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The Great Party-Crasher: *Mrs. Dalloway*,
The Great Gatsby, and the Cultures
of World War I Remembrance

As might be expected in the wake of so immense a cataclysm, the decade of the post-World War I 1920s, in the cultures of both of the western victor nations and of those defeated in the massive conflict, proved an epoch rich in the literature of aftermath. Literary war writing had begun to appear as early as 1917 with Henri Barbusse's *Through the Flames* and 1920 with an initial version of Ernst Junger's *Storm of Steel*. 1921 saw the publication of John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers*, 1923 Thomas Boyd's *Through the Wheat*, and 1924 Jaroslav Hasek's anti-war absurdist satire *The Good Soldier Schweik*. There followed later in the decade an outpouring of combat narrative, with British literary memoirs including Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928), Robert Graves' *Good-Bye to All That* (1929), and Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), as well as Vera Brittain's classic of remembrance and loss, *Testament of Youth* (1933). Novels of the same period included Eric Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Frederick Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (1929) [republished 1930 as *Her Privates We*], and William March's *Company K* (1933). Drama included Maxwell Anderson's and Lawrence Stallings' *What Price Glory* (1924) and R.C. Sheriff's, *Journey's End* (1928). The large body of British war poetry bringing to literary prominence such figures as Blunden, Graves, and Sassoon, as well as Edward Thomas, Ivor Gurney, Isaac Rosenberg, and others, found a culmination at the end of the decade in the publication of

the previously uncollected works of Wilfred Owen. More general aftermath texts, involving recurrent modernist symbolologies of death, disease, depersonalization, and destruction, of sterility, blindness, cynicism, and despair, likewise abounded. A short list of major works shaped in the image of the war might include Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste-Land*, E.E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room*, Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and Louis-Ferdinand Celine's *Journey to the End the of the Night*.

My purpose here is to draw into the orbit of such major canonical writing of the Great War—as it was still called at the time—two oddly paired but remarkably parallel texts, both well-known modernist classics of social realism/naturalism produced exactly at mid-decade, as it happens, in 1925. The first is Virginia Woolf's masterpiece of postwar English manners and class relations, *Mrs. Dalloway*; the second is its American counterpart, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Both, by conventional taxonomy, are considered major twentieth-century extensions of the novel of society; at the same time, both represent experimentalist departures in the tradition of the art-novel, with their striking innovations in form and narration, their complex psychological explorations of inner consciousness, their modernist fragmentations, juxtapositions, and economies in structure and point of view. That is, if we remember them for their greatness as social texts in the long tradition of the novel of manners—the attempt to capture at a certain distinct point in history what Lionel Trilling once called “a culture's whole hum and buzz of implication”—we also respond to their extraordinary aesthetic achievement. Both, to put it directly, as powerful social or political fictions, are also possessed of an exalted, albeit haunting and ultimately tragic beauty. A major source of both their power and their beauty, I would propose here, lies in the subtexts of the British and American public cultures of World War I remembrance—through novelistic invocations not only of general popular culture iconographies of war memory but also of particular individual figures connected with the frequently conflicted visions of heroism and sacrifice arising out of the war.

To lay the ground for such a broad cultural or ideological argument connecting the two texts, it may prove useful initially to make a further note of a number of important and quite specific cross-cultural affiliations. To begin with, both are in large part novels of the city, centered on the twinned postwar cultural capitals of the Anglo-American world, London and New York—albeit with pastoral elements involving, for Woolf's titular protagonist, memories of the English country house and, for Fitzgerald, with the great lawns and expanses of Long Island shoreline estates recalling an older vision of American nature. In the same

sense of elegiac consciousness, both look back across the abyss of the war years themselves to lives of youthful aspiration and possibility, *Mrs. Dalloway* to the late Victorian and Edwardian world of the young Clarissa Parry with her hopes of intellectual and spiritual self-realization, and *The Great Gatsby* to a boy named Jimmy Gatz with his Benjamin Franklin self-improvement schedules and golden dreams of success and romantic love. As emanations of postwar sensibility, both are fables of mechanization, abounding in imagery of cars, trains, autobuses, and airplanes, of crowded streets, bridges, and highways, of enforced rituals of urban de-individualization and anonymity. At the same time, both are novels of society in a highly conventional sense of the rituals of traditional class arrangements, centering as they do on the idea of the party as a social gathering and post-World War I cultural microcosm.

In this, one should note, they share fictional ground with works as diverse as the Paris of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, itself devised in wandering expatriate social panorama as a desperate, drunken, nonstop party of the war-damaged, a kind of moving "fiesta," as the original short version was entitled; Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories*, with the dark nightlife, the subterranean culture of the club and cabaret; the London of Evelyn Waugh's early novels about the dissolute bright young things of 1920s novels such as *Vile Bodies* and a *Handful of Dust*; the New York of F. Scott Fitzgerald's other works of the era including *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, and assorted other tales of the Jazz Age. The cosmopolitan roster of doomed, merrymaking capitals of the world could be further expanded—Vienna, Prague, St. Petersburg, Madrid, Shanghai, Havana. Amidst a spectacle of throbbing music and dance crazes, out of the cultural epicenters of a world afire with the excitements of modernism would come a steady production of books underpinning the desperate gaiety in one way or another with the spectral presence of the war, its continuing role in the memory culture of everyday life. Strangely ensconced amidst the entertainments—whether the polite, carefully planned, albeit vestigial gatherings of survivor prewar elites, or more usually, the vast, vulgar, carnival displays of the newly mobile and meretricious—the Great War would continue to reach out and claim its latest victims.

