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The Revolution in Morals

The disintegration of traditional American values—so sharply recorded by novelists and artists—was reflected in a change in manners and morals that shook American society to its depths. The growing secularization of the country greatly weakened religious sanctions. People lost their fear of Hell and at the same time had less interest in Heaven; they made more demands for material fulfillment on Earth. The “status revolution” of the turn of the century undercut the authority of the men who had set America’s moral standards: the professional classes, especially ministers, lawyers, and teachers; the rural gentry; the farmers; the urban patricians. The new urban minorities and *arriviste* businessmen were frequently not equipped—not even aware of the need either to support old standards or to create new ones. Most important, the authority of the family, gradually eroded over several centuries, had been sharply lessened by the rise of the city. “Never in recent generations,” wrote Freda Kirchwey, “have human beings so floundered about outside the ropes of social and religious sanctions.”

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When Nora, the feminist heroine of *A Doll’s House* (1879) by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, walked out into the night, she launched against male-dominated society a rebellion that has not ended yet. The “new woman” revolted against masculine possessiveness, against “over-evaluation” of women “as love objects,” against being treated, at worst, as a species of property. The new woman wanted the same freedom of movement that men had and the same economic and political rights. By the end of the 1920’s she had come a long way. Before the war, a lady did not set foot in a saloon; after the war, she entered a speakeasy as thoughtlessly as she would go into a railroad station. In 1904, a woman was arrested for smoking on Fifth Avenue; in 1929, railroads dropped their regulation against women smoking in dining cars. In the business and political worlds, women competed with men; in marriage, they moved toward a contractual role. Once ignorant of financial matters, they moved rapidly toward the point where they would be the chief property-holders of the country. Sexual independence was merely the most sensational aspect of the generally altered status of women.

In 1870, there were only a few women secretaries in the entire country; by the time of World War I, two million women worked in business offices, typing the letters and keeping the records of corporations and countinghouses in every city in the nation. During the war, when mobilization created a shortage of labor, women moved into jobs they had never held before. They made grenades, ran elevators, polished locomotives, collected streetcar fares, and even drilled with rifles. In the years after the war, women flew airplanes, trapped beaver, drove taxis, ran telegraph lines, worked as deep-sea divers and steeplejacks, and hunted tigers in the jun-

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gle; women stevedores heaved cargoes on the waterfront, while other women conducted orchestras, ran baseball teams, and drilled oil wells. By 1930, more than ten million women held jobs. Nothing did more to emancipate them. Single women moved into their own apartments, and wives, who now frequently took jobs, gained the freedom of movement and choice that went along with leaving home.

After nearly a century of agitation, women won the suffrage in 1920 with the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment. The American suffragettes modeled themselves on their British counterparts, who blew up bridges, hurled bombs, and burned churches, activities previously regarded as the exclusive privilege of Irish rebels. Using less violent methods, American women had greater success, and the adoption of the suffrage amendment climaxed a long debate in which suffragettes argued that the advent of the women's vote would initiate a new era of universal peace and benevolence, while their enemies forecast a disintegration of American society. (The chief result of women's suffrage, Mencken predicted, would be that adultery would replace boozing as the favorite pastime of politicians.)

As it turned out, women's suffrage had few consequences, good or evil. Millions of women voted (although never in the same proportion as men), women were elected to public office (several gained seats in Congress by the end of the 1920's), but the new electorate caused scarcely a ripple in American political life. Women like Jane Addams made great contributions, but it would be difficult to demonstrate that they accomplished any more after they had the vote than before. It was widely believed, although never proved, that women cast a "dry" vote for Hoover in 1928 and that women

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were likely to be more moved than men to cast a "moral-issue" vote. Otherwise, the earth spun around much as it had before.

