

1920S SETTING



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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

SOCIETAL NORMS

The conservative society of the early twentieth century was changed by the First World War. Society began to systematically throw off the restrictions of the pre-war days, and a blossoming new vibrant energy, almost nihilistic in its immediacy, swept across Europe and the USA.

The USA had emerged from the First World War utterly transformed. From a debtor with a struggling economy, at the end of the war the USA was a powerful new world leader both politically and economically. Industrial output and exports to war-ravaged and recovering Europe were increased. The US, though, emerged with economic problems of their own. With greater economic output came inflation, which pushed up production costs. Manufacturers initially froze and then reduced wages and even laid off workers. The US union movement responded to the measures by calling for strikes and other industrial unrest in 1919. A wave of strikes swept industrial America and the ill-feeling and competition for work spilled out into race riots. Mistrust of Socialism, Communism and European immigrants took hold in the upper echelons of political and industrial America, leading to a tightening of the immigration laws. The government intervened to prevent wage reductions and increase production and, by 1922, a resurgence in economic prosperity led to an economic boom with higher wages and standards of living. People found that they had money, including easy credit, to spend on manufactured consumer goods, thus further fuelling the economy.

Consumerism was hugely increased for those with money. Relative and actual prices for goods were falling but there was more disposable income for those in good jobs. A greater demand for consumer goods meant more money ploughed back into the national economy. The stock market was booming. Cars allowed more personal freedom, radios transmitted music and news, and new and exciting forms of music allowed much more liberal forms of dancing. The division between rich and poor was brought into focus, a 'live for the moment' attitude emerged. A feeling of impermanence seemed to sweep the country, and the 'Roaring Twenties' was born, lasting until the Great Depression which followed the stock market crash of October 1929.

Music, as usual, reflected or drove the social movement. Influences from Jazz and black music styles led to faster and wilder dances. Dances such as the Grizzly Bear, Turkey Trot and One-Step did not survive the war but many other popular dance styles of the pre-war era were retained, especially, of course, by the older

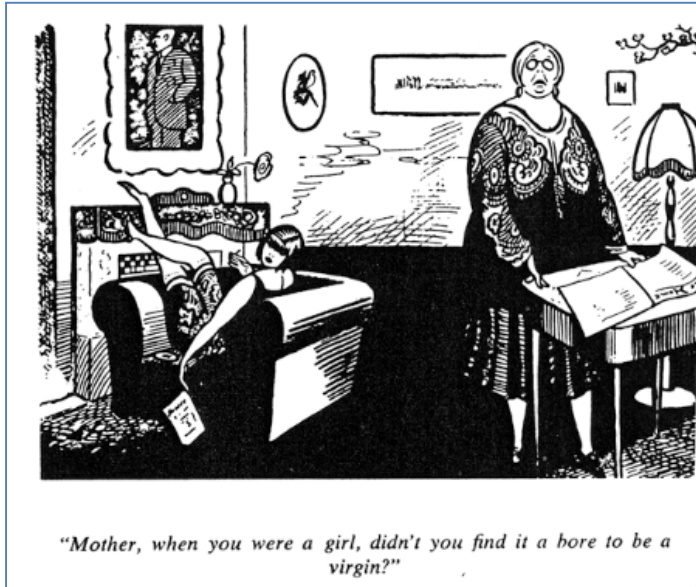


generation and more conservative youngsters; waltzes and tangos, for example, survived the war years to resurface, somewhat changed, in the social dances of the 1920s. Dancing was freer, less formal. The new dances were more exciting and athletic, from the Samba to more exotic fads like the Charleston and the Black Bottom. A particular favourite was the Foxtrot, which had emerged before the war but ironically had not been popular enough to become unfashionable afterwards. Music, it is interesting to note, was often sold on the back of the dance you could perform to it. You bought the record not only for the music track but also for the dance.