Distinctively, in the two works directly at hand, major roles are enacted by characters suffering from the war-related mental disorder called at the time shell shock. Though various diagnostic explanations existed for the latter—it was first thought to be a kind of brain lesion, the result of concussion from artillery bombardment or other explosive ordnance—the concept of injury was quickly extended into the psychological and neuropsychiatric dimension and would

come to be unfolded over the decades of the century under an evolving set of terminologies that would include battle fatigue, combat exhaustion, and, most recently, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These, in both novels, are further surrounded by large casts of persons qualifying as war-damaged in one way or another, with the eventual cataloguing of malady extending from specific injury in body and mind into broader imagings of physical disease and mental deracination. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the chief representatives of war trauma include the mad, shell-shocked veteran Septimus Smith, but also the upper-class partygiver and hostess Clarissa Dalloway, who has notably lost her health and her earlier vision of life through a near fatal infection with Spanish Influenza. In Fitzgerald's novel, the two primary figures are the titular hero, Jay Gatsby, a highly decorated hero, as it turns out, of combat with the American Expeditionary Force in France, but also in considerable degree, Nick Carraway, the first-person narrator who begins with substantial comment on his own war experience and its effects on his subsequent understandings of belief and value. And as with such characters, one shortly discovers, so with their worlds, we feel the death culture of the war continuing throughout the ensuing decade to spill over into somber public atmospherics and grim monumentalism. For both nations, in fact, this was a matter of recent, postwar memory. In London's Whitehall, on 11 November 1920, the British dead of the war had been honored with the dedication of the great Cenotaph, literally the "empty tomb;" at the same ceremony, the body of a single unidentified British soldier was interred in Westminster Abbey. A year later in the U.S., at Arlington National Cemetery, parallel scenes of remembrance were enacted in ceremonies marking the return home and the burial of an unidentified American at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. So throughout these contemporary novels of postwar social relation in the two victorious nations of postwar culture and power, the landscape of popular memory continues to be haunted by the wandering ghosts of Flanders, Gallipoli, the Isonzo, the Argonne.

For Woolf's novel of postwar London society, set somewhere around 1923, the more appropriate phrasing might be "high society," certainly in the terms projected for the Dalloway gathering in Westminster. For here, as in so much English literary fiction, the drama of manners and class relationships being played out will eventually come to center on the highly arranged and formalized social gathering, with invitation determined largely by status, power, family tradition, socio-political standing. To be specific, the culminating event toward which the novel tends from its first sentence onward is to be a single, very English party, given on the evening of the day in which the novel is set, by the titular character,

a well-born Englishwoman in her fifties and her husband, a well-connected government functionary. The house is in the fashionable West End, amidst the enclosures of fine dwellings and private squares, of great parks and royal palaces, abutting Whitehall, the traditional seat of government and public ceremony. In keeping with the postwar mood of a small, ancient island culture that has lost nearly a million of its young men, one in ten of its eligible males, to death, with another 2 million maimed, mutilated, disabled, or otherwise wounded, mentally or physically, the gathering, even nearly five years after the armistice, is to be somber, select, sedate, in keeping with traditional upper-class social rituals and observances. For all that will be written eventually about the 1920s English generation of “bright young things” by Evelyn Waugh, Nancy Mitford, and others, the daring, privileged, frequently outrageous sons and daughters of the postwar upper classes, here will be no desperate revelry, garish costumes, jazz dancing, drunken or drug-addled public misbehavior. Presiding over the world of the novel, within and without, is an England undergoing an extended period of mourning and chastened remembrance. The one working class character featured in a major role, the ghostly representative of the war on the landscape of remembrance, making recurrent appearances, is the shell-shocked English veteran, Septimus Smith with his Italian war bride, Lucrezia—or, as she is called by the narrator, “Rezia.” At the same time, in a strange thematic and stylistic partnering, coming to share this larger novel of shell shock, one might say, as the great social disease of the 20th century, is also its titular protagonist, Clarissa Dalloway. Of the ruling class generation of the war, she now lives out a life of memory of prewar hopes and enjoyments, of country-house life with lost romantic dalliances, male and female, mixed with reflection on present disappointments: an old suitor returned; a caregiver husband, affectionate but remote; amidst the absences of the sons of old friends lost to the war, a grown daughter given over to the company of a dour female religionist. She feels old, tired, invalidated at age 53—in fact barely recovered from her own legacy of the war, the great influenza pandemic that in 1918-1919 alone killed between 20 and 40 million inhabitants of the globe..

In Fitzgerald’s American correlative to Woolf’s representation of the social gathering as civilized entertainment, the partygoing that seems to be the central social activity in Fitzgerald’s novel is frantic and nonstop. Jay Gatsby’s parties in particular, as rendered to us through the eyes of the narrator Nick Carraway, are big, lavish, drunken, brassy, and loud as only as American entertainments can be. As models of class arrangements, they are as vulgar and various as the Dalloway gathering is polite and select. And so they are further interspersed with a other

frequently discordant social mixings and minglings at various levels of status and refinement, with their participants running the gamut of the American class system of the era. The book begins with a small dinner party at the old-money Tom and Daisy Buchanan estate on East Egg, he the wealthy Yale football all-American and polo celebrity, and she the well-born Daisy Fay of golden memory Jay Gatsby has now come to reclaim, dwelling across the bay from Gatsby's arriviste West Egg pleasure palace; the middle is marked by a sordid confused vaguely remembered drinking bout at a New York apartment maintained by Tom Buchanan for his mistress Myrtle Wilson; the culmination of the partymaking occurs during an ad hoc summer afternoon's event in a rented suite at the Plaza Hotel on Central park, where a climactic confrontation involving Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby over their rivalry for her love extends itself on the homeward journey into violent death. Meanwhile, the novel immerses us in recurrent depictions of lavish Gatsby house-party entertainment spectacles, a kind of bacchanalian pageant of the Jazz Age. Here the subject truly is the postwar American 1920s, with the brief participation of U.S. forces in the war subsumed into a quick orgy of patriotic rah-rah at home, while the nation, in Fitzgerald's own memorable phrasings, primed itself for the inevitable celebrations of victory. America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history, he wrote, "and there was going to be plenty to tell about it." *The Great Gatsby* becomes testimony to that acute socio-literary recognition.

Here, a mysterious wanderer on the postwar landscape, the main victim of shell-shock is the central character and titular protagonist. Jay Gatsby, we eventually discover, is a hero of the Argonne Forest, a mysterious, solitary, elusive man who looks as if he killed somebody because he has, albeit in so doing saving his own cut-off battalion from destruction by several German divisions. There is also, however, the narrator, Nick Carraway, who frequently reveals similar symptoms—a pronounced sense of emotional detachment, a chronic reserve of solitariness, a tendency to live in memory. They are both figures whose eyes have looked out on the World War I spectacle of mass death. Amidst the Jazz Age entertainments of their America—from the lavish, opulent, vulgar, entertainments thrown by Jay Gatsby at his estate on West Egg to which nearly everyone comes yet nearly no one is actually invited, to the smaller scenes of labored festivity or furtive assignation—the two veterans, in their shared experience of the war, frequently seem to stand as markedly apart from the scenes of postwar culture to which they have returned as do the disembodied advertising-billboard eyes of a long departed oculist, Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, that look out in the text over the urban industrial wasteland that has become the American middle landscape.

