

☐ Contemporary  
Literary Criticism

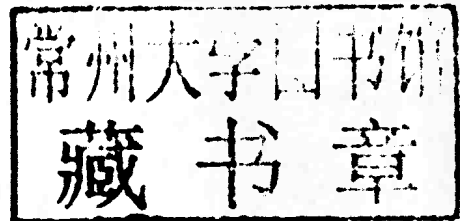
**CLC 365**

Volume 365

# Contemporary Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works  
of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,  
Short-Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and  
Other Creative Writers

Lawrence J. Trudeau  
EDITOR



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**Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol. 365**

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WCN: 01-100-101

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 76-46132

ISBN-13: 978-1-4144-9970-3

ISSN: 0091-3421

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## Preface

Named “one of the twenty-five most distinguished reference titles published during the past twenty-five years” by *Reference Quarterly*, the *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* series provides readers with critical commentary and general information on more than 3,000 authors from 91 countries now living or who died after December 31, 1999. Before the publication of the first volume of *CLC* in 1973, there was no ongoing digest monitoring scholarly and popular sources of critical opinion and explication of modern literature. *CLC*, therefore, has fulfilled an essential need, particularly since the complexity and variety of contemporary literature makes the function of criticism especially necessary to today’s reader.

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*CLC* is designed to serve as an introduction to authors of the twenty-first century. Volumes published from 1973 through 1999 covered authors who died after December 31, 1959. Since January 2000, the series has covered authors who are living or who died after December 31, 1999; those who died between 1959 and 2000 are now included in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. There is minimal duplication of content between series.

Authors are selected for inclusion for a variety of reasons, among them the publication or production of a critically acclaimed new work, the reception of a major literary award, revival of interest in past writings, or the adaptation of a literary work to film or television.

Attention is also given to several other groups of writers—authors of considerable public interest—about whose work criticism is often difficult to locate. These include mystery and science-fiction writers, literary and social critics, world authors, and authors who represent particular ethnic groups.

Each *CLC* volume contains individual essays and reviews selected from hundreds of review periodicals, general magazines, scholarly journals, monographs, and books. Entries include critical evaluations spanning an author’s career from its inception to current commentary. Interviews, feature articles, and other works that offer insight into the author’s works are also presented. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the general critical and biographical material in *CLC* provides them with vital information required to write a term paper, analyze a poem, or lead a book discussion group. In addition, complete bibliographical citations note the original source and all of the information necessary for a term paper footnote or bibliography.

*CLC* is part of the survey of criticism and world literature that is contained in Gale’s *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800 (LC)*, *Shakespearean Criticism (SC)*, and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism (CMLC)*.

### Organization of the Book

A *CLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the author’s name.



- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication information of each work is given. In the case of works not published in English, a translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is a published translated title or a free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. As a further aid to the reader, a list of **Principal English Translations** is provided for authors who did not publish in English; the list selects those translations most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, plays are dated by first performance, not first publication, and the location of the first performance is given, if known. Lists of **Representative Works** discussed in the entry appear with topic entries.
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- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Citations conform to recommendations set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2009).
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In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *CLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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# Ihab Hassan

1925-

Egyptian-born American literary critic, theorist, and autobiographer.

## INTRODUCTION

Hailed as one of the founders of Postmodernism, Ihab Hassan is known for his literary and cultural criticism. His prolific output covers topics from antiquity through the early twenty-first century, in an unconventional style that utilizes visual and verbal devices such as typographical variations, images, blank spaces, wordplay, fragments, anecdotes, and self-referentiality. Praised for its vigor, experimentation, and poetic aspects, Hassan's work, which has also attracted criticism for its perceived opacity and lack of commitment to particular arguments, is characterized by an approach to texts that emphasizes the silences within them that either demand or defy meaning.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Hassan was born on 17 October 1925 in Cairo, Egypt, to Habib and Faika Hamdi Hassan. Little is known about his childhood, but he studied engineering and graduated with top honors from the University of Cairo. Hassan immigrated to the United States in 1946 to continue his studies, receiving a master's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Pennsylvania. Captivated by literature, however, he remained at the university to earn an MA in English literature in 1950 and a PhD in 1953.