The extreme feminists argued that women were equal to men, and even more so. "Call on God, my dear," Mrs. Belmont is alleged to have told a despondent young suffragette. "She will help you." Female chauvinists wanted not merely sexual equality but, insofar as possible, to dispense with sexuality altogether, because they conceived of sexual intercourse as essentially humiliating to women. "Man is the only animal using this function out of season," protested Charlotte Perkins Gilman. "Excessive indulgence in sex-waste has imperiled the life of the race." Chanting slogans like "Come out of the kitchen" and "Never darn a sock," feminist leaders rebelled against the age-old household roles of women; before long, even a woman contented with her familiar role felt called on to apologize that she was "just a housewife."

In Dorothy Canfield Fisher's *The Home-Maker* (1924), the process is taken to its logical conclusion: a woman who has been a failure as a mother succeeds in business while her husband, a failure in business, stays at home and makes a success of raising children. The literature of the time reflects the growing male sense of alarm, notably in D. H. Lawrence's morbid fear that he would be absorbed and devoured by woman but even more in a new American character represented by the destructive Nina Leeds of O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* (1928), the husband-exploiting title figure of George Kelly's *Craig's Wife* (1926), and the possessive "son-devouring tigress" of Sidney Howard's *The Silver Cord* (1927).

The new freedom for women greatly increased the instability of the family. By the turn of the century, women

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were demanding more of marriage than they ever had before and were increasingly unwilling to continue alliances in which they were miserable. For at least a century, the family had been losing many of its original social and economic functions; the state, the factory, the school, and even mass amusements robbed the family of functions it once had. The more that social usefulness was taken away from the family, the more marriage came to depend on the personalities of the individuals involved, and, since many Americans of both sexes entered marriage with unreasonable expectations, this proved a slender reed. In 1914, the number of divorces reached 100,000 for the first time; in 1929, over 205,000 couples were divorced in a single year. The increase in divorce probably meant less an increase in marital unhappiness than a refusal to go on with marriages which would earlier have been tolerated.

As the family lost its other social functions, the chief test of a good family became how well it developed the personalities of the children, and parents, distrustful both of their own instincts and of tribal lore, eagerly sought out expert advice to avoid the opprobrium of having raised unhappy children. Dr. John B. Watson published the first edition of *Behaviorism* in 1914, but it was not until its third edition in 1925 that behaviorism—the idea that man was nothing but a machine responding to stimuli—took the country by storm. Since man was only a machine, environment alone was significant in determining both man's character and the nature of his society. "Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in," declared Watson, "and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, mer-

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chant-chief, and yes, even beggarman and thief, regardless of his talents, tendencies, abilities, vocations and race of his ancestor." Watson's theories had the greatest impact on child-rearing; the Department of Labor incorporated behaviorist assumptions in its pamphlet *Infant and Child Care*, which, with emphasis on rigid scheduling of a baby's activities, became the government's leading best seller. Watson predicted that the time would come when it would be just as bad manners to show affection to one's mother or father as to come to the table with dirty hands. To inculcate the proper attitudes at an early age, Watson warned parents, "Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit in your lap."

Great as Watson's influence was, it could not hold a candle to that of Sigmund Freud. Before the war, Freud's name was known, outside of medical circles, only to a coterie of intellectuals. He had been referred to in the United States as early as 1895 by Dr. Robert Edes, but, a decade later, only a few well-informed medical men knew his name. By 1908, Dr. A. A. Brill, who had studied at Jung's Clinic of Psychiatry in Zurich, was won to Freudian theory and undertook the major task of translating Freud's work. In 1909, when Freud journeyed to the United States to give a series of lectures at Clark University, he was amazed that "even in prudish America" his work was so well known. The following year, Brill published the first of his translations of Freud, *Three Contributions to a Theory of Sex* (previously available only in the German *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexual-Theorie*), and in 1913, Brill, at the invitation of the precocious Walter Lippmann, explained Freud to a group of American intellectuals gathered at Mabel Dodge's salon.