Precisely as novels of the postwar metropolis, then, both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Great Gatsby* set themselves to detail the forms and relations of mid-1920s society culture, old and new, select and vulgar, tradition bound and brawlingly disordered. Meanwhile, the war itself intrudes upon the scene like the most unwanted of unwanted guests. Both yield to disastrous irruptions of violence at the end, with climactic scenes of brutal and graphic death. In the era of postwar social recovery and rehabilitation, the war becomes the great party crasher. Further, in both instances, the manner of the ghostly appearance would suggest the invoking of publicity about a well-known figure from recent war memory—in the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the highly decorated and politically controversial antiwar soldier-poet Siegfried Sassoon, and in the case of *The Great Gatsby*, the much publicized U.S. Army hero of the Argonne Forest and Medal of Honor winner Major Charles Whittlesey.

These may seem large claims to status as contemporary war novels on behalf of two works of manners realism regarded at the time as thematically and formally slight. *Mrs. Dalloway* we know to have been fashioned from two short stories. H.L. Mencken went so far as to refer to *The Great Gatsby* as “no more than a glorified anecdote.” A letter from T.S. Eliot, on the other hand, described it “the first step that American fiction has taken since [Henry James](#).” Here, something like this might be profitably said of *Mrs. Dalloway*. In homage to Woolf’s fellow modernist voyager, it has been called a London mini-*Ulysses*. More to the point, it is a perfect Henry James “situation.” Clarissa Dalloway, we are told in the novel’s first sentence, has decided to go out and select the flowers for her party herself. The ensuing text follows her various journeys of the day, public and private, physical and mental, all beginning with a bright, vivid walking excursion, albeit in a city filled with traffic, noise, horns, exhaust. An extended section appears on a royal limousine bringing downtown traffic to a halt. Later, pedestrians stop to descry the advertising message being written in the sky by an airplane. It is a machine world. Amidst it all, Clarissa Dalloway, in keeping with her name, maintains some small bright excitement of hope. “Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it around one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh,” she thinks to herself. “In people’s eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June.”

For it was the bright middle of June, she goes on. "The War was over." The capitalization is intentional. Indeed the war broods over the novel, mentioned recurrently in the opening pages. Mrs. Dalloway gazes shortly into the windows of a "glove shop where, before the War, you could buy almost perfect gloves" (15). Her daughter's glum, religious friend Miss Kilman she recalls as having been dismissed from her school "during the war" (16). In the rituals of postwar life, people carry on, their recent griefs notwithstanding. She remembers those for whom the war can never be over "like Mrs. Foxcroft, at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed." (6).

As for Clarissa Dalloway, this morning errand through Westminster launches her into her own landscape of remembrance. In various recapitulations of a life, we find out what might have been in its relation to new musings on what has turned out to be. She carries her own legacy of the great killing, the influenza which has nearly taken her away and left her permanently invalided. She thinks of the traditional ruling-class men in her life, all aging minor officials with small careers. There is the country house recollection of an old might-have-been lover, Peter Walsh, clever, somehow failed and incomplete, out to India and back with his silly romantic infatuations. There is a meeting in the Park with Hugh Whitbread an old childhood friend, impeccably dressed, a petty court functionary with the latest tales of a neurasthenic, hypochondriacal wife. Hovering in the background throughout the novel will be Clarissa's own caretaker husband, Richard, the partner chosen years back for a conventionally good, but passionless marriage, a minor Westminster official, companionable, considerate, attentive, busy with the round of his nameless parliamentary committees. A contending, vivid counter-memory introduces itself of a young woman companion of her pre-marriage years, the bold, heedless Sally Seton, and of a single, lingering kiss on the lips they once shared. It remains a vivid secret in a lifetime of civilized disappointments and banked passions.

Meanwhile Clarissa Dalloway's physical progress takes her through St. James Park from the Westminster of sedate, elegant homes and court and embassy receptions, government parties and lunches. To the other side of the park, beyond the serpentine and the Horse Guards Parade, is Whitehall, with the newly dedicated Cenotaph. At the far limit is the fashionable Bond Street hubbub and bustle of established shops and merchant houses—florists, tailors, jewelers, dressmakers.

Now, it is also crammed with images of the machine present—automobiles, taxis, buses, the sleek, silent, armored limousine of some official personage.

A more immediate reminder of war-menace is also distinctly present in human form this morning on the immediate geography of Clarissa Dalloway's London. It is the shell-shocked, angry veteran, Septimus Warren Smith, with his frustrated, increasingly helpless and resentful Italian war bride, Rezia. Amidst a generation of the mutilated, paralyzed, grotesquely scarred and maimed, he seems visibly unmarked. But he is no less blighted and stricken, with his nightmares, hallucinations, intrusive memory scenes. Indeed, such "hysterical men," as they were called, with their loss of nervous control, tics, tremors, outbursts, and frenzied motions, had continued to appear in such numbers in the years after the war that an official inquiry had been undertaken during 1920-22 under Lord Southborough, with various actions proposed—in a well-publicized report, according to recent scholarship, that Virginia Woolf may have read. These included establishment of a liberal support agency, the Ex-Services Welfare Society, treatment centers, and—as will be noted in the novel—isolation and confinement therapies involving rural group recovery homes. The official attitude of the government and military mandarins continued to pigeonhole shellshock as a somewhat embarrassing failure of masculinity: some men can take it, and some small percentage cannot. In contrast was that of the anti-war liberal and literary intelligentsia, who increasingly imaged the idea of the military victim as the trusting, innocent, betrayed conscript, or, as often, the keen, idealistic, quickly disillusioned young officer, all emblematic of a generation of patriotic volunteers, sacrificed for old men's lies. To this degree, in intellectual circles, the figure often came further to represent postwar class conflict as well as changing ideas of gender roles.