The new sense of freedom extended to sex. Whilst by no means a 'free love' society, sex for unmarried adults was somewhat more accepted in the Jazz Age. The 1920s flapper certainly showed that she was prepared to take control of her own sex life. Whilst a majority of women carried the moral hesitancy of their parents' generation when it came to sex outside of marriage, there were a growing number prepared to embrace and accept their own sex drive, encouraged that they had greater control in avoiding unwanted pregnancies by the introduction of the diaphragm to the USA in 1916.

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Romance for young people was in state of flux. Freedom to go to dances or for drives in cars meant that adult supervision was not as oppressive as it was pre-war, which led to greater liberalism. However, peer pressure was still a major restraint in the world of dating. A young woman could legitimately be seeing several



young men at the same time and such popularity was often viewed by suitors as being more important than actually being attractive. Her beaux would 'make love' to her, but this was not what modern interpretation would suggest. Rather they would express their undying attraction or love verbally or with presents, usually in fashionably hyperbolic terms. If the young woman particularly favoured a man then she might allow him to lead her outside of a party for a passionate kiss. Further favour might lead to 'petting', defined as anything from really serious kissing to more advanced and experimental sexual behaviour such as foreplay but stopping short of actual sex.

'Petting parties' were organised by older teenagers, where attendance assumed a willingness to 'pet'. A young woman who allowed several young men to reach the stage of petting without being exclusive might become known as a flirt or tease. Sex itself was still a hugely significant act, although not as significant as it had been at the turn of the century. A young engaged couple were accepted, by their peers at least, as being 'allowed' to have sex as it was part of finding out how compatible they were. Diaphragms (and condoms, of course) allowed women to have sex without pregnancy, which was always at the forefront of most young couples' minds. Teenage sex with anyone but someone you were engaged to, however, was inviting gossip and possible social exclusion, especially for the girl.



FASHION

One of the more obvious, and indeed defining, changes in post-war USA was in the field of women's clothing. The corsets and tight clothes of the turn of the century were giving way to looser outer clothing and less restrictive underwear. For the more fashionable, waists disappeared to create dresses with a straight 'drop'. More daring women, such as the (in)famous 'flappers', wore skirts with hems far higher up the leg than was considered entirely decent, even reaching above the knee. The emerging fashion was for flat, boyish figures which meant that structured undergarments emphasising busts and waists were out. For women to wear trousers was still very daring, and women who did so risked being labelled as lesbians (see the section below on Homophobia). One exception was in the field of sports, including riding and golf, where the wearing of knee-length bloomer-style trousers was often, but not always, acceptable. By the middle part of the period,

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the late 1920s and early 1930s, images of Hollywood stars wearing baggy 'beach' or 'lounge' pyjama trousers made them increasingly popular for very informal occasions, although trouser-wearing women were still seen as somewhat bohemian and bold. By the beginning of the 1930s, the defined waist was returning and there was a move towards wider shoulders.

Despite the almost universal image of 1920s women in straight bobbed hair wearing cloche hats, women's hair was usually kept long but worn in a variety of high or short styles. Hair worn long was generally restricted to very informal 'undress' situations such as at the beach, with more usual styles involving long hair tidily arranged above the neck. Various tight wave styles, such as the famous 'Marcel Wave', were suddenly more practical and popular thanks to the inventions of a metal curling machine, the style having previously required risking scorched hair using curling irons heated in the coals of a fire. Deliberately less tightly controlled hair, also usually arranged high, was a popular hairstyle for bohemians and very occasionally for flappers. When a young woman did take the ultimate plunge and have her hair cut short, in the early part of the period she would be making a very brave statement and be risking social criticism. Religious and conservative views were that long hair was feminine. It took some years for short-cut hair to become socially acceptable and this was driven, as with many other fashion statements, by Hollywood actresses.



Male fashion changed very little. The three-piece suit, almost invariably worn with a hat, was the essential male uniform for all social classes above college age. The quality and condition of the suit, as well as the shirt and detachable collar underneath, would indicate your position in life. Men working at heavy physical labour might lose the jacket and collar, but the waistcoat was often still present, even if unbuttoned. Neutral dark colours and pinstripes in greys, blues and browns were the most common suit colours, but less conservative combinations were worn by those wanting to make a splash. The latter included many gangsters, some of whom became notorious for their distinctive sartorial extravagance. Men's fashion in the 1930s reflected an increase in 'hyper-masculinity', with wide lapels and shoulders and narrowed waists.

