Daisy who in actuality is a married woman as well as he hopes to break a family since Daisy and Tom have a daughter that Gatsby does not take into consideration.

Although Gatsby and Jesus both die at a young age, but Jesus is venerated by all his followers after his death, while Gatsby is completely ignored and forgotten after death society. Gatsby becomes worthless to the partiers so they do not feel the need to attend the funeral, which further shows society's inhumanity and avarice.

Dick's collapse of his utmost qualities and his vital energy is resulted from the permeating corruption of his surrounding world and faith in his pre-war romantic idealism. Dick's surname, Diver, his descent, and steady dive into destruction, immorality, privacy, and finally absolute solitude. Fitzgerald wrote that his intention in *Tender is the Night* was to depict an individual who is a "natural idealist, a spoiled priest, giving in for various causes to the thinkings of the bourgeoisie, and in his rise to the peak of the social world losing his idealism, his talent, turning to drink and dissipation." The people that surround Dick intelligently depict his temptations and failings: Baby Warren, money; Abe North, liquor; Tommy Barban, anarchy; Albert McKisco, self-betrayal; Rosemary Hoyt, infidelity.

Both Gatsby and Diver are immoral since they want to achieve their goals by hook or by crook. Influenced by the spiritually decadent landscape of post-war America, both of them involve in immoral actions. Both of them are inherently good, but they are disillusioned men, whose inner void makes them vulnerable to the vices of their environment. Ironically, their immoral actions aimed for self-fulfilment give the completely opposite effect.

Similarly, the protagonists of Heller, influenced by their void, choose to make immoral decisions. Yossarian makes a self-centered choice where it is more important to save his life than take part in the present war and defend his country. His approach to life is that everyone lives for himself/herself alone, everyone has his/her own island, and should live on it alone. Heller gives his readers a glimpse of American society in modern times, which is primarily individualistic rather than collectivist. In

addition to this feeling of selfishness, another major reason for his desire to live his life and prefer death based on personal choice is his belief that there is no other person who would die for him or for the ideology that he believes in. Yossarian also knows that other people subscribe to the same principle as well.

Although Yossarian is not morally wicked like his superiors, it can be argued that he is a morally weak character. Aristotle likens the agent of a morally weak act to a city that has good laws but fails to apply them. Similar to someone who is morally wicked, a morally weak person is fully conscious of the wrongness of what he does. Therefore, Yossarian is as guilty as Cummings and Croft in his immorality.

Immorality for Bob Slocum is adultery and an indifference for the emotions of his son. The fact that Bob mentions the names of his colleagues but not his family members makes us understand that he has uncertain spirits towards them. Bob has a sour relationship with his wife. He is constantly adulterous, not because of a lack of interest in her but simply because, as a member of the management team of the company that he works for, he feels he is entitled to have sex with all the women they employ. Heller portrays Bob as a man who has crossed the line of immorality and has stopped looking back.

Heller's Bob and Yossarian have become part of the predominant immoral society of the contemporary America. In *Something Happened* Heller's criticism is directed towards the moral standard in the corporate world in America

In *Catch-22* and *Something Happened*, Heller has compared the spiritually degenerate and oppressive forces of military and corporate respectively. In *Good as Gold*, Heller has further shown the soul-crushing force of bureaucracy

Gold is ready to put everything at stake for glittering money. He feels irresistibly attracted towards rich and glamorous women. As Heller writes, "Whenever he was at leisure, he fell in love" (Heller, *Good as Gold* 397). Bruce Gold's extra-marital flings are limitless. He is so blinded by the aura of Washington that it appears to him that it is the only heaven in the whole universe. He is ready to put his morality at stake for petty materialistic gains.



Similar to Slocum, in order to achieve his objectives, Gold is ready to choose the immoral path to success. In order to achieve overnight success, both of them neglect morality and values and indulge themselves in the deadly sins. In contrast, Cummings and Croft choose immorality in order to acquire more power. Their pursuit of power is based more upon using immorality and vices to intimidate their juniors and eliminate competition.

Cummings, who is the commander of the division, who is supposed to guide the soldiers, is himself a neurotic trapped in a race for omnipotence. His actions are not fuelled by care for his men or their lives, but simply for the purpose of cultivating power. When he learns that Hearn might disobey him, he threatens to have him court-martialled. In his hunger for power, he has denounced God, patriotism and morality. By this, a void is created in him, which eats him up from the inside. Despite the power he already possesses, he doesn't feel a moment of true happiness in his life. Alienated from all, he is stuck in his own labyrinth since his pursuit is fake, corrupt and immoral because it lacks the very essence of the American Dream: To achieve greatness with hard-work, faith, and morality. The army men for him are nothing but fodder to feed his desires for prestige.

Similarly, Croft is so obsessed with his ambition for power that in order to gain complete control of the platoon, he gets Hearn killed by passing the wrong information to him. His unquenchable thirst for power makes him a neurotic. He too like Cummings has no value for God and goodness. He seems to be possessed by the Devil; a person who can put anything on stake for his will to have power. Human life, the most precious thing in this world- has no value in his eyes as he doesn't hesitate to sacrifice it to fulfil his whims and fancies. Since he goes on working against virtues and morality, he gets trapped in the cycle of power politics. His hunger for prestige takes him far from spirituality and makes him a psychopath: having no value for love, emotions and life. His callousness towards the members of his platoon and his neurotic condition stand to prove his spiritual void. The cunning plan of getting Hearn killed, the brutal killing of an innocent bird and the cold-blooded murder of a Japanese prisoner by him, show his bloodthirsty and psychopathic traits.

This pursuit of power without morals which had originally led to the war, further became widespread as the common man too was dragged into misery, leading him to denounce God as well. Thus a vicious circle of immorality and faithlessness was created in and by the war, leading to death, destruction and depression. Yossarian, Slocum, Gold, Cummings and Croft are all the oppressed and oppressors in this trend of immorality and faithlessness. In comparison to Gold in bureaucracy and Slocum in Corporate America, Eitel performs immoral actions in order to achieve power and prestige in the outwardly glamorous world of Hollywood.

The Norton Committee and the shoddy standards of the film industry have ripped away all the external supports from Eitel's life. He has been a marionette so long that he is, despite himself, used to feeling Teppis pull the strings, and in his heart, courage battles with his desire to return to the security of the puppet show. His talent has been prostituted, his integrity seduced, his moral nature raped, by the monster that is Hollywood.

He submits himself to the lure of Hollywood wealth and status. As a commercial director his career continues and his salary increases but he never succeeds in making pictures which are "art". The artist, he believes, "was always divided between his desire for power in the world and his desire for power over his work" (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 124). But in choosing the former Eitel unwittingly compromises not only his principles but his talent also. He has knowingly lost his integrity and morality to the demands of a congressional investigating officer.