Both of these are suggested by the presence of Septimus Smith in the world of Clarissa Dalloway, where, as a catastrophically failed man, he becomes singularly emblematic of a whole failed system of class, gender, privilege, and social administration. He is also a prediction in Woolf's prophetic genius, as frequently suggested, of similar survivor victims of trauma across the long decades of horror to come, imaging uncannily the precise symptomologies of the various conditions we have now come to call PTSD. As importantly in the direct connection with World War I memory, here Septimus, from his first appearance onward, becomes in the world of Clarissa Dalloway a kind of uncanny psychological double, sharing the novel with her in an arrangement of correlative and sometimes intertwined centers of consciousness. Though the two characters will never meet, he is the

embodied presence of the war. Accordingly, by the novel's end, his world and Clarissa Dalloway's will intersect with shattering consequences.

For Septimus, it turns out, is in the last day of his life. A walking inventory of war-induced aberration—as rendered through the attendant recollections of his increasingly hopeless and resentful caretaker wife—his life has become a series of recurrent scenes of mental disturbance mingled with of endless consultations and suggested “cures.” Now he has become simply worn down by the apparitions, the voices—the dead comrades appearing at midday, most particularly the officer friend Evans, beckoning him back across the barbed wire and mud. He has been treated initially by the estimable Dr. Holmes, friendly, ingratiating, paternal, if somewhat ineffectual. Today he has come to see a Harley Street expert, the Olympian Sir William Bradshaw. The consultation is to take place at high noon; and so Sir William duly arrives at his chambers, full of degrees and honors, borne in his sleek monolith of a motor car. Dr. Holmes has begun by suggesting there is nothing wrong with the patient that a little rest and personal discipline won't cure; in the alternative, he has suggested confinement to a rehabilitation facility. One of his own, of course. Sir William pronounces with even greater confidence—his benign manner concealing even greater authoritarian menace—a diagnosis that is basically opposite. A complete breakdown, he notes. (144). Holmes has treated Septimus for six weeks, Sir William notes, prescribed a little bromide. He is not impressed. Their own talk at the appointment runs no-nonsense to the war. The word recurs over and over. Septimus is in the possession of other words and other voices. “I will kill myself” he has said. (20). “I have committed a crime,” he tells the doctor. (145). The doctor privately interviews Rezia. They agree that he is very sick. He should go to a home. No, not one of Dr. Holmes' homes. One of Sir Willams's homes. For the moment, the doctor admonishes Septimus to avoid thoughts of suicide, think not of himself but his wife. “‘Trust everything to me,’ he said, and dismissed them” (149).

Septimus has survived the military blunderers of the battlefield. Adrift among the civilian medical experts who would return the mad of the war to postwar sanity, he will die in the well-intentioned peace. Back at their lodgings, for a moment a kind of sanctuary, Rezia assures him that they will stand together against the experts, the judges, and their professional verdicts. Shortly he hears a conversation between his wife and Dr. Holmes, who has come, he says repeatedly, “as a friend.” (225) Muscling past Rezia, the doctor ascends the stairs. Neither Holmes nor Bradshaw will get him, Septimus decides. He throws himself from the upstairs

window and impales himself on the speartips of his landlady's iron fence. "The coward!" Holmes shouts.

The case of Septimus is not a solitary instance in fiction of the era. Two of the most popular romantic novels of the war, in fact, Rebecca West's *Return of a Soldier* (1918) and James Hilton's *Random Harvest* (1941) center on domestic situations involving amnesiac shell-shock victims. This, however, was something else indeed. Some case can be made, and with reason, that the characterization of Septimus has much in common with Woolf's own lifelong experiences of surging, recurrent bouts of madness, the struggling toward momentary recovery only to be assaulted by new onsets. As wandering souls, they also share haunted, but somehow vivid and affecting memories of same-sex intimacy with lost companions. (1925, the year of the novel's publication, would mark Virginia Woolf's sexual affair with Vita Sackville-West.) There also seems to be her own pronounced resentment of the doctors, the male medical experts, alternately patronizing and bullying, kindly and authoritarian. Then as now, deep trauma reaction mocked them as a malady beyond their power, the endless assaults of horrific, intrusive, unbidden memory. The beckoning voice of suicide: during a 1904 onset of madness Woolf herself had tried to take her own life by jumping out a window; another in 1913 had resulted in a near-successful attempt with a drug overdose; more immediately, though sources differ on dates and degrees of severity, the early 1920s produced a wave of episodes. The dates notwithstanding, for Septimus as eventually for his literary creator, the apparitions and voices seem already to be there in 1925, the ones that would impel her—worn out with the struggles over the long years—to take her own life a decade and a half hence.

At the time of the novel's composition and publication, however, a source of peculiar insight into the passion of Septimus Smith may also have come from personal acquaintance with a corresponding war-connected figure with whom she was familiar on both social and literary terms. That figure was Siegfried Sassoon—himself probably the most notorious military celebrity head-case to emerge from the war and to figure importantly in the literary aftermath. A notably brave and able officer in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, he is thought to have become gradually deranged by loss of his brother Hamo at Gallipoli and of an intimate prewar friend second lieutenant David C. 'Tommy' Thomas—the "Dick Tiltwood" of *Memoirs of a Fox-hunting Man*. Increasingly bent on revenge, he turned himself to audacious stunts in the front lines, winning the Military Cross, and earning from his men the epithet Mad Jack. Wounded and returned to duty, only to be sent back to hospital with trench fever, in England he next suddenly cast himself, at great peril under

military law, at the center of a major political controversy with his issuing of a formal, public declaration of refusal to serve further in what he had come to believe a prolonged, mishandled, and immoral war. Knowing that the ultimate penalty for such an action, under court martial, could be military execution, he at least initially refused to back down. Instead, through the agency of well-placed friends (including his fellow officer in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, Robert Graves, and his first cousin, Philip Sassoon, aide de camp and personal secretary to commander of British forces, Alexander Douglas Haig) he was transferred to the Craiglockhart Hospital for the Insane, specializing in shell-shocked officers, and placed under the care of the noted expert Dr. G.H. Rivers. It was there, at “Dottyville” as it was called by the patients, where Sassoon read and made suggestions on the poetry of another inmate, Wilfred Owen. A series of reassignments, at the end of the war, then led him back to the lines where his irrationally audacious if not downright suicidal behavior resulted in a severe head wound which placed him on indefinite sick leave until retirement from his commission in 1919. Over the same period, he had also become part of the fashionable Bloomsbury literary entourage, including such notables as Philip and Ottoline Morrell, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, and Leonard and Virginia Woolf. By his own account, he now continued to suffer from various symptoms of mental disorder, including apathy, anger, recurrent nightmares, and in some especially severe instances, the hearing of voices and the sudden experiencing of visual hallucination.