While still a student, Hassan began teaching literature at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. In 1954, he became an instructor at Wesleyan University, and in 1962 he was promoted to full professor, serving as the Benjamin L. Waite Professor of English from 1964 to 1970. He then moved to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as the Vilas Research Professor of English and Comparative Literature. Remaining there until his retirement in 1999, he also held visiting professorships at Yale University, Trinity College, and the University of Washington and at universities in Sweden, Japan, Germany, France, and Austria.

Hassan has published more than three hundred essays, fifteen books of criticism and theory, and several pieces of short fiction. His work has been cited widely and translated into sixteen languages. In his long career as a critic and theorist, he has received several awards and fellow-

ships, notably two Guggenheim Fellowships and three senior Fulbright Lectureships, as well as awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities and honorary degrees from the University of Uppsala and the University of Giessen.

## MAJOR WORKS

Hassan's iconoclastic style was evident in his first book, *Radical Innocence* (1961). Through readings of a broad array of post-World War II novels by William Styron, Bernard Malamud, Ralph Ellison, Carson McCullers, Norman Mailer, J. D. Salinger, and others, Hassan describes the hero in modern American literature. In contrast to the classical conception of the hero as an initiate who represents the community in the face of opposition, Hassan argues that contemporary heroes are outsiders, rebels against or victims of society, who distinguish themselves through resistance, suffering, alienation, and anarchy. According to Hassan, the new hero's primary quality is courage, but this characteristic is full of contradictions and is portrayed through plots that hover between tragedy and comedy.

Developing Hassan's thoughts on shifts in American literature, *The Literature of Silence* (1967) contrasts American and European sensibilities. In this work, he suggests that an American desire to exist independently of time not only obliterates the past but also destroys the present. Treating several works, with a focus on those of Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett, he argues that American literature evinces a peculiar anxiety about the destruction of a worldview that attributed to the United States the power of "a primeval jungle" over the "most archaic temple" of Europe. Ultimately, Hassan aligns the concept of "silence" with the subversion of conventional language and form, as well as the destruction of earlier modes of authority.

In *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (1971), Hassan continued his exploration of silences and subversion in literature, contending that the Orpheus myth provides a model for authors who seek to create a language of nothingness. The text draws a line of tradition "that extends from Sade, through Kafka, Genet, and Beckett, to the literary imagination of our own day." A similar tradition extends from William Blake and Friedrich Hölderlin to Walt Whitman and Arthur Rimbaud; and from Jean-Paul Sartre to Albert Camus to Alain Robbe-Grillet. Beginning each section with a biographical sketch of each of his chosen authors, Hassan notes the contributions they made toward the literature of silence. Hemingway, for example, employed a

very limited vocabulary, "perhaps the smallest of any major novelist," and minimalist lines, refusing to synthesize or justify the violence of war he depicted. Meanwhile, Sade constructed a psychological prison, creating "an absolute moral vacuum in the world, which he then proceeds to fill with his overweening consciousness."

Hassan undertook his most provocative exposition of Postmodernism in his essay collection *Paracriticisms* (1975), a work that both outlines a definition of the term and illustrates the discontinuities and resistances to definition that Postmodernism entails. Immediately announcing its unconventionality with visual devices—changes of font and text size, variable margins, and blank spaces indicated by empty parentheses or underlining—the book is mischievous in its content as well, interjecting number and word games and quotations without commentary. It presents Hassan as a fictional character, observing his previous work with irony, incorporating snippets of reviews, and rewriting his ideas in parodic form. In discussions ranging over literature, art, science, philosophy, and religion that treat, at once, Plato, James Joyce, and Jimi Hendrix, Hassan eschews a coherent thesis or even a coherent voice. In their place, he offers an alternate mode of criticism that does not establish the authority of the critic but instead constantly undermines it through circularity, discontinuity, interruption, and impersonation. *The Right Promethean Fire* (1980) also challenges conventional forms of literary and cultural investigation through deliberately playful acts. In this book, Hassan explores the ideas of social and physical scientists, among them Sigmund Freud, Arthur Koestler, and Albert Einstein, characterizing criticism as experiment, personal inquiry, and performance rather than as definition and comprehension.