With startling speed Freudian doctrine was acknowledged

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by a number of American intellectuals; in 1915 Lippmann and Max Eastman wrote perceptive articles on him, and his work, along with that of Nietzsche and Bergson, had strongly influenced Lippmann's *A Preface to Politics* (1914). Freud's sexual theories, particularly his contention that neurotic symptoms could be traced to sexual disturbances, were not popularly disseminated until after the war. But they were well enough known to New York social workers that, despite hostility and even revulsion at his blunt descriptions of infant sexuality, Brill was able to lecture on "Masturbation" to the ladies of the Child Study Association.

At the same time, Freudian theories made headway against vehement opposition in American medical circles. By 1916 there were some five hundred psychoanalysts, or people who called themselves that, in New York City. American participation in the war made the whole country psychology-conscious, if not Freud-conscious; more than one hundred psychologists served on the Surgeon-General's staff, and there was wide discussion of wartime medical phenomena like "shell shock." Even more important in popularizing psychology were the Army "intelligence" tests and the debates they aroused; during the war, hundreds of thousands of soldiers were asked to cross out the "g" in "tiger."

In the years after the war, psychology became a national mania. Books appeared on the *Psychology of Golf*, the *Psychology of the Poet Shelley*, and the *Psychology of Selling Life Insurance*. People talked knowingly of "libido," "defense mechanism," and "fixation," confused the subconscious with the unconscious, repression with suppression, and dealt with the tortuously difficult theories of Freud and of psychoanalysis as though they were simple ideas readily grasped after a

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few moments' explanation. One article explained solemnly that the immense popularity of the song "Yes, We Have No Bananas" was the result of a national inferiority complex. Psychiatrist Karl Menninger found himself badgered at parties to perform analyses of the personalities of guests as though he were a fortune teller. "When I refuse," he explained, "my questioners often show me how the thing is done." Neophytes were able to read books like *Psychoanalysis by Mail* and *Psychoanalysis Self-Applied*, while the Sears, Roebuck catalogue offered *Ten Thousand Dreams Interpreted* and *Sex Problems Solved*. Like the automobile, Freud was brought within the reach of everyone.

Freud's popularity had an inevitable effect on the "revolution in morals." It was assumed that he was arguing that unless you freely expressed your libido and gave outlet to your sex energy, you would damage your health; by the distortion of his work, a scientific imprimatur was given to self-indulgence. By a similar but more understandable misinterpretation, it was believed that Freud was denying the reality of love; his name was invoked in support of the dehumanization of sex. "I'm hipped on Freud and all that," observed a Scott Fitzgerald heroine, "but it's rotten that every bit of *real* love in the world is ninety-nine percent passion and one little soupçon of jealousy."

What only the initiate understood was that although Freud did emphasize the strong power of unconscious motivation, psychiatry was aimed not at stressing the irrational or at licensing indulgence but at making it possible for man to use his rational powers to control unconscious forces. Freud taught that the most "irrational" act had meaning. Psychiatrists used Freud's theories to enable men to control their emotions

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through a clearer understanding of their irrational impulses. The vast popularity of Freud in America, which was to move the center of psychiatry from Vienna to Park Avenue, alarmed many psychoanalysts. They realized that the popularity had been achieved less through an understanding of Freud than through a belief that he shared the American conviction that every man had the right not merely to pursue happiness but to possess it. This distortion had a number of unfortunate results, not least of which was the disappointment patients experienced when they came to realize that progress could be made only when self-indulgent fantasies were surrendered; but its ultimate effect was good. In Europe, psychiatry followed a course of near-fatalism in treating mental illness; in the more optimistic and more expectant American environment, psychiatry made greater gains and received far greater public support.

