The Development of the Fitzgerald Hero.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FITZGERALD HERO

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of English

by

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B. A. (Hons), University of Western Australia, 1950
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ABSTRACT

Since Fitzgerald's death in 1940, a considerable interest in his life and work has been exhibited by critics, both academic and otherwise, and many valuable attempts have been made to define the nature of his achievement. But, in spite of the mass of periodical literature devoted to Fitzgerald, there has emerged only a single full-length study of the "Laureate of the Jazz Age." This is Arthur Mizener's The Far Side of Paradise. Its subtitle, "A Critical Biography," accurately suggests the orientation of most Fitzgerald criticism. Aware of the almost too perfectly symbolic pattern of Fitzgerald's life, commentators have frequently sought to transfer that pattern to his work. The result has been a one-sided assessment of his performance. The inadequacies of his personal career are made the bases of certain literary and imaginative inadequacies; if his work is conceded any sort of authority, it is usually felt to be, in Fitzgerald's own phrase, "the authority of failure."

The present study questions neither the peculiarly intimate relationship between Fitzgerald and his writing nor its effect on his artistic procedures. It does maintain that prior knowledge of Fitzgerald's life has too often coloured critics' judgments of his purely literary stature. The positive aim of this dissertation is, then, to use the relation of the man and his work as the basis for arriving at an accurate account of Fitzgerald's artistic achievement. To accomplish this task, attention has been centred in his fictional heroes, who, as
is demonstrated in the introductory chapter, provide the proper clue to understanding his specifically literary merit.

In detail, three lines of investigation have been undertaken. First, there is an analysis of the various techniques by which Fitzgerald transposed his own experience into the record of meaningful literary personalities. Second, his heroes are examined as the embodiments of a consistent set of ideas concerning the nature of Romantic individualism and its operations in the twentieth century. Third, the environments in which his central characters work out their destinies are the subject of some scrutiny. If Fitzgerald's career is the story of his search for a good man, it is equally that of his search for fitting environments wherein his modern morality might be put into effect.

As a result of these enquiries, followed through Fitzgerald's novels and short stories, it becomes evident that one of the major patterns of Fitzgerald's literary career was the progressive coalescence of his mature vision of Romantic individualism with one of his fundamental creative mechanisms—his sense of disaster. Endowed from the first with the ability to create an atmosphere of impending doom, Fitzgerald, as he progressed beyond This Side of Paradise, was forced to find adequate imaginative motivations which might give that sense of disaster a tragic validity. In the end, then, Fitzgerald can be viewed as the writer of modern tragedy rather than the frivolous representative of an era best forgotten. This study does not insist on Fitzgerald's complete success in this role. It does insist on a fresh adjustment in evaluating his literary worth. Such an adjustment must be based on the
realization that the basic condition of Fitzgerald’s writing is its quality as a sustained effort to plot the course of modern individualism in a series of tragic situations; the method adopted in this study for understanding that condition is the examination of the moral ordeals sustained by his fictional heroes.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Books are like brothers. I am an only child. Gatsby my imaginary eldest brother, Amory my younger, Anthony my worry, Dick my comparatively good brother, but all of them far from home. When I have the courage to put the old white light on the home of my heart, then...

The publication of This Side of Paradise in 1920 provided a spectacular start to the writing career of F. Scott Fitzgerald and set a trend in the critical estimate of his art which has never completely disappeared. Yet since the reception of that first novel, many other elements have been added to Fitzgerald's literary reputation, elements which can be organized, both historically and thematically, into meaningful patterns. Therefore some account of the critical response to Fitzgerald since 1920 will here be useful as a means of, first, demonstrating what has already been accomplished in the understanding of the writer and, second, pointing the direction towards the principal concerns of the present study.

Inevitably the enormous success of This Side of Paradise brought its author considerable fame, if of a very special kind. Fitzgerald immediately became known as the flouter of established convention, the spokesman for the young men of the post-War generation and, after a few short stories, for the flappers as well. All the circumstances of the

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1 F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 176. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to C-U.
appearance of his first book conspired to push him in the direction of personal notoriety rather than of literary prominence; and this trend, at least in the first years of the 1920's, was aided and abetted by the behavior of Fitzgerald himself. With the help of his much publicized antics, such as riding down Fifth Avenue on the top of a taxi or jumping into the Plaza fountain, he was soon well on the way to becoming a legend in his own lifetime. It was Fitzgerald's lot to be cast in the role, as Lloyd Morris has written, of "the brilliant, unfortunate symbol of the Jazz Age."

If, in this earliest phase of his career, Fitzgerald suffered from a dearth of intellectual criticism aimed at his work rather than the popular image of the man, such comment was not entirely lacking. It was supplied mainly by his Princeton friends -- T. K. Whipple, John Peale Bishop, Edmund Wilson. Wilson's portrait in The Bookman for March, 1922, is of particular importance; in demonstrating the deficiencies of This Side of Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned, Fitzgerald's lack of intellectual control, the importance of his cultural

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background, and certain elements in his personal psychology the article still remains basic to an understanding of Fitzgerald at this stage in his development. Paul Rosenfeld was similarly perceptive in Men Seen, contriving, in his discussion of the writer's relation to his characters, to define what has since come to be regarded as a major problem in Fitzgerald criticism.

From 1920 to 1925 — while Ernest Boyd spoke of his "smile so winning that only the clichés of romantic fiction can describe it" and "his sense of reverence... that must endear him to people of taste" — in these years Fitzgerald wrote short stories, another novel, and a play, made money, spent it successively in New York, Long Island, and Europe, and finally published The Great Gatsby. That he thought highly of this book and wished it to gain critical as well as popular success is evident from the letters of the period; and in this wish Fitzgerald was not to be disappointed. As a matter fact, for the first time in his career critical acclaim outweighed sales. The Great Gatsby sold well, but in nothing like the same quantities as This Side of Paradise. Yet, more than anything else he wrote, it established Fitzgerald, in the

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6The Great Gatsby sold approximately 20,000 copies in the twelve months following its publication, according to figures cited in Arthur Mizener, The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), pp. 178-179. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TFSOP.
judgment of those he respected, as a writer of major importance. Flatter-
ing letters came from Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, and Edith Wharton; the popular reviews were almost unanimous in their praise. If, as has frequently been argued, The Great Gatsby represents the most complete fulfillment of Fitzgerald's powers, its reception was certainly the high point of his career.