Meanwhile, he became a public literary figure of sorts, the book editor of the socialist *Daily Herald*, and involved himself in the working class politics of the Labor Movement. This cemented his connections with the postwar literary intelligentsia. His relationships with Virginia Woolf included a favorable *TLS* review of his 1917 book of poems, *The Old Huntsman*, followed by at least one notable exchange of letters, before a dinner occasion, where he pleaded his lack of intellectualism. A closer female intimate, possibly figured as Rezia, was the flamboyant, histrionic Ottoline Morrell, with whom he been offered refuge at Garsington, the Morrells’ country home and haven for conscientious objectors near Oxford, during the “Declaration” controversy, and who continued to wish desperately to minister spiritually and sexually to his war tormented soul, a feeling unreciprocated by Sassoon, along with her continuing attempts at imposition as his would-be muse, mentor, protector, and social and literary promoter. “Rezia,” or “Lucrezia,” to give her full name, with its echoes in Renaissance literary and political scandal, may thus have provided a humorous reference to Morrell’s exotic costuming and love of Italianate culture. Sassoon’s own feelings, as a conflicted

homosexual, may have been imaged correspondingly in the Septimus Smith relationship with the young officer Evans. "I have committed a crime," Septimus cries out. Beyond his idolization of Dick Tiltwood, we do not know of Sassoon's relations with women or men before or during the war. It is certain that in the postwar period his need played out initially in a succession of love affairs with men, including the actor Ivor Novello, the actor Glen Byam Shaw, the German Prince Philipp of Hesse, the writer Beverley Nichols, and the young aesthete Stephen Tennant. The last seems to have put an end to any further fantasizing on the part of Ottoline, who led a round of bitter merriment at Garsington. (To complicate matters further, eventually would come an abrupt marriage in 1933, to a woman named Hester Gatty, the birth of a son George 1936, and a divorce shortly after World War II.)

One finds certain small textual traces of Sassoon's shadow-presence in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The young Septimus, it turns out, has been a boy of a certain literary bent—the kind with "fantastic Christian names like Septimus [or Siegfried] with which their parents have thought to distinguish them" (127)—who has come up to London with dreams of success and fame. He falls in love with his Shakespeare lecturer Miss Isabel Poole. When the war comes, he is one of the first to volunteer. In the war, "he developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name." He has committed a crime. The crime is the familiar one in the army. Evans has been the affectionate young officer and Septimus has been the soldier boy. During an interlude of battle on the Italian front, while on leave with Evans, he meets Rezia. Evans is killed. He marries Rezia and returns to England. He begins to go mad. Rezia is powerless, increasingly resentful. The war and its ghosts have claimed Septimus again.

The party itself will become the site where the twinned psychological trajectories of the book, those of Mrs. Dalloway and of Septimus Smith, will have been destined from the outset to converge. This is a day that has begun with Clarissa's pure delight in taking in the whole experience vast panoply of life, London, with her mission, a generous hostess' crowning touch of beauty, to buy personally the flowers that will complete the party. Her aesthetic appreciation of the world is fragile. She herself is but a step away from the clinical regime of the damaged and broken, the invalided. Just across the line, with the war the great abyss of demarcation, is Septimus now. The war has begun the final process of calling drawing him back into the realms of madness and death. Indeed, as the novel develops, she and Septimus have been shown to inhabit parallel universes, even down to the deepest springs of secret desire: Clarissa Parry and her wild, unconventional friend Sally Seton; Septimus

and his officer friend Evans. Whatever the personal etiologies, the diagnoses are parallel. Nothing is really wrong with her, people think; some kind of nervous problem. Nothing is really wrong with him, people think; some kind of nervous problem. Queer people in the fullest sense, they are already, now or later, in the grasp of some remembered great doom.

The climax of day that has begun with so great an appetite for the world comes at Clarissa Dalloway's evening party. Richard, having surprised her with his arrival back from India that very afternoon, returns. The old female love Sally Seton returns, now Lady Roseter, with her "five enormous boys." The daughter awakens a certain bemusement in her arrival with the dour Miss Kilman. In a high moment of the party, for the hostess as well as those in attendance, the Prime Minister makes his appearance. Sir Richard and Lady Bradshaw have arrived shockingly late. Clarissa overhears Sir William talking to her husband Richard about a Parliamentary Bill: "The deferred effects of shell shock." Then something about a suicide. A young man. Who had been in the army. "Oh, thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought." She is of course correct.

In the beginning, the glorious June of a London day, Clarissa has found herself asking a dark question that has somehow been hanging in the air. "Did it matter, then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow, in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best; who had lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself?" She is drawn back to some old "image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open: "*Fear no more the heat o' the sun/Nor the furious winter's rages.*" She goes on: "This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows, courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing." Across the abyss of the war, the same questions come back now at the end, their echo and embodiment in her thoughts now of the young man who, unbeknownst to her, has been there at the very heart of her world at the beginning all those long, deadly hours ago, on Bond Street.

Had he "plunged holding his treasure?" she wonders. There are some over whom death holds this passion, this strange power of defiance. What, she imagines, if

he had “gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor yet to her obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing your soul, that was it.” Thus “life is made intolerable,” she goes on. “they make life intolerable, men like that?”