Freudian theories had a great impact on American writers, in part because they suggested new techniques for the exploration of human motivation, in part because they gave post-war intellectuals an invaluable weapon against the older standards. In some works the use of Freud was explicit; in others, as in the novels of Sherwood Anderson, where the influence of Freud seems obvious, there was apparently no conscious use of Freud at all. Eugene O'Neill turned to Freudian themes in his ambitious *Strange Interlude* (1928) as well as in his *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931). Freud's greatest impact on the form of the novel was in the "stream-of-consciousness" technique, although its most important exponent, the Irish novelist James Joyce, was more directly influenced by Jung than by Freud. Stream of consciousness was employed in America most notably in William

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Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and in the works of the novelist and poet Conrad Aiken. "I decided very early," Aiken recalled, "that Freud, and his co-workers and rivals and followers, were making the most important contribution of the century to the understanding of man and his consciousness; accordingly I made it my business to learn as much from them as I could."

Freud's theories also opened up a new world to biographers anxious to understand the inner life of their subjects, but most of his effect on biography ran from the unfortunate to the disastrous. His own *Leonardo da Vinci* (1910), which should have served as a warning to biographers, became instead a model. In this essay Freud attempted with doubtful success to reconstruct Da Vinci's life and to interpret his works from a single fantasy that Da Vinci remembered. With similar fragmentary evidence, psychoanalytically oriented biographers tried to add a new dimension to their work; some of these ventures were serious, others were little more than vendettas on heroes of the past. Emerson and Thoreau, Ludwig Lewisohn wrote, were "chilled under-sexed valetudinarians." Even when new information or interpretations were established, it was not always clear what use could be made of them. "The superstition persisted," wrote Alfred Kazin, "that to have proved one's subject impotent was to have made a critical statement."

In the attempt to work out a new standard of relations between men and women, Americans in the 1920's became obsessed with the subject of sex. Some novelists wrote of little else, in particular James Branch Cabell, whose *Jurgen* (1919), actually a curiously unerotic novel despite its absorption with the subject, was praised for its "phallic candour."

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Radio singers crooned songs like "Hot Lips," "Baby Face," "I Need Lovin'," and "Burning Kisses." Magazines like *Paris Nights*, *Flapper Experiences*, and *Snappy Stories* covered newsstands. The newspaperman Frank Kent returned from a tour of the country in 1925 with the conviction that "between the magazines and the movies a lot of these little towns seem literally saturated with sex." Advertising, once pristine, began the transition which, as one writer remarked, was to transmute soap from a cleansing agent to an aphrodisiac and to suggest "that every woman buying a pair of stockings is aiming for an assignation, or at the very least for a rescue via a fire-ladder."

Absorption with sex was the life's blood of the newspaper tabloid. Developed by Lord Northcliffe in England, the tabloid first appeared in America with the founding of the *New York Daily News* in 1919. As a picture newspaper like the *Sketch* and the *Mirror* in England, the *News* caught on immediately; within five years it had the largest circulation of any newspaper in New York. Hearst followed with the *New York Daily Mirror*, a slavish imitation of the *News*, and in 1924 Bernarr MacFadden demonstrated how far salacious sensationalism could be carried with the *New York Evening Graphic*. The New York tabloids soon had their imitators in other cities. Although the tabloids won millions of readers, they did not cut into the circulation of the established newspapers; they found a new, semiliterate market.

Not even the tabloids exploited sex with the zeal of Hollywood; it was the movies which created the American love goddess. When the "vamp," Theda Bara, appeared in *The Blue Flame* in 1920, crowds mobbed theaters in eastern cities to get in. Movie producers found that films like *The Sheik*

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drew large audiences, while *Sentimental Tommy* or epics like *America* played to empty houses. When it was apparent that sex was infinitely more profitable than the prewar sentimental-patriotic fustian, the country got a steady diet of movies like *Up in Mabel's Room*, *Her Purchase Price*, and *A Shocking Night*. (Cecil B. De Mille changed the title of Sir James Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* into *Male and Female*.) Clara Bow was featured as the "It" girl, and no one had to be told what "it" was. The only ones in Hollywood with "it," explained the novelist Elinor Glyn, were "Rex, the wild stallion, actor Tony Moreno, the Ambassador Hotel doorman and Clara Bow." Movie ads promised kisses "where heart, and soul, and sense in concert move, and the blood is lava, and the pulse a blaze."