LAWS

Prohibition, officially the 18th Amendment, was brought into force on 16th January 1920 and not repealed until 5th December 1933 with the adoption of the 21st Amendment. It is useful to note that Prohibition outlawed the sale, transport and manufacture of alcohol, but not its consumption or private possession. Only a very small number of arrests were actually made in relation to the number of manufacturers and distributors of illicit alcohol, but even that small percentage led to overbooked courts and overcrowded prisons, and then conviction relied on a usually sympathetic alcohol-drinking jury bringing in a 'guilty' verdict.

The corruption and rise of organised crime linked to Prohibition is perhaps well known, but the emergence of 'speakeasies' also brought about an enforced mixing of sexes, social classes and different races. Women had previously been restricted to drinking only in company with men, and even then not all establishments allowed them in. Single women trying to enter saloons had often been assumed to be prostitutes. Whilst few black people might have patronised largely white establishments (having their own drinking places or holding 'rent parties'- see below), they certainly worked in the bars and provided

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entertainment, and the rise in popularity of jazz was largely due to its being played in speakeasies. With smuggled commercially produced alcohol expensive, poorer folk had to make do with moonshine, or 'bathtub gin', and any one of a number of other vile concoctions distilled from ethyl alcohol, paint, varnish, perfume, or similar sources. Many of these proved poisonous, with plenty being fatal. The rise in popularity of sweet and heavily-flavoured cocktails has been attributed to Prohibition-era attempts to make homemade gin taste more acceptable. There was also a rise in the popularity of 'rent parties', where people opened up their apartment for a fee-paying crowd to dance, drink and have a good time away from the eyes of the law. The fees gathered were usually low but helped poorer tenants to afford their rent, hence the name. Of course, wealthier people would also host wild parties but these rarely charged an entrance fee.

Gun laws only came into effect towards the end of our period. In response to the violence of the gangster era, Roosevelt introduced the National Firearms Act in 1934. This means that all firearm sales were now taxed (\$200 sales tax) and registered, as well as the owner's details being recorded. It also spelt the end of legally-held fully automatic weapons, including the good old Thompson SMG. Also now banned for private ownership were sawn-off and short-barrelled shotguns and rifles, silencers and 'gadget' firearms such as cane guns and pen guns. In addition, the sale of dynamite, grenades and the like were now heavily regulated.



Traffic laws were left to the states to decide upon, with most opting for slow speed limits within town or city limits (15 or 20 mph was typical), and anything from 50 to 70 mph outside. Sticking to speed limits was often a matter of personal morality, with few states having enough police to properly enforce them. The Ford Model T had a theoretical top speed of around 45mph on roads, so sticking to out-of-town limits was not a hardship. Faster cars were generally the most expensive, and the wealthy would often flout traffic laws in the knowledge that they could usually buy their way out of trouble. Such

reckless disregard for speed limits is a key element in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

SEXISM, RACISM, AND HOMOSEXUALITY AND HOMOPHOBIA

However much we are attracted to the glamour and excitement of the Jazz Age, it cannot be denied that it fell far short of our own standards of equality and what is considered acceptable. Needless to say, the final decision on how much authentic, but distasteful, period bigotry is to be included in the game is up to the GM and players.

SEXISM

The position of women following the First World War was improving from earlier days, but was by no means equal to that of men. In 1920, the 19th Amendment gave women in the US the right to vote, and a change in divorce laws made divorce easier. Although this latter change obviously affected both men and women, it allowed more women to escape from loveless and abusive marriages with less consequential stigma than had been previously been the case. During the 1920s, around 8 in 1000 marriages ended in divorce.

Women's education was improving from its pre-war position. Despite increases in women's colleges, at the turn of the century, only 19% of all college degrees awarded in the USA were awarded to women. By 1928 this had more than doubled to 39% and young women had greater access to higher education.