Rojack too suffers from Moral damage. He is unable to differentiate between good and evil and continues to make psychopathic decisions. He murders his wife, Deborah, he rapes his maid Ruta, and constantly indulges in drinking. Rojack is addicted to sexuality just as much as he is addicted to alcohol and violence. Furthermore he is unable to experience love and intimacy. There is no love even in the relationship between Cherry and Rojack. As Rojack says: "We did not meet as lovers, more like animals in a quiet mood, come across a track of the jungle to join in a clearing, we were equals" (126). Similarly, "Nothing was loving in her; no love in

me... I had some distant awareness that my breath could hardly be good and her lungs breathed back an air of ashes and the tomb..." (127).

Every protagonist of the selected novels is therefore immoral: some are morally wicked while some are morally weak. By involving themselves in vices, they sign a deal with the Devil and sell their soul and happiness in the process.

All the selected writers have taken up the themes of violence, loss of love, sexuality, spiritual void, endless pursuit for money and power, hopelessness, promiscuity and perversion. They deal with inferiority complex, paranoia, schizophrenia and neurosis. All the protagonists live in an eternal void. Instead of behaving like men with transcendental vision, they become victims of psychic pressure, deflated and de-sublimated. They live in a lacuna and feel that life is meaningless and all struggle is futile, that reality is only inescapable suffering. The protagonists show the true picture of the predicament of modern man, the socio-economic situations are very challenging even today, as the youth is lost and directionless. The protagonists are trapped and therefore become anti-heroes. They can be termed as neurotics, being the victim of schizophrenic tendencies. They are split personalities having no connection between their thoughts and actions.

After comparing all the selected novels, it can be observed that all the protagonists suffered from the trauma of the war, in addition to other traumatic incidents that were directly or indirectly stemmed from the war and post war landscape of America. Subsequently, all of them suffered from neurosis or psychosis; while some were a victim of schizophrenia, others were psychopaths. As a result, all of them began obsessing on one thing or the other, trying to fill the gap that the trauma and neurosis had created in their minds. Due to these obsessions and the general spiritually derelict environment, they developed a spiritual void and chose the immoral paths to fulfil their objectives, unaware of their catch-22 situations. The moment the protagonists chose the immoral path however, they fell in the trap of money and power culture of America: slowly but steadily spiralling downwards into the abyss of helplessness and insanity.

## Conclusion

The present thesis entitled “Consciousness of Spiritual Void: The Trapped protagonists in the Select Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Kingsley Mailer investigates the forces of spiritual decadence in the War and post-World War American society. War had destroyed all institutions and propagated the wave of skepticism, violence, nihilism. American youth who survived the war brought new values; they expressed a strange sense of revolt and questioned the existing customs and rituals. Like a red thread through all these novels runs the image of the inner cancer which is trapping American youth disgusted with the collapse of American Dream. The emergence of the spiritual void after the War brought new challenges for the Americans. This research is a critical, qualitative investigation of the issues of pessimism and nihilism which grew in the War and Post-War American society. The present study explores the trapped nature of the protagonists who lead a life in death as they cannot escape from the money culture of America and ultimately get disintegrated or killed.

The famous novels such as *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night*, *Catch-22*, *Something Happened*, *Good as Gold*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Deer Park* and *An American Dream* reflect the spiritual decadence of the war-ridden society. Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer were impacted by the philosophical ideas of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. A wave of pessimism and nihilism gripped the psyche of American youth who returned from the front. All the selected War novelists were aware of the Spiritual Void of contemporary America. Their lives themselves were full of challenges and contradictions. The Great Depression and the brutal World Wars had the most pervasive role in shaping their mind, ideas and sensibility. They themselves were pessimists, sceptics and nihilists, therefore, they created protagonists who are suffering from Spiritual Void and are very much conscious of it. The protagonists, through their own words, actions and lives show awareness of their rootlessness and spiritual void. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald depicts the consciousness of spiritual void through the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. These eyes are identified with the eyes of God (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 178).

The eyes stare down on Gatsby as he continues to commit immoral actions, knowing it well that he has lost his faith forever and therefore, doesn't hesitate to commit any sin in his mad quest to achieve material success. The lavish parties attended by his unethical guests reveal his consciousness of spiritual void as every act of immorality takes place at the parties hosted by him, and he continues to remain indifferent to these sinful acts since he has made dollar his God. It is because of his awareness of spiritual void that he remains eternally restless, and in his heart considers his own life absurd (79). Dick Diver too is not only suffering from spiritual void but he is conscious of it as well. He is extremely close to his father, who is his moral guide, but his separation from his father proves disastrous: he loses all his morality and ethics. Aware of his immorality, he feels guilty and broken (Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* 241). By losing his moral guidance, he becomes a pawn in the hands of rich Warrens and consciousness of his wrecked condition further throws him into an abyss of conflict and neurosis.

Yossarian, the war-hero, expresses the consciousness of his spiritual void and nihilism and rejects God, sharing his inner eclipse with Scheisskopf's wife (Heller, *Catch-22* 231). He further makes a mockery of the existence of God, who holds no place in his heart (230). Likewise, Bob Slocum, the protagonist of the novel *Something Happened* acknowledges the consciousness of his Spiritual Void (Heller, *Something Happened* 496). He is quite aware that the reason behind his misery is that there is an inner void in his life, and he therefore feels rootless and alienated. In the novel, God is not considered a powerful and all knowing deity, but rather a dispensable entity, who is a subject to the whims and wishes of humans. Instead of worshipping God, Slocum is a devotee of money, power, and sex (210).

In addition, Bruce Gold is also aware of his own faithlessness and is conscious of his spiritual void. In an exchange with Conover, his spiritual dereliction and absence of faith is crystal clear (Heller, *Good as Gold* 429).

Upon analysing *The Naked and the Dead*, it has been observed that almost all the characters and protagonists are conscious of their spiritual void. Cummings doesn't believe in a God, instead he thinks that humans themselves are capable and

wish to become omnipotent. God in his eyes is not the epitome of morality and ethics, but merely an illustration of omnipotence that he wants to achieve (Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* 337).

Eitel is very much aware that the world of Hollywood is built on the foundation of materialism, where spirituality and divinity have no value at all. Conscious of his own spiritual void and that of his surroundings, he takes the decision to cooperate with the Subservience Committee. This consciousness makes him self-destructive and he goes on working against morality just to earn dollars. He frankly disapproves of the Church (Mailer, *The Deer Park* 210). Church, which is considered the abode of God, has lost value in his heart and soul. On the contrary, Hollywood- which worships Dollar- is the place of his profession and ambition. Consciousness of spiritual void slowly but surely corrodes his true self, and he becomes an artificial and disintegrated personality.

Although he has achieved material success in his life, Rojack feels soulless because of his spiritual void, which he is keenly aware of, since he knows that in reality, he is a failure. Rojack knows that post-war American culture is producing a new breed of man, who suffers and is conscious of his inner eclipse (Mailer, *An American Dream* 269).

The first research objective aimed to trace the causes of the spiritual void; analyse its roots to better understand its effects on the protagonists and their psyche has been accomplished. In the selected novels, it has been observed that a major cause of spiritual void is the direct or indirect effect of war on their psyches and the society. Most of the protagonists are war-heroes who suffer from the atrocities and traumas of the battlefield. As a result, lose their rational thinking, and psychic fantasy and trauma grip their consciousness.

