

Hemingway and Literary Modernism (1910-1945)



Period of Intense Change

- Virginia Woolf: “On Or About December 1910 human character changed.”



A New Literature



- Ezra Pound challenged artists to “Make it New”

Modern Milestones

- 1902: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*
- 1905: Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity
- 1913: Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (English translation)
- 1914-1918: World War I
- 1922: Eliot's *The Waste Land*; Joyce's *Ulysses*
- 1925: Hemingway's *In Our Times*; Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*; Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*
- 1926: Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*
- 1929: Stock Market crash; Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*; Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*
- 1930: Beginning of Great Depression

World War One



- Late 19th C faith in science and technology undermined
- Technology in WWI:
 - Machine guns
 - Poisonous gas
 - Tanks
 - Airplanes
- Effect on Civilians



. . . the immense panorama of futility and anarchy that is contemporary history.

---T. S. Eliot

Henry James on WWI



- “The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and horror so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be...gradually bettering, that. . . [it] is too tragic for any words.”

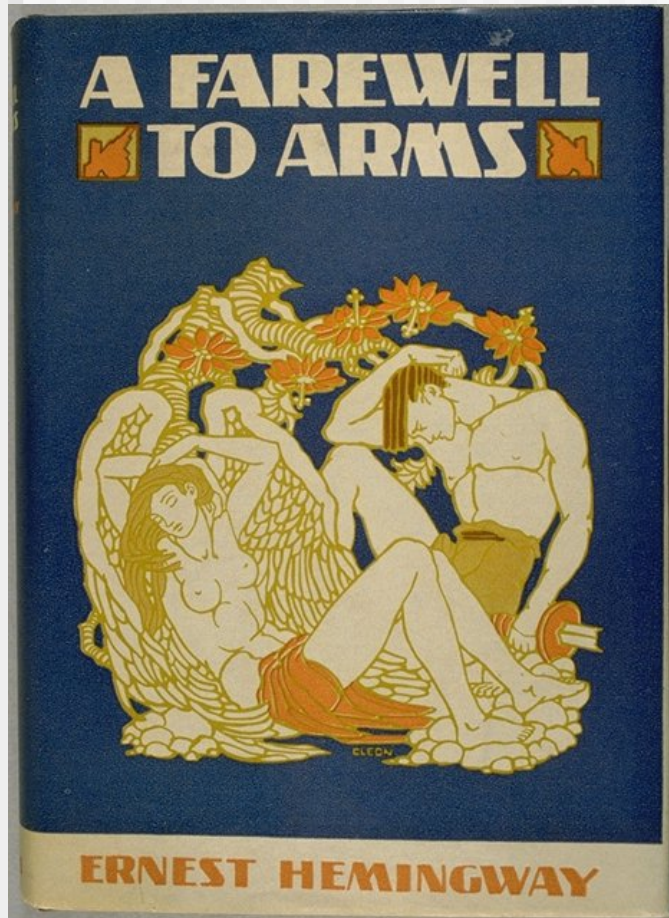
Henry James on WWI, cont.



- The war has used up words; they have weakened, they have deteriorated like motor-car tyres; they have like millions of other things, been more overstrained and knocked about and voided of the happy semblance during the last six months than in all the long ages before, and we are now confronted with a depreciation of all our terms, or otherwise speaking, with a loss of expression through increase of limpness, that may well make us wonder what ghosts will be left to walk.

— *The New York Times*, March 21, 1915

Hemingway on WWI



First Edition Cover, 1929

- Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, musing on the words “sacred,” “glorious,” “sacrifice,” and “in vain”:

“We had heard them...and had read them...and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had real dignity.”

Lost Generation



- Phrase coined by Gertrude Stein to describe Hemingway and group of disillusioned expatriot American writers living in Paris in the 1920's
- Included Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Zelda Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Ezra Pound, Kay Boyle, Ford Maddox Ford, etc.