After 1925 Fitzgerald became increasingly involved in personal difficulties, as well as in that general hysteria of the last years of the Boom which he describes so vividly in "Echoes of the Jazz Age." The Wall Street Crash of 1929 meant the end of many phenomena which had sprung up in and been fostered by the decade of the Twenties; among these was Fitzgerald's contemporary reputation. He had published nothing since The Great Gatsby but short stories for the slick magazines (some of which had been collected as All The Sad Young Men in 1926), and his material, to the socio-economically oriented Thirties, appeared increasingly irrelevant. When Tender Is the Night was finally published in 1934, its unfavourable reception was a bitter blow to Fitzgerald. Those critics who did not damn it outright as a hang-over from a decade best forgotten approximated to the opinion expressed by Harlan Hatcher that "there was some good writing in Tender Is the Night; there was also much pathological material and considerable repetition of matters already disposed of in the days of Flappers and Philosophers and Tales of the Jazz Age."8

7See Mizener, TFSOP, p. 169.

It is significant that Hatcher's comment appeared in a book entitled *Creating the Modern American Novel*. Not infrequently in the Thirties Fitzgerald appeared in such works, his name being mentioned in the past tense and in a manner ominously suggestive of a career already closed. However, the flame of his notoriety flickered up in most unfortunate circumstances in 1936. Fitzgerald was discovered in a rest home in Asheville, North Carolina, by an enterprising reporter, who featured a story on the front page of the New York *Evening Post* on September 25, the day after Fitzgerald's fortieth birthday. Reports such as this were sufficient to give the final twist to the Fitzgerald legend — the myth of the romantic, alcoholic writer, burned out and finished with the decade he largely helped to form. As far as the public was concerned, there was little left for Fitzgerald to do but to gravitate to Hollywood, there to finish his life as a scriptwriter. When he died in 1940 the headstone was placed on the legend by the now notorious article of Westbrook Pegler in the New York *World Telegram* for December 26 of that year.9

Yet Pegler's were not the only words evoked by his death. Many magazines published obituaries, some formal, some sympathetic, but the typical tone of all of them is accurately represented by these words from the *New Republic*: "His death [In Hollywood], for anyone who was young in the 1920's, is like the death of one's own youth. It is like the stone

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9 Several of the most famous phrases from this article are quoted in Mizener, *TPSOP*, xvii. Pegler spoke of Fitzgerald's "group or cult of juvenile crying-drunks" and of the era "when Scott Fitzgerald's few were gnawing gin in silver slabs and sniffing about the sham and tinsel of it all."
placed over the grave of all the flappers and smoothies, all the glit-
ter and foolishness and wild good humor.\textsuperscript{10} It was felt that he who,
in the phrase of Glenway Wescott, had been "a kind of king of our
American youth"\textsuperscript{11} had at last had the decency to pass symbolically if
belatedly from the scene.

Nevertheless, the pattern of Fitzgerald's reputation did not
complete itself — did not even solidify into lasting form — with his
death. Fitzgerald, who fiercely resented "the boys and girls who tried
to bury me before I was dead,"\textsuperscript{12} would have found in the posthumous
growth of his fame some little recompense for the long years of neglect.
The rehabilitation of his reputation can be ascribed quite definitely
to a number of individuals. The first of these were a group of Fitz-
gerald's personal friends among the professional writers, who conducted
a symposium in his memory in the \textit{New Republic}. The comments of these
men — John Dos Passos, Glenway Wescott, John O'Hara, and Budd Schul-
berg — were unanimously friendly, often very perceptive, sometimes a
little over-enthusiastic. Nevertheless, combined they made it abundant-
ly clear that Fitzgerald was an important force in the advance of American
fiction.

In the same year as the \textit{New Republic} symposium, 1941, Edmund
Wilson, an even closer and more important friend of Fitzgerald, con-

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{New Republic}, CIII (December 20, 1941), 885.

\textsuperscript{11} Glenway Wescott, "The Moral of Scott Fitzgerald," in Kazin,
\textit{F. Scott Fitzgerald}, p. 116. This article is reprinted from the sym-
17, 1941), 213-217 and CIV (March 3, 1941), 311-313.

\textsuperscript{12} Fitzgerald, \textit{C-U}, p. 176.
contributed still further to his solid establishment as a figure of real literary significance. The appearance of Fitzgerald's unfinished novel, *The Last Tycoon*, under Wilson's editorship, moved Stephen Vincent Benét to write, "You can take off your hats now, gentlemen, and I think perhaps you had better. This is not a legend, this is a reputation—and, seen in perspective, it may well be one of the most secure reputations of our time."\(^{13}\) Later estimates of the novel have not dealt so kindly with it, but no critic seems to have questioned the fact that it is worthy of literary debate. Publication of *The Last Tycoon* did not complete Wildon's efforts on his dead friend's behalf. In 1945 he brought out a further volume which has since assumed almost equal importance with the posthumous novel. This was *The Crack-Up*, a collection of personal articles by Fitzgerald, together with selections from his notebooks and correspondence. *The Crack-Up* was widely reviewed, from *Newsweek* to *The Nation*,\(^ {14}\) and in fact it evoked some of the most significant, intelligent, and influential writing which has accumulated about Fitzgerald.

This new interest in Fitzgerald proved to be infectious, and in the next few years he was re-examined with such widespread interest that it was literally possible to speak of a Fitzgerald revival. The crest of the boom was reached in 1950 and 1951 with the appearance, in

\(^{13}\) Stephen Vincent Benét, "The Last Tycoon," in Kazin, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 116. This article is reprinted from *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXIV (Dec. 6, 1941), 10.

rapid succession, of Budd Schulberg's fictionalized and often misleading version of his life, *The Disenchanted*, Arthur Mizener's more scholarly biography, *The Far Side of Paradise*, and Alfred Kazin's collection of criticism, *Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work*. Schulberg's novel was soon selling by the thousand; Mizener's and Kazin's books were reviewed widely and even widely bought. Fitzgerald was in the air; practically all his novels were being reissued in either hardback or paperback editions. Publishers' Weekly for February 10, 1951, could report that "Mr. Mizener's book had sold 20,000 copies five days after publication" and that "Bantam Books edition of *Tender Is the Night*, published on January 10, sold out a first printing of 240,000 copies within the month, with 62 per cent of the sale in the first ten days."15 For the first time in nearly thirty years Scott Fitzgerald was back on the best sellers' lists.

By this time, too, awareness of the situation had filtered through to academic circles, and in the years 1951, 1952, and 1953 a steady flow of criticism and comment found its way to the "scholarly" journals as well as to the more "popular" publications like the Saturday Review of Literature. Close analyses of individual works (particularly *The Great Gatsby*) were made; severe studies of specific critical problems were undertaken. Fitzgerald was discovered or re-discovered overseas; his merits were debated in *Scrutiny*.16 Malcolm Cowley wrote for

15 Publishers' Weekly, CLIX (Feb. 10, 1951), 879-880.

for the Italian journals; French critics were impressed. And when the international furor had subsided, it was found in his homeland that in Fitzgerald America had produced a writer of lasting, if limited, importance, on whom useful and interesting comment would be made even after the high tide of his posthumous success had receded.

