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AUTHORIAL SUBVERSION OF THE FIRST-PERSON NARRATOR
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN FICTION

THESIS

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American writers of narrative fiction frequently manipulate the words of their narrators in order to convey a significance of which the author and the reader are aware but the narrator is not. By causing the narrator to reveal information unwittingly, the author develops covert themes that are antithetical to those espoused by the narrator. Particularly subject to such subversion is the first-person narrator whose "I" is not to be interpreted as the voice of the author. This study examines how and why the first-person narrator is subverted in four works of twentieth-century American fiction: J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, and Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus*.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Henry James correctly observed that an author may be "remarkably objective and impersonal, but he would go too far if he were to entertain the belief that he has kept himself out of his books" (qtd. in Booth 66). Likewise, a reader also goes "too far" if he believes that an author has kept himself out of his book. Indeed, the primary element of every narrative, the selection of one story from among a myriad of possible alternatives, is a calculated, subjective, authorial intervention into the "narrator's" narrative. The critical analysis of authorial intervention in first-person narrative fiction is particularly interesting because the "I" of the narrative is not interpreted as the voice of the author and because the reader is not, in Gerald Prince's terminology, the "narratee" to whom the narrator's remarks are actually addressed. The casual reader of first-person narrative too often assumes an excessive degree of authorial detachment, mistakenly reading as if the author has wound-up his toy and turned it loose to "do its thing" when in actuality he has skillfully manipulated the "strings" attached to the narrator so that his story conveys a significance of which the author and the reader are aware but the narrator is not. This subversion is intended to persuade the reader to assume, in

Walker Gibson's words, the role of "mock reader," which is the "fictitious modification" of the reader's self that exists for the duration of the fiction-reading process (268). But the reader does not automatically assume, and in fact often resists or refuses to assume, the role of mock reader; therefore, the author must enable, encourage, and persuade the reader to do so, or the reader may respond to the narrative only as the narrator wants the narratee to respond. This communication between author and reader, which must necessarily be conducted "over the head" or "behind the back" of the narrator, may accomplish any of several strategic objectives. The author (persona) may seek to emphasize the importance of an event or series of events, to underscore, illustrate, or contradict a theme, to clarify an ambiguity, to enhance characterization (particularly of the narrator), to control or moderate the reader's reactions to the defense or debunking of certain values, to guide the reader's moral or ethical judgement, or as Prince points out, the author may simply oblige the reader "to participate more actively in the development of the narrative" (21). Whatever the author's motives or methods, he must simultaneously satisfy the twentieth-century reader's demand for the illusion of objectivity and realism. If the author does not do this, the reader will refuse to become the mock reader, and regardless of whether the author's artistic motive has been to enhance the reader's knowledge of himself and the world, to assist

him in clarifying his own system of values or to motivate him in some other respect, the author, as artist, will fail to accomplish his objective.

Because allegory involves the transformation of abstract qualities into concrete images, it allows a narrator's words to be infused with multiple meanings; therefore, early American writers often employed allegory to convey a meaning other or "higher" than the sum total of the literal details of a first-person narrative. But a story such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Celestial Railroad" (1843) or a novel such as Herman Melville's Moby Dick (1851) does not approach the degree of apparent authorial objectivity demanded by modern conceits. Not until Mark Twain wrote The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884) did an American writer unintrusively subvert his first-person narrator yet maintain the character's ethical credibility and enhance the reliability of the narrative. For instance, Mark Twain's narrator, Huck Finn, tells of his genuine disappointment in the fugitive slave Jim for "coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children--children that belonged to a man I didn't even know . . ." (93), but Mark Twain's sense of irony, which is perceptible to the reader but not to Huck, allows the narrator and his story to remain humorous and loveable despite adherence to a philosophy unpalatable to most readers. Through this "other" narrative voice, Mark Twain maintains a standard of reliability in an otherwise

unreliable narrative yet avoids editorial comment and asides to the reader.

Although irony enables an author of narrative fiction unintrusively to subvert an unreliable narrator and to "steer" the reader in the desired direction, its effectiveness is limited because it indicates only what the belief or attitude of the author is not; it does not indicate what the author's belief or attitude actually is. Therefore, American authors in the twentieth century have relied less on irony than did Mark Twain and more on figures of speech, particularly metaphor, to indicate to the reader an alteration in the basic meaning of a first-person narrator's words. Such is the case in J. D. Salinger's novel The Catcher in the Rye (1951), in which the narrator, Holden Caulfield, begins his narrative much as Huck Finn does, directly addressing "you" and informing the narratee of his tendency to lie, but Holden is unaware of Salinger's use of metaphorical imagery to manipulate the narrative. By having the narrator bring to the reader's attention an implied but extended comparison between Holden and the biblical character known as Legion, the Gerasene demoniac, Salinger provides the reader with insight into Holden's psychological make-up and behavior--insight that Holden is actively seeking to discover but does not possess. Through metaphorical implication, Salinger presents a characterization of the narrator that is different from but more reliable than the one offered by

Holden himself, and he does so without Holden's conscious recognition and in opposition to numerous rhetorical appeals made by Holden as narrator.

As Wayne C. Booth points out in The Rhetoric of Fiction, "Patterns of imagery and symbol are as effective in modern fiction as they have always been in poetry in controlling our evaluation of details" (272). This is certainly the case in Salinger's novel, and is equally applicable to F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby (1925), in which Fitzgerald adapts a familiar image from classical epic poetry to enhance characterization and to introduce thematic considerations that are not conscious concerns of the narrator, Nick Carraway. By having Nick unwittingly depict his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, as a classical siren of the type portrayed in Homeric myth, Fitzgerald enables the reader quickly to perceive Daisy's role as la belle dame sans merci, and he draws attention to implications of Nick's unavowed homosexuality, thus adding alternative ways in which the reader may interpret Nick's ambiguous narrative.

When the first-person narrative voice is that of an adult, complex and calculating, as it is in The Great Gatsby, subtle techniques are demanded to manipulate the narrative so that direct author-to-reader communication is established in an unintrusive manner. In Ernest Hemingway's novel A Farewell to Arms (1929), for example, the narrator, Frederic Henry, recognizes that his relationship with his lover, Catherine

Barkley, is much like a game, but he remains unaware of the decidedly anti-romantic overtones that Hemingway attaches to the game analogy. Through what is sometimes referred to as Hemingway's "iceberg" technique of fictional narrative, which requires reader cognizance of the implications of that which is not declared overtly as well as of that which is said overtly, Hemingway causes Frederic to reveal attitudes and ideas that he does not consciously intend to communicate, and, in fact, is sometimes not aware of at all. For example, Frederic's narrative technique is primarily one of apparent objectivity; he records events and conversations as they happened, and he inserts little or no comment or evaluation. But through strategic imagery and setting, as well as through incorporation of quasi-biographical and historical details, Hemingway establishes in the narrative a consistent pattern of covert evaluations, which without Frederic's recognition signifies to the reader a negative characterization of Frederic, of Catherine, and of their gamelike relationship and romantic idealism in general.

In Goodbye, Columbus (1959), Philip Roth uses a narrative technique much like Hemingway's, and he achieves a similar effect. Roth's narrator, Neil Klugman, like Frederic Henry, tells the story of a gamelike romantic affair that has mundane and metaphorical overtones of which he is not consciously aware. In telling the story of his summer romance with Brenda Patimkin, Neil gives the impression that theirs

was a mature love affair forced to an untimely end because of a careless mistake made by Brenda; but Roth covertly indicates to the reader that the romance is indeed a game in which Brenda is using Neil to "get back" at her mother. Moreover, through incorporation of elements based on his personal experiences as a young Jewish man growing up in New Jersey, Roth endows the romance with metaphorical implications that signify the futility of romantic idealism in general and of the American Dream of upward social mobility and economic prosperity for minorities in particular, although neither of these themes is a conscious concern of Neil as narrator.

Each of the narratives here examined exhibits a creative artist's unique attempt to establish a communicative experience with the mind of his reader. But each of the works also demonstrates the fact that even though the words of a text remain the same, the reading experience is somehow different each time because the reader who opens the book has changed and is different from the previous time that he read. Therefore, the exposition of this thesis can elucidate only "a" reading from among the numerous possible readings of each work discussed, and it must acknowledge that no critical examination is ever the final word about a really good piece of writing. As Hemingway observed, "In truly good writing no matter how many times you read it you do not know how it is done. That is because there is a mystery in all great writing

and that mystery does not dis-sect out. It continues and it is always valid. Each time you re-read you see or learn something new" (Baker 770).

CHAPTER II

SALINGER'S THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

In chapter fourteen of J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, the narrator, Holden Caulfield, tells the narratee that "the guy I like best in the Bible, next to Jesus, was that lunatic and all, that lived in the tombs and kept cutting himself with stones" (101). Holden's acknowledgement that he likes the lunatic is significant for a number of reasons, not least among them the fact that Holden rarely likes anything, especially other human beings. More important, his fondness for the lunatic attracts the reader's attention to parallels between Holden and the lunatic that are keys provided by the author so that the reader can understand the "madman stuff that happened . . . around last Christmas" (1). Furthermore, a conspicuous dissimilarity between Holden and Legion allows a reading that conflicts with the prevalent interpretation of Rousseauistic critics, who find the cause of human depravity in the corruptive influence of a wicked world's social institutions, but which nevertheless recognizes Salinger's anti-romantic theme of the imperfectability of human nature. Holden is an everyman type of individual who, despite trying and unfortunate circumstances, must ultimately assume ethical and/or moral responsibility for the consequences of his actions or remain

in a state of psychological turmoil.