Furthermore, the war had a devastating impact on the society as well, because the commodity culture that emerged after the Great War created an unrestrained desire for money in postwar America and doubled social and moral decay.

For instance, *The Great Gatsby*, with all its implications and contradictions, is regarded as a cornerstone that deals with war and post war experience of Americans

and the corruption of moral and social values. In essence, the novel sheds light on the decaying values of the newly emerging “nouveau riche” class who worshipped holy capitalist economy and made money the upsurging power of the period. After being the part of bloody and traumatic war, Gatsby confronts the money ridden world and realises there is only one power in the universe: Money, not God. This realisation brings with it the fall of morality in Gatsby’s heart, who is ready to ride on the wave of false American dream. When he decides to disrupt the value system to fulfil his goals, he makes Dollar his God and this creates a spiritual void in him. Consequently, he gets trapped in the vicious money culture of America.

Similarly, For Dick Diver, the war is the defining event of his generation. He, Nicole, Rosemary Hoyt, Tommy Barban, and Abe North all live “in the broken universe of the war’s ending,” divorced from the social cohesion of the pre-World War I world for which Dick repeatedly longs. Though as a non-combatant during the war he has been prevented from experiencing the horrors of the war at first hand; yet he, too, views the war as creating an irrevocable severance from the past.

His emotional decision to marry Nicole is not an act of a professional doctor, but an irrational act of a rash and impulsive soldier as the war changes his mentality forever. After coming back from the war, he neglects his ambition to become a psychiatrist and falls in love with a rich heiress. His quest for knowledge is substituted by his quest for easy money. The sentimental involvement of Dick with Nicole and her money results in his moral decadence and spiritual dissipation.

Yossarian joins the army in the hope of becoming a hero. But as a soldier, his life becomes a series of traumas: death of Kraft, loss of tent mate Orr, disappearance of Dunbar, tragic atmosphere of war, his Catch-22, power-hungry and ruthless superiors, death of Natley, greed of Milo, death of Kid Sampson, McWatts’s suicide, and most importantly the graphic death of Snowden. All these memories haunt his psyche. He realises his helpless situation and futility of war, and therefore questions the existence of a higher power. Slowly but surely, his faith in God shatters as he observes the cruel environment around him. The bloodshed of war, deaths of his

comrades one after another, and oppressive forces of military and bureaucracy slowly result in his spiritual death.

Bob Slocum is a part of the insidious war culture. Although he feels that being in the war gives him freedom, his psyche is fractured due to alienation and aloofness. Furthermore the scenes of death and destruction of the war also leave his inner-self badly damaged and have far reaching consequences in his life, which is apparent in his monologue (Heller, *Something Happened* 87). This also shows that he is somewhat conscious of the detrimental effect that war has had on him. In addition to the direct effect of war, the post-war materialistic society plays a vital role in his spiritual decline. In the mad pursuit of minting money, he rides on the wave of false American Dream. To get money and power, he forgets everything which is truly valuable to live a contented and happy life. In this horse-race, he has left love, which is the essence of life, far behind. Friends, family and parents have lost their meaning in his eyes as he is blinded by achieving high-status in society. Slocum completely ignores Derek, he competes with his daughter when he talks to her at all, and he pushes and browbeats his son. He constantly reprimands his children, fantasies about divorcing his wife, and even hopes to back-stab his best friend to make his ambitions come true. Nobody in the world is more dear to him than dollars.

The cruelty of war, cut-throat corporate world and materialistic environment make him slowly lose his virtues and he becomes a spiritual derelict.

Although Bruce Gold has not directly participated in war, nevertheless the post-war culture plays a quintessential role in his upbringing and therefore his adult life. Gold engages himself into adultery which shows the affect that the family surrounding has had on his mind. The post-war landscape of America is one where family ties and relationships were eroding. A lack of attachment with one's blood relations and the continuous pursuit of materialistic belongings took one far from his roots, creating a void in his psyche. Because Gold is brought up in this materialistic era, he has no value for family and all he cares about is achieving power and prestige. This hollow quest for money and power in post-war America eventually lead to his spiritual degradation.



Cummings seeks the concentration of power in the military. He is driven by deep ambition; each step up the military ladder gives him more control over men and material. He is far more than a simple-minded military man; he realises that power, and the quest for power, is the most significant element in modern events. Cummings' deepest desire is to emerge from the war in a position to manipulate this immense and consolidated power; the Army is a vehicle for gaining this objective.

He has no value for the lives of his soldier as his primary goal is to gain power. War changes his psyche and he becomes power-hungry. This immoral pursuit for power is what results in his spiritual lacunae.

In his hunger for power, Sergeant Croft is the enlisted man most similar to Cummings. Croft is so obsessed with his ambition for power that in order to gain complete control of the platoon, he gets Hearn killed by passing the wrong information to him. His unquenchable thirst for power makes him a neurotic. He too like Cummings has no value for God and goodness. He seems to be possessed by the Devil; a person who can put anything on stake for his will to have power. Human life- the most precious thing in this world- has no value in his eyes as he doesn't hesitate to sacrifice it to fulfil his whims and fancies. Since he goes on working against virtues and morality, he gets trapped in the cycle of power politics. Consequently, he goes deeper into the depths of psychopathy and becomes spiritually barren.

Congressman Richard Selwyn Crane is thinly veiled Joe McCarthy, and the investigation that looms so importantly in Eitel's career is a fictional example of what was, for the Hollywood of the early 1950's, a common occurrence. Eitel's antagonistic stance in his appearance before the committee caused the unemployment and poverty with which he must currently cope. He has not been a part of combat in the war, but his blacklisting and thus his ultimate degeneracy is rooted in the post-war practices of McCarthyism. In addition, he is unable to pursue his goal as an artist as he prioritises materialistic possessions and money over it. This too can be attributed to the contemporary money culture of post-war America. When he chooses wealth over artistic greatness, he fails to grow as an individual. His failure to grow is the beginning of his spiritual void.

Rojack is a product of war and post-war society, and like the protagonist of the other selected novelists, is vulnerable to the trap of the false American Dream due to the effect of War on his psyche. He also suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can be observed from his reminiscences of the War. The stress and anxiety of war brings out his animalistic instincts. He feels spiritually empty and soulless (Mailer, *An American Dream* 7). In addition, Rojack's feelings of dissatisfaction and worthlessness are firmly rooted in his World War II experience. Not only does the War directly impact him, but also, it affects him negatively through the hellish post-war landscape of America. War wounds his soul and his encounter with the four Germans in the war begins his downward spiral into a spiritual abyss.