In a body of work that redefines criticism in terms of the critic's personal encounter with texts, Hassan's autobiographical books, *Out of Egypt* (1986) and *Between the Eagle and the Sun* (1996), may also be considered installments in his development of a distinctive critical mode. Although *Out of Egypt* is divided into four sections titled "Beginnings and Ends," "Solitudes: 1925-1941," "Resolutions: 1941-1946," and "Passages: 1946-1985," the chronological markers belie the lack of a traditional narrative. Both books combine fragments of personal history with critical interjections on literature, philosophy, and religion. A retrospective of essays from Hassan's career, *Rumors of Change* (1995) marks moments of transition in American letters, considering such writers as William James, Wallace Stevens, and Marge Piercy as well as broader subjects, including power and the postmodern imagination. *In Quest of Nothing* (2010) collects fifteen essays written between 1998 and 2008 that reflect the diversity of Hassan's interests: autobiography and travel, geopolitics and postcolonial studies, Postmodernism, spirituality, and nihilism. Through examinations of locales and literature from around the world, the work explores cultural relations between the East and West.

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

Alternately revered as the father of Postmodernism and derided for his unconventional methodology, Hassan has intrigued and perplexed critics who attempt to characterize his work. Responses to his first book were generally favorable, hailing his forceful debut as a critic, with Paul B. Newman (1962-63) remarking, "One feels that *Radical Innocence* is an important book: a brilliant and comprehensive report on the writers of the fifties." Louis D. Rubin, Jr., (1962; see Further Reading) condoned Hassan's divergence from "the kind of critical study in which novels are examined and generalizations attempted from what is found" into a practice in which "the theory comes first," but he warned of the possibility that novels are not only "read as moral allegories, but they are *judged* as moral allegories." Austin M. Wright (1963; see Further Reading) also found "significant limitations" in Hassan's definition of form and attempts at formal analysis, although he praised *Radical Innocence's* "erudition and persuasive power," declaring it "the best book yet written on the fiction of the period." David Sanders (1962) characterized Hassan's protagonists as dependent on an existential condition that is defined by an ironic encounter with the world.

*The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, Hassan's fourth book and his first to use the word "postmodern" in its subtitle, attracted harsher indictments for its approach to criticism. Marvin Mudrick (1971; see Further Reading) was openly disdainful, describing Hassan's writing as "wet pastry" that tends toward "unintelligible platitude." He censured the author's habit, "at each pause in what might be called his argument," of appending a lyrical sentence that resembled "an abrupt little Parthian fart." Edward W. Said (1972) also criticized Hassan's "shortcuts, verbal tricks that poorly disguise his wanting insight and work," protesting that "[l]iterature for him amounts to a biography plus a flood of slogans on subversion." In a passage that summarizes critical confusion about Hassan's methods, Said asked, "Is this philosophy, or is it history, or is it literature?"

Hassan's *Paracriticisms* met with greater approval. Citing it as a "radical work of criticism in both form and content," Sharon Weinstein (1975; see Further Reading) explained that its strength lay in compelling readers to derive their own conclusions. But although she admired its playful and poetic qualities, she ultimately professed ambivalence toward its view of a world that defies attempts to create meaning. Robert D. Spector (1976) identified the book's primary strategy as one of using literature to stimulate the critic's emotional response to the posited end of humanism.

Reviews of Hassan's more recent essays have focused on the broad scope of his interests and his unusual perspective. Jerome Klinkowitz (1988) argued that Hassan's work redefines the act of criticism. According to Klinkowitz, Hassan sees American literature as a ceaseless struggle against the history by which the rest of the world is bound. Brigitte Scheer-Schäzler (1988) analyzed *Out of*



*Egypt*, arguing that despite the common critical assumption that the autobiographer's impulse is narcissism or self-justification, Hassan's work is actually "an expression of the human desire for a life and a world beyond the self." Jerzy Durczak (1997) noted that, despite scholarly trends aligning criticism with politics, Hassan deliberately avoided subscribing to a political stance, thus remaining an outsider who favored elegance to specialized jargon. Alfred Hornung (2012) suggested that Hassan's global experience and his sweeping view of literature allow readers to see culture on a planetary scale, potentially inspiring the collective improvement of the human condition.