II

As early as 1948 Fitzgerald had been enshrined by his inclusion in The Literary History of the United States—a fact suggesting a definitive "placing" of the nature of his achievement. And, although interesting work continues to be done on his novels and stories, the unanimity which prevails concerning the central core of Fitzgerald's meaning is quite remarkable. Furthermore, a start was made in the creation of this corpus of agreed opinion quite early in Fitzgerald's writing career. In other words, although Fitzgerald's reputation has undergone a number of fluctuations, an objective attempt, largely successful, has been made to isolate the central critical problems which must be faced in any study of his life and writings.


19 For later work, see the Bibliography.

Thus it was early decided that Fitzgerald was the "laureate of the Jazz Age," a phrase which has been so continuously applied and misapplied to Fitzgerald that it has now degenerated into a mere cliche without any real critical worth. Certainly, Fitzgerald's own behaviour helped in his identification with the Twenties, but to characterize his relation to his time by the repetition of a catch-phrase is to limit both Fitzgerald's achievement and the critical process by which it is judged.

Reformulations of the phrase have therefore been attempted, and these have led to further critical truisms about Fitzgerald. Cultural historians have been particularly attracted to his works, finding them invaluable source books for serious study of the post-World War I decade. F. L. Allen in Only Yesterday, Lloyd Morris in Postscript to Yesterday, and Oscar Cargill in Intellectual America have all used Fitzgerald's books as valuable historical documents for an economic, sociological, or ideational analysis of recent American history. With a rather more literary orientation, he has been put to exactly the same use by Frederick J. Hoffman in The Twenties and Alfred Kazin in On Native Grounds.

A genuine literary merit to be deduced from Fitzgerald's alleged laureateship of the Jazz Age was early noted by Paul Rosenfeld when he noted that "what he writes reflects the environment not so much in its superficial aspects as in its pitch and beat."21 Here he is pointing out

21Paul Rosenfeld, Men Seen, p. 216. This essay is reprinted in Kazin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, pp. 71-76.
the same quality that John O'Hara responded to in Fitzgerald in his much quoted phrase, "The people were right, the talk was right, the clothes, the cars were real..." Practically every commentator who has ever engaged himself with Fitzgerald has been aware of his extraordinary capacity to render the quality of a particular time, a place, a moment, through a brilliant selection and arrangement of details. The sort of record that Fitzgerald's work can supply has more than purely historical value.

"To record," he wrote in his Notebooks, "one must be unwary." This is a significant entry in its indication that the sort of historical and spatial accuracy that Fitzgerald was capable of was made possible chiefly by the special organization of his own inner life. And the nature of his personal psychology has also emerged as one of the major problems of Fitzgerald criticism. His career seems to suggest a clear illustration of weakly romantic yearning followed by the inevitable disillusion. The effects of his early success, his slavish attachment to wealth and love of money, the apparent dependence on immature images of achievement — all these aspects of his life have been made the constant centres of critical debate. In particular, much has been made of Fitzgerald's need for "badges of pride"— "those


24 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 76.
ineffable symbols of aristocracy which were forever eluding him,"25 "the shoulder pads worn for one day on the Princeton freshman football field and the overseas cap never worn overseas."26 When these symbols finally failed him, it is said, when the money and the good times at last ran out, Fitzgerald cracked up and fled to North Carolina, where, over a "stock of potted meat, crackers and apples,"27 he weakly brooded on things past. Fitzgerald, it seems to be the general verdict, was in his personal life a weak and immature man.

In particular, his romantic weakness is evidenced by his yearning for the unattainable; "What Fitzgerald valued was a beauty and intensity of attachment, which his imagination required should be an attachment to something inaccessible. For the wholly inaccessible he admitted two modes, the never existent and the already past."28 Hence is established the crucial importance in evaluating Fitzgerald's art of his everlasting preoccupation with time, for his obsessive concern with its passage is projected again and again into his writings. "He was haunted by time," Malcolm Cowley has written, "as if he wrote in a room full of clocks and calendars...."29 Arthur Mizener, Fitzgerald's biographer, has also been drawn to this compulsive theme, and, outside


26Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 84.

27Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 80.


of *The Far Side of Paradise*, probably his most important contribution to his subject is the article, "Scott Fitzgerald: Poet of Borrowed Time."

Since so much of the best writing about Fitzgerald was evoked by *The Crack-Up*, it should not seem surprising that such a large part of it is directed towards the appraisal of Fitzgerald's personal life. However, a more important reason can be found for this fact. If anything emerges from a study of Fitzgerald's critical reputation, it is the marked insistence by his commentators on the intimate relation between the man and his work. If the man was ultimately immature, so then was his work; sometimes the argument is almost as simple as that. Yet it cannot be easily or abruptly dismissed. Quite patently, the relationship between Fitzgerald and his fiction is of an especially close and indestructible nature. Practically everything that ever occurred to him or near him found its way into his writing. His barber made and lost a fortune during the Boom; the episode becomes fiction in "A Change of Class." Zelda became obsessed with the wish to be a dancer; Fitzgerald's reaction to the situation is projected into his work in half a dozen places. A fist fight in which he has been engaged becomes a central incident in the career of Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night*. Memories of his own boyhood become the matter of the series of eight stories involving Basil Duke Lee. In effect, a biographical counterpart could be supplied for nearly every fictional situation that Fitzgerald wrote about. Indeed, it seems that he quite consciously viewed his own life and those of the people about him as
material for his art. Thus Mizener records that when Zelda gave birth to Scotty, Fitzgerald, even at the peak of his emotional involvement, had his notebook out and was taking down every word she said. Her incoherent mutterings were later given, without much change, to Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*.

John Peale Bishop, Fitzgerald's friend from Princeton days, perfectly summed up this aspect of the man when he wrote, "He had the rare faculty of being able to experience romantic and ingenuous emotions and half an hour later regard them with satiric detachment." Yet it was reserved for Malcolm Cowley to convert Bishop's perception of Fitzgerald's character into a critical formula about his writing—a task he performed in the *New Yorker* article, "Third Act and Epilogue." He cultivated a sort of double vision...; he surrounded his characters with a mist of admiration and simultaneously he drove the mist away.... It was as if all his novels described a big dance to which he had taken, as he once wrote, the prettiest girl... and as if at the same time he stood outside the ballroom, a little Midwestern boy with his nose to the glass, wondering how much the tickets cost and who paid for the music." Cowley's idea was so happily phrased that the concept


of "double vision" has become one of the standard techniques by which it is attempted to resolve the central problem of Fitzgerald criticism — the intimate and very special relation between his life and his work.