The second research objective aimed to find the impact of spiritual void on the life of the protagonists of Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer has been achieved. Spiritual Void throws people towards pessimism and demoralisation. This pessimism and demoralisation create nihilism, man gives way to despair and instead of worshipping God, he starts worshipping money. Spiritual Void makes man's inner self weak and he easily becomes vulnerable to his circumstances. It ultimately strips a man of his spirit. Gatsby's spiritual void has a harrowing effect on his life. Because of this inner eclipse, Gatsby becomes a disintegrated self. Although he rolls in money, but he doesn't have even a single moment of true happiness and peace of mind. His life becomes meaningless and empty as he doesn't have any philanthropic purpose but a selfish whim to have Daisy in his life by hook or by crook.

Similarly, Dick's spiritual decadence ironically transforms him from a genius psychiatrist to a neurotic wreck. He continues to drown in the Slough of Despond and his life itself becomes a hopeless case study. It leaves a great impact on his personal life as well. His wife, for whom he puts everything at stake, leaves him, further drowning him in a quicksand of neurosis and hopelessness. His void takes away everything from him, from his position as a great doctor, to his beloved wife.

The faithlessness of Yossarian makes him confused and bewildered. Instead of pursuing an uplifting goal which may give meaning to his life, he creates his own inferno. A medal winner war hero becomes a traitor whose only motive in life is

physical survival. God, soul, faith, and morality all seem elusive to him. His self gets deflated and his life becomes a living hell.

Slocum's bankruptcy of faith makes him an emotionless robot. He does his work efficiently, and earns a great deal of money, but all this is not for caring for his family but simply because of greed and pursuit of power. His life is mechanical: love, sacrifice and care have no meaning for him. Day-by-day, his inner self becomes corroded, his void makes him a living corpse who is unable to escape from the vicious circle of money making. His miserable and artificial life has no meaning in itself. Absence of faith in any dimension of spirituality makes Gold unable to understand the true essence of life. His mind becomes a marketplace. Constant boot-licking of powerful individuals makes him slowly lose self-respect and integrity. His family relations disintegrate and life becomes an adjustment for him; just a compulsion to fulfil. His insidious void eventually makes him trapped and annihilates his soul.

General Cummings' inner decay makes him a power-eccentric paranoid. Day and night he thinks of increasing his materialistic and militaristic power and prowess unaware about the quintessential power which originates from spirituality: the only source of true happiness and bliss. With every act of oppression towards his soldiers, he unknowingly oppresses his own humanity and shatters his own inner-strength. In his quest to become omnipotent, he inadvertently cripples his own self. His life becomes mechanistic, devoid of personal relationships and without love and satisfaction.

Croft's lack of faith makes him an animalistic personality: a living dead. His existence is hellish, with absence of love and purpose. His yearning for power takes him far from inner satisfaction and happiness. There is a lack of human relationships in his life which he compensates by trying to fulfil materialistic desires of power and prestige. His inner void, in a sense, deprives him of his humanity.

Eitel's inner degeneracy leads to the erosion of his own self. He lives an artificial life: outwardly successful and prosperous, but inwardly dissatisfied, shallow, and defeated. He becomes a rootless being, dangling perpetually alone in the lonely crowd of film industry.

In a similar fashion, due to Rojack's spiritual dereliction, he is unable to differentiate between good and evil and continues to make psychopathic decisions. He murders his wife, Deborah, he rapes her maid Ruta, and constantly indulges in drinking. Rojack is addicted to sexuality just as much as he is addicted to alcohol and violence. Furthermore he is unable to experience love and intimacy. There is no love even in the relationship between Cherry and Rojack.

The third research objective intended to examine and reinterpret the money culture of America and understanding how all the protagonists are trapped by the oppressive forces of bureaucracy, military and power politics, has been fulfilled. For the protagonists of the selected novels, money is a huge motivator in the characters' relationships, motivations, and outcomes. Most of the characters reveal themselves to be highly materialistic, their motivations driven by their desire for money and things.

Money becomes a power symbol for Gatsby. He thinks that Tom could win Daisy over from Gatsby because of Tom's abundant wealth. So, in order to compete with Tom's money, penniless Gatsby becomes obsessed with minting dollars. The main objective of his life is to get Daisy back and for this goal, he resorts to all forms of corrupt practices, from bootlegging to fixing match series. Nick affirms that Gatsby's dream of Daisy was corrupted by money and dishonesty and to have Daisy back in his life, he casts morality away in the wind and consequently gets trapped in the money culture of America. As he wishes to increase his power and prestige through money, he is inadvertently oppressed by the forces of power-politics prevailing during the post-war American Era.

Dick, an ambitious young man, a promising psychiatrist and an intelligent doctor, becomes trapped in the money culture of America when he marries a rich but neurotic heiress. After his marriage with Nicole, he starts ignoring his professional pursuits and indulges himself in Warren's parties and alcohol. Unable to handle the easy money that belongs to his wife, he goes on deteriorating himself and thus his self-image and integrity. Ultimately, he becomes a neurotic wreck who is mad after bodily pleasures. Money culture of America engulfs his true-self and the fragile self finds it impossible to emerge from this trap, losing everything to it. Instead of going

through the moral route of becoming successful through his academic prowess, he instead chooses easy money, and thus becomes a victim of power-politics.

Yossarian finds himself trapped by the oppressive force of military of America. He lives in a world where war is depicted as the inevitable product of an insane culture that values material gains more than human life. Man's lust for power and money in the contemporary society makes his life hellish. He is caught in the tangle of growing money culture because of his superiors' quest for the dream of success. Unlike the other protagonists, he is more of a cog in the war machine and money culture, since it is because of his superiors' greed that he is crushed by the unforgiving pestle of contemporary materialism.

Bob Slocum is a person for whom money is all powerful. In order to procure wealth and prestige, he is ready to make any sacrifice. As a result of his undying lust for money, he has lost all his personal relationships. He considers dollar his God, his companion and his saviour. His mind has become a marketplace, as a consequence of which he falls further down into the trap of corporate America and its money culture. In order to pursue wealth, he is ready to betray his friends and his family, and eventually betray his own humanity.

Gold believes that money plays the most important role in one's life. He doesn't think twice while making the decision to leave his children, wife and parents to pursue his political and monetary ambitions. Due to his desire to become the secretary of state, he lets his inner self and integrity to be broken into pieces by the antagonistic bureaucracy. The post-war money minting culture of America has such a deep impact on his psyche that for earning dollars, he doesn't even hesitate to sacrifice his own self. He goes on flouting his religion for political power, but doesn't realise that doing so, he is slowly being entrapped by the materialistic world of Washington.

Croft and Cummings represent the rotten state of society and the army of contemporary America. Both these protagonists are a product of the money and war ridden society. Both these men want to achieve power to gain position and inadvertently wealth. For this hunger for power and prestige, they are willing to put

human lives at stake, which shows how deep they have drowned in the pool of the greed and lust for money and power. They symbolise the money culture at its true ruthlessness, showing the corruptness and viscousness that came out of the post-war era. They too, are thus trapped in money culture since their sinful actions are a direct result of the money ridden contemporary America.