Greater improvement was seen in the North than in the South. Educated women found gaining employment relatively easy in the 1920s. As well as the need for stenographers, secretaries, shop girls and all the 'usual'



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employment associated with women, employers were keen to employ women in less gender-usual unskilled and semi-skilled positions within industry. Rather than being a deliberate move to bring equality, however, such employment was due to women being paid far less than a male equivalent, as little as half the wage in some cases. The excuse for such wage inequality was that women were expected to be supported by a man, and hence their income was expected to be secondary a man's income. Male workers were often hostile to women working in 'male' occupations and environments, seeing them as taking jobs from men with families to support. Married women taking such jobs were especially vilified. More detail about this inequality can be found in *1920s Jobs and Status*.

However, not all work was available to women. The so-called 'Protective Laws' were enacted by most states and covered thousands of laws designed to prevent women from taking certain jobs. In the main these were jobs involving heavy physical work or dangerous conditions but also included jobs that might have a detrimental effect on a woman's morals. These restrictions were supported by unions. Bans on night work or long hours often meant that women were denied the opportunity to do overtime or the better-paid shifts. Women might also be denied jobs because the employer did not have suitable toilets, and many employers refused to hire pregnant women or dismissed them when they became pregnant because pregnancy was judged to decrease attention span and job efficiency.



Many women could nonetheless earn their own wage and this gave them greater financial independence. They were also a new consumer market previously untapped by advertisers and manufacturers, who began to produce consumables specifically aimed at women. Makeup, perfumes and cigarettes were just some of the products that were designed and marketed specifically to appeal to women. Cigarettes, for example, were deliberately manufactured to be milder in flavour and more elegant in appearance to sell to the new class of working women.

In law, married women were essentially treated as an extension of their husband. They could not bring legal action independently (except against their husband...), had no rights to property in their own name, and struggled to get a passport that was not also in the husband's name. A woman wanting to travel abroad without her husband was viewed with great suspicion. Even staying unmarried might not have been the answer to greater freedom. In contrast to unmarried men, an unmarried woman in her late 20s was viewed with some suspicion, not least by married women who assumed them to be mistresses and by single men who were suspicious that such women must have flaws that made them poor marriage prospects.

Independence in young women was one thing, but society (including most women) still expected that same young woman to be seeking out to secure a husband to support her financially. Women not conforming to this expectation could expect to suffer socially, and probably economically. A woman on her own could expect to be turned away from clubs and theatres and be the target of gossip even if she did manage to secure entry; acquiring a male escort (e.g. brother or friend) was customary. Securing loans, mortgages or other financial necessities might prove extremely frustrating unless independently wealthy enough to bypass the usual requirements for a man to counter-sign such applications.

Playing a female character in the game might well be worth a *Social Stigma* (Second Class citizen) -5 points. A more extreme stigma is appropriate for defiantly single and independent women over 25.



RACISM

A SMALL BUT IMPORTANT NOTE BEFORE I CONTINUE.

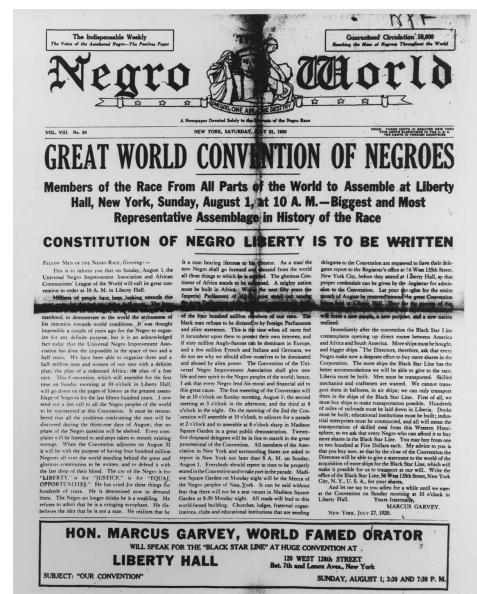
Acceptable modern terminology for discussing black people changes, and it certainly has done since the 1920s. The terms ‘people of colour’, ‘African-American’, and so on seem to be more popular in the US, and ‘black’ is more frequently used in the UK. Being a UK writer I shall use ‘black’ hereafter with an implicit understanding that I am not trying to make any sort of political statement or offend anyone’s sensibilities.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY VERSUS MODERN ACCEPTABILITY