Irene Hsiao

## PRINCIPAL WORKS

*Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961. (Criticism)

*Aspects du hero americain contemporain* [may be translated as *Aspects of the Contemporary American Hero*]. Paris: Minard, 1963. (Criticism)

*The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett*. New York: Knopf, 1967. (Criticism)

*The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 1971. (Criticism)

*Liberations: New Essays on the Humanities in Revolution*. Ed. Ihab Hassan. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1971. (Essays)

*Contemporary American Literature, 1945-1972: An Introduction*. New York: Ungar, 1973. (Criticism)

*Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1975. (Criticism)

*The Right Promethean Fire: Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1980. (Criticism)

*Innovation/Renovation: New Perspectives on the Humanities*. Ed. Hassan and Sally Hassan. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1981. (Criticism)

*Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1986. (Autobiography)

*The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1987. (Criticism)

*Selves at Risk: Patterns of Quest in Contemporary American Letters*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990. (Criticism)

*Rumors of Change: Essays of Five Decades*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1995. (Criticism)

*Between the Eagle and the Sun: Traces of Japan*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1996. (Autobiography)

*In Quest of Nothing: Selected Essays, 1998-2008*. Ed. Klaus Stierstorfer. New York: AMS, 2010. (Criticism)

## CRITICISM

### David Sanders (review date 1962)

SOURCE: Sanders, David. Rev. of *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel*, by Ihab Hassan. *Books Abroad* 36.1 (1962): 74-5. Print.

[In the following review, Sanders considers Hassan's exploration of the post-World War II American fictional hero. In Sanders's view, Hassan describes these heroes as dependent on their existential condition, which is defined by an ironic encounter with the world; furthermore, while they may be influenced by others, they are bound to their own time.]

Already there have been attempts to classify the novelists who have followed the Hemingway-Faulkner era, and men overwhelmed by their roles as literary historians have pegged a Mailer, a Bellow, a McCullers, in confident patterns that derive from earlier literary histories rather than from any observations of present-day writing. Thus, one certified veteran surveyor has recently squeezed Mailer into two pages of a chapter on the continuity of naturalism and thoughtfully added titles by Algren, Jones, Bellow, O'Hara, and Bourjaily in an accompanying footnote. In 1951, John Aldridge produced *After the Lost Generation*, a study whose title and opening sections devoted to Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Dos Passos suggested that no definition was then possible. Several of the novelists spoke for themselves in *The Living Novel* (1957) and went relatively unattended. If such unconcern greets Ihab Hassan's *Radical Innocence*, it may actually mean that we are trapped in the habit of forming patterns and hierarchies and that professed interest in current writing is little more than professional anxiety for new molds into which safe judgments may be cast.

"Radical Innocence" describes the existential situation of the hero of the contemporary novel. "Radical," Professor Hassan writes, "first, because it is inherent in his character and goes to the root or foundation of it. But radical, too, because it is extreme, impulsive, anarchic, troubled with vision." The term, then, can be a useful means of understanding the prevalence of grotesques, picaros, victims, anti-heroes, and other less accountable central characters in fiction written since Hiroshima. It helps to explain why comparisons between present writers and their immediate predecessors are so misleading. The world into which such radical innocence is now thrust is so impersonal that it makes the celebrated impersonality of World War One and the Depression years seem almost a romantic evocation. Radical innocence compels one to recognize that this pervasive difference may be what matters most in considering any honest writer working in the present. He may be indebted to almost anyone before him, but he cannot

possibly be categorized outside the special conditions of his present encounters.

The book is divided into three sections. In the first, this basic condition is described against a background of contributing history. Here, the reader must hold tight to definitions as the lines summon a storehouse of references to historians, social scientists, and even a few literary critics—notably Northrop Frye. It has not been easy for Professor Hassan to show the steps through which the hero in American novels has passed from being an initiate to becoming a rebel or a victim. Because the change is not confined to America, these three hard-wrought chapters must show why the hero is existential and not strictly Existential, how he is prefigured not only by *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but by *Notes from Underground* as well.

Hassan next analyzes nine novels which realize three ironic possibilities in the existential hero's encounter with experience. Seizing the terms of *pharmakos*, *eiron*, and *alazon* from Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, Hassan shows: first, the tragic irony in William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*, Harvey Swados's *Out Went the Candle*, and Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*; next, the "hovering" irony in Frederic Buechner's *A Long Day's Dying*, Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*; and, finally, the potentially comic irony in Herbert Gold's *The Optimist*, John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle*, and J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*. This reader especially appreciated the comments on *The Naked and the Dead*, perhaps the book most often oversimplified in casual references, and the analyses of Swados's and Cheever's novels, which rarely have been considered outside of their initial reviews.