The "lunatic" liked by Holden is the Gerasene demoniac whose story is told in three of the four New Testament gospels (Matt. 8.28-34, Mark 5.1-20, Luke 8.26-39). He lived on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee near Gerasa and Gedara, and his violent behavior led the townsfolk to bind him with chains and to exile him to the cities' graveyards where "constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones" (Mark 5.5). Although Holden uses the word "lunatic" to describe him, the biblical writers tell of a man who was "possessed" by demons. In fact, when asked his name by Jesus, the man replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many" (Mark 5.9, Luke 8.30), indicating that numerous "unclean" spirits possessed him. Holden is interested because the demoniac is not held accountable for his misdeeds. Instead, after the demons are exorcised and punished, the man is encouraged by Jesus to "Go home to your people and report to them everything that the Lord has done for you . . ." (Mark 5.19). Holden identifies with the demoniac's torment, and he envies Legion's freedom from guilt and his return home to his people. The story of the demoniac allows Holden to rationalize that his own "madman" behavior might be beyond his control and, therefore, behavior for which he is not accountable. This concept is the basis of the theological position Holden attempts to defend in "quite a few arguments"

with fellow student Arthur Childs.

> I remember I asked old Childs if he thought Judas, the one that betrayed Jesus and all, went to Hell after he committed suicide. Childs said certainly. That's exactly where I disagreed with him. I said I'd bet a thousand bucks that Jesus never sent old Judas to Hell. I still would, too, if I had a thousand bucks. I think any of the Disciples would've sent him to Hell and all--and fast, too--but I'll bet anything Jesus didn't do it. (101)

Judas, like Legion, was possessed (John 13.27), so Holden reasons that Judas remained guiltless and would not have been condemned to hell for betraying Jesus and taking his own life. To achieve such freedom from the guilt, pain, violence, and loneliness associated with reprehensible behavior is Holden's chief desire, but he does not consciously recognize it as such, so Salinger instills in Holden a liking of the demoniac in order that the reader might possess this insight that Holden does not possess and is, therefore, incapable of conveying on his own. In order to draw the reader's attention to the significance of Holden's identification with Legion, Salinger heralds Holden's acknowledgement by a threefold reference to the sun: the prostitute who has visited Holden's hotel room is named Sunny, the time of day is sunrise, and the new day dawning is Sunday.

Throughout the narrative, Salinger parallels Holden's situation with that of Legion. As noted above, Legion was an exile forced to live among tombs; when Holden's narrative begins, he has been "exiled" to Pencey Prep School where he

lives in the dormitory's Ossenburger Memorial Wing, named after "this guy Ossenburger" who "made a pot of dough in the undertaking business" (16), and whose name connotes both an ossuary and a form of meat. Legion is said to have cried out and gashed himself with stones; likewise, Holden cries tears frequently, cries out loudly when emotionally upset (as with Sally Hayes), and continually inflicts harm on himself, most notably on the night of his brother's death, when he breaks his hand by smashing windows with his fist. Robert Slabey notes that even when Holden assumes a fictional identity during the course of his narrative, he also feigns some physical affliction: "'Rudolph Schmidt' (on the train) has a brain tumor; 'Jim Steele' (in the hotel) is recovering from a clavichord operation; and the Dickstein's nephew (in his apartment house) has a bad leg" (175). Holden frequently pretends to be gutshot, all but invites physical beatings, twice admits to considering suicide, and habitually uses the word "kill" to describe the effect of things delightful or distasteful: when he loves something, it "kills" him, and when he hates something, it "kills" him; therefore, in Holden's mind, to love or to hate is to kill himself.

Holden does not consciously realize that his fixation with self torment is manifest in his narrative, particularly in his unwarranted assumption of personal guilt for the premature deaths of other young people. In chapter fourteen he confesses to "talking, sort of out loud, to Allie" (his

dead brother) in attempts to show penance for once having refused to allow Allie to accompany Holden and a friend on a bicycle trip to Lake Sedebego. "It wasn't that I didn't use to take him with me when I went somewhere. I did. But that one day, I didn't. He didn't get sore about it--he never got sore about anything--but I keep thinking about it anyway, when I get very depressed" (100). And on one occasion Holden's guilt is reflected in his self-conscious correction of the meaning of his slang: "She [his sister, Phoebe] killed Allie, too. I mean he liked her, too" (70). Perhaps the initial statement disquiets Holden because he is compelled to assume total blame for Allie's death. And in his description of the suicidal leap of classmate James Castle, Holden inserts a declaration of his own whereabouts literally between the boy's jump from the window and his impact on the stone steps. Possibly Holden is unconsciously "confessing" his presence among the group of boys who prompted Castle's jump. ("I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life," he forewarns the reader. "It's awful.") James Castle, who dies while wearing Holden's sweater, and as Holden reflects, whose name "was always right ahead of me at roll call" (174), suffers one of those deaths that "drives" Holden "crazy." "Romeo and Juliet, at least it was their fault."

But Holden is unwilling to consummate his masochism in a suicide attempt because his faith in guiltless suicide is not absolute. Salinger therefore establishes a revealing parallel

between Hamlet and Holden by having Holden attend a performance of the play in which the "sad, screwed-up type guy," Hamlet, like Holden, is constrained by that which "makes us rather bear the ills we have/ Than fly to others that we know not of" (Ham. 3.1.81-82). But Holden is also conscious of the ultimate fate of Legion, who was restored to his right mind and sent home to tell his story, so Holden yet finds reason to hope for extrication from his own dilemma. However, the consequences of Legion's exorcism are hauntingly problematic for Holden: "The demons came out from the man and entered [a herd of] swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank and into the lake, and were drowned" (Luke 8.33). Herein lies "the rub." Exorcism from Legion frees the demons to drive unsuspecting animals to their deaths over "the edge of some crazy cliff"; must not Holden's own peace of mind also come at the expense of innocents? "What I have to do," he decides, "I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff--I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them" (176). This is the source of Holden's concern for the ducks that disappear from Central Park; from childhood he has been able to find tranquility there, so he thinks that his peace of mind may somehow come at the ducks' expense.

Significantly, Holden's story of "this madman stuff" ends near the zoo in Central Park where Phoebe rides the musical carrousel and he decides to "really go home." "I felt

so damn happy, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. It was just that she looked so damn nice, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God, I wish you could've been there" (215). Holden's peace of mind is achieved in Central Park, and the ducks are gone. But Phoebe, her name suggestive of the moon, is the one who circles "around and around, in her blue coat" (the sky) and is the inspiration for Holden's overwhelming emotion and his decision to go home; unlike Legion, who was sought out, exorcised, and sent home by the Lord, Holden is affected by the inconstant "moon" and capriciously decides to return home. The ultimate sentence of the narrative proper ("God, I wish you could've been there."), which Salinger punctuates with an internal comma instead of with an exclamation mark, can be read as Holden's lamentation of this significant difference between himself and Legion. In a final and poignant parody of Legion, which verifies Corbett's assertion that "Salinger likes this boy, and he wants his readers to like the boy, too" (443), Holden, though "unexorcised," is allowed by the author to return to his people and eventually to tell the story of what has happened to him.

One might wonder why mention of demons and the Devil is conspicuously absent from the narrative if Holden is entertaining the possibility of demonic activity in his life, but consideration of his institutionalization prompts the realization that such statements would most likely result in

a more restrictive solitary confinement that would deny him the opportunity to tell his story to "you," his undefined narratee.

By denying Holden the miraculous type of restoration that is granted to Legion, Salinger indicates, despite the narrator's confusing, romanticized and frequently deceptive rationalizations, that Holden, though often subject to circumstances beyond his control, is, like everybody else, nevertheless responsible for his actions and their consequences, and that his psychological distress, unlike Legion's demon possession, will not be relieved until he reconciles himself to his own "sinfulness" and that of others. For thirty years this fact has been consistently sidestepped by the many critics who have fallen in lockstep with Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller, Jr., whose influential essay "J. D. Salinger: Some Crazy Cliff" [Western Humanities Review, Spring 1956] concludes:

> It is not Holden who should be examined for a sickness of the mind, but the world in which he has sojourned and found himself an alien. To "cure" Holden, he must be given the contagious, almost universal disease of phony adultism; he must be pushed over that "crazy cliff." (137)

Heiserman's and Miller's conclusion reflects the eighteenth-century theory of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who maintained that the innocence of man in childhood is eventually corrupted not by inherent human depravity but by the wickedness of the world, primarily through social

institutions. But Holden's psychological turmoil is symptomatic not of resistance to a societal assault on his as-of-yet uncorrupted innocence, but rather of the deep-seated "universal disease" that already infects him as he attempts to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood, which is further complicated by his presence in the large metropolitan "Babylon" of New York City and by his uncaring parents, who have, for all practical purposes, abandoned him to the care of institutions, such as Pency Prep and the sanitarium, where he is forced to grow up without parental nurturing. As Slabey correctly points out, "The loss of innocence is actually more pathetic than tragic and can be accomplished without the social and psychological violence which Holden experiences and hopes to save others from" (179).