The same concept, by an easy extension, is sometimes restated as another solution to the critical difficulty of Fitzgerald's immaturity and its projection into his art. The behaviour, it is sometimes granted, is immature, but the "writing" is not. The immature longings of the little Midwestern boy, runs the argument, are recorded in a beautifully pellucid, melodious prose which is more or less divorced from its content. "It is true," wrote Edmund Wilson in 1922, "that Fitzgerald plays the language entirely by ear. But, for all that, his flute is no mean one. He has an instinct for graceful and vivid prose which some of his more pretentious fellows might envy." This idea of Fitzgerald as a "natural stylist," so early enunciated, has since become one of the strongest elements in the accepted corpus of comment, particularly because, if unthinkingly applied, it provides an easy means of evading the most difficult problem of all — that of establishing the degree of imaginative control Fitzgerald achieved over the personal experience he projected into his art.

William Troy, in "Scott Fitzgerald — the Authority of Failure," put forward the ingenious solution that if failure was the end product of his life, it was also the major theme of his fiction, which is thus given validity and force. And if we add Troy's name to those of F. J. Hoffman, Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, and Arthur Mizener, we have called the roll, with one notable exception, of those who are principally responsible for the establishment of what it is not improper to call

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33 Edmund Wilson, "Fitzgerald before The Great Gatsby," in Kazin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 79.
the Fitzgerald critical tradition. The tradition has as its central postulates these facts — Fitzgerald was in one sense or another a representative of the post-World War I decade; he can nevertheless be fitted into an American tradition, cultural, sociological, or literary; he was a romantic man, whose romanticism led to an obsession with time, wealth, and various inadequate symbols of achievement, but which expressed itself through a beautiful style; being a romantic man, he made little distinction between his experience and his fiction; if his life was a failure, this fact must somehow or other be given an explanation in terms of his fiction. And whether the final evaluation of Fitzgerald be rejection or praise, it is invariably in the process of coming to terms with the problem of the relationship of the man to his work that the evaluation is made.

III

Approaching the problem from the point of view of biography, Arthur Mizener showed in The Far Side of Paradise that Fitzgerald's life followed a far more significant and tragic pattern than was usually held to be the case. However, it is Lionel Trilling, the one notable exception mentioned in the last paragraph, who, more than anyone else, has shown the significance of that life for literature. In his essay, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," Trilling starts off with the same basic assumptions about Fitzgerald as most of the other critics — that the relationship of the man and his work is central, that his "crack-up" represents a real psychological failure —, but his interpretation of the fundamental facts varies widely from what is conventionally said about them. Fitzgerald, Trilling maintains, was a Romantic, but a
Romantic in the strongest sense and in the tradition of Goethe, Byron, Yeats, and Gide. As with all great romantic sensibilities, "the heroic quality is...much here," and "the root of Fitzgerald's heroism is to be found, as it sometimes is in tragic heroes, in his power of love." Trilling's thesis is, thus, that Fitzgerald's crack-up was caused, not by personal weakness in the conventional sense, but by a too whole hearted committal to the life around him. Fitzgerald was not indeed a prudent man, but he "was perhaps the last notable writer to affirm the Romantic fantasy, descended from the Renaissance, of personal ambition and heroism, of life committed to, or thrown away for, some ideal of self."

The original occasion of Trilling's essay was a review of The Crack-Up. And there are jottings all over that volume which support his thesis as to the heroic nature of Fitzgerald's committal to life. The attitude is evident in the most casual of the jottings in the Notebooks. "He has a dark future," he once wrote, "He hates everything"; or in the section, "Conversations and Things Overheard," this is typical

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34 Trilling is fully conscious of the famous names he invokes. "I am aware that I have involved Fitzgerald with a great many great names and that it might be felt by some that this can do him no service, the disproportion being so large. But the disproportion will seem large only to those who think of Fitzgerald chiefly through his early public legend of heedlessness." Lionel Trilling, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," The Liberal Imagination, p. 249. This article is a reprint of his review of The Crack-Up in the Nation.

35 Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, pp. 243-244.

36 Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p. 249.
of the sort of fragment he felt it to be worthwhile preserving —
"I am willing to die with my boots on — I just want to be sure that
they are my own boots and that they're all one." Even more directly
he wrote in "Sleeping and Waking" that part of the ultimate horror
was "to stand forever, perhaps, on the threshold of life unable to
pass it and return to it." It is part of Fitzgerald's greatness that,
although in many ways a weak man, he chose not simply to stand on the
threshold of life but walked boldly in. Fitzgerald failed as a man,
not because he pursued the wrong course, but because he "could not
always keep the balance true."

This view of Fitzgerald makes of his life a far more courageous
and consciously engineered thing than it is often deemed to be. This
fact becomes particularly evident when we remember the idiosyncratic
view that he held concerning the nature of his talent. It has been
frequently noted that Fitzgerald seemed to regard the source of both
his living and his writing (his "vitality") as a sort of bank account
against which he was forced to draw and which, never being replenished,
inevitably became smaller and smaller. "You know, I used to have a
beautiful talent once, Baby," he said to Budd Schulberg. "It used to
be a wonderful feeling to know it was there, and it isn't all gone yet.

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37 Fitzgerald, C-U, pp. 167, 97.
38 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 67.
40 See, for instance, Mizener, TFSOP, pp. 244-249.
Fitzgerald frequently returned to the idea in the letters he wrote to his daughter over the last year or so of his life; that he felt he had too often squandered his talent is plain enough, but that this was not entirely the case he also knew. "I am not a great man," he wrote in one of those letters, "but I sometimes think the impersonal and objective quality of my talent and the sacrifices of it, in pieces, to preserve its essential value has some sort of epic grandeur."

Here, then, is the picture of a man who knowingly and willingly poured himself into life and art at the expense of his own completeness. Surely the image — in spite, perhaps, of a certain overstatement of the case by Trilling — is a noble one. It certainly compels a re-examination of the relationship between the man and his fiction. The exact nature of the problem is clarified when we realize how completely Fitzgerald immersed himself in his creative activity. "I can never remember the times when I wrote anything," he noted. "This Side of Paradise time or Beautiful and Damned and Gatsby time, for instance. Lived in story." Granted such a complete identification with his work and the type of Romantic nature ascribed to him by Trilling, his degree of self-knowledge, it is plain, is vital to an accurate estimate

41Budd Schulberg, "Fitzgerald in Hollywood," in Kazin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 110. This article is reprinted from the New Republic symposium.

42Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 291.

43Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 176.
of the value of his art. It has sometimes been asserted that Fitz­
gerald failed conspicuously to understand his own motives. D. S.
Savage, for instance, discovers in his writing many unresolved Freudian
images and themes, particularly those of incest; D. W. Harding sees a
latent and unconscious homosexuality as a possible basis for much of
Fitzgerald's behaviour. Almost always it is felt that the roots of
Fitzgerald's case history go deeper than the symbols through which
he chose to give it expression.