Without claiming that they are the long-sought giants of their time, the third part of *Radical Innocence* consists of separate essays on the work of Carson McCullers, Truman Capote, J. D. Salinger, and Saul Bellow. Hassan chose them not because their work is "the final vindication of the fictional imagination in our time," but because it "defines a certain character of achievement which typifies the age." The sequence is not hierarchical. Rather, it is like the progression used in the second section: Mrs. McCullers begins by implying the reconciliation between the self and the world which comes nearest to reaching an affirmation in the novels of Saul Bellow. Irony is most tragic in her work, most comic in his.

Ihab Hassan committed himself to definition in *Radical Innocence* without pretending to write a definitive book. The result should be met with like honesty by students of contemporary literature. Bellow and Salinger and Swados should be read for what they have done in their own time. As the literature from 1945 onward is considered beyond its present citation in appendices and footnotes, it should not be fashioned into a sequel of the well-worn summaries of the Twenties and Thirties.

Paul B. Newman (review date 1962-63)

SOURCE: Newman, Paul B. Rev. of *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel*, by Ihab Hassan. *Critique* 5.3 (1962-63): 112-16. Print.

[In the following review, Newman presents *Radical Innocence's* vision of modern man as a failed and isolated rebel. According to Newman, Hassan paints contemporary heroes as having no claim to religion, myth, or community and as serving instead as tragicomic figures whom we admire for their individual discoveries rather than their public service.]

*Radical Innocence* is an existentialist study of American fiction since the Second World War. In addition, it is a subtly pungent comment on modern society. As Mr. Hassan says, "If Existentialism is a symptom of an industrial society in process of dissolution, the existential self which modern literature reveals is one that reaches out to new conditions while recoiling to preserve a radical kind of innocence." Essentially, "radical innocence" is an effort to affirm values in a time when individualism has usurped the value-creating functions of society and in so doing has begun to dissolve the bonds of society itself. The individual is then thrown back on his own resources, forced to supply the values and motivations which society and tradition have ordinarily provided in the past.

In essence, Mr. Hassan's thesis is that modern man is the product of an "intractable" society against which he cannot rebel because he cannot find a viable existence in it. "Initiation" is no longer possible—except in a purely formal and hence never-finished sense—and as a result the basic condition of the modern hero is isolation. Having never escaped from that, how can he revolt? On the other hand, how can he accept? The answer, as Mr. Hassan sees it, lies in a form of dramatic mockery; the hero of the modern novel, coming to terms with the problems of modern man, seeks merely to make an enigma clear: revolt in the modern world is hopeless and at the same time it is our only hope.

"Radical innocence" is the form which revolt takes in the American novel. It is a state of mind which has long been familiar to America, for America has never mastered the contradictions of its beginnings: contradictions which were inevitable in any beginning but which have been heightened by the "continuing revolution" on which American society is based. "History, in fact, knows no beginning, only development." The essential contradiction in American life is the contradiction between the parties of hope and memory, as R. W. B. Lewis would call them, and the failure to find a middle ground is a symptom of that "recoil" by which the individual preserves his innocence at the expense of his ability to find acceptance in the world. As Mr. Hassan says: "Childhood and youth satisfy at once the demands of our past and the hopes of our future. This is our national neurosis, the form of our recoil from an actual world that brings Failure, Age, and Death."

Mr. Hassan's analysis has something in common with that of Mr. Lewis in his *The American Adam*, but Mr. Lewis, working with writers of an earlier period, finds the presence of an actual reconciliation in the work of Hawthorne, Melville and James: the reconciliation is the product of an initiation which has succeeded. Through the acceptance of tradition these men have gained awareness of guilt and time—have gained existence in a time-bound world where tradition grants redemption (and a second innocence) through its values. This view creates the possibility of a third party—the “party of irony” as Mr. Lewis calls it. Essentially, Mr. Lewis sees tragedy through Christian eyes, after the manner of Hawthorne, for whom revolt against and acceptance of the idea of original sin were essential to a growth beyond Adamic innocence. Mr. Hassan is also dealing with a “party or irony,” but since the characters of the novels with which he deals fail to succeed in losing their radical innocence, they do not succeed to the tragic mode. Neither do they succeed to the comic. They are grotesques.