“She felt very like him—“she thinks, “the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad he had done it, thrown it away. The clock was ticking.” “But” for now, for herself, “she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter.” The last of the conventional partygoers depart, even the tedious Whitbreads. Here is her daughter Elizabeth. Here is her husband and Elizabeth’s father Richard. Tonight, she decides, she will stay on. She is not ready yet. Sally and Peter remain at the end. Sally opines that Richard has turned out rather well. “What does the brain matter,” she says, “compared with the heart?” Peter lingers, as if to grasp one moment longer at Clarissa’s avidity for the world. “What is this terror? What is this ecstasy? He reflects. “What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?” It is Clarissa, he said, for there she was.

As with *Mrs. Dalloway*, so slim an introspective volume, required to carry such a weight of war memory, *The Great Gatsby* seizes upon an analogous, comparatively rather sordid minor incident on which to hang a great, war-haunted American tale. A bootlegger, “an elegant young roughneck,” he is called by the narrator, once a young lieutenant, after coming back from the war commits himself to trying to regain the prewar love of a woman of high social estate, now a wife and mother in a family of wealth and position, wooing her with his frenzied pursuit of status, money, possessions. For this, the young man so described, James Gatz, comes up with a preposterous, even mad concoction of a postwar identity, his wealth, his house; his “ancestral mansion;” his legendary parties. He is Jay Gatsby. And it is all for the girl he remembers from before the war as Daisy Fay. The text is thus at bottom a social novel in the great tradition, the young man from the provinces; the American dream of success and romance, arising to the status of post World War I American myth. It is the great novel of the American 1920s, the Jazz Age, New York, Wall Street, the Big Money. Yet brooding over the text, as with the Waste-Land geography of the Valley of the Ashes presided over by the disembodied eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg is a vision of the haunted landscape of war memory. The two main characters, the titular protagonist and the first person narrator, Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway, are both combat veterans of the American Expeditionary Force, of the same infantry division, it turns out, and having served in the same major battles. They return from the war visibly unwounded; still, both remain prisoners of their memory of having looked out on the landscape of death. As with

Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus, carrying their own versions of shell shock, Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway are memory culture's walking wounded.

As is well known, American combat participation in the war was relatively brief. The physical costs, out of 2 million sent to France, during a set of brief but costly engagements in late 1918, amounted to 116,156 deaths from combat and disease, with an additional 204,000 wounded. Those determined to have suffered psychiatric disability numbered 159,000, with around half, 70,000, permanently discharged. As to postwar care for the latter, hospitalizations by 1921 numbered around 7500, with the figure rising by 1931 to 11,000. Public awareness concerning neuropsychiatric wounding seems to have been relatively limited, perhaps understandably so in light of such relatively small figures for a populous nation as opposed to main combatants who had engaged in nearly five years of war with dead in the millions. Returned soldiers in need of support of various kinds also found help from major postwar voluntary organizations including the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.—themselves enjoying the support of the U.S. Congress and major political figures. Further, through its own 19th century mass Civil War, the U.S. was also a nation with some experience in the emergent military pathology. Indeed in the aftermath of 1861-65, large numbers of veterans had been identified as psychically damaged sufferers of what was sometimes called “soldier’s heart” or “nostalgia.” Today we address such problems with elaborate diagnoses and therapies devoted to PTSD. Then, as with World War I, and eventually World War II, a familiar feature in towns and cities across America would remain the shell-shocked veteran, usually in the care of family or a local care facility, with his vacant gaze and strange, shuffling walk, often called upon to lead the line of march in some memorial or armistice day parade.

Certainly World War I combat trauma was a visible subject of postwar American literature. Hemingway, in the stories of *In Our Time*, created war-damaged characters such as Harold Krebs in “Soldier’s Home” and Nick Adams in “Big Two-Hearted River,” and also the blighted, benumbed, lost generation wraiths of the *Sun Also Rises*. Also noteworthy in this respect were many of the disturbed first person narratives assembled in William March’s *Company K*.

In Fitzgerald’s novel, the titular protagonist is invested with myriad shadowings of the war. He is variously rumored to be a nephew of Kaiser Wilhelm, of von Hindenburg, and/or a German spy. Whatever his connection, he has that look in the eye. “You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody’s looking at him. I’ll bet he killed a man.” More directly, the legacy of combat is immediately there to see for anyone attuned to the symptoms in the victim of shell-shock. When we see

Jay Gatsby, he is always alone. He touches nobody. Nick Carraway makes just such a crucial observation of Gatsby at the height of one of his lavish parties. During a signature musical performance by full orchestra of a work entitled “Vladimir Tostoff’s *Jazz History of the World*,” says Nick, “my eyes fell on Gatsby, standing alone on the marble steps and looking from one group to another with approving eyes.” He is not drinking; he actually grows more sober and stiff in behavior as the general hilarity increases. Nick concludes: “When the *Jazz History of the World* was over, girls were putting their heads on men’s shoulders in a puppyish, convivial way, girls were swooning backward playfully into men’s arms, even into groups, knowing someone would arrest their falls—but no one swooned backward on Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby’s shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby’s head for one line.” He is forbiddingly affectless. Such spiritual numbness is imaged both in his psychological dissociation and in his general social disconnection from the world around him. His lines sound scripted. He has quick angers. He is coldly violent. He frightens people. With his cars, his telephones, his speedboat, he is the man of the machine. With his mentors, Dan Cody—the name vividly imaged in e.e. cummings’s Buffalo Bill poem of the era, the nation’s “blue-eyed boy, Mr. Death”—and Meyer Wolfsheim—who has fixed the 1919 World Series and wears cufflinks made of human molars—he too himself has become something of a machine—a ruthless gangster, a seeker by any means necessary of absolute power over his world—a war machine. When Nick, near the end of the novel, attempts to help him understand that Daisy, in spite of her love for him before the war, might also have loved her husband, his reply is chilling. “In any case,” he says, “it was just personal.”