All this is probably true and capable of proof if one is
willing to subject Fitzgerald's writing to a Freudian analysis. But
I am not sure of the value of such an analysis as the basis for
literary judgment or even for measuring a writer's degree of self-
knowledge. I doubt if any great writer has ever understood himself
in a fully psychoanalytic sense, and if he had it is questionable
whether he would have been a better writer for it. Fitzgerald, at
least in the more conventional meaning of the term self-knowledge,
arrived at a remarkably complete understanding of himself. Even if he
could not at all times satisfactorily control his behaviour, he always
seems to have had a highly ironic awareness of what he was doing to
himself and to others. The three Esquire articles which constitute
"The Crack-Up" provide the principal autobiographical proof of this
assertion, but there are random comments all over the Notebooks which

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44D. S. Savage, "The Significance of F. Scott Fitzgerald,"
Harding's argument is to be found in the Scrutiny article previously
cited.
demonstrate Fitzgerald's bitterly accurate awareness of his own nature. And here it might be pointed out that if Fitzgerald's critics are fond of quoting each other, they are even more addicted to quoting Fitzgerald — particularly on the topic of himself. Certain phrases from "The Crack-Up," the Notebooks and the letters (especially those to his daughter) appear again and again in the critical literature accumulated about him. Fitzgerald, it would seem, was his own best commentator. He certainly succeeded in finding phrases which are both memorable and accurate to describe the symptoms of his patterns of living. All that he ever wrote about himself indicates that he knew with deadly precision exactly what he was doing, if at all times he could not exactly understand why he did it.

That is to say, he always had the power to make imaginative and moral judgments about the worth of his own acts (and Fitzgerald was basically a moralist — "I guess am too much of a moralist, at heart," he wrote to his daughter, "and really want to preach at people in some acceptable form, rather than to entertain them"). Since, as a writer, he was primarily a Romantic who functioned by the projection of himself into fiction, this fact has considerable importance. If Fitzgerald could analyse himself accurately and judge himself morally, did he possess the professional conscience and ability to convey the analysis and the judgment into his art? To rephrase the question as a proposition, when a man of Fitzgerald's peculiar temperament and gifts turns to creative writing, it is essential that he cultivate a

45 Fitzgerald, CWJ, p. 305.
strong sense of his responsibility as a writer and achieve an adequate writing technique. If he lacks an artistic conscience, he will not be honest in the presentation of his "self" in his fiction; if he lacks a controlled technique, he will not possess the means to convert that "self" into literature; his writing will be simply a formless romantic outpouring. Hence, to talk of Fitzgerald's "fine writing" more or less in a vacuum is to evade the question. Unless we can discern a consistent and real interest in the problems of his craft, we will have to admit that Fitzgerald was not concerned with the one thing vital to the conversion of his type of Romanticism into important fiction.

Actually, Fitzgerald's writings provide telling evidence of exactly this sort of preoccupation on his part. Conscious of the influence of his Princeton friendships and of his early success, he yet felt that it had been his destiny to become a writer, and throughout his life he committed himself wholeheartedly to the profession of letters. If The Crack-Up proves anything, it proves that, as an artist, Fitzgerald was supremely unhappy in his career as a writer of potboilers. Yet, because always in his mind there was the knowledge that he was a professional, even the potboilers cost him some sweat and pain. At the end of the article "Auction — Model 1934" he wrote of "the four hundred thousand we made from hard words and spent with easy ones these fifteen years."

Fitzgerald was quite conscious of his passage from an amateur to a professional status. With his usual precision, he places the

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46 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 62.
process as taking place between the acceptance and publication of This Side of Paradise. "While I waited for the novel to appear, the metamorphosis from amateur to professional began to take place—a sort of stitching together of your whole life into a pattern of work, so that the end of one job is automatically the beginning of another." As a professional, Fitzgerald also felt the need to stay abreast of contemporary writing. Just how closely he maintained contact with current literature is clearly indicated in the pages of The Crack-Up. From the earliest letters to Edmund Wilson to the latest entries in the Notebooks, there are constant references to other writers, comments on their ability, evaluations of their achievements. Hand in hand with this intellectual interest went a more personal concern for writers, which manifested itself in unselfish sponsorship of such friends as Ernest Hemingway and Nathanael West.

But first and foremost Fitzgerald felt that, as a professional, it was his duty to explore the technical problems of writing. "I have now at last become a writer only," he could say in the last of his "Crack-Up" articles, and it was in the problems and the possibilities of his chosen craft that he found his final support after the realization that he "had become identified with the objects of [his] horror and compassion" had forced him to abandon his youthful ideals. That composition for Fitzgerald was a slapdash matter of inspired moments

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47 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 86.
48 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 83.
49 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 81.
there is no evidence at all. Indeed, everything that we know about his approach to writing indicates the exact contrary. Mizener's record of the feverish correction of the galley proofs of *The Great Gatsby* or the nine years spent on *Tender Is the Night* does not suggest a careless writer unaware of the effects to be wrought by a controlled technique. When Fitzgerald set himself to the task of serious composition he engaged his entire imagination in the problem of finding a method proper and adequate for his material.

This fact is strikingly illustrated by the notes which accompany *The Last Tycoon*. In these we are presented with a Fitzgerald novel in the process of composition, a process which involved repeated revisions, alterations, and improvements. Fitzgerald's detailed knowledge of what he was trying to do is effectively demonstrated by a quotation from a letter in which he discusses his use of point of view in the novel:

*Cecilia is the narrator because I think I know exactly how such a person would react to my story. She is of the movies but not in them. She probably was born the day The Birth of a Nation was previewed and Rudolph Valentino came to her fifth birthday party. So she is, all at once, intelligent, cynical, but understanding and kindly toward the people, great or small, who are of Hollywood.*

*This love affair is the meat of the book — though I am going to treat it, remember, as it comes through to Cecilia. That is to say by making Cecilia, at the moment of her telling the story, an intelligent and observant woman, I shall grant myself the privilege, as Conrad did, of letting her imagine the actions of the characters. Thus I hope to get*

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the verisimilitude of a first person narrative, combined with a Godlike knowledge of all events that happen to my characters.51

In a direction to himself about another scene, he wrote "This must be subtly done and not look too much like a parable or moral lesson, still the impression must be conveyed, but be careful to convey it once and not rub it in. If the reader misses it, let it go — don't repeat."52

From such specific instructions about delicate shades of meaning, he could move to detailed plans for the sweep of whole scenes and episodes or analyses of his characters and their relation to one another. But all the notes appended to The Last Tycoon give evidence of a tremendous intellectual concern for and exploration of the means by which ideas and feelings may be converted into valuable fiction.

IV

Through an examination of the critical literature assembled about him and of his own self-revelations set down in The Crack-Up, Fitzgerald has, then, been established as a Romantic of that important type whose work "exists in the aura of their personal lives, which by their genius they made more than personal."53 Further, it appears possible to state definitively that if Fitzgerald was his own best subject

51 F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 138-139, 139-140. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TLT.