Threatened by censorship bills in thirty-six states, the industry made a gesture toward reforming itself. Following the model of organized baseball, which had made Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis its "czar" after the Chicago Black Sox scandal of 1919, the movie industry hired Harding's Postmaster-General, Will Hays, to be the "Judge Landis of the movies." All the Hays Office succeeded in doing in the 1920's was to add hypocrisy to sex by insisting on false moralizations and the "moral" ending. Movie ads continued to entice patrons with "brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp."

Taboos about sex discussion were lifted; women talked freely about inhibitions and "sex starvation." Speech became bolder, and men and women told one another off-color stories that a short while before would have been reserved for the Pullman smoker. Novelists and playwrights spoke with a new

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bluntness; in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), the word "bitch" recurs frequently. The woman who once was shocked by everything now prided herself, observed a writer in *Harper's*, on the fact that nothing at all shocked her; "immunity to the sensation of 'recoil with painful astonishment' is the mark of our civilization."

Parental control of sex was greatly lessened; the chaperone vanished at dances, and there was no room for a duenna in the rumble seat of an automobile. The bachelor girl had her own latchkey. Girls petted, and when they did not pet, they necked, and no one was certain of the exact difference; Lloyd Morris observed: "The word 'neck' ceased to be a noun; abruptly became a verb; immediately lost all anatomical precision." At one conference in the Midwest, eight hundred college girls met to discuss petting, to deal with searching questions like What do nice girls do? and How far should you go? "Whether or not they pet," said one writer, "they hesitate to have anyone believe that they do not." The consensus of the delegates was: "Learn temperance in petting, not abstinence."

Victorian dance forms like the waltz yielded to the fast-stepping Charleston, the Black Bottom, or slow fox trots in which, to the syncopated rhythms of the jazz band, there was a "maximum of motion in the minimum of space." Jazz made its way northward from the bordellos of New Orleans to the dance halls of Chicago during these years, crossed the ocean to Paris (where it was instantly taken up as a uniquely American contribution to music), and created its own folk heroes in the lyrical Bix Beiderbecke and the dynamic Louis Armstrong who, legend has it, once played two hundred different choruses of "Sweet Sue." The tango and the fox trot

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hit the country before the war, but it was not until the 1920's that the more voluptuous and the more frenetic dance crazes swept the nation. Moralists like Bishop Cannon protested that the new dances brought "the bodies of men and women in unusual relations to each other"; but by the end of the period the fox trot was as popular and the saxophones wailed as loudly at the high-school dances of the Bishop's Methodist parishioners as in the dance halls of New York and Los Angeles.

What did it all add up to? Lord Birkenhead, the British Lord High Chancellor, observed in 1928: "The proportion of frail to virtuous women is probably constant throughout the ages in any civilization." Perhaps, but the meager evidence suggests otherwise. There appears to have been an increase in promiscuity, especially in sexual experience before marriage for middle-class women; there was probably an increase in extramarital experience as well. With effective contraceptive techniques widely used, the fear of pregnancy was greatly lessened. ("The veriest schoolgirl today knows as much as the midwife of 1885," wrote Mencken.) At the same time, quite possibly as a consequence, a great many brothels lost their customers and had to close their doors, while itinerant workers in the same field disappeared from the sidewalks. The degree of sexual experimentation in the 1920's has certainly been exaggerated, but there is a good deal to bear out Alexander Pope's aphorism that "every woman is at heart a rake."