Using appropriate 1920s terminology for black people, many other ethnic groups or for homosexuals is problematic. Whilst it might be easier to whitewash the dilemma by using modern language, this becomes anachronistic and jarring if the game is seeking an historical flavour. Conversely, incautiously flinging about contemporary 1920s racist and homophobic language is (hopefully) very likely to be unacceptable to a group, no matter that their authentic 1920s characters would probably used it. My compromise is mentioned below, but each group should make its own decision. Many regular 1920s terms for different races and alternative sexualities sound both offensive and dated to modern ears, even those employed by respected contemporary writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and, significantly, H. P. Lovecraft. Casual racism was, of course, rife during the period so the everyday language of the Jazz Age reflects this. A GM and group should agree how they will tackle this issue at the beginning of the game, either by ignoring offensive language altogether and using anachronistic modern terminology, or by finding a balance with just enough contemporary language to maintain period flavour without making a game session gratuitously offensive.

Words like ‘nigger’ and ‘darkie’ were casually and frequently bandied about by unthinking or uncaring white society in the 1920s. Perhaps not everyone using such terms at the time realised how offensive they were being, but US (and European) society as a whole was undoubtedly racist. This was the era of eugenics and pseudo-science that sought to show how black and white people were fundamentally different, with white people being portrayed as superior, of course. In my games I would certainly avoid this more inflammatory language unless being employed for its shock value to make a point about the speaking character’s entrenched attitudes. Less is definitely more. If I found myself using it more than once every few sessions then I would be overusing it.

The term ‘negro’ still sounds archaic and awkward to many modern ears. However, whilst some groups may have problems with it, it may be the least offensive of the common terms used to describe black people during the period and did not carry deliberately racist overtones. During the 1920s and well into the second half of the twentieth century, it was commonly used by black people to refer to themselves as well as by more progressive whites. Indeed, some modern US African Americans apparently still prefer the term ‘negro’ to ‘black’. Using the word ‘negro’ within the game allows the group to maintain a period flavour without drifting into either jarring anachronisms or less acceptable and more offensive racist language. As always, the GM and group should find their own balance.



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PLAYING BLACK AND OTHER ETHNIC MINORITY CHARACTERS

The beginning of the twentieth century saw ninety percent of black Americans living in the rural South. By the 1920s, mass migration from the South to the urban North had changed this position somewhat, although the census for 1930 still showed 79% of black Americans living in the South. Both US wartime casualties among the working population and immigration restrictions following the First World War left northern employers in need of cheap unskilled labour, and they deliberately turned to the black population in the South and actively encouraged them to travel north. The South was experiencing declining rural wages and more mechanisation. Many black Americans travelled in search of jobs and better conditions, and the North's big cities saw a large and sudden growth in black households. Jobs and housing available to black people were usually those at the poorer end of the market, and wages were not comparable to white men doing the same job (Detroit's Henry Ford was a notable exception to this practice, although even here black workers tended to be assigned to less desirable positions). See *1920s Jobs and Status* for how this affects GURPS mechanics.



With the 13th Amendment banning slavery having only been signed in 1865, many older black US citizens in the 1920s, particularly those originally from the South, might well have been slaves. Children and grandchildren of former slaves would be common in this era, and many black families will have an older relative who can talk first-hand of their experiences. Remember too that US slavery was not exclusively a feature of the Deep South; states and territories such as Texas, Missouri and Delaware were all slave owning up until the 13th Amendment. Education for black children was limited even in the North, and this meant that they could be stuck with finding unskilled or, at best, semi-skilled jobs and continuing the cycle of black poverty. Even those better educated black workers would have to overcome the hurdle of a lack of jobs available to them due to their colour. Where educated black workers found jobs, they were liable to be pushed into only working for black clients or in black neighbourhoods.