52 Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 157.

53 Lionel Trilling, "Fitzgerald Plain," New Yorker, XXVI (Feb. 3, 1951), 90.
for fiction, his was not an uncritical projection of himself into art; he had — or made an honest effort to achieve — a sufficient degree of self knowledge to make his appearance in literature potentially valuable. Finally, he possessed, in high degree, that sense of conscious craftsmanship without which a Romantic may create great confessional literature but will never write memorable or important fiction. Here, that is, is a Romantic with, on the one hand, an overwhelming urge to commit himself to life coupled with a powerful sense of moral values, and, on the other, a sense of professional responsibility and the cultivation of an equipment aimed specifically at converting his energies into art. The result, quite obviously, was the concentration in his fiction on the technical problems involved in the creation of a hero and the imaginative problems of finding a fitting mode and sphere of action for a modern individualist.

For any Romantic writer the manipulation of the heroes of his fictions will be of central importance. The course of the present argument, through the examination of certain images of Fitzgerald and the man and the writer and the relation of these images to each other, must lead to the conclusion that in the case of Fitzgerald the role of his heroes holds the key to his entire achievement. That Fitzgerald himself as aware of their basic importance is clearly indicated by the epigraph placed at the head of this chapter. Malcolm Cowley records a further comment of his which shows the intensity of his identification with his heroes, coincident with the awareness: "Sometimes I don't know whether I'm real or whether I'm a character in one of my novels." 54

Indeed, practically every one of Fitzgerald's major characters bears a marked family likeness — physically, imaginatively, or in the details of his actions — to his creator. Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch, Jay Gatsby, Dick Diver, Monroe Stahr — all, as he himself recognised, were Fitzgerald's fictional brothers.

If Fitzgerald's nature had been completely egocentric, this fact would have posed no problem either for him or for readers seriously interested in evaluating the worth of his achievement. He would have simply written about himself, under different names, in one orgiastic, uncritical novel after another. But Fitzgerald's Romanticism expressed itself through a love of others and a desire to put his vitality to their service. Therefore his heroes do not hold up a totally schizophrenic mirror-image of himself. His relation to them is fraternal; they represent facets dissected out of his total character which are placed and judged in a variety of contexts. His heroes are rarely, if ever, allowed to operate in an egocentric vacuum. Fitzgerald always calls them to account in their relations with their fellow men. The moralist in Fitzgerald could not tolerate simply the practicing of a Romantic individualism; that individualism had also to serve as a proving ground for Fitzgerald's various attempts to understand what constituted the good life.

It is my view, therefore, that the whole of Fitzgerald's literary accomplishment can be validly approached, if it is viewed as an attempt to establish what constitutes the individually good life in the modern world, and how and where it may be lived. That is, Fitzgerald's literary career can be properly resolved into a recognizable thematic pattern wherein he sought to find within his own experience the bases for a
twentieth century individualism. What sort of person is most admirable? To what sort of profession, career, or business will such a person commit himself? How will he come to terms with his spatial and temporal contexts? In other words, what will be his relationship to time, geography, history? It is these questions, asked and at least partially answered through the image of the fictional hero, which give point and unity to the corpus of critical problems established by the major students of Fitzgerald. It is through a thematic examination of Fitzgerald's fictional brothers that we will arrive at a sympathetic and clear understanding of the thematic pattern of his literary career.

Fitzgerald, of course, did not take up a neatly arranged set of ideas about his heroes and examine them one by one. The need to engage himself with the images of individualism was so deeply a part of his mind that it is probable he was not consciously aware of it as his subject. Certainly, he rarely made overt, intellectualized statements about what we must regard as his major theme. The separable aspects of his thinking about the heroic individual appear, disappear, and reappear constantly, and in ever varying combinations, in his fiction; and their relative importance and Fitzgerald's success in dealing with them is to be established not by the nature of his intellectualized comments but, because of the profoundly "creative" nature of his mind, by his handling of them in literary form. That is to say, we cannot judge the value of his thematic material simply by what his heroes seem to represent when abstracted from their fictional contexts. Concepts expressed through the form of the novel or short story can be only as valid as the fictional techniques of their author allow them to be. We have already noted Fitzgerald's acute awareness of the importance of
craft in the profession of writing; further, we have noted that the
tradition sets up as one of Fitzgerald's positive merits his excellence
as a "pure writer." Yet, hardly any effort has been made to examine
that area of his artistic achievement where, in the light of the present
argument, conscious craftsmanship is quite vitally important — the
rendering of his heroes as imaginatively credible and satisfying figures.
If Fitzgerald's heroes carry no weight of fictional conviction, simply
as characters, there can be no point in any further study of his work.
If all Fitzgerald's "natural" writing skill is not directed towards
amalgamation with his major theme, it is tangential to what must be
the basic criterion for judging his fiction. However, such does not
seem to be the case. To revert again to the epigraph at the head of
this chapter, when Fitzgerald speaks of his fraternal relation to his
heroes, he immediately follows the remark with an image which can
represent only his sense of the function of technique, "When I have
the courage to put the old white light on the home of my heart, then...."
The white light is surely nothing else than the searching ray of con­
trolled fiction; and Fitzgerald's various attempts to bring his heroes
into imaginative control by means of style and structure supply criteria
for establishing his worth quite as important as the themes he embodies
in their persons.

As a result, then, of an examination of the peculiarly close
and intense relationship between Fitzgerald and his literary productions,
and of Trilling's brilliant interpretation of his Romanticism, it has
become my belief that all the insights, difficulties, problems, truths
and truisms which criticism has distilled from his work can be best
brought into focus by concentration on Fitzgerald's treatment of his
fictional heroes. Furthermore, an examination of Fitzgerald's projected, fictionalized individualism should make possible a more complete and just accounting of his literary merit and importance than has hitherto been possible. For it has been a marked feature of Fitzgerald criticism that, while most of his commentators can agree as to what are the basic ingredients of his life and art, no two can reach agreement regarding the qualitative merit of either.

A study of Fitzgerald's heroes such as I project will necessarily be oriented more towards his literature than his life and, as I have endeavoured to show, must be of a two-fold nature. First, there must be a scrutiny of Fitzgerald's various attempts to find an adequate moral pattern to which his Romantic individualism could attach itself, as well as of his experiments in reconciling his heroes to certain temporal and spatial contexts. Second, and side by side with this thematic scrutiny of the Fitzgerald hero, must go an analysis of the techniques by which he is made a fictional reality.