Not only the American woman but the American girl was reputed to be freer with her sexual favors than she had ever been before, although serious periodicals published learned debates over whether this was fact or fiction. The flapper had as many defenders as accusers on this score, but no one

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doubted that every campus had its Jezebels. Smith College girls in New York, noted Malcolm Cowley, modeled themselves on Hemingway's Lady Brett. Certainly, girls were less reticent than they had been before the war. "One hears it said," lamented a Southern Baptist periodical, "that the girls are actually tempting the boys more than the boys do the girls, by their dress and conversation." They dressed more freely; they wore bathing suits which revealed more than had ever been revealed before. At dances, corsets were checked in cloakrooms; then even this pretense was abandoned. Above all, they were out for a good time. "None of the Victorian mothers," wrote F. Scott Fitzgerald in *This Side of Paradise*, "had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed."

Although Fitzgerald reported that the ideal flapper was "lovely and expensive and about nineteen," the flapper appeared bent on playing down her femininity and emphasizing her boyishness. She used the most ingenious devices to conceal the fact that she had breasts. Even the nudes at the Folies Bergères were flat-chested and were picked for that reason, and in England, women wore the "Eton crop" and bound their chests with wide strips of ribbon to achieve a "boyish bust." The flapper wore dresses that suggested she had no hips at all; her waistline moved steadily southward. As one writer recalled, "Women not only lost their waists; they sat on them." She dieted recklessly in an effort to remove unwanted protuberances. Girls, noted Dr. Charles F. Pabst, were attempting to become "pathologically thin." "A strikingly sad example of improper dieting," he said, "was the case of a shapely motion-picture actress, who became a nervous wreck and blasted her career by restricting herself to tomatoes, spin-

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ach and orange juice." The flapper bobbed her hair and dyed it raven black. She concealed everything feminine but her matchstick legs. In 1919 her skirt was six inches above the ground; by 1927 it had edged about to her knees. The well-acquainted flapper wore a tight felt hat, two strings of beads, bangles on her wrists, flesh-colored stockings rolled below the knees, and unbuckled galoshes. Ironically, the more she adopted mannish styles, the more she painted her face, daubing her cheeks with two circles of rouge and her lips with "kissproof" lipstick; cosmetics became the chief way of distinguishing feminine members of the race.

The vogue of the flapper was only the most obvious instance of the new American cult of youth. "It is the glory of the present age that in it one can be young," Randolph Bourne wrote in 1913. In every age, youth has a sense of a separate destiny, of experiencing what no one has ever experienced before, but it may be doubted that there was ever a time in American history when youth had such a special sense of importance as in the years after World War I. There was a break between generations like a geological fault; young men who had fought in the trenches felt that they knew a reality their elders could not even imagine. Young girls no longer consciously modeled themselves on their mothers, whose experience seemed unusable in the 1920's.

Instead of youth modeling itself on age, age imitated youth. Scott Fitzgerald, looking back on the years of which he was the chief chronicler, recalled: "May one offer in exhibit the year 1922! That was the peak of the younger generation, for though the Jazz Age continued, it became less and less an affair of youth. The sequel was a children's party taken over by elders." "Oh, yes, we are collegiate" was the theme song

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of a generation yearning for the irresponsible, idealized days of youth. Everyone wanted to be young. Mrs. Gertrude Atherton's *Black Oxen* (1923) described how grandmothers might be rejuvenated through a glandular operation and once more stir up young men. It was the young girl who started the flapper ideal; it was her mother who kept it going.

Americans in the 1920's, at least on the surface, were less sinridden and more self-indulgent than they had ever been before. They broke the Sabbath apparently without compunction, missing the morning sermon to play golf, driving into the country in the afternoon instead of sitting stiffly in the parlor. The mood of the country was hedonistic; Omar Khayyam's quatrains took the colleges by storm. The ideal of hedonism was living for the moment, and if one can isolate a single spirit which permeated every segment of society in the postwar years, it was the obliteration of time.