Eitel is a part of the Hollywood film industry, where money is considered the strongest pillar of the society. For the sake of power and money, Eitel puts his integrity, and thereby his soul on stake. After being blacklisted for his stance against the committee, he loses his courage and takes decision against his will, just to regain his position in the superficiality of Hollywood. This decision taints his inner self, as he starts living an artificial life of celluloids. The moment he forgoes his art for the sake of financial gains, his growth as an individual stops, and becomes just another puppet of the money minting culture of Hollywood.

Rojack embodies the spiritually decadent post-war money culture of contemporary America in its true sense. Lust for power is central in the novel *An American Dream*, because Rojack once had the ambition of becoming the President of the United States. This desire led him to marry Deborah Kelly, the daughter of a multimillionaire Barney Oswald Kelly, who has connections to the highest circles of political power. The plot the novel thereby traces Rojack's downward spiral as he tries to extricate himself from this trap. Rojack's quest for power and money aligns him with the forces of evil. In his thirst to attain power and prestige in society, he loses his soul and becomes trapped in the prevalent money culture.

The fourth research objective aimed at investigating the protagonists' Catch-22 situation and its consequences, and the impact of war on their psyche, on their vision, love, sex, and identity has been successfully achieved.

Gatsby with his desire to become rich like Tom, tries to ride on the wave of American Dream, which apparently ensures success. But he falls in a Catch-22 situation. There are two ways for him to achieve his objective: to work hard and ethically earn money, that is, to follow true American Dream, or, to earn money by fraudulent means and become rich overnight; to follow the false American Dream. He

believes that if he chooses the former, it will take a lifetime to become rich like Tom, and hence his dream would remain unfulfilled. On the other hand if he follows the unethical path and chooses the latter, he can become rich overnight. Thus, mirroring his society that values only money, he becomes a bootlegger in order to earn easy money. Although he becomes a millionaire, ironically, he is still unable to have Daisy back in his life as his fraudulent activities are exposed by Tom. Therefore, in reality, he has no real choice as he doesn't win over Daisy and remains a loser in each scenario. By choosing the unethical mode to fulfil his desire, not only does he lose Daisy, but his own self as well. Thus, no matter which move he makes, he is bound to suffer. The bloody war leaves a lasting mark on his mind, and his psyche gets fractured and he becomes a schizoid. His vision turns pessimistic, and he takes a turn towards immortality. He starts to treat love and sex like commodities which can be bought with money. His real self is destroyed as an ambitious young man and war-hero turns to bootlegging.

Dick Diver aims to become a renowned psychiatrist in addition of being a good husband. But similar to Gatsby, he finds himself trapped in a Catch-22 situation. Either he could work towards becoming a great doctor and spend time and effort to improve his skill and knowledge, or spend quality time with his wife, who is neurotic and thus requires care and attention. If he gives his time towards his profession, it would sever his relationship with his wife and consequently deteriorate her mental state. And if he chooses his wife over his dream of becoming a famous doctor, he would thus have to sacrifice his ambition and talent and therefore his own self image and integrity. Influenced by the prevalent money culture, he decides to prioritise spending time with his rich wife. In his efforts to make his wife happy, he loses his own happiness, as he goes further away from his purpose and self. By choosing the latter, he consequently loses his wife, his talent, his profession and even his sanity. Thus, his Catch-22 leaves him without escape and he too has no real choice presented to him. The trauma of war wrecks his psyche, his outlook becomes nihilistic, and true love and sex become elusive for him. As a result, his identity gets shattered. Thus, a great psychiatrist himself becomes a patient of schizophrenia.

Yossarian is invariably trapped in a Catch-22 situation, as the novel's title heavily implies. If Yossarian rejects to glorify the corrupt official he will be court-martialed, and if he doesn't, he will still suffer at their hands. Similarly he is at odds in respect to his participation in the war. If he continues to fight in the war, there are chances that he might get killed by the enemy. On the other hand, if he leaves the battlefield and runs away, he will become a fugitive, a traitor and spend the rest of his life in the fear of getting caught by the military. He is in such a Catch-22 where any move that he makes, he is bound to suffer. War makes Yossarian's life a series of traumas, and traumatic episodes haunt his memory. His vision turns morbid, paranoia grips his psyche, and he turns in a helpless schizophrenic. He becomes a womaniser, whose identity is ruined, and he spends each moment in fear of death.

Bob Slocum is also trapped in a Catch-22 situation. Living in a society which worships money and power, he dreams of success and security, and this quest occupies a central position in his life. In order to achieve this goal, he can walk two paths: He can follow the moral path and grow himself while helping those around him succeed as well, that is, he can play a positive sum game in his company by helping his friend Andy Kagle. But in doing so, he would not be able to get the promotion that he so dearly yearns for. Or, he can choose the disruptive road and deceive and betray his close friend for the sake of promotion in the office. Influenced by the power hungry environment of corporate America, he chooses to cheat Andy to climb up the power ladder. By doing so, he kills his own humanity and gets trapped in the vicious circle, which makes him evermore dissatisfied and thus truly unsuccessful. Therefore, whatever road he chooses to ride on, he feels a loser either outwardly or inwardly. As a result of the war and post war society, love, sex and marriage hold no value in his eyes, and he becomes a philanderer. His psyche becomes numb, and his vision of life is nihilistic. He loses his identity and becomes just another face in the corporate American world.

Bruce Gold wants recognition and respect in his life through the procurement of wealth and power. He too has two choices laid in front of him for the attainment of such objective: he can stay with his family and work hard to gain respect in the



society, which demands lifelong efforts and separation from his dream of working in Washington; or he can take the offer to go to Washington and attain power through dishonesty while leaving his family behind. As he too is the product of the materialistic post-war generation, he selects the immoral path and betrays his children by leaving them and his wife by trying to marry Andrea. In doing so, he digs a grave for his integrity and falls into the trap of false American Dream. By choosing the latter option, he feels alienated, and the loss of his integrity takes him further away from his real goal: gaining respect. In being immoral, not only does he lose respect from the outside, but loses his self respect as well. Thus, he has no real choice as whatever decision he makes, he is bound to face humiliation in the society. His upbringing in the post war American society moulds him into a fragile person with a broken identity. He hates his family, and considers love and relationships a liability. Sex for him is means of mere physical pleasure, and his psyche turns hollow. His vision of life is that filled with hopelessness.

General Cummings has only one desire in life: to be all powerful. He is willing to do anything to attain this power as he is a neurotic. In order to gain this illusory omnipotence, he is provided with two alternatives. Either he can be humane and earn respect among his men through acts of bravery and intelligence, or he can be inhuman and ruthless to arouse fear among the soldiers and attain power. If he chooses the former, it would pose a threat to his life and he may die and thus forgo his dream. Due to his void and his environment, he adopts the latter approach. In doing so he loses his humanity and therefore the power he gains is worthless. Therefore, he is trapped and has no real choice as his dream of power is corrupt. Whatever choice he makes, he will not gain the illusive omnipotence that he hopes to attain. His blind pursuit for power slowly rips his identity apart, and his vision grows pessimistic with each passing day. War turns him into a machine man, whose heart has no place for love, sex and relationships. Sex is just a means of gratification for him, and his psyche disintegrates as a result of the war landscape.