Of course, these two elements in Fitzgerald's attempts to engage with the fictionalized image of his imagined hero do not proceed exactly hand in hand, nor do they develop in a completely harmonious and uninterrupted pattern. Nevertheless, I believe it can be shown that both the thematic and stylistic experiments, abortive, abandoned, developed, casual, or continuous, do in the large view demonstrate that Fitzgerald's talent was constantly maturing in range and intensity. In tracing out this growth, a more or less chronological sequence can be followed; heaviest stress must obviously be laid on the novels and a few of the short stories. However, there are many other stories which are valuable for the light they throw on the major works. These must
properly be studied in groups, even at the expense of a strictly chrono-
logical account of Fitzgerald's literary career.

Such an examination of the Fitzgerald canon, so organized and
so oriented, and ranging from *This Side of Paradise* to *The Last Tycoon*,
it is my purpose in the following chapters to carry out. In the belief
that this two-fold approach to the development of his heroes can make
a real contribution to the understanding of his art, I intend to follow
Fitzgerald's efforts to come to terms with his fictional brothers from
Amory Blaine to Monroe Stahr and, finally, to hazard some general con-
clusions concerning the nature and success of those efforts.
CHAPTER II

THIS SIDE OF PARADISE

A Romance and a Reading List

I

"It is difficult to read This Side of Paradise now," wrote Harlan Hatcher in 1935, "and after the revolution in conventions since the War one is amazed to recall the stir it made in 1920." Six years later Oscar Cargill found it "a task to re-read this book today." And it must be admitted that, as a succès de scandale, Fitzgerald's first novel has lost much of its original force. Most current readers would indeed concur with John P. Marquand's wish that "one's own children behaved as sensibly and nicely as the "This Side of Paradise" galère." Nevertheless, perhaps it was Fitzgerald's very success in defining and

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reflecting the behaviour patterns of Flaming Youth which caused the book to become so rapidly dated. Certainly he intended its hero to be the shockingly complete epitome of post-War youth; "I know I'll wake some morning and find that the debutantes have made me famous overnight," he wrote to Edmund Wilson. "I really believe that no one else could have written so searchingly the story of the youth of our generation."\(^5\)

If, as Maxwell Geismar maintains, "This Side of Paradise was the generation's masculine primer,"\(^6\) Amory Blaine was its archetypal hero.

In creating Amory Blaine, then, one of Fitzgerald's basic concerns was to portray a character thoroughly representative of the Lost Generation six years before Hemingway popularized that famous phrase. Hence, there is more than historical importance in understanding those qualities which made Amory and his friends seem so daring in their behaviour to the pre-War generation; the same qualities provided some of the early themes of Fitzgerald's fiction and helped to determine the nature of many of his early heroes. Fortunately, the daring, shocking elements in Amory's behaviour are not hard to isolate; Fitzgerald is almost invariably peering over our shoulder to point them out to us.

Thus even Amory's childhood can render up some episodes designed to make Fitzgerald's contemporary audience squirm. Quite early in his career, Amory gets drunk on apricot cordial, an incident which soon becomes an amusing addition to his mother's repertoire of anecdotes.

\(^5\) Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 252.

All her hearers are properly appreciative, "but" — and here Fitzgerald gleefully points the moral — "many were the keys turned in sideboard locks that night against the possible defection of little Bobby or Barbara..." 7 A little (but not much) later, Amory has his first tentative encounter with girls. Deliberately arriving late to a bobbing party, he deftly turns Myra's brusque greeting to his own advantage and is rewarded with his first kiss — described, incidentally, in juicily sensuous terms. "He had never kissed a girl before, and he tasted his lips curiously, as if he had munched some new fruit. Then their lips brushed like young wild flowers in the wind." 8 Myra's reaction is, very simply, "We're awful." And if the reader did not heartily agree, one suspects that Fitzgerald would have been deeply disappointed.

However, the discussion of sex at the adolescent level was more important and probably more genuinely shocking to the readers of 1920 than this juvenile romance. Fitzgerald actually entitled one section of his novel "Petting," and if the practice had been common since 1915 of 1916, 9 Fitzgerald was the first person to acknowledge the fact in print:

Amory saw girls doing things that even in his memory would have been impossible: eating three-o'clock, after-dance suppers in impossible cafes, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery,

7 F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 6. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TSOP.

8 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 15.

yet with a furtive excitement that Amory considered stood for a real moral let-down. But he never realized how widespread it was until he saw the cities between New York and Chicago as one vast juvenile intrigue.10

It is in his encounter with Isabelle Borge that Amory demonstrates the new style adolescent in action. And that he is quite definitely a new style Fitzgerald is at pains to point out — "Isabelle and Amory were distinctly not innocent, nor were they particularly brazen. Moreover, amateur standing had very little value in the game they were playing...."11 As a matter of fact, all the women in Amory's life are just as unconventional, at least in their talk, as he is (and here it might be pointed out that throughout This Side of Paradise Amory's discourse is far worse than his deeds). Rosalind, for instance, analyses the meaning of a kiss in terms distinctly new and chilling to her rejected suitor:

There used to be two kinds of kisses:
First when girls were kissed and deserted;
second, when they were engaged. Now there's a third kind, where the man is kissed and deserted.12

When she is not kissing dozens of men ("I'll probably kiss dozens more") she is wearing one-piece bathing suits, worrying about the suntan on her legs, and diving off thirty-foot-high summer houses. Eleanor is even more intellectually emancipated. On her own confession, she is "hipped

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10 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 65.
11 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 73.
12 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 194.
on Freud,\textsuperscript{13} and is given to reciting Verlaine from the top of Maryland haystacks at the height of thunderstorms. Only eighteen, she is likely at any moment to describe herself as "one of those people who go through the world giving other people thrills, but getting few myself...."\textsuperscript{14}

Mizener is quite right in pointing out that "Fitzgerald's lovers are concerned with something called "kissing," an act which is dissociated from any other physical action and in itself involves almost no physical sensation\textsuperscript{14}; nevertheless, their concern, immature though it may be, is accompanied by what at the time of its appearance must have seemed some quite daring talk. But most shocking of all was probably felt to be the end product of Amory's sexual experience, the sacrifice of his own character to rescue Alec Connage from a tawdry little affair — not out of any sense of honour or heroism but from complete boredom and disenchantment.

Further, not all of the daring talk was about sex. Eleanor, for instance, when Amory finds her sitting on a haystack, has just lost her belief in immortality. A large part of her conversations is taken up with taunting Amory with his emotional dependence on Catholicism. To prove the sincerity of her own position she is ready to ride off a cliff without a moment's hesitation. Her intensity forces Amory to review his own position, which consists primarily of an emotional and aesthetic attraction to the liturgy of Roman Catholicism. He is held to the Church —

\textsuperscript{13} Fitzgerald, \textit{TSOP}, p. 255.

\textsuperscript{14} Fitzgerald, \textit{TSOP}, p. 244.