To argue that Holden is an innocent whose agony is due to resistance against society's corruptive influences is not only to distort Salinger's symbolic use of Legion but to disregard the confession made by Holden himself as he looks out his hotel window and sees a couple of "perverts" squirting water out of their mouths and into each other's faces: "The trouble was, that kind of junk is sort of fascinating to watch, even if you don't want it to be. . . . Sometimes I can think of very crumby stuff I wouldn't mind doing if the opportunity came up" (63). By his own admission, Holden would not have to be subjected to the external

influences of the wicked world in order to engage in aberrant behavior; he would choose to do it because he is already a "fallen" creature. His subsequent remark, "I keep making up these sex rules for myself, and then I break them right away" (64), exemplifies not the principles of Rousseau at work but the universal phenomenon that the biblical apostle Paul characterized as "sin":

> For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death? (Rom. 7.19,20,24)

Until Holden realizes that the unavoidable corporeality of human existence is the root of his disgust for life, and that he is not "crazy" but simply being forced to accept the fact that he cannot romantically "mummify" life's charming moments in a museum-like glass case nor be a "catcher" of all other youth who are yet to "fall," he condemns himself to a life of Legion-like self torment. Granted, his decision to let Phoebe grab for the gold ring on the carousel, even at the risk of falling off her horse, can be interpreted as a sign that Holden is toying with maturity, or as Strauch says, that he "has added a cubit to his psychological stature" (27), but to read into this episode Holden's "cure" or his "exorcism," as, by implication, does Miller, who credits Holden with achievement of "the mature awareness . . . that the fall, finally, cannot be stayed" (18), is to be

influenced more by the narrator than by the authorial personae. The reader must not ignore the fact that following the carousel incident with Phoebe, Holden is committed indefinitely to a psychiatric institution; Salinger provides no romantic resolution by divine intervention or by self "exorcism." Though Albert Fowler does not completely agree, he is substantially correct in terming The Catcher in the Rye "a tragedy without catharsis" (191).

CHAPTER III

FITZGERALD'S THE GREAT GATSBY

In the closing scene of F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Nick Carraway returns to the beach at East Egg, Long Island for a few final moments of solitary reflection; and as he sits in the moonlight, reality in the form of "the inessential houses" begins "to melt away," and thoughts of "a transitory enchanted moment" of "aesthetic contemplation" begin to fuse his vision of "the old, unknown world" with his recollections of Jay Gatsby's infatuation with Daisy Buchanan. This fusing of images from a mythical past with the story of Gatsby's fatal attraction to Daisy results ultimately in the romanticized elegy that Nick as narrator offers as "the history of the summer" of 1922, but by causing Nick unwittingly to depict Daisy in the image of a siren of Homeric myth, Fitzgerald exposes Nick's unacknowledged problem of sexual ambivalence and reveals the delusory nature of his (and Gatsby's) romantic illusions.

In chapter one, Daisy is introduced in a siren-like pose with Jordan Baker amidst the opulence of the Buchanan's Long Island home; the women, dressed in "rippling and fluttering" white dresses, recline full length upon a large divan, "buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon" (8). As R. E. Long notes (133), this siren image is replicated in chapter

seven. That Fitzgerald had in mind the Homeric sirens, who in The Odyssey (Od.) live leisurely in a beautifully flowered island meadow, is evident not only in Nick's final recollections of "the old island here that flowered once" and in the situation of Daisy's lovely island mansion "overlooking the bay" (6), but also in the postures of Daisy and Jordan, in the choice of Nick's words "buoyed up" and "anchored," and, in the paragraph immediately preceding the depiction of Daisy's initial siren-like pose with Jordan, in the echoing of two epithets found recurrently in Homeric literature. In describing "a bright rosy-colored space, fragilely bound into the [Buchanan] house by French windows at either end" (8), Nick represents the brightness of the shining sun as "rosy-colored," unwittingly alluding to an adjective used frequently by Homer to precede the word "dawn" (Od. 2.1, 8.1, 17.1, etc.); and in Nick's description of the shadow of a fluttering curtain, which "rippled over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea" (8), Fitzgerald creates a wine-colored "sea" of rug (in the midst of which the two sirens are "buoyed up") that is reminiscent of Homer's often-referred-to "wine-dark sea," or as E. V. Rieu correctly observes, what "ought to be 'wine-faced' or something to that effect" sea (20) (Od. 2.421, 5.132, 5.349, etc.). Beginning the novel with these Homeric epithets and sustaining the siren imagery throughout the narrative suggests that Fitzgerald made good his boast in

a letter written to friend Thomas Boyd during the period of The Great Gatsby's composition: "I'm going to read nothing but Homer & Homeric literature--and history 540-1200 A. D. until I finish my novel . . ." (Bruccoli, Duggan, and Walker 141).

The Homeric sirens used their melodious voice to enchant men. "Come near," they sang to Odysseus, "so you may listen to our voice. No one ever yet sped past this place . . . before he listened to the honey-toned voice from our mouths, and then he went off delighted . . ." (Od. 12.184-188; [Cook]). Likewise, Daisy's most alluring quality is her voice, and Fitzgerald emphasizes it by having Nick refer to it more than twenty times during the course of the narrative. Surprisingly few critics have commented upon this siren-voice imagery, but noteworthy among those who have are Glenn Settle [American Literature: A Journal . . ., March 1985, 115-124], who recognizes Daisy as a classical siren but who claims incorrectly that other critics had not done so (Long noted the similarity six years prior to Settle's publication), and Paul McCarthy [Lockhaven Review, 2 (1969), 51-56], who fails to note the classical influence but comments upon the numerous references to Daisy's voice. However, no commentary yet published fully achieves McCarthy's stated objective of a detailed examination of "the nature and purpose of Daisy's voice" (51). Nick's initial observation is that the manner of her voice (like that of the

sirens) was designed to draw people closer: "I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her . . ." (9). He also notes the musical quality of her "low, thrilling voice":

> It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. 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 cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered "Listen. . . ." (9)

Like the sirens, Daisy possesses a unique and unforgettably euphonious voice, so exciting and compelling that men are attracted by it more than by the physical beauty of its possessor. And like the voice of the sirens, Daisy's voice has an intoxicating quality: "The exhilarating ripple of her voice was a wild tonic in the rain. I had to follow the sound of it for a moment, up and down, with my ear alone, before any words came through" (86). But the intoxicating enticement of a siren's voice usually compels a man to his death. Homer's sirens are surrounded by "a large heap of bones, of men rotting" (Od. 12.45-46; [Cook]), and Daisy enchants Jay Gatsby to his death. "I think that voice held him most," Nick says, "--that voice was a deathless song" (97).

In depicting Gatsby's attraction to Daisy, Fitzgerald sustains the siren imagery in Daisy's voice, which in 1922 retains its "inexhaustible charm" of being as irresistably "full of money" as it had been in 1917 when Gatsby first

began to idolize her:

> She turned toward him and he kissed her curious and lovely mouth. She had caught a cold, and it made her voice huskier and more charming than ever, and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor. (149-150)

And the risk of contracting physical corruption, i.e. death, (symbolized by Homer in the bones surrounding the sirens and here by Fitzgerald in Daisy's illness) remains inconsequential in comparison to the pleasures of the siren's intimate companionship. But Fitzgerald does not allow Nick to detail the emotional and physical intricacies of Gatsby's relationship with Daisy after their reunion. Instead of showing how they actually felt about each other after five years or indicating whether their affair involved sex, Nick offers a second-hand, romanticized fiction about the couple's past, leaving a void that Fitzgerald in a letter to Edmund Wilson referred to as the "worst fault" in the novel:

> "The worst fault in it, I think is a BIG FAULT: I gave no account (and had no feeling about or knowledge of) the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe. However the lack is so astutely concealed by the retrospect of Gatsby's past and by blankets of excellent prose that no one has noticed it--though everyone has felt the lack and called it by another name. (Fitzgerald, _Crack-Up_ 270)

This "fault," however, complements the siren imagery and reveals by implication Nick's emotional feelings toward not

only Daisy but Gatsby as well. Not until after Gatsby's death does Nick realize that Daisy is one of those "careless people [who] smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was . . ." (180); initially her voice contains for him the alluring "promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour" (9-10). According to Piper (108), Fitzgerald originally created Nick in love with Daisy. But unlike Gatsby, Nick is able to listen to the siren's "song" and to live to tell about it. In the Odyssey, Odysseus must be bound to the ship's mast so that he can listen to the sirens' voice without being enticed to his death, and though this causes him great anguish, his bonds restrain him and allow him to escape seduction and to live to tell his story. In a similar manner, Nick is attracted to Daisy, but he can resist her seductive charms because he is also metaphorically "bound" to the phallic "mast" of homosexuality, and this sexual ambivalence causes him considerable psychological anguish. Not only does Nick's ambivalence allow him as narrator to retain the degree of detachment required for "safe" observation of the siren; it also reflects the dubious sexuality of Fitzgerald--his wife, Zelda, openly accused him of being homosexual (LeVot 239), and Ernest Hemingway, who was once accused by Zelda of being Scott's sexual partner, conveyed his suspicions when he wrote about Fitzgerald's

"mouth that, on a girl, would have been the mouth of a beauty . . . The mouth worried you until you knew him and then it worried you more" (A Moveable Feast 149). Nick's homosexuality also allows the silence referred to by Fitzgerald as the narrative's "BIG FAULT" to be interpreted as a subconscious indication of Nick's rivalry with Daisy for the attention of Gatsby, the man in whom Nick saw "something gorgeous." Tom Burnam provides an apt analysis of this so-called fault: "Fitzgerald's instinct for craftsmanship, we may be thankful, operated before his analysis as a critic" (10).