In a brilliant analysis, Mr. Hassan defines the relevance of the breakdown of belief to the development of the modern grotesque hero. As the tragedy of Hawthorne developed out of a simultaneous challenge and submission to the tenets of tradition, so comedy emerges from a nascent world-view against which its author struggles while seeking for acceptance. If comedy and tragedy then depend for their significance upon a struggle with belief, either traditional or incipient, the form of the modern novel emerges out of a struggle to find meaning in a context without belief. As Mr. Hassan says: “The grotesque is uncreated. But it is also, in people, a kind of inwardness gone sour, a perverse insistence on *subjectivity*. It is innocence deformed and preying on itself. The aim of the grotesque, in fact, is to *perpetuate the victim in the self*.”

The grotesque mode, in short, is an attempt to impress us with the fact that we are not alive. The dialectics of mass society are the dialectics of isolation, and individualism destroys itself in the name of material progress. Frustrated by his sense of not belonging, the individual turns more deeply inward. Struggling to maintain his identity, he only deepens the gap between himself and society. In a nation of individualists this problem becomes endemic:

The World, in our time, seems to have either vanished or become a rigid and intractable mass. The anarchy of nihilism and the terror of statism delimit the extremes between which there seems to be no viable mean. Mediation between Self and World appears no longer possible—there is only surrender or recoil. In its modern recoil, the Self has bared its insatiable nature. The hero has become an anti-hero. And the latter, knowing that there is always an element of crime in freedom, that indeed freedom may be defined only in terms of rebellion, readied himself to pay the full price of immolation. The rebel-victim came of age.

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The hero as anti-hero may suffer, but he cannot tell why he suffers, for in a faithless world he lacks the demonstrable criteria of character and dignity. The relativity of choices makes all choices the same. By the same token his perception of the situation remains both “limited and relative.” His insights are limited by his bewilderment. “Because the hero seldom attains to full knowledge, he is seldom a tragic figure in the classic sense. And because his life is so rarely devoid of genuine pain, he is rarely a comic figure of harmless compromises.”

The result is that the form of modern art is tragi-comic. Its tendency is toward a confusion, even a breakdown of forms, which in itself is related to the ever-increasing relativity and meaninglessness of values in society. Nevertheless, its existence is a refutation of that meaninglessness at the same time that it is, in a certain sense, a celebration of it. Mr. Hassan is less pessimistic than I have made him out to be. He is in fact a spirited and objective observer of a spectacle which he seems to find both alarming and invigorating. His insights are allusive and charged. His style, intricate and flexible, constantly challenges one's intellectual vitality. In a sense he writes criticism as poetry. The qualities of Mr. Hassan's style may be seen in his description of the modern hero as a diver beneath the frozen surface of a mass society: in which manners have been replaced by materialistic yardsticks—status symbols—as measures of the differences between men:

The central fact about fiction in a mass society may be this: that as the modes of behavior congeal into a hard, uniform crust, the hero attempts to discover alternate modes of life on levels beneath the frozen surface. The new hero is a diver, a subterranean, and this accounts for the aesthetic distance which the formal resources of the novel put between him and the standardized realm of social behavior. A diver, however, moves where light is seldom sharp, and the shadowy contours of things melt into the strange imaginings of the eye. Forced beneath the surface, the hero in a mass society lacks some measure of definition, lacks the basis to distinguish between illusion and reality which the traditional novel afforded.

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The genuine measure of human differences probably lies somewhere between manners and one's ability to influence the outcome of events. Since our society places such a heavy emphasis upon the latter we are forced to lump the mass of men together—increasingly so, as our effective social units become concentrated into groups of larger size. The result is an increasing contempt for mere modes of *communication*—for manners, as such—compensated for (to some extent) by the existence of cultural pockets between which communication is impossible: the Beatniks, hipsters, juvenile delinquents, and others, grading off toward the criminal elements in our culture. In addition, as Mr. Hassan points out, certain ethnic and regional differentiations in our culture exist, which still afford some measure of intimate and personal communion to the members