\textsuperscript{15} Arthur Mizener, \textit{The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), p. 105. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to \textit{TFSOP}.
insofar as he is at all — through the influence of a single man, Monsignor Darcy. And it is the strength of the Monsignor's personality as well as his late Nineties brand of aestheticism which provides his strongest hold on Amory's affiliations. After the priest's death, Amory almost entirely loses his hold on religious faith, so that he finally realizes that "there was no God in his heart...." The influences which had been at work on him from his childhood exploits with Froggy Parker, through his Princeton friendships, to the post-War New York-apartment existence in the end reach their fulfillment in Amory's self-dedication to a life of art.

In thus orienting his first fictional hero away from the practical problems of the day, away from politics, Fitzgerald clearly read the signs of the age. As he himself later recorded in "Echoes of the Jazz Age," "The events of 1919 left us cynical rather than revolutionary, in spite of the fact that now we are all rummaging around in our trunks wondering where in hell we left the liberty cap — "I know I had it" — and the moujik blouse. It was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all." Exactly the same point is made by Malcolm Cowley in Exile's Return: "The writers of our generation were humble in the sense that they did not hope to alter the course of events or even to build themselves an honored place in society. Their class, the urban middle class, was lacking in political power; it was so empty of political ideas as not to realize that such power was being

16 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 304.

exercised by others." And when Amory is momentarily moved to discuss politics during his last journey to Princeton, he is drawn towards Socialism, a position just as suspect in 1920 as Communism is today. Typically enough, Amory objects to Capitalism not on orthodox economic or sociological grounds but because "it makes wealthy men the keepers of the world's intellectual conscience." Amory's argument is that of the depressed intellectual, but he is prepared to admit that the Russian Revolution of 1917 may be a valid example of benevolent violence. When one of his listeners advocates the use of machine guns against the mob, he can calmly point out, "Ah, but you've taught them their use." In the year 1920, such a remark must have seemed quite as inflammatory as any other of Amory's opinions, even if it is that of a disillusioned, disappointed man.

Sex, religion, politics — on the three big topics Amory voices opinions calculated to make the generation of the Nineties feel uncomfortable. And on practically every page he perpetrates an epigram aimed indiscriminately against pre-War mores. Happy families make him sick at the stomach; he would rather be a provincial hot tamale than a soup without seasoning. Whether he is being witty, disillusioned, or romantic, the mood is frequently accompanied, even enlivened, by alcohol in considerable quantities. His three weeks spree caused by the loss of Rosalind

19 Fitzgerald, *TSOP*, p. 293.
is brought to a close only by the advent of prohibition, not that this technicality makes much difference to Amory's drinking capacity or career. Surely *This Side of Paradise* must have been one of the first novels to make literary capital out of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Attempts to outwit the Volstead Act, Maryland idylls, the discovery of Joyce, undergraduate expeditions to the Jersey shore — the initial effect of Amory's experiments in revolt is colourfully kaleidoscopic. Yet the most brightly coloured, most individual incidents can be resolved into a consistent pattern of moral behaviour. Commentators on the period are becoming more and more convinced that the Twenties saw a fundamental revolution in American life. Malcolm Cowley has characterised this revolution as the shift from a production to a consumption ethic, thus neatly suggesting the correlation between socioeconomic patterns and codes of moral behaviour. The career of Amory Blaine provided a personal illustration of this shift as well as helping in its accomplishment. Indeed, that an Amory Blaine could be created at all was in itself a significant fact. It demonstrated the completeness with which the moral revolution was being worked — from the bottom (the smelly immigrants whom Amory so despised) right through to the top. For Amory Blaine was no Clyde Griffith or Sister Carrie. He came from a "good" family, which at one stage had an opulent fortune, never entirely dissipated. He went to Princeton, one of the "best" colleges. He was, in fact, quite obviously one of the "best" people; and this was probably the most distressing thing about his presence on the literary scene. When somebody of Amory's background and upbringing got the urge to go to the devil decadently in Mexico, while "an olive-skinned, carmen-lipped girl caressed his hair" as he lived out his "strange
litany, delivered from right and wrong and from the hound of heaven and from every god"; when such a young man got such an urge, the old order was indeed changing.

And the new was not waiting till it got decently out of sight. If Amory Blaine contained within his person everything that made the older generation tremble, he also represented everything that the young might ask of life. Amory frequently identifies himself with the young generation of his own day, seeing them as leading a life utterly different from that of their parents; further, he presses the claims of youth with vigour and persistence. For instance, through Amory, Fitzgerald shed over American university life an aura of romanticism and glamour which is still probably responsible for many of the cliches for the idealized image of campus existence. But even beyond the limits of his University career, Amory Blaine must have been a dazzlingly attractive image to many a young American in his twenties in the Twenties.

There is the often repeated story of the young man who called on Fitzgerald while he was living in Baltimore. The visitor presaged his arrival by telephone calls from ever nearer cities. Finally arrived, he announced, "Here I am at last. I had to see you. I feel I owe you more than I can say. I feel you formed my life," and collapsed dead drunk. Fitzgerald's enormous, if sometimes unfortunate, ability to influence the lives of his contemporaries and the generation immediately succeeding them first found expression in the creation of the hero of This Side

22 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 282.

of Paradise. In Amory, Fitzgerald contrived to present Romanticism and disillusionment in a peculiarly modern and satisfying blend. Amory Blaine was the young individualist out to make what he could of the world without fear or favour, and certainly without the advice of his elders.

If Amory was an image to which the young people of the Jazz Age could attach their imaginations, his reading also supplied them with the materials for an intellectual credo. As a matter of fact, Amory's development is almost defined in terms of his changing literary tastes. Some of his earliest recorded reading consists of Little Women, The Fall of the House of Usher, "Dangerous Dan McGrew" and "Gunga Din." As a senior at St. Regis's, he advances to Stover at Yale, Dombey and Son, "L'Allegro," parts of Tennyson and Kipling, and all of E. Phillips Oppenheim. His prep school reading sets a pattern he will retain throughout his life at Princeton — a marked preference for reading outside the required courses. At Princeton, this trait first of all takes the form of an addiction to Wilde, Swinburne, and the late nineteenth century aesthetes generally. Later on he discovers Wells and Rupert Brooke and, under the guidance of Burne Holiday, Tolstoi, Emerson, and Whitman. Inevitably he despises the Victorians, admires Mackenzie, Chesterton, Galsworthy, and Bennet. In his final burst of intellectual activity, he discovers Joyce, Dreiser, and Shaw. The latter, together with Wells, Nietzsche and Carlyle, provides some of his most permanent intellectual influences. The simple act of calling over the list of Amory's admirations is sufficient to indicate his last great service to his contemporaries. Not only did he provide an exciting image of romantic individualism, and a sense of hopeful beginnings; he also held up to them a list of required titles without which they could not hope to be thorough-
ly modern.

II

However, Fitzgerald poured into Amory more than the collective consciousness of a culture in the process of change. As Malcolm Cowley