In addition to engaging in the unorthodox endeavor of writing a romantic novel not about his relationship with a woman but with a man, Nick suggests his homosexual inclination by acknowledging on the third page that he had intended to "take a house together" with another "young man at the office" had not the man been transferred to Washington and by his subsequent lamentation of "a thinning list of single men to know" (136). Nick also offers curiously sensuous descriptions of the physical attributes of people who attract his attention. Tom Buchanan, "with his legs apart," is introduced to the reader this way:

> Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body--he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage--a

cruel body. (7)

And photographer Chester McKee is described as "feminine," in contrast to his wife who is "handsome" (30). Most interesting, though, are Nick's descriptions of the masculine characteristics of Jordan Baker, the one woman to whom he is physically attracted, or as he puts it, toward whom he "felt a sort of tender curiosity" (58). Nick describes Jordan as "small breasted" and "like a cadet" (11), and he notes her "slender muscles" (18), her "hard, juanty body" (59), and that she wore "all her dresses, like sports clothes" (51). (Lionel Trilling refers to her as "vaguely homosexual" [245].) Somewhat tongue-in- cheek, Fitzgerald also has Nick stereotypically distinguish between Myrtle Wilson's dresses of "dark blue crepe-de-chine" (25), "brown figured muslin" (26), and "cream-colored chiffon" (30), and he causes him to recognize the uniform of Gatsby's chauffeur as being "robin's egg blue" (41).

The evidence most suggestive of Nick's homosexuality lies, however, in his midnight liason with Chester McKee, the "pale, feminine" photographer. While at Tom and Myrtle's New York apartment, Nick uses his handkerchief to wipe away a "spot of dried [shaving] lather" from McKee's cheek as he sleeps on a chair. When McKee awakens and leaves the apartment, Nick follows him, talks to him in the elevator, and then, following a pregnant ellipsis, declares, "I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the

sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio in his hands" (38). Nick's revelation of the intimacy of this encounter suggests that he wants his narratee to be aware of his homosexual tendencies, but following a subsequent acknowledgement of "reading over what I have written so far" (56), he makes noticeably few additional "incriminating" remarks, as if in reviewing his text he realized that he had revealed as much as he cared to, so he made a conscious decision to stop. Of course Fitzgerald knew that as narrator Nick would have to reveal his proclivity in a covert manner because open avowal would forfeit reader and critical acceptance and probably prevent the novel's publication in the 1920's, but unknown to the narrator, his unwillingness as a character to acknowledge his sexual ambivalence is designed by Fitzgerald to reveal Nick's deceit of self, of other characters, and of the narratee, and to provide insight into why Gatsby, who initially represented everything for which Nick had "unaffected scorn," eventually came to be in Nick's estimation "worth the whole damn bunch put together."

Sustaining the siren motif, Fitzgerald causes Nick to refrain from detailing Daisy's physical characteristics as he does those of other characters; as a siren she is personified by her irresistable voice, which by its charm is attractive to Nick but noticeably disturbing when it hints at his homosexuality. On one occasion Daisy describes him as a "rose":

> "I love to see you at my table, Nick. You remind me of a--of a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn't he?" She turned to Miss Baker for confirmation: "An absolute rose?" (15)

"This was untrue," he objects to the narratee, "I am not even faintly like a rose." Daisy also taunts Nick by threatening to "arrange a marriage" between him and Jordan Baker by "accidentally" locking them in a closet (19). When she later insists on questioning him about a rumored "engagement" (20), Nick attempts to rationalize her sarcasm by claiming to have sensed the "warmth" of her remarks and to have been "touched" by her interest, thereby revealing his propensity to be deceptive rather than to acknowledge overtly his confused sexuality. The dishonesty that results from Nick's ambivalence is most obvious in the dubious excuses he offers for avoiding intimate relationships with women. In explaining the breaking-off of the "engagement" to which Daisy refers, Nick says, "The fact that gossip had published the banns was one of the reasons I had come East. You can't stop going with an old friend on account of rumors, and on the other hand I had no intention of being rumored into marriage" (20). Later he maintains, "I even had a short affair with a girl who lived in Jersey City and worked in the accounting department, but her brother began throwing mean looks in my direction, so when she went on vacation in July I let it blow quietly away" (57). He also rationalizes that he put "brakes on my desires" for Jordan Baker because "there was a vague understanding

[with a girl back home] that had to be broken off before I was free" (60). (That "certain girl" Nick remembers for "a faint mustache of perspiration" that developed on her lip as she played tennis [59].) The questionable nature of these excuses, in addition to revealing Nick's unreliability as a narrator, makes evident his habit of eventually developing a negative attitude toward all the women whom he comes to know--Daisy, he concludes, is a "careless" one who "smashed up" creatures; Jordan Baker is "incurably dishonest . . . dealing in subterfuges . . . in order to . . . satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body" (59); and Myrtle Wilson and her sister, Catherine, are characterized as a pair of tawdry floozies.

As narrator of the siren imagery, Nick is metaphorically linked to the Homeric questor, a role that critics often reserve for Gatsby; but by virtue of having homosexual tendencies, Fitzgerald's Odyssean figure has no Penelope to inspire his quest and to embody its consumation. In Jay Gatsby, however, Nick sees "something gorgeous . . . some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life . . . an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again" (2), and this romantic quality inspires an unabashed affection that leads Nick to cultivate his relationship with Gatsby, and following the man's death, to write a romantic novel bearing his name and

glorifying his memory. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, without his narrator's recognition, depicts Nick's attraction to this romantically gorgeous "something" as being comparable to Gatsby's idealization of Daisy, thereby indicating the siren-like delusory nature of romanticism's attraction.

In his short story "Absolution," which was originally intended to be the prologue to The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald initiated the image that permeates Nick's narrative--a sensuous feminine voice creating psychological havoc within a male mind. Father Adolphus Schwartz, who in the afternoons "was unable to attain a complete mystical union with our Lord" due to the "terrible dissonance" that he found in the "shrill laughter" of Swede girls who passed by his window, is approached by young Rudolph Miller, who is guilt-ridden for having become deceitful following an incident in a barn where "immodest things" were said by and to a young girl. ("He could not tell Father Schwartz how his pulse had bumped in his wrist," the narrator says, "how a strange, romantic excitement had possessed him when those curious things had been said" [143].) Telling Rudolph to "stop worrying," he has not committed "Apostasy," Father Schwartz offers a seemingly deranged admonition to visit an amusement park:

> It's a thing like a Fair, only much more glittering. Go to one at night and stand a little way off from it in a dark place--under dark trees. You'll see a big wheel made of lights turning in the air, and a long slide shooting boats down into the water. A band will play somewhere, and a smell of

> peanuts--and everything will twinkle. But it won't remind you of anything, you see. It will all just hang out there in the night like a colored balloon--like a big yellow lantern on a pole. . . . But don't get up close . . . because if you do you'll only feel the heat and the sweat of life. (149)

The priest's words make Rudolph feel "that his own inner convictions were confirmed. There was something ineffably gorgeous somewhere that had nothing to do with God." Therefore, Rudolph feels absolved in that he no longer senses God's anger toward his sins, and with this newly-found inner peace he leaves the priest's house, able now to hear the "girls with yellow hair . . . calling innocent [emphasis mine], exciting things to the young men" (149). In contrast, Father Schwartz suffers an emotional and physical collapse.