Croft is crazy over gaining control over his platoon. If he wishes to achieve this goal, he has two courses of action to pursue this objective. He can lead by

example and gain control through skill and efficiency. But in case he chooses this alternative, it would be very much possible for Hearn to take command and thus make Croft lose control over the men. Therefore, he would be unable to command the soldiers at his will. On the other hand, he can become immoral and gain control by becoming cunning and ruthless. Being in the power hungry environment, he chooses the second option and gets Hearn killed. But by doing this, not only does he kill his humanity and make the power achieved thus worthless, but he also evidently loses his power over his platoon who consider him a psychopath. Therefore, his downfall is imminent. His plan to climb Mount Anaka becomes a failure and his cunningness thus becomes futile. By choosing the immoral means, not only does he fail to achieve control, but also becomes a shallow man with no real humanity left in him. His psyche is ruptured, and his faith in the institution of marriage is broken. His power hungry vision is clouded by inner despair and alienation.

Eitel wants to become a successful artist. But he is trapped in a Catch-22 because if he doesn't cooperate with the committee, although he would uphold his principles and thus become an artist in the true sense, he would be blacklisted and wouldn't be able to release his work to a wider audience. On the other hand, if he agrees to cooperate with the committee he would be able to become a successful director. When he chooses the latter out of greed for money and fear of middle-age, he fails both as an artist and as an individual. Thus he has no real choice as whatever decision he makes, he would never be able to become a famous artist. Furthermore, in choosing the latter, not only does he lose as an artist, but he also loses his own self. His psyche suffers from continuous guilt, and living in the decadent world of Hollywood, he considers love and sex as instruments of bodily pleasure only. His vision is bleak and gloomy, and his identity lost.

Rojack aims to live a happy and successful life. He can do so by pursuing two choices: he can follow the individual and personalised American Dream, by working hard and with faith in God. Or, he can take the shortcut to attain the collective and false American Dream, which says that one should attain power and prestige by hook or by crook. If he chooses the former, he would be invariably considered to be a

failure by the society, because it would take him a lifetime to become successful. Therefore, as he is a part of a materialistic money minting society, he chooses the latter. But, this too has its dire consequences. When he chooses the collective American Dream, he loses his own identity and though he is conventionally successful, he feels discontented and utterly unhappy at the core of his heart. Therefore, both the approaches leave him stranded on an island of dissatisfaction. He has no real choice as he is left without peace of mind in both of the cases. Due to his experience in war, Rojack's psyche is scarred by the memories of bloodshed, and subsequently, he feels as if his identity is built upon a void. His adulterous attitude is a testament to the fact that he considers love and sex animalistic rather than a holy communion. He too, like the rest of the protagonists, has a defeatist view of the world he inhabits.

Therefore, it can be concluded that all of the protagonists are trapped in a Catch-22 as whatever choice they make, they are bound to suffer. The impact of war is so detrimental on their psyche that it gets shattered leaving them neurotic wrecks. Their vision becomes pessimistic and nihilistic, and love and sex become commodities for them. Their identity thus becomes disintegrated and hollow.

The last research objective aimed to apply the psychoanalytical theories of Freud given in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and of post Freudian thinkers such as Karen Horney's *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) and Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) on the bewildered and trapped protagonists has also been achieved.

Drawing from Freudian theory, the traumatic formulation relates to an analogy between psychic and physical trauma. Furthermore, Freudian theory also argues that for a traumatized person there is a conflict between the forces of sexuality and its repression. The sexual drives can be seen as impulses that sought immediate and unconditional satisfaction, defined in part as the elimination of unpleasurable tension from the psychic apparatus. Breuer and Freud (1893) also point out that trauma can be derived from both irreparable loss of a loved person and the social circumstances (Freud, *The Complete Works* 13). Relying on Freud's notion of trauma and trying to

read *The Great Gatsby* in the light of his theory, it can be said that Gatsby is traumatized by the loss of his idealized love.

Daisy rejects the marriage proposal of Gatsby, simply because he has no financial heritage. He suffers from an inferiority complex because of financial insecurity and low social status. He realises that being poor he could never participate in the arrogant, inherited old wealth of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby is compelled to change the course of his life; now his main objective of life is to accumulate money which will help him enter Daisy's social class. Gatsby is so much mentally disturbed that her wealth becomes his obsession. He thus enters into a mad pursuit of social reputability. Gatsby feels sexually repressed when Daisy rejects him and marries Tom. Gatsby's personal sense of grief and loss results from the desire to win Daisy. From a Freudian perspective his failure leads to his regressive wish. Gatsby creates a world of illusive fantasy and spends days and nights recollecting his memories of Daisy. Gatsby is not a rational human being like a crazy and eccentric lover, he worships Daisy's shadow. Daisy haunts Gatsby for the rest of his life. His deceptive memories eventually deflate his self, making him a neurotic lover. His chronic problem adversely affects Gatsby's capacity of thinking resulting into his personality disorder. He is a war hero turned into a schizoid.

Dick Diver's collapse is related to Freud's theory of hysteria. It is Diver's hysterical fantasy and his unsatisfied wishes that drag Diver into uncertainty and a dead well. At the end of the novel, it is seen that Dick Diver is no longer the "fine man", an ambitious psychiatrist as he used to be. It is of course not only Dick himself that suffers from hysteria and melancholia in the novel but also the importance of Diver's case stems from his being one of the most important representatives of ambiguous personality in the modern Western world. However, he was once a successful psychiatrist dealing with the reasons and solutions of the illness, but then Diver himself is caught to illness in the later part of his life. So the decline of the promising psychiatrist Dick Diver to a schizophrenic mess can be considered as one of the most ultimate breakdowns among the characters in Fitzgerald novels. Fitzgerald took the name *Tender is the Night* from a John Keats' poem, "Ode to a Nightingale,"

in which the speaker complains of a heartache so intense he feels as if he has consumed poisonous hemlock. The mythical Narcissus, consumed by the frustration of his unmet needs for love, metamorphoses after his death into a poisonous plant. The toxic, destructive qualities of narcissistic self-absorption resonate in Dick Diver's disappearance into an abyss, a dive into death.

Blood-shed of war makes Yossarian a neurotic misfit. The death and disappearance of his friends give so much trouble to his psyche that a soldier becomes a neurotic wreck. In war his life becomes a series of trauma: death of Kraft, loss of tent mate Orr, disappearance of Dunbar, tragic atmosphere of war, Catch-22, cruel behaviour of his officers, death of Nately, greed of Milo, death of Kid Sampson, suicide of McWatt, and the most harrowing event of the violent death of Snowden in his own arms give trauma after trauma to Yossarian. All these episodes haunt his memory. The flashbacks of these catastrophic events make him restless. He suffers from a series of traumatic experiences. These intense traumas exert power over the psyche of the protagonist and it becomes difficult for him to work in a sensible and realistic way. He becomes obsessed with scenes of death because he has had an intimate experience with death. These experiences turn into paranoia. Yossarian becomes so much more aware of his own life, that he expectantly waits for the signs of death. He thus turns into a schizophrenic individual who has lost his grip on reality.