So, as with Mrs. Dalloway, this postwar novel is full of machines, trains, taxis, trucks, cars. In the first of the three violent deaths with which the novel concludes, that of the sensuous and passionately bodied Myrtle Wilson, the murder weapon is an automobile. The victim is graphically mutilated. Her breast is described as hanging like a flap. In the second murder, that of Gatsby, the weapon is a revolver, of a sort a military officer would have carried in the war. The third murder is a suicide, that of the gunman, the deracinated George Wilson, a gas station owner, auto mechanic, and dealer in used cars

A further determinant of the omnipresence of postwar memory culture in the novel is the fact that Nick Carraway, the first person narrator who becomes Gatsby’s confidant, interlocutor, and eventual elegist, is himself a veteran, having served with the AEF during the war. On this basis, as the narrative develops, he and Gatsby appear to come quickly to a kind of unspoken identification, with Nick

as surely drawn into Gatsby's psychological orbit as Gatsby is drawn into his. They have both been there, and they recognize each other for having been there. They belong to mysterious fraternity of those who have served in military close combat. Accordingly, Nick also carries his own psychological and social legacy of the war, an inventory of veteran mannerisms. He is detached, ironic, solitary. He rationalizes his way out of his own romance with Daisy's friend Jordan Baker by describing himself as "five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor." One has a good idea of where the old idea of honor got left behind.

He hits thirty in the book, and envisions "the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning briefcase of enthusiasm, thinning hair." The reflections are frequently interpreted in a generalized social sense as Prufrockian. For Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby, they also partake of the shared experience, both psychologically and socially transforming, of the western front. Nick knows what Gatsby knows. He knows something the others can only suspect, contrive, idly conjecture or rumor about. "You're worth the whole damn bunch of them put together," he shouts at the end of a last talk extending to the small hours of the morning. "I've always been glad I said that," Nick continues, "because I disapproved of him from beginning to end." It is Gatsby's response, however, that sticks in his mind. "First, he nodded politely, and then his face broke into that radiant and understanding smile, as if we'd been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact all the time." They have been; and it is the war that has brought them together at the beginning and at the end on Gatsby's dark lawn that last night.

It is indeed crucial to the narration, in this respect, that when Nick Carraway first meets Gatsby at one of his lavish parties, where he turns out to be, actually, as Daisy's cousin and Gatsby's rental-cottage West Egg neighbor, one of the few people actually invited, their first connections are laid out in their relation as momentarily nameless combat veterans of the American Expeditionary Force under Pershing. At this point, Nick does not even know that he is meeting his host. Their bond is already the war. Gatsby, in fact, recognizes Nick first. "Your face is familiar," he said politely. "Weren't you in the Third Division during the War?" "Why, yes," Nick replies, "I was in the Ninth Machine Gun Battalion." "I was in the Seventh Infantry until June nineteen eighteen. I knew I'd see you somewhere before."

"We talked for a moment about some wet, gray little villages in France." For the reader, it is a small soldier conversation, familiar, elliptical, comradely. As to the theme of war memory in the novel, it speaks a whole subtext. To borrow Edmund Blunden's phrasing, these are the undertones of war. They have both been members of the Third Division—coming to be known for its war record as The Rock of the

Marne. Nick, in a nice techno-war touch, has served in the Ninth Machine Gun Battalion. Gatsby has been in the Seventh Infantry Regiment.

The latter is crucial. The full story emerges, through Nick's eventual redacting of Gatsby's account of his experiences. It is the quite recognizable story of the legendary battle in the Argonne Forest, essentially that of the U.S. Army formation that came to be known as the Lost Battalion. Gatsby's tells it in succinct first-person: "In the Argonne Forest I took two machine-gun detachments so far forward that there was a half mile gap on either side of us where the infantry couldn't advance. We stayed there two days and two nights, a hundred and thirty men with sixteen Lewis guns, and when the infantry came up at last they found the insignia of three German divisions among the piles of dead." We are never told what American decorations Gatsby may have received for his heroism. We learn that he was promoted to major—"and," he continues, "every Allied government gave me a decoration—even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea!"

The narration occurs, appropriately, while Gatsby and Nick are driving in Gatsby's splendid, glittering juggernaut of an automobile. As it turns out, he has the medal in his pocket. He shows it to Nick. "To my astonishment," Nick recalls, "the thing had an authentic look. 'Orderi di Danilo,' ran the circular legend, 'Montenegro, Nicolas Rex.'" He turns it over.

"Major Jay Gatsby," I read, "For Valour Extraordinary."

"Little Montenegro," the "Order of Danilo." Ventured further are other, rather lovely details. In proof the short, postwar sojourn claimed by Gatsby at Oxford, he shows himself as appearing in a photograph as a quondam companion of the Earl of Doncaster. There was such a person. The contemporary of the fictional Gatsby, he too was a war hero, an artillery captain and winner of the Victoria cross. He was an Oxford man, and a notable victim of shell-shock. He was also a descendant of the Dukes of Buccleugh. In the novel Nick Carraway mentions this as part of his own pedigree.

To be sure, in this vivid novel of historical realism/naturalism, noted for its many features of the *roman à clef*, inspiration for main arrangements of character and incident come from many places, not least the fictional imagination. (It is said that Fitzgerald got the idea for Dr. T.J. Eckleburg after being shown of a mock-up of the original dust jacket, a art-deco rendering of Daisy's disembodied face over the lights of Manhattan.) It is often autobiographical. Scenes of Gatsby as a young officer in Louisville, with Daisy as the local belle with ardent suitors, recall Fitzgerald's courtship of Zelda in Montgomery while he was stationed at Fort Sheridan, Alabama. At other times, various elements register literary and popular

culture sources. As noted, the naming of Dan Cody recalls both the wild west killer-hero-showman Buffalo Bill and the title of the famous Cummings poem, itself published in 1920. Gatsby's New York underworld mentor/confidant, Meyer Wolfsheim, recalls the gangster Arnold Rothstein. Gatsby himself is also partially modeled on Rothstein, although he has also been noted as resembling other 1920s crime figures including Max Gerlach, George Remus, Dapper Dan Collins, Larry Fay.

It is as an embodiment of the culture of war remembrance, I would propose however, that Jay Gatsby inscribes one of his most direct popular-culture models in the figure of the actual hero of the Argonne Forest Battle. This was the commander of the Lost Battalion himself, Major Charles Whittlesey.