As a means of escaping the psychological dilemma that sensuality poses for the traditional moral conscience, Fitzgerald presents his characters with the kaleidoscopic alternative of this "something ineffably gorgeous," the essence of romantic idealism which, since it has "nothing to do with God," replaces adherence to (or frees one from bondage to) traditional concepts of sin and guilt, particularly those governing sexual conduct and truthfulness. Jay Gatsby's ideal of this gorgeous "something" (which is symbolized in the green light at the end of Daisy's dock--an adaptation of Father Schwartz's "big yellow lantern on a pole") is embodied in his idea of Daisy Buchanan; for him she becomes the "sound of money," the "mystery" of wealth, the

"gleaming" idol of his devotion. But Gatsby never realizes the siren-like effects of his self-delusion; he does not heed Father Schwartz's admonition to Rudolph Miller to observe the twinkling vision from a distance in order to avoid the deadly carnal trap of "the heat and the sweat of life," so pursuit of his vision of Daisy draws Gatsby to his death. On the other hand, Nick reveres in Gatsby the alluring attributes of success, wealth, charm, and good looks and is captivated by the man's "romantic readiness," his ability to create and to sustain an illusion that gives purpose, direction, and meaning to his life, even though as narrator Nick indicates an awareness of the tenuous fragility of such idealism by commenting retrospectively, at the exact point in the narrative when Gatsby and Daisy first make physical contact, that "the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. . . . Now it was again a green light on a dock" (94). Throughout his narrative, Nick ignores illusion's siren attributes and instead glorifies in his characterization of Gatsby the illusory (and delusory) ideal behind the "green" and "twinkling" lights. (Observe how the light motif is infused into the narrative--Nick initially observes Gatsby standing in the moonlight, regarding "the silver pepper of the stars" and stretching out his arms toward the green light at the end of Daisy's dock; on subsequent occasions Nick regards Gatsby's moonlit mansion and "glowing garden"; and ultimately the glittering is

transferred even to Gatsby's guests: "On Sunday morning while church bells rang in the villages alongshore, the world and its mistress returned to Gatsby's house and twinkled hilariously on his lawn" [61]). Only Fitzgerald's linking of the "twinkling" and siren imageries enables the reader (or more precisely, the mock reader) to see through the narrator's romanticism and to recognize that the alluring gorgeous "something" that Nick admires in Gatsby is, like the siren's call, a potentially destructive self-delusion. "Thats [sic] the whole burden of this novel," Fitzgerald explained in a letter, "the loss of those illusions that give such color to the world so that you don't care whether things are true or false as long as they partake of the magical glory" (Bruccoli, Duggan, and Walker 145).

Fitzgerald once acknowledged that the character of Jay Gatsby "started out as one man I knew and then changed into myself" (Crack-Up, 271), but Nick Carraway also in many ways is Scott Fitzgerald--both are mid-westerners, veterans who participated only in "the counter raid" phase of World War I, both in their confusing sexualities reflect the problematic nature of the hedonistic amorality of the 1920's, and both are writers. This lack of "distance" between the author and his characters, especially the narrator, results in a disturbing duality that characterizes the narrative as a whole--the charming Daisy is a femme fatale; Jay Gatsby is James Gatz and Scott Fitzgerald; and Nick Carraway is an

unreliable narrator, an unavowed homosexual, and Scott Fitzgerald. Thus, when Nick prefaces his narrative by saying, "the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions," his insight is Fitzgerald's confession. Certainly Fitzgerald believed the "BIG FAULT" to be the suppression that most "marred" The Great Gatsby, and possibly he considered the novel's terms "plagiaristic" because they are rooted in Homeric imagery and because their use had been suggested to him by "the great novel of the future" ("10 Best," 9)--James Joyce's Ulysses (which was published in 1922). Unlike that of his narrator, however, Fitzgerald's "intimate revelation" is a poignant admonition against "belief in the green light." Therefore, in the narrative's concluding sentence, Fitzgerald's final echoing of the ancient nautical myth, the futility of romantic illusion is typified in Nick's metaphor of "boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

CHAPTER IV

HEMINGWAY'S A FAREWELL TO ARMS AND ROTH'S GOODBYE, COLUMBUS

In book three of Ernest Hemingway's novel A Farewell to Arms, the narrator, Frederic Henry, twice lingers between wakefulness and oncoming sleep and mentally pretends to be with his lover, Catherine Barkley, when in actuality he is far from her and is in the process of abandoning the Italian war effort. Frederic's suspension between wakefulness and sleep epitomizes the dilemma of the romantic idealist who attempts to avoid the harshness of reality by embellishing it with visions of the way he would like things to be. In the first of the two "dream" sequences, Frederic talks out loud (198), defining further the image of a man who appears to be consciously aware of his situation but who in actuality is existing in a world of self-created mental fantasy. Furthermore, the first dream sequence occurs during the Italian army's retreat from Caporetto, and the second sequence takes place during Frederic's desertion from that army, thus constituting a regression, or retreat, from the embracing of universal ideals, such as sacredness, glory, and sacrifice, to a more individualistic idealism embodied in his romantic affair with Catherine. Following Catherine's death, however, Frederic can no longer employ her to divert his thoughts, so at the end of his story, after he walks "back to

the hotel in the rain," he must awaken the following morning to confront an entirely deromanticized reality.

But why, if such narrative imagery so obviously suggests an anti-romantic theme, is the novel so consistently misinterpreted as being a romantic tragedy? Perhaps, as Robert W. Lewis, Jr. points out, Hemingway himself is somewhat to blame for having misled critical readers to think of the novel as his Romeo and Juliet (42). More probably, though, misinterpretation is due to a lack of understanding of the author's narrative technique, which incorporates what has frequently been called Hemingway's "iceberg theory." This theory is described by Hemingway in Death in the Afternoon:

> If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. (192)

Thus, that which is not stated in Hemingway's narrative can be as important as, or more important than, that which is declared, and the reader's failure to discern these undeclared "truths" may result in misinterpretation or ignorance of the author's intentions. For example, had Hemingway concluded A Farewell to Arms with the following ending that he considered prior to completion of the novel in its present form, Frederic's awakening to "see the light" would have conspicuously culminated the series of events that

constitute his progression from idealist to realist; but omission of such a passage, though it does not inhibit discernment of the "truth" of Frederic's experience, does require the reader to infer rather than to deduce the narrator's state of mind and thereby increases the possibility of misinterpretation:

> When I woke the sun was coming in the open window and I smelled the spring morning after the rain and saw the sun on the trees in the courtyard and in [the] that moment of waking everything was the way it had been [and there was nothing gone]; then I saw the electric light still on in the daylight by the head of the bed and [then] I knew what it was that had happened and [that] it was all gone now and that it would not be that way any more. (Oldsey 108)

Oversight or misinterpretation of Hemingway's anti-romantic theme may also result from the narrator's silence with regard to his place in time. All that can accurately be determined from the narrative is that Frederic wrote his story sometime after the death of Catherine, but whether he wrote on the rainy night that followed his return from her deathbed, or whether days, months, or years elapsed, is never specified. Knowledge of how much time has elapsed between the events recorded and the recording of those events is critical to the reader because passage of time allows for reflection, and such hindsight enables a narrator to construct rather than simply to report his story. He may record events objectively, with little or no comment, as Frederic often does, yet he may record those episodes in a

selective and "artistic" manner, deleting and/or embellishing details so as to elicit a desired response to the story. The narrator far removed in time from the events that he records may remain factual yet not reliable because of his ability to create impressions that differ from those that the reader would have obtained had the story been a more objectively reported chronological narrative. But the reader of A Farewell to Arms remains uncertain as to the degree of Frederic's ability to exercise such rhetorical slanting, so that reader is especially vulnerable to being influenced by narrative manipulation. Another of the endings that Hemingway considered prior to completion of the novel does, however, contain an acknowledgement by Frederic that he could have added a "great many more details" to the end of his story, and reference is made to "continuing on with the rest of my life--which has gone on and [will probably] seems likely to go on for a long time" (Oldsey 109). If this variant indicates the author's concept of the narrator's place in time, and it probably does, for such a placement parallels Hemingway's removal of almost a decade from the autobiographical incidents upon which some of the novel is loosely based, then a number of years passed between Catherine's death and Frederic's writing of the narrative, as is made obvious by further comments about fascism in Italy. This means that Frederic wrote his narrative with the benefit of considerable reflection and hindsight, that he had ample

time to "get it straight in my head" (250) before he put it in final form. This hindsight allows Frederic a point of view that encompasses a high degree of cognizance, so he is conscious not only of the literal details of his story but of many of the symbolic implications as well. The first-chapter image of the "muddy and wet" caped troops who "marched as though they were six months gone with child" (4) is testimony to Frederic's ability at the beginning to foreshadow the end, as is his attribution to Catherine of the ability to "see" herself "dead in the rain." Thus, Frederic's narrative can be deceptive because this undeclared hindsight enables him to record events objectively, yet in a way that allows illusive (and sometimes elusive) multiple meanings. As J. F. Kobler has correctly noted, Hemingway's narrative technique

> provides a direct, unaltered, overtly unevaluated view of Catherine and Frederic's romance, while at the same time producing a covert evaluation of the real and unfavorable meaning of the affair . . . Hemingway's good writing is, indeed, like that iceberg, with the really meaningful parts beneath the surface. (5,7)

In producing this negative "covert evaluation," Hemingway sometimes causes Frederic to write passages that convey information that he is unaware of communicating, as is the case in the aforementioned dream sequences that have anti-romantic implications. Kobler has observed this technique in Hemingway's "blackest of black humor jokes"--a newspaper headline about "the break through on the British

front," which Frederic reads shortly after Catherine's Caesarean delivery (Kobler 10). Hemingway's covert negativism is, in fact, manifest in Frederic's descriptions of Catherine almost from the beginning of the narrative. For example, when Frederic first sees Catherine, she is clothed in white and standing in a garden. "I thought she was very beautiful" (18). This type of pose traditionally is emblematic of an Edenic purity, but Frederic also notes that Catherine "was carrying a thin rattan stick like a toy riding crop, bound in leather." Hemingway's introduction of this phallus-like flagellum negates the traditional image and suggests that Catherine is sadistic. The author's characterization is reinforced during the couple's second meeting in the garden when Frederic tries to kiss Catherine and she slaps his face hard and says, "I didn't mean to hurt you. I did hurt you, didn't I?" (26). Frederic responds by saying, "I don't mind at all." Catherine soon says, "I'd be glad to kiss you if you don't mind." Then they kiss.