Immigration, urbanization, crime, racketeering, and bootlegging are only a few of the many crises that befell America in 1920s. These predicaments, however, were not without consequences. According to the novellas as well as the non-literary texts under discussion, immigration brought with it alien [...] values that went hand in hand with promiscuity, bacchanalia, fox-trotting, and jazz. Thus, antagonism toward foreigners (new-timers) by native-born Americans (old-timers) is expressed in various forms, particularly racism and xenophobia. In addition, foreigners are held responsible for boosting materialism and immorality in ways that shake the texture of the social order and the foundations of the American family and hence the American identity. Therefore, materialism and mass production are also denounced for making the annihilation of these entities possible by the competitive ambiance they create, the ruthlessness they entail, and the brainwashing of the masses they practice.

DERIVED FROM ABSTRACT IN; WISAM CHELEILA, 'BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: RACIST, XENOPHOBIC, AND MATERIALIST 1920S AMERICA STRUGGLING FOR HOME AND IDENTITY', *COGENT ARTS & HUMANITIES*, 3:1 (2016).



Even in the officially more tolerant North, public attitude to black people was mostly negative. Separate black and white neighbourhoods were common everywhere from New York City to small town America. At a time when jobs were scarce, employers could employ black men at a fraction of the wages paid to white workers and thus actively sought black labourers. In addition, US trades unions usually barred black members and thus black workers were a source of (usually temporary) non-union 'scab' labour when strikes were called. This created dissent amongst both employed and unemployed male white workers and racial tensions rose. In cities in 1919 and subsequent years there were many race riots sparked by various incidents such as (usually unsubstantiated) rumours of inter-racial rape or murder, and (usually substantiated) accusations of racist inequality by local law enforcement. Sporadic lynchings of black men still occurred in the South on the flimsiest of pretexts, fuelled by the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan in 1915 and its growth in the early 1920s.



Although inter-racial relationships were legal in a few, most Northern, US states (including New York and most of the North-East by the early 1930s), anti-miscegenation laws were upheld in the majority of states. This prevented mixed-race couples from both marriage and cohabitation, and a legal marriage in one state would not necessarily be recognised in another. This anti-miscegenation was not always restricted to black-white relationships, incidentally, but could also apply to other races (including Chinese and Hispanic) according to the state in question.

Obviously, setting a strictly historical game in this sort of context can be difficult for modern players. Playing a black or racist character in the period could be walking a delicate tightrope and be a challenging choice. The players and GM need to establish what should be expected from the outset of the game. Although many gaming groups will prefer not to fully play out the racism prevalent in the period, ignoring it completely is an unsatisfactory solution if historical verisimilitude and the turmoil and zeitgeist of the 1920s is important. The answer, as always, lies with the maturity of the group and especially the GM, and their willingness to face historical racism and deal with it in-game in a manner which does not offend the players.

The Disadvantage of *Social Stigma* (Outsider) -10 points, will allow the player of a black character to reflect 1920s US society's attitude mechanically, although this value can be adjusted according to where the campaign is predominantly set. A campaign predominantly in the Deep South, for example, will probably warrant a greater penalty than -10.



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Finally, although primarily speaking about black people of the period, remember that most ethnic groups, notably Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans and Jews, all historically had their share of prejudice in the era. Even the Irish had suffered racist exclusion, not helped by a large second wave of Irish immigrants arriving from the 1850s to 1921. Concern about immigrants bringing immorality and radical politics into the USA led to the imposition of a quota system in 1921 in order to curb further influxes. Although not as socially excluded as those with black skin, any member of an immigrant white European ethnic group such as Poles, Italians or Germans (the war had only recently ended) can still be a minority for a *Social Stigma* (Second Class Citizen) -5 points, and *Social Stigma (Outsider)* -10 points can easily apply to those with non-Caucasian skin and features.