Slocum's life is characterised by a series of different traumatic events. These events control his behaviour and influence his life, and various Freudian theories have been applied to understand the effect of such traumatic events on his psyche. In Freud's early work he argues that traumatic hysteria develops from repressed earlier experiences. Freud and Breuer emphasise in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that the original event was not traumatic in itself but only in its remembrance. Trauma is thus defined in relation to the process of remembering and as an event harboured within the unconscious that causes a splitting of the ego or dissociation. Flashbacks of the death of Virginia haunt Slocum and such flashbacks occur again and again in various instances of the novel.

Furthermore the scenes of death and destruction of the war also leave his inner-self badly damaged and have far reaching consequences in his life. The death of his father and subsequently the lack of a father-figure leaves a deep imprint on his mind. This also leads to the lack of his psychosexual development during his phallic stage.

The “fright” that Slocum faces when he gets the shocking news of Virginia’s death and the news that he himself killed his son by suffocating him leave a deep impact on his psyche. His anxiety, which acts as a protection mechanism against traumatic neurosis, carries no defence against these unexpected situations. These external stimuli rupture the barrier and enter his inner psyche without the adequate internal defence. In the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) Freud has asserted that hysteria was caused by the patient’s efforts to repress traumatic memories, similar to what Bob Slocum does. According to Freud, external traumatic events (like the death of a loved one, war trauma) coupled with internal impulses that are improperly repressed by the ego and that, therefore, find alternative expression are required for neurosis to manifest itself. In the case of Slocum, external events such as the news of Virginia’s death, mistakingly murdering his son, war and death of his father, combined with internal repression like the inability to make love with Virginia cause him to become a neurotic.

Gold’s obsession for money and power, and his ultimate disintegration of values, stems from his childhood traumas and social alienation. Freud along with Breuer in their *Studies on Hysteria* (1893) observed that it was usually some childhood events that triggered severe symptoms of neurosis that reflect later in a person’s life. Near the beginning of the novel, Gold expresses such an event where his elder brother, Sid, once deliberately left him alone at a place where Gold as a child felt helpless and miserable. There are many such traumatic events in Gold’s childhood and adulthood which act as a trigger to his neurosis later in his life. As a child, he was a misfit (Heller, *Good as Gold* 59). Later, he feels alienated from his family, including his wife (25). Gold faces racial discrimination, which makes him suffer from an inferiority complex, and further traumatises him (203). All dreams are inspired and

manifestations of desires according to Freud. In Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he remarks that dream life is capable of extraordinary achievements—at any rate, in certain fields. This behaviour of Gold where he fantasises about living a life of respect and prestige, is observed frequently throughout the novel (122).

Freud first proposed the concept of the Oedipal complex in his 1899 book *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In his psychoanalytic theory, the Oedipus complex refers to the child's desire for sexual involvement with the opposite sex parent, particularly a boy's erotic attention to his mother. This desire is kept out of conscious awareness through repression, but Freud believed that it still had an influence over a child's behaviour and played a role in development.

Cummings believes that the deepest trauma is the one an infant experiences when he discovers that he and the universe, the infant's equivalent of the mother, are not the same. Cummings uses intellectual defences to hide from his own life-long trauma at the separation from his mother. The infantile trauma and the fear of the castrating father induce a sense of helplessness in Cummings which he retains in his adult life. The fantasy of becoming God is his unsatisfactory attempt to compensate for his nagging sense of inadequacy. Cummings' own words (Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* 411) are an expression of the General's wish to supplant the father, thereby having the mother for himself.

Croft's desire for omnipotence has the same Oedipal origins as Cummings'. In its size, the mountain represents the father's phallus which Croft, feeling deprived of, wants for himself. Only by scaling the mountain can he engage in primitive battle with the father. Croft is inhumane most of the time, he has an immense hunger for power, and he is a man driven by the neuroses that, like those which motivate most of the other characters in the novel, are predominantly sexual in origin. The Time Machine passage devoted to Croft emphasises that Croft's desire for power grows out of his feeling of sexual inferiority and impotence. Both Cummings and Croft show psychopathic tendencies which is a result of their Oedipal ailments.

Eitel's behaviour and thus his vulnerability to the trappings of the Hollywood landscape can be analysed using Freud's theory of drives: Eros and Thanatos. In his

earlier psychoanalytic theory, Freud suggested that Eros was countered by forces of the ego. In this later outlook, he claimed that life instincts were countered by the self-annihilating death instincts, called Thanatos. Supporting this theory, Freud remarked that individuals who live through a traumatic occurrence would often repeat that event. From this, he came to the conclusion that individuals have an unconscious wish to die but that the life instincts greatly hinder this desire. In addition, when this energy is channeled outward toward others, Freud maintained, it is expressed as aggression and violence.

For Eitel, sex is violent because it serves as a sublimation for other drives. It is the outlet for the violence. Eitel is filled with violence which he directs against himself. He torments himself with jealousy over Elena. He hurts her so that he can hurt himself. He punishes himself by needlessly antagonising other persons, such as Teppis and Dorothea and Munshin. And finally, he destroys the mainstays of his life, his relationship with Elena and his own integrity and principle.

*An American Dream's* opening chapter provides one a glimpse into the formation of Rojack's mind, filled with the traumas of war, the public life, the society marriage which Rojack will shortly terminate by strangling his wife to death. According to Cathy Caruth, the impact of the traumatic event manifests after the fact of its occurrence in symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and other traumatic affects that have since been classified under the banner of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As an event too overwhelming to be experienced at the time of its arrival, trauma continually re-emerges long after the initial traumatic scene, similar to the way Rojack could not escape from the memories of the four German soldiers. Rojack is a product of war and post-war society, and like the protagonist of the other selected novelists, is vulnerable to the trap of the false American Dream due to the effect of War on his psyche. Dr. Karen Horney believes that neuroses are personality disturbances which inevitably arise when an individual develops a feeling of "basic anxiety" in the face of an environment that threatens to engulf him. This is similar to the "anxiety" that is felt by Rojack when he encounters



the four Germans in the battlefield. He is both a psychopath and a patient of psychosis.

The present research has its novelty in the form of the exploration of the trapped condition of the protagonists resulting from their spiritual void and their morally decadent environment, which has been detailed extensively in the aforementioned third research objective. The depressing factors of spiritual void have been analysed by fulfilling the first research objective of the study. A wide range of harrowing causes of spiritual void have not been discovered in the earlier studies on the selected novels. Secondly the present study not only has explored the factors leading to spiritual void, but also has analysed the aftermath of spiritual decadence of the protagonists by fulfilling the second research objective of the present study. Thus the study has its uniqueness in the form of the investigation of the devastating impacts of the aforesaid spiritual void. The penultimate newness of the study lies in the exploration of the Catch-22 of the protagonists of the selected novelists and the impact of it on their psyches and eventually lives. This aspect of the study has already been elucidated broadly in the aforementioned fourth research objective. The final uniqueness of the study lies in the psychoanalysis of the protagonists using the theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, and Karen Horney. This analysis has been highlighted by fulfilling the fifth research objective. Thus the study has perceptibly brought new observation in English literature and American Cultural studies.