Hemingway's negative attitude toward Frederic and Catherine's affair is also indicated in covert evaluation of Catherine's death. As narrator, Frederic analyzes why she dies, but he does not overtly say anything about what her death actually means to him. Nevertheless, a paradox early in the narrative indicates the didactic nature of Catherine's death. When telling about his severe wounding by a trench mortar shell, Frederic says, "I knew I was dead and that it

had all been a mistake to think you just died" (54). He goes on to say how he felt himself "slide back" to life. Herein lies the paradox: Frederic claims to have learned a "truth" by experiencing death, but Catherine, not Frederic, dies in the story. Unless the reader is willing to stretch credibility and to accept as factual Frederic's account of this out-of-body experience, logic requires one to assume that if Frederic learned something from a death, he learned it from someone else's and not his own. The lesson's transferral from one experience to another does, however, serve a reasonable purpose. Frederic's statement that it is "a mistake to think you just died," recalls the conversation that he had with Catherine during their first meeting in the hospital garden. After telling Frederic about her first love, Catherine says, "And then of course he was killed and that was the end of it," to which Frederic replies, "I don't know." "'Oh yes,' she said.'That's the end of it'" (19). Thus, Frederic's claim to have experientially invalidated the belief that life ceases at death implies the vacuity of Catherine's philosophy of life; and his suggestion that consciousness continues after death minimizes the gravity of her decease. Overt declaration of such ideas would, however, undermine the narrator's ethical appeal to the reader, as would acknowledgement of any pragmatic benefit gained through Catherine's death. Therefore, Hemingway follows a strategy employed elsewhere in <u>A Farewell to Arms</u>: he transfers the

didactic elements of one experience, in this case Catherine's death, to a fabulated account of another experience, Frederic's "death," and thereby maintains the narrator's ethical credibility while offering a negative evaluation of romanticism. So much for Catherine's notion that lovers can become indivisible soulmates (299,300).

In the narrative's final paragraph, Hemingway caps his anti-romantic "iceberg" with two more overt stylistic devices, neither of which Frederic is completely aware of employing. First, Hemingway culminates as a metaphor an analogy that is drawn by Frederic in an aside to the reader following Catherine's slap of his face in the garden: "I was angry and yet certain, seeing it all ahead like the moves in a chess game." Frederic does, of course, go ahead and play the game; but by the time of their idyllic sojourn in Switzerland, when Catherine is still playing the game of wanting the two of them to be "all mixed up" together (300), he indicates his dissatisfaction with the lovemaking game by showing a preference for the actual game of chess. But Frederic knows that he and Catherine are "playing for some stakes"; however, "Nobody had mentioned what the stakes were" (31), and they are not revealed until the much-commented-upon penultimate sentence of the narrative, "It was like saying goodbye to a statue" (332). When the game's final move is made, blonde Catherine, her skin deathly ashen, is statue-like, the image of the "white queen captured," and

Frederic is "checkmated" by the "black king," death, who, as always, ultimately claims the stakes: life itself.

A second stylistic device is involved in the writing of the narrative's final sentence, in which Hemingway causes Frederic to misplace the phrase "in the rain" so that "rain" is the last word in the narrative, thereby leaving the narratee with a lasting impression of the symbolic link between death and rain in the novel. But the perceptive reader who discerns the story's cumulative anti-romantic message reads the sentence not for what it says but for what it actually means: in the rain Frederic walked back to the hotel. He ends up not in the rain but in the hotel. Once Frederic turns away from the romantic game embodied in Catherine's corpse, he endures only symbolic death, i.e. rain, and that for a short time before stepping once again into the "clean, well-lighted" hotel, which is suggestive of life and rest. The war is forever "behind" him then, and so are the romantic game and the plethora of problems that would have resulted from marriage to Catherine and the rearing of a child. Perhaps Lewis goes too far when he claims that "in the depths of his mind Henry is really glad that Catherine dies" (49), but for all practical purposes Frederic does face a less-problematic future when he arrives back at the hotel.

The narrative technique, as well as the symbolic title, used by Hemingway in _A Farewell to Arms_ is closely paralleled half a century later by Philip Roth in his novella _Goodbye,_

Columbus. For instance, Roth follows a pattern identical to Hemingway's in bringing together the narrator and his female counterpart; by invitation of a third party, the narrator goes to his future lover's "territory," where he is somewhat out of place: Frederic Henry meets Catherine Barkley as a result of accepting his friend Rinaldi's invitation to visit "beautiful English girls" at the British hospital, where Catherine is a nurse, and Roth's Neil Klugman meets Brenda Patimkin as a result of being his cousin Doris's guest at a country club to which Brenda's family belongs. Moreover, Neil romances Brenda while he is among the affluent upper class in the suburbs instead of with his native lower-middle class in metropolitan Newark, New Jersey, just as Frederic, an American, conducts his affair with Catherine while he is in the Italian army fighting a European war. Additionally, Brenda is upper class as opposed to Neil being lower-middle class, as Catherine is British in contrast to Frederic being American, and just as Frederic and Catherine share the English language while among Europeans, so Neil and Brenda share their Jewishness while among the multi-racial Gentile inhabitants of New Jersey.

Roth also parallels Hemingway's use of imagery to convey ideas that the narrator does not consciously communicate. For example, Frederic does not consciously relegate tranquility to the mountains high above the fracas of war, but Hemingway sets Frederic and Catherine's most peaceful time of

lovemaking, as well as the priest's idyllic Abruzzi homeland, amidst the mountains that tower above the turmoil of lower elevations. Likewise, Neil does not choose to locate Brenda's residence in the "Gauguinesque" Short Hills of New Jersey, but Roth sets her world apart in order to caricature Neil's shuttling between reality and romantic idealism. Both authors also make symbolic use of season and weather, the narrators, for the most part, remaining unaware of the symbolism. Frederic and Catherine play their romantic game for a complete cycle of seasons, including a complete gestational cycle, only to part, ironically, in the springtime season of regeneration, at which time Frederic must walk "back to the hotel in the rain." In like manner, Neil and Brenda play their game of love for the duration of a summer season, but the game ends with the Jewish year drawing to a close and Neil departing from Brenda to be "under the tired autumn foliage and the dark sky" (103).

As one might suspect, the similarities between Goodbye, Columbus and A Farewell to Arms are more than superficial; they are also thematic. Just as Frederic's and Catherine's lovemaking game is based on his willingness to subjugate himself to sadistic treatment in return for sexual favors, so sustenance of Neil's and Brenda's romantic game depends upon Neil's willingness to assume attributes of servitude. For instance, when Brenda first approaches Neil at the country club pool, she has him hold her glasses while she swims. She

further tests his submissiveness by assuming a demeaning manner during a telephone call later that evening. Pretending not to remember him, Brenda asks,

> "What do you look like?"
>
> "I'm . . . dark."
>
> "Are you a Negro?"
>
> "No . . . ." (5)

Her question about his being a Negro is intended to be an insult, so Neil's passive acceptance of it indicates to her that she probably will be able to order him about in the manner that she insists upon. A couple of days later, when Neil goes to the Patimkin home to visit with Brenda, he finds her family waiting for him to arrive so that they can leave. "You have to sit with Julie," Brenda informs him. "Carlota's off" (29). Once inside the house, Neil remarks to the reader, "I felt like Carlota; no, not even as comfortable as that" (30). Following Brenda's return that evening, Neil is allowed to make love to her for the first time, so the fundamental "rule" of their lovemaking "game" is established: volitional submission by Neil is rewarded with sexual submission by Brenda, as is demonstrated on a later occasion when Brenda commands Neil to make love to her:

> "Make love to me, Neil. Right now."
>
> "Where?"
>
> "Do it! Here. On this cruddy cruddy cruddy sofa."
>
> And I obeyed her [Neil adds]. (52-53)

Neil, as narrator, is conscious of the gamelike attributes of his relationship with Brenda, but he never realizes, or for some reason does not admit, that her primary motive for having an affair with him is to "get back" at her mother for not lavishing upon her the attention she craves. So Roth employs Hemingway's "iceberg" technique of covertly communicating to the reader that which the narrator does not overtly declare. In the above instance not only is Brenda's abusive nature revealed, but her infantile jealousy is also manifested in her desire to "defile" her mother's keepsake sofa by fornicating upon it.

The most meaningful way in which Roth's technique parallels Hemingway's is that both authors engage in quasi-biographical fabulation in order to give their stories a metaphorical significance that the narrators do not consciously recognize. In 1918, Hemingway went to Italy to become an ambulance driver, and while there was severely wounded by a trench mortar shell, and subsequently fell in love with a young nurse, Agnes Von Kurowsky, at a Milan hospital; but the "late summer of that year" to which Frederic refers in the opening sentence of his narrative is 1915, not 1918, and the character of nurse Catherine Barkley reflects attributes of Hemingway's first wives, Hadley Richardson and Pauline Pfeiffer, as well as of Agnes Von Kurowsky. The discrepency between fact and fiction is due primarily to Hemingway's desire to use as the setting for

Frederic's "separate peace" the Italian Second Army's infamous retreat from Caporetto in late October 1917, which, according to Michael Reynolds in _Hemingway's First War: The Making of_ A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway had for a decade thoroughly researched in military histories, interviews, travel guides, and newspaper articles (some written by himself). Hemingway romanticized his personal experiences, transferring them to 1917-18, and created in Catherine an idealized composite character, thereby producing in the narrative not only the story of a romantic affair, but also a metaphorical condemnation of romanticism. He did this by creating a fabular story-within-a-story, which is about Frederic's involvement in the Caporetto retreat and his subsequent desertion, that epitomizes the universal futility of all romantic idealism, whether in love or in war.