At first a social connection may seem remote for Whittlesey, a figure of New England descent, and Jimmy Gatz from North Dakota. As it turns out, Whittlesey was born in the Midwest, coming east as a Williams undergraduate and Harvard Law student. Here, in the Gatsby connection, is where the story gets interesting. Even while in school, he was nicknamed "the Count," remembered by friends and acquaintances as affecting a notably aristocratic demeanor. He then found work in New York after graduation, partnering with a fellow Williams graduate in a Wall Street law firm, though keeping a non-establishmentarian edge in a friendship with the socialist Max Eastman and acceptance of brief membership in American socialist party until he deemed the direction of its politics too extreme. Meanwhile, as an exemplar of the American citizen soldier and reserve officer in the Plattsburg mold, at the U.S. 1917 entry into the war, he took his active commission in the 77th New York ("Metropolitan") Division. Promoted to captain, he was assigned to Meuse Argonne Offensive. Then, on 2 October 1918, over a brief span of days he was thrust into heroic celebrity with his command in the Argonne Forest of the unit of the 3rd division that came to be called The Lost Battalion. For his performance, he was decorated with the Congressional Medal of Honor, along with the French Legion of Honor. There was even a special award for bravery from Danilo, King of Montenegro. At the same time, for all the mythification, there arose serious questions on how the battalion got to be "lost" in the first case, and about the degree to which its agony was in fact a function of poor amateur-officer leadership. Stories circulated about how they had managed to get cut off, walking into a trap by advancing too far ahead of units on flanks. Besides such rumors of poor coordination, others had to do with sending out faulty location coordinates with the result of drawing U.S. artillery fire on the position. At the same time, as the commander of the pinned down unit, Whittlesey had reportedly replied to a

German surrender offer with four succinct words: “You go to hell.” The casualty figures were certain. Of around 554 battalion members, 107 were dead, 63 missing, and 190 wounded. Only 194 were deemed operational. The killed and wounded rate was totaled at 65%.

After his return to practicing law, Whittlesey was unable to shed his war celebrity and/or notoriety. He described incessant personal demands on him by fellow veterans, “Not a day goes by but I hear from some of my old outfit, usually about some sorrow or misfortune, he said. “I cannot bear it much more.” In public, he was recurrently required to appear at major events of war remembrance, speeches, awards ceremonies, honorary degree presentations. Most notable was a command performance in 1921 at the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier where he stood on the podium with two other Medal of Honor Winners, both up-from-the-ranks, Sergeant Alvin York and Sergeant Samuel Woodfill. Days afterward, he sought solace in a Caribbean cruise on *SS Toloa*, a United Fruit Company floating party ship, bound for Havana. Late after dinner on 26 November 1921, the first night out of New York, presumably in his dinner attire, after a good deal of drinking, he cast himself overboard—in some accounts first leaning over the rail and shooting himself in the head with a revolver. Almost nothing is known of his postwar family connections or other possible close relationships. In a last note to his close friend Bayard Pruyn, he wrote, “I’m a misfit by nature and by training.” Among further letters to family members and friends were also found the Argonne Forest German surrender note and instructions for the captain on disposition of his luggage. There is a grave marker in the family plot in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. It is a cenotaph marked “in memory only.”

As with Septimus Smith, in the mad Jay Gatsby, we come to know the isolation; the mute inability to feel; the strange, off-tune, maladaptive phrases; the restless movement of unease. The assumption of an unreal identity becomes the desperate attempt to have back the vision of the world the way it was before the war, but it is all an insane dream, the whole crazy scenario, the mansion, the landscaping, the furnishings, the car, the shirts, the famous scene in which their lavish waste and abundance move Daisy to tears. He is a hero; he is a gangster; he is a dreamer; he is mad.

Likewise, as in *Mrs. Dalloway*, in *The Great Gatsby* depictions of glittering social worlds culminate in acts/moments of extreme violence, graphic bloodshed. Septimus, the hopeless isolato, chooses suicide by defenestration and impalement. Gatsby, the deranged gangster-hero, floating on a raft in his ill-gotten swimming pool, is murdered by a jealous husband with a gun—a gat, in gangster parlance, the

instrument of his own trade—sent by another jealous husband with the money and the reasons to want him dead. As a social outcome, it is as if he has contracted for his own murder, is waiting for death to come find him at last. The touch of war-death dooms and corrupts everyone, everything. The disease of the twentieth century turns out to be shell shock. In both novels, the party is a wake. It celebrates the death of civilization as a sustaining force in people's lives. The instruments of death amount to whatever hard metal is to hand—an iron fence, a car, a gun. The scene of the crime is postwar London or New York. Whether by suicide, murder, or some combination of both, the operative diagnosis is death by reason of insanity.

This is the obvious thematic conclusion in these great novels of war-memory. Beneath the surfaces of postwar social intercourse, class relations, shell shock becomes the diagnosis for a whole botched civilization. We can say of Septimus Smith, death had come to the party. Jay Gatsby, Trimalchio in *West Egg*, with the last guest departed, floats in the swimming pool, on the last day of summer, waiting for the delayed rendezvous. So inscribed are the fates of significant cultural figures of war remembrance on whom the two are modeled., Siegfried Sassoon and Charles Whittlesey. Sassoon would spend his endless years remaining on earth writing it over and over, eventually calling a last bitter version *Siegfried's Journey*. Whittlesey would elect for cutting it short, tired to death of the endless retellings of the heroism and death in the Argonne. We can further say this of Virginia Woolf and F. Scott Fitzgerald themselves, veterans in a sense of their rare insight into their lives and times between the wars. Woolf's 1940 suicide we now know in large degree attributable to her inability to go through it all again, the vast impending cataclysm, perhaps to endure it but only to wake up to the somber, wrenching, tragic aftermath of another great war. Fitzgerald, though famous for his remarks on his own non-veteran combat status, his rueful declarations about "the overseas cap not worn overseas," nonetheless possessed a profound understanding of the American and Anglo-European generations of the war. Anyone who doubts that need only read Dick Diver's soliloquy in *Tender is the Night* for the war dead while on a visit to the old battlefield at Verdun. Fitzgerald's death, ironically, also came in 1940. His was of a heart attack, as the U.S. was about to enter the conflict in both the European war and the Pacific—induced by years of drinking and self-destructive behavior, a slow suicide. Both Woolf and Fitzgerald thus made their final arrangements with the great death they had somehow seen for so many years as awaiting inhabitants of the 20th century. If not killed in action, they might be remembered at the very least, along with their war-damaged characters, as having died of wounds.

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