Abandoning the notion of saving income or goods or capital over time, the country insisted on immediate consumption, a demand which became institutionalized in the installment plan. The President's Research Committee on Social Trends noted "the new attitude towards hardship as a thing to be avoided by living in the here and now, utilizing instalment credit and other devices to telescope the future into the present." Songs became obsolescent almost as soon as they appeared, and people prided themselves not on remembering the old songs but on knowing the latest. The imitation of youth by age was an effort to telescope the years, while youth itself tried to escape the inexorability of time. One of the younger generation, replying to its critics, observed: "The trouble with them is that they can't seem to realize that we are busy, that what pleasure we snatch must be incidental and feverishly

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hurried. We have to make the most of our time. . . . We must gather rose-buds while we may."

In the magazine *Secession*, a group of intellectuals, including Hart Crane, Kay Boyle, and Elliot Paul, signed a "Proclamation" declaring "Time is a tyranny to be abolished." Gertrude Stein's concept of a "continuous present" effaced not merely history and tradition but any sense of "time." "The future," she declared, "is not important any more." In Italy, the Futurists had cast out Petrarch and Dante and rejected harmony and sentiment; their present-mindedness had a direct impact on Ezra Pound, who found their chief spokesman, Marinetti, "thoroughly simpatico." The characters in the novels of the day, particularly those of Scott Fitzgerald, lived only for the moment, while Edna St. Vincent Millay penned the theme of the generation in "My candle burns at both ends." The spirit of hedonism of the decade, wrote Edmund Wilson, was "letting oneself be carried along by the mad hilarity and heartbreak of jazz, living only for the excitement of the evening."

The obliteration of time carried with it a conscious assault on the authority of history. The Dada movement, which developed in the war years in Zurich, adopted as its motto: "Je ne veux même pas savoir s'il y a eu des hommes avant moi" ("I do not wish even to know whether there have been men before me"). More remarkably, the very men who were the spokesmen for history and tradition led the onslaught; in this, Henry Ford and Charles Beard were one. Ford's interest in history was actually an anti-history. He took cottages in which Noah Webster and Patrick Henry had once lived and moved them to Dearborn, Michigan, where they had no meaning. He sentimentalized and pillaged the past, but he had no respect

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for it. "History is more or less the bunk," he said. "We want to live in the present, and the only history that is worth a tinker's dam is the history we make today." As early as 1907, the historians Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson had deliberately attempted to subordinate the past to the present with the aim of enabling the reader "to catch up with his own times; . . . to know what was the attitude of Leo XIII toward the Social Democrats even if he has forgotten that of Innocent III toward the Albigenses." Beard's emphasis on current history had its counterpart in Veblen's dislike for dead languages, Holmes's skepticism about the value of learning as a guide in jurisprudence, and Dewey's emphasis on the functional in education.

The revolution in morals routed the worst of Victorian sentimentality and false modesty. It mitigated the harsh moral judgments of rural Protestantism, and it all but wiped out the awful combination of sanctimoniousness and lewdness which enabled Anthony Comstock to defame Bernard Shaw as "this Irish smut-dealer" and which allowed Teddy Roosevelt, with unconscious humor, to denounce the Mexican bandit Villa as a "murderer and a bigamist." It greatly extended the range of choice; "the conduct of life," wrote Joseph Wood Krutch, had been made "more thrillingly difficult." Yet, at the same time, it raised baffling problems of the relations between husband and wife, parent and child, and, in itself, provided no ready guides to conduct. The hedonism of the period was less a solution than a pathological symptom of what Walter Lippmann called a "vast dissolution of ancient habits," and it rarely proved as satisfying as people hoped. "Sons and daughters of the puritans, the artists and writers and utopians who flocked to Greenwich Village to find a frank and free

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life for the emotions and senses, felt at their backs the icy breath of the monster they were escaping," wrote Joseph Freeman. "Because they could not abandon themselves to pleasure without a sense of guilt, they exaggerated the importance of pleasure, idealized it and even sanctified it."