In a similar manner, Roth chose what he knew by experience, his hometown, Newark, and its Jewish culture, as the theater for Neil and Brenda's romance, and by romanticizing personal experiences and attitudes that embody the values implied by the metaphorical connotations of the story's details, he made the narrative serve as a socio-philosophical metaphor concerning the right relationship of realism to idealism. Roth's fabulation, like that of Hemingway, is quasi-biographical in that it is based upon his experiences as a young Jew in nineteen-fifties Newark, particularly his experiences with the Newark Public

Library. And Roth uses these romanticized experiences to infuse metaphorical significance into the narrative of Neil's and Brenda's affair, as is most evident in his creation of the character of a young black boy, who each summer morning makes his way to what he calls the "heart" (not the head) section of the Newark Public Library where Neil works, so that he can look at a book of Gauguin reproductions, fascinated by the colorful pictures of dark-skinned people in impressionistic paintings of Tahiti. In no way is the character of the boy crucial to the story of Neil's and Brenda's romance; in fact, Neil never tells Brenda anything about the boy. But Roth creates the character so that Neil's narrative will imply ideas that Neil does not or cannot state. The boy's infatuation with Gauguin's idealized Tahiti is, for example, not overtly recognized by Neil as being of special narrative significance, but Roth employs it to typify Neil's romantic attraction to Brenda and her upper-class life-style. Such is the case when the boy muses to Neil, "Man, . . . Ain't that the fuckin life?," offering a startlingly accurate description of Neil's and Brenda's relationship.

The implications of this metaphor, and the extent of Roth's intrusion into "Neil's" narrative, can be most fully discerned through comparison of the story of the little black boy and an editorial piece written by Roth for The New York Times in 1969. A footnote to a reprint of the editorial in

Roth's collection Reading Myself and Others explains that in February 1969 the Newark City Council voted to take action that would have resulted in the permanent closing of the Newark Public Library and the Newark Museum, both of which are described in Goodbye, Columbus. Roth's editorial, written in protest of the impending closings, reveals his attitudes toward and some of his experiences with the library at which Neil is employed and to which the black boy pilgrimages on hot city mornings. The primary concern of the editorial, entitled "The Newark Public Library," is the library closing's anticipated effect on Newark's predominantly black inner-city population, particularly the black children. "Will they loot the stacks the way Newarkers looted appliance stores in the riot of 1967?" Roth asks. "Will police be called in to Mace down thieves racing off with the Encyclopedia Britannica?" (175).

Roth explains that as a youngster growing up in Newark he learned that borrowed library books should be returned "unscarred and on time . . . because they weren't mine alone, they were everybody's. That idea had as much to do with civilizing me as any I was ever to come upon in the books themselves" (176). This confession is reminiscent of a question that the black boy asks of Neil: "What you keep telling me take that book home for? At home somebody dee-stroy it" (45). Like young Roth himself, the boy is genuinely concerned about keeping the public's property in

good condition. Besides, he says of the library, "I likes to come here. I likes them stairs" (45). This also echoes Roth's attitudes as expressed in the Times editorial: "If the idea of a public library was civilizing, so was the place . . . it was a kind of exacting haven to which a city youngster willingly went for his lesson in restraint and his training in self-control" (176). Such is exactly the case when the black boy is reprimanded for making too much noise by clicking his shoe taps on the library's marble floor. "Otto, the guard at the door, told him to make less noise with his shoes, but that did not seem to bother the little boy. He clacked on his tiptoes, high, secretively, delighted at the opportunity Otto had given him to practice this posture" (25). And as Roth adds in the editorial, "For a ten-year-old to find he can actually steer himself through tens of thousands of volumes to the very one he wants is not without its satisfactions" (176).

Roth concludes his editorial with an indictment of the Newark City Council's latently racist shortsightedness (which closely parallels the attitude of Neil's co-worker, John "McRubberbands" McKee, who seeks to prevent the boy's handling of the library's expensive art books): "In a city seething with social grievances there is, in fact, probably little that could be more essential to the development and sanity of the thoughtful and ambitious young than access to those books" (177). Thus, the characterization of the black

boy, as well as Neil's otherwise unexplainable kindness toward him, are manifestations of Roth's attitudes towards the Newark black community that he has known all of his life. Likewise, when Neil sits in the park and says that he feels "a deep knowledge of Newark, an attachment so rooted that it could not help but branch out into affection" (23), he does so because Roth is using him to declare unwittingly the author's affection for his hometown.

Roth's metaphorical use of this black boy's romantic idealism is initiated in Neil's narrative of the day following his first meeting with Brenda. Again at the country club pool and holding her glasses "not as a momentary servant but as an afternoon guest; or perhaps as both . . ." (11), Neil describes Brenda as being "like a sailor's dream of a Polynesian maiden, albeit one with prescription sun glasses and the last name of Patimkin" (11). This mental synthesis of reality and romanticism is further evidenced when Neil later envisions Brenda's Short Hills, New Jersey, residence: "which I could see now in my mind's eye, at dusk, rose-colored, like a Gauguin stream" (28). Neil's conscious blurring of the distinction between the romantic and the real is epitomized toward the end of his week-long vacation at the Patimkin home when he spends what he anticipates will be his last night in Brenda's bed, and he has a dream in which he and the black boy are on "an old sailing ship":

> For a while it was a pleasant dream; we were

> anchored in the harbor of an island in the Pacific and it was very sunny. Up on the beach there were beautiful bare-skinned Negresses, and none of them moved; but suddenly we were moving, our ship, out of the harbor, and the Negresses moved slowly down to the shore and began to throw leis at us and say "Goodbye, Columbus . . . goodbye, Columbus . . . goodbye . . ." and though we did not want to go, the little boy and I, the boat was moving and there was nothing we could do about it . . . we were further and further from the island, and soon the natives were nothing at all. Space was all out of proportion in the dream, and things were sized and squared in no way I'd ever seen before, and I think it was that more than anything else that steered me into consciousness. (56-57)

In this dream, Roth caricatures the futility of Neil's pursuit of the romantic ideals embodied in Brenda and the Patimkin life-style. In actuality, Neil and the black boy are "in the same boat," lower-class citizens who, amidst "borrowed" opulence, aspire to romantic ideals that will forever remain elusive. The boy escapes the tough reality of the Newark city streets by taking refuge in the library, where he is able to ascend "the long marble stairs that led to Tahiti" (36) and to the vision there conjured in his mind. Likewise, Neil ascends the Gauguinesque Short Hills to "Polynesian" Brenda and her what-more-could-you-want Patimkin lifestyle. But the dream foreshadows the interruption of Neil's, and the boy's, romantic delusions. In this respect, it functions as Neil does when he tries to warn the boy that one day the Gauguin book will be checked out by another library patron and will be unavailable. But like the boy, who

responds to Neil by saying, "Don't you worry . . . Ain't nobody done that yet" (46), Neil resists reality's encroachment upon his romantic experience, so he does not realize what Roth metaphorically implies to the reader: the pragmatic futility of aspiration to a romantic ideal.

Roth culminates this metaphor by using as the title of his novella a phrase repeatedly intoned by the "Edward R. Murrow gloomy voice" on a phonograph record issued to commemorate the athletic career of Brenda's brother's senior class at Ohio State University. Of course the author could have made Ron Patimkin an alumnus of any university, but he chose OSU because its situation in Columbus made possible the multiple meanings of the farewell phrase: "Goodbye, Columbus" has literal significance in its association with the end of Ron's glorious playing days, and it also presages the end of Neil's and Brenda's romantic game; most significantly, however, the failure of the traditional American Dream of upward social mobility and economic prosperity is metaphorically implied in the phrase's repitition by beautiful Negresses who call out as Neil and the black boy, in a Christopher Columbus-type ship, reluctantly sail away from their dreamy paradise.