All the protagonists of the selected novels are shown under the influence of contemporary social as well as political forces. They are the victims of hallucinations, nightmares and above all pessimism. They find no ray of hope anywhere in the world. Neither do they have the courage to rebel against the derogatory conditions of their life and thus bring an improvement in it nor do they show any sign of willingness that they want any change in their condition. No doubt, sometimes they get fed up with the futility and meaninglessness of their lives, but still they don't want to step forward with an initiative to find a solution. They are suffering from the loss of confidence in themselves. In fact they are constantly struggling to escape from their self. The true self of all the protagonists of the selected novels is deluded because the ground of

their being is nothingness, everything is made of nothing and the characters are loitering to escape from their distorted self. They lack the prodigious mental prowess and don't possess the superior gifts of head, heart and hand. They have no meaningful ambitions, aim or purpose, no place to go, only a hellish place in which they are imprisoned. They feel themselves isolated from their culture, values, morality, past, religion, traditions and even family.

The study significantly contributes to society and English literature. Firstly, the present study creates awareness among individuals, families, organisations, and communities about spiritual void and its negative repercussions on their lives and the lives of those around them.

All societies need moral codes in order to survive. Without moral rules there is disharmony and chaos that no society can long survive. Since the World Wars and the Great Depression, however, there had occurred a tremendous social change in America. The developments which took place in America in many fields have changed the thoughts and customs, and even the manners and behaviours of the Americans, who were traditionally God fearing and peace-loving people. Their sudden shift to pleasure culture is at the root of all troubles which America faces today. They like to enjoy biblically prohibited fruits of adultery, incest and pornography. A nightclub culture has invaded America and weakened its soul. The modern lifestyle of America is offensive, threatening and dehumanising. The social changes have built up social tensions, and people no longer pay any attention to moral and spiritual principles and values. They have no faith in God, and their God is like one of them always embattling for his own survival in the face of a world turned topsy-turvy. They no longer believe in a God who can't protect the interest of his worshippers.

By analysing the novels of these celebrated war-novelists, the researcher aims to highlight these issues and bring them to light. By doing so, the researcher hopes to demystify the problem of spiritual void to make it more concrete and hence solvable.

Secondly, the research also creates a platform for the future scholars to explore the immediate and delayed effects that were brought about by the World Wars and the Great Depression. In the early days, America was a happy place, but after war, it

turned into a ragged edge of the universe. The sound reality of the situation was that, in pursuit of money and power, the spiritual side of America, was pretty much dying. Everybody was mad after money and power, but they failed to understand that material possessions don't bring one contentment. Man had, and unfortunately, still has lost his confidence in his ability to shape his life. Humanity has lost its connection to God. People have become pleasure seekers and are living hedonistic and sinful lives. What they fail to realise is simple but fundamental: A life without value system is of no use because it doesn't give contentment. If there is spiritual void, there is no peace of mind; the world where there is no spirituality will be a hellish place to live in.

People who reject God and Morality do get rich and powerful, but at the cost of sacrificing their principles and morals. This achievement is shallow and meaningless because it doesn't make them happy. Instead love, care and sacrifice bring true peace of mind. They achieve riches, but there is no true love, real happiness and inner peace; absence of these things makes everything worthless. They have all the goods in the world, but no goodness in their hearts. Therefore, by analysing the money culture of America, the study aims to enlighten future researchers and general public about the devastating impacts of mad pursuit of money and power.

Thirdly, the study enables readers to grasp that the extreme exposure to traumatic events leads to the utter devastation of the unity of the psyche. Though the selected novels belong to the war and post-war era of America, the traumatic incidents which occurred in the first half of the twentieth century still refresh the wounds of Americans. World War I, World War II, and the Great Depression left their nerve-wrecking and everlasting corollaries on the psyche of victims and witnesses. It has been further added that traumatic events didn't occur only in the first half of the twentieth century, but they happened afterwards as well. Moreover, they are still taking place across the globe. For instance, the terrorist attack of 9/11 (2001), the US military abuses at Abu Ghraib prison (2004), the Amish shootings in Pennsylvania (2006), U.S embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania (1998), Sri Lanka War Crimes (2009), Jos Riots Nigeria (2010), Syrian Massacres (2011-Present), Peshawar school

massacre (2014), Garrisa University College attack, Kenya massacres (2015), Bataclan Massacre, Paris (2015), Orlando Massacre, Florida (2016), Amarnath Yatra Attack (2017), Istanbul Nightclub shooting (2017) and Sargodha Shrine Massacre (2017) are also the appalling events which took place in the past years, and projected the traumatic experience borne by the victims and their relatives. The bloodbath of these events is still going on in several nations of the world.

Consequently, victims and witnesses are suffering from spiritual void. The study thus emphasises that if we are not going to learn lessons from the wars and massacres, and their everlasting repercussions, then we are doomed to repeat them. Simply said, the study aims to analyse the past in hopes of creating a better future.

The scope of the present research is that it adds novel dimensions to the research domain since all the selected works have been investigated from the psychoanalytical perspective. The contribution of this study is that it will help other scholars to have a better understanding of different aspects of spiritual void along with its causes and impacts. The study is beneficial for the society since it highlights the trapped conditions of the individuals which arose due to the mad pursuit of money and power. The study further conveys the message to the youth to accept the realities of life and it also gives them positive direction to further research on this topic. In addition, this research gives the youth social and psychological awareness to confront the psychic pressure and anxiety. The present study also examines the fact that physical wounds are curable, but the wounds on the psyche remain hard to cure, and give endless torment to the afflicted person. War leads to the never ending destruction; there is endless instability, restlessness, hopeless and helpless which arises from it. The present research paves the way for further research in the field by highlighting the already conducted research.

The root cause of all the miseries and sufferings of the modern world is spiritual void. Even if one has all the money, comfort and facilities of the world, and there is loss of faith, it becomes difficult for him to have even a single moment of true happiness. Therefore, faith is the only power which makes man get rid of all problems faced by humanity today: stress, alienation, rootlessness, discontentment, suicides,

mental illnesses, crime, etc. Hence, this research is beneficial not just for a small group of individuals or a particular race, sect, or country, but for whole of humanity as it enlightens the readers that the mad pursuit for money and power, and consequently war, destruction, bloodshed, criminal activities- that is, immorality- are the enemies of human soul and psyche. The modern man is burdened with the anxieties and stresses of life, as life has become very competitive and survival is very hard. The present thesis will give the youth the direction to confront the existential reality wisely.

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