By our period in the 1920s, it ought to be noted that the Irish-American situation was largely reversed, and by 1945 long-established Irish-Americans were in the majority within wealthy US society.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND HOMOPHOBIA

Homosexuality was still illegal throughout the era (and would be for many decades to come), as was cross-dressing, the two being somewhat conflated in the minds of most people at the time. The 1920s and early 1930s saw a rise in gay culture in films, songs and even the pornography industry. An acceptance of, or recognition of at least, gay culture was on the rise in New York and a few other large cities (rather gloriously known as the 'Pansy Craze'), but homosexuals still had to keep their sexuality under wraps in public to avoid arrest. Prohibition had forced people of all status, colour and persuasion together into speakeasies, and a certain amount of this tolerance continued following Prohibition's repeal. Gay clubs were fairly numerous in places like Greenwich Village, but were run by the Mafia (who ensured they stayed open and were not constantly raided) and usually served bad booze at high prices (even following the repeal of Prohibition).



with an acceptable association with the alternative culture of which homosexuality and cross-dressing were a part. The appreciative audience for such 'pansy balls' or 'pansy parades' were largely straight and respectable, including social heavyweights such as the Astors and Vanderbilts, but also included a very significant proportion of homosexuals who openly wore drag and danced with members of the same sex. Higher status homosexuals would be less willing to risk being exposed to society and would thus be less likely to attend exclusively homosexual nightclubs, but they might attend a drag balls and sit undetected amongst the straight attendees.

Less open to the general public were gay bars and nightclubs where like-minded homosexuals, sometimes mixed but often exclusively male or female, would meet up looking for partners and socialising. Such clubs and bars were sometimes run and protected by the Mafia because otherwise the police might occasionally



raid them. Usually, however, they were tolerated by the local authorities so long as they remained discrete. Homosexuality was kept hidden, albeit often only barely. Laws prevented people being openly gay, but a growing subculture invented various elaborate and subtle codes to advertise their situation to others within the homosexual community. The wearing of certain colours, certain hand gestures, certain topics of conversation, all suggested that the person in conversation was a fellow homosexual. Newspaper 'lonely hearts' adverts might include references to Oscar Wilde, for example, or mention that the correspondent had 'unusual tastes'. The word 'gay' was only just beginning to be used to mean homosexual, and a coded conversation might use the word in the hope that it would be repeated in the response.



'Coming out', nowadays used to mean informing the outside world that a person is homosexual, meant something different in the 1920s. Back then it meant entering gay society. The term 'invert', coined by in the late nineteenth century sexologists (sexology being the scientific study of human sexuality) and made popular by Radclyff Hall's 1928 ground-breaking lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, was a common pseudo-scientific term for a homosexual and referred to a supposed inversion of masculine and feminine traits. A marriage of convenience to disguise homosexuality was a 'lavender marriage'. A gay man who dressed in feminine clothes was known as a 'pansy', and men wearing evening gowns and makeup were a common sight in gay clubs.

A gay woman dressing in masculine clothes was a B.D. (bull-dyke or bull-dagger). Any woman wearing trousers during this period, especially wearing men's trousers, would likely be assumed to be a lesbian, and full male evening-wear was almost a badge of membership for some lesbians and was popular attire in lesbian clubs. At the end of the 1920s, loose 'beach pyjamas' were gaining popularity for bohemian or otherwise radical straight women for very informal occasions, and a woman out riding or playing certain sports whilst wearing knee-length 'knickers' might get away with only attracting an occasional disapproving look, but that was as far as a 'respectable' woman could go in the trouser department.

Gaming a homosexual character in the 1920s could be an interesting exercise in subculture, secrecy and discretion, always assuming that the player wants the character's sexuality to be an in-game issue in the first place. Many homosexuals of the time were secretive about their sexuality, and an obvious character choice is the Disadvantage *Secret* for -5 points (or even -10 if the character is a respectable member of high society or holds a high rank in their profession). Being openly gay, or even being widely assumed to be gay, will very likely attract a *Social Stigma* (especially amongst more conservative society) and will bar the character from many professions as well as drawing the attentions of the police or psychiatrists (!). Some more liberal professions or subcultures would not necessarily share such stigma; rumours surrounding the sexuality of certain actresses, for example, did not seem to have affected their career or popularity, and a bohemian or artist community is unlikely to care one way or another.