Following his return to work after the vacation at Brenda's, Neil never again sees "the colored kid," who he supposes has "gone back to playing Willie Mays in the streets," blaming Neil for the disappearance of the Gauguin

book, when in actuality it had been checked out. "For some reason I imagined that he had blamed it on me, but then I realized that I was confusing the dream I'd had with reality. . . . He's better off, I thought. No sense carrying dreams of Tahiti in your head, if you can't afford the fare" (91-92). However, Neil continues to idealize Brenda, especially in the telling of his story, so just as an understanding of the black boy's metaphorical significance is crucial to the reader's comprehension of Roth's covert evaluation of Neil's and Brenda's relationship, so is discernment of Brenda's motive in purchasing the critically much-discussed diaphragm, around which the breakup of the relationship revolves. Neil's insistence that Brenda acquire a diaphragm is a cowardly testing of her to see whether she intends to continue their intimate relationship after she returns to Radcliffe in the fall. And the diaphragm itself, as Charles Clerc suggests, "not only symbolizes the apartness of Neil and Brenda--it also signifies that their differences can never be reconciled" (Roth, Goodbye 128). However, Brenda's decision to purchase the diaphragm, when considered in context, is more meaningful than any symbolic interpretation of the device itself; for Brenda purchases the diaphragm just four days before her return to school, and after using it only once leaves it in a drawer in her bedroom where it is discovered by her mother. Either Brenda purchased the diaphragm because she intended to continue her relationship

with Neil and wanted to please him and to prevent conception, or she purchased it with the twofold intention of leaving it to be found by her mother, whom it would surely devastate, and to supply an excuse for breaking off the romantic relationship, which would at that point have accomplished her unscrupulous objective. The former idea is what Neil wants to believe and what he presents to the narratee to believe, but the latter belief is consistent with the author's covert indications of Brenda's selfish nature and motives, as exemplified in passages such as the sex-on-the-"cruddy"-sofa episode. This latter interpretation is corroborated in Neil's and Brenda's final confrontation, which takes place in a Cambridge, Massachusetts, hotel room, where, as most critics fail to note, Brenda is the first one to verbalize the suggestion that "I wanted her to find it" (100). There Brenda declares her intention to spend the Jewish holidays at home with her parents and in so doing "sounds the death knell" of her relationship with Neil. But even in Neil's concluding paragraph of introspective reflection (both literal and symbolic), he does not, or cannot, overtly admit the whole truth; therefore, he ends his narrative in an apparent state of bewilderment, questioning rather than informing his narratee about what the romance has actually meant. And by briefly entertaining once more the romantic notion "If she had only been slightly not Brenda" (104), Neil intimates that he has not learned what Roth, through his covert evaluations,

has made clear to the reader by means of the narrator's words: "No sense carrying dreams of Tahiti in your head, if you can't afford the fare" (92).

Even though Neil does not comprehend all of the implications of his remark, Roth has enabled the reader to understand through illustration of Neil's failure to attain his vision of the American Dream. This socio-philosophical metaphor is similar to that which Hemingway achieves in A Farewell to Arms when the Italian war effort collapses and Frederic deserts. In neither of the narratives does the narrator completely reject his romantic idealism (although Frederic seems to have moved further in that direction by the time he writes his narrative than does Neil), but covertly both authors consistently imply the futility of such romantic notions as individual and societal perfectability. Likewise, through their negative evaluations of the gamelike love affairs, both Roth and Hemingway inveigh romantic self-expression. In A Farewell to Arms, Catherine's substitution of Frederic for her "dear dead boy," manifested most noticeably in her be-in-love-with-love (instead of with Frederic) attitude and her sadistic tendencies, is culminated by the author in her death; and Frederic's devotion to "duty" results in the chaos of the Caporetto retreat and his subsequent desertion. Similarly, in Goodbye, Columbus, Neil's rationalization that subservience to Brenda is a form of romantic involvement is lampooned by Roth in his repeated

comparisons of Neil and the socially-inferior Negro characters, particularly the laborers. Although neither narrator is able or willing to acknowledge the full ramifications of his lover's demand that he assume an inferior position in the relationship, the authors, by means of some of the various devices available to the personae, indicate to the reader the dualistic nature of all of the individuals involved and the naivete that is inherent in the various forms of romantic idealism.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

For the writer of narrative fiction, the predominant socio-philosophical attitudes of the first half of the twentieth century posed a curious dilemma. The so-called "scientific method" of investigation, which rose to prominence during the "Enlightenment" of the eighteenth century and spread from the laboratory to the social sciences and pseudo-sciences in the nineteenth century, gained such ascendancy in the early twentieth century that it became manifest among critics and readers in a demand for "objectivity" and "realism" in narrative fiction. On the other hand, the savagery of the machine gun, the horror of mustard gas, and the unprecedented carnage of World War I tempered this heretofore insatiable desire for stark realism and renewed among the American public the inclination toward escapism, solipcism, and romanticism, which was epitomized in the social attitudes of the "Jazz Age" twenties, and which took deeper root in the economically depressed thirties, the war-ravaged forties, and the nuclear-threatened post-World War II years. This dichotomy of desire for objective realism and romantic idealism was one of the dominant forces that shaped the culture and the fiction of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Salinger, and Roth, who, though separated by as much as a

generation, all perceived some of the possibilities of a narrative technique that could be used to mate realistic objectivity with romantic idealism. In so doing they produced, with varying degrees of success, the twentieth-century phenomenon of the undermined unreliable narrator.

In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1917), T. S. Eliot speaks of the poet's need to recognize "the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same" (6). Whether or not one agrees with this philosophy, Eliot alludes to a central question that should be addressed in a thorough analysis of any artistic technique. In the context of the present discussion, the question is this: Is the technique of subverting a first-person narrator, by means of covert author-to-reader communication, an improvement (or advance) in the art of writing fictional literature. The answer probably is no, this technique is not an improvement in the art form; however, the technique does afford advantages to the author and reader.

This narrative technique allows the author to write a first-person narrative about the inexhaustable theme of human romantic love and to express his own contemporary attitudes about the harsh realities of romantic idealism. For example, in all four of the narratives here examined, covert narrative subversion is used to debunk the romantic notion of

individual and societal perfectability. Frederic Henry realizes that his participation will not help end the war, but by implication Hemingway indicates to the reader that Frederic's war did not "make the world safe for democracy" nor was it "the war to end all wars." And Holden Caulfield exemplifies the refutation of the romantic notion of perfectability. Living in mid-twentieth century metropolitan America, he, in his dismal condition, personifies the plight of modern man in that he is fifty years into what was expected to be a millenial age of technological and societal advancement, but try as he might, Holden cannot escape the fundamental imperfection of human existence. And neither can Neil Klugman nor Jay Gatsby attain the perfection of the American Dream, which, in Nick's words, "year by year recedes before us." Also condemned covertly through the narrative technique of these authors is the philosophy of romantic self-expression. Catherine Barkley's romantic idealism, her "be-in-love-with-love" mentality, which, though not evaluated overtly by Frederic, is thoroughly discredited through the implications of Hemingway's imagery. Likewise, Jay Gatsby's "romantic readiness," though espoused by Nick at the conclusion of his narrative, is depicted by Fitzgerald as being a route to psychological and physical self-destruction. Moreover, the undermining of these unreliable narrators allows each writer to emphasize the decidedly unromantic notion of the dualistic nature of all human beings.

In developing a form of narration that requires the reader to infer rather than to deduce the author's attitudes, these writers enhance, indeed necessitate, a high degree of reader participation in the fiction-making process and thereby promote wit and intellectualism in the art form. Their challenge to decipher symbols, metaphors and images facilitates the reader's pleasure by encouraging "collaboration" with the author. What reader does not receive added enjoyment from reading a work of fiction when he, unlike the narrator, realizes, for example, that Holden is very much like Legion (and legions of others are like Holden), that Frederic is partially the young Hemingway but mostly not, that Neil's experiences in the Newark library are in part Roth's experiences in that library, or that Fitzgerald so admired the writings of Homer that he took bits and pieces of the poet's work and made them part of his own work? Or what reader does not experience satisfaction in recognizing the author's subtle "wink" or "elbow to the ribs" that indicates the two are in collusion, knowing what the narrator and less perceptive readers do not--that Holden is not crazy or possessed but just a mixed-up kid who is too hard on himself and others, that Catherine plays the "game" of love even unto death but that the novelty has long since been exhausted by Frederic, that despite Nick's claim otherwise he is not an "honest person" and that his ambiguous sexuality is at the root of his deceit, or that Brenda

Patimkin is not Neil's little angel with "tiny wings" but a stereotypical Jewish American Princess who makes the otherwise reprehensible slur, "Slap a JAP," seem somehow not quite so reprehensible? One may conclude, like Eliot, that collusion between author and reader is not really an improvement in the art of fiction, but that it is an enhancement of the reader's opportunity to enjoy that fiction is demonstrable.

This innovative technique also encourages the exploration of seldom pursued avenues of criticism, focusing particularly on the roles of the authorial personae, the narratee, and the mock reader; and since the narrative, if interpreted only in the manner intended by the narrator to be the response of the narratee, is not at all an expression of the artist's actual beliefs or feelings, this technique has been in part responsible for a subtle shift away from the more romantic "expressive" theory of art, which defines the work of art as the expression of the artist's "true" beliefs and emotions, and toward a more objective theory that finds meaning in the work itself, regardless of the circumstances of composition and the author's intentions. Additionally, because of the increased reader involvement necessitated by the technique, critical questions about the rhetorical purposes of art and the powers of language also have been explored with increased intensity.

As is the case with most thorough literary inquiries,

examination of the narrative technique employed in these novels raises as many textual and critical questions as it answers: What power does a work of fiction have to elicit a response from the reader? What form should that response take? Is the ultimate attainable degree of objectivity really desirable? Who is Holden Caulfield's narratee? Does Neil Klugman ever "wise up"? Why did Fitzgerald cause Nick to have homosexual inclinations? And why did Frederic Henry compose his narrative? To suppose one could answer all the questions would be presumptuous, but to be able to answer a few of them and to pose some others is at least a step toward greater understanding of the intricate art of twentieth-century American narrative fiction.

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