Following the war, an explosion of modern culture

- Jazz
- Movies
- Radio
- Electrification
- Mass transit
- Telephones
- Airplanes
- Automobiles
- Psychoanalysis



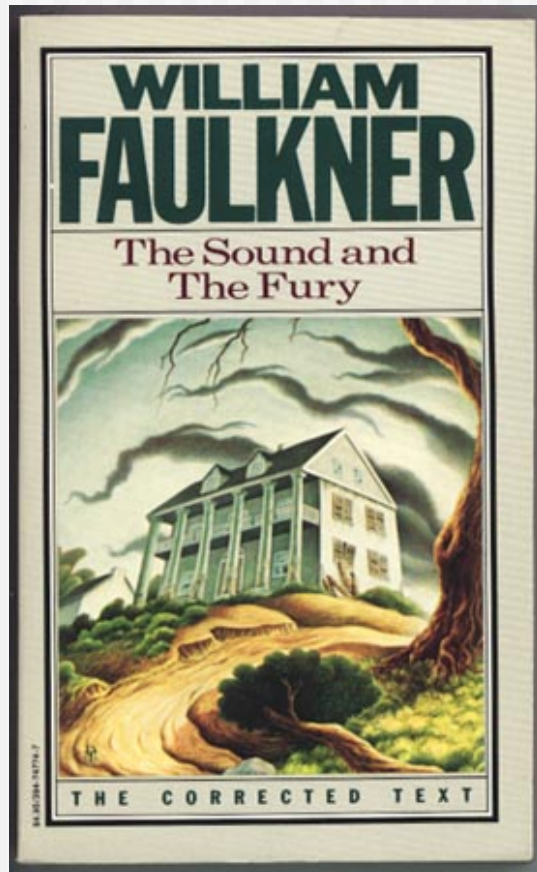
World of Ideas Changing as Well

- Art (Post Impressionism; Cubism)
- Science (Relativity; Quantum Mechanics)
- Religion (Darwin, Nietzsche)
- Psychology (Freud)

Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase, Number 2" (1912)



Perspective in Literature



- Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, 1929
- Same story told from 4 different perspectives
- “A tale told by an idiot”

Unreliable Narration: “The Quai at Smyrna”



Religion



Nietzsche by Munch

- God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?

--Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 16

Modern crisis of meaning

- Post-Darwinian disillusion
- Scientific contradictions of Biblical history



Crises of Meaning Explored in Literary Works



Joseph Conrad

- What's happened to traditional religious values in *Heart of Darkness*?

Crises of Meaning Explored in Literary Works



“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,”
--From Yeats’s “The Second Coming” 1919

From “Hugh Selwyn Moberley” (Ezra Pound, 1920)



There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.

From “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (Hemingway, 1926)

"Good night," said the younger waiter.

"Good night," the other said. Turning off the electric light he continued the conversation with himself. It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. Certainly you do not want music. Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours. What did he fear? It was not a fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee.

Art Replaces Religion?

