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What Lost Generation?

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What Lost Generation?...

...Margaret Perry

Back in the twenties there rose a group later referred to as the "lost generation." They were the ones who could not find themselves, could not adjust to the life around them, and therefore did not become lost in the mass of those who were 'adjusted.' The "lost" could not be cowed into believing what they did not, nor could this minority be torn away from their lonely journey of seeking the verities which they found so hard to recognize. And because this group separated itself from mass thinking and walked gropingly into the future, it has been labeled the "lost generation."

But then, was it the only generation that has been lost? How many generations have not felt the pangs of uncertainty — of searching? In 1920 the world had the sanguine memory of a war which happened to be the fertile ground from which their "lost generation" rose. But is it not true that all generations — our generation — have had to face either war, or something even more disconcerting: ideas? The "lost generation" could not accept the ideas of the mass, could not live in a world of indifference to the chaos around them, and today we have the same problem where we see a few of the present generation lost in a whirlpool of ideas and beliefs. Certainly we have had wars — the petty wars, the big wars — and this generation has had, like generations before, the problem of facing the beliefs of today, of yesterday, and of choosing to accept or reject them to some satisfaction. Here, we see, is the dilemma; and now is the time when there will exist a separation between those who find their niche in the world and those who refuse to grasp just anything and therefore become "lost."

The present maturing men and women have been labeled the "sober generation" — the "quiet generation." Some people seem to lament the fact that contemporary young adults are not a reflection of the Scott Fitzgerald era. But what critics of the present generation fail to note in its quiescent demeanor is a trait of interrogation. The lost faces which are emerging from the mass are somehow being overlooked in the sea of those who do not care to search, or do not attempt to understand. One need only to observe carefully to notice that now
— in this present moment — another lost generation is rising, a generation which does not sip champagne from slippers, or hold nudist bathing parties, but one which is most painfully searching for truth.

Most obviously there have always been individuals, or institutions, in search for life's verities. Every age has produced a Spokesman, in one form or another — respected or not by the world — expressing a mode of seeking out, and of living life. And so the present generation has been struck with the unquenchable longing to search and to search, to accept or reject, and to search again. Because the youth of today have been surrounded by hate, fear, and suspicion, their minds have become confused. Their hearts — their souls — cannot see, cannot grasp enough love in this world of hate, fear, and suspicion. Therefore, disenchantment, and an inability to realize what beliefs they should cling to in order to find a place in the existing society.

The present generation could argue that their mothers and fathers, who matured during the twenties, have given them a chaotic and run-down world in which to live. But the time for blaming one generation for the depravity of the other is past. If those in the contemporary scene would cease to lament over what they have not inherited and would proceed to present — in modern terms — their ideas of faith, we would at least have a starting point. The modern novels — poetry — drama — are filled with disillusionment and unrest without portraying solutions. Everything is in turmoil; nothing is certain. If only there could emerge one person, or institution, of enough stature — with enough faith — to instill our hearts and souls with a fervid belief in the good, the true, and the beautiful (and point out what they are) the underside of the earth would turn up its face. But it seems as if the thinkers of today can only define the problem, lament over it, and leave it to rest upon the breasts of others in this “lost generation.” And because this is not enough, there are still the cries of those who wail: but what is the solution . . . but what is the solution?