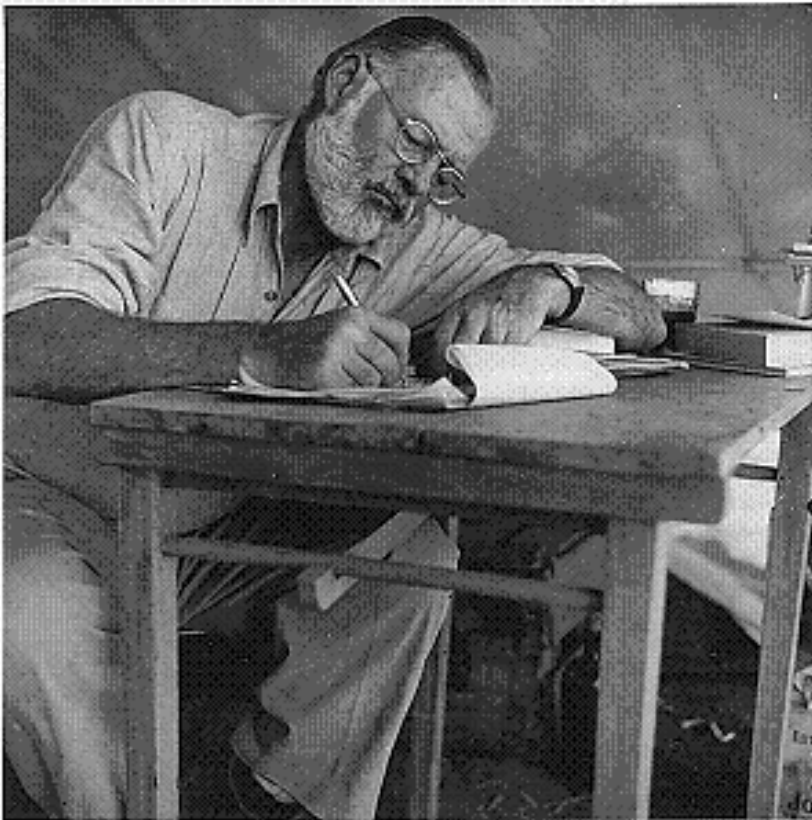
- Wallace Stevens: “In an age of disbelief...it is for the poet to supply the satisfactions of belief in his measure and style.



Summary: Characteristics of Modern Literature

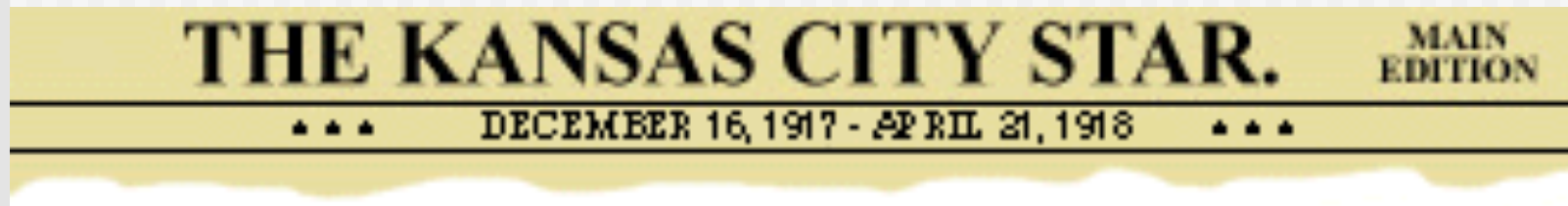
- Spiritual disillusionment/anxiety
- Psychological depth
- Focus on perspective/stream of consciousness
- Thickening of style (drawing attention to style, to the fact that art is not simply a “mirror to the world”)
- Thus, often difficult/experimental
- Emphasis on symbolism (symbols an avenue to the unconscious)

Hemingway's Modernism: Style



- Doesn't use stream-of-consciousness
- Yet, still heeds Ezra Pound's advice to "make it new"

Elements of Hemingway's Style



- Stripped down, terse prose
- Dialogue (no tag lines)
- Psychological displacement
- Moral ambiguity (lack of authorial editorializing)
- Codified violence
- Iceberg principle

Iceberg Principle

“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 iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water.”

--From *Death in the Afternoon*

Hemingway's Modernism: World War I



Hemingway in uniform, 1918

- Hemingway's own experiences
- "Soldier's Home"
- "The Sun Also Rises"

Hemingway's Modernism: Religious Disillusion; Alienation



In Italy, 1918

- Harold Krebs
- Older waiter in “A Clean Well-Lighted Place”

Hemingway's Modernism: Romantic Disillusion



From *Life* magazine, early 1920's

- The New Woman
 - Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*
 - Girls in "Soldier's Home"
- Prostitution

Hemingway's Modernism: Order/Disorder

- Characters often search for meaning in a chaotic, disordered universe (feeling man in an unfeeling universe)
- Hemingway Hero:
 - Wounded physically, emotionally, or psychologically
 - Drinks too much
 - Sleeps with lights on
 - Afraid of dying
 - Yet, remains stoic; exhibits “grace under pressure” in the face of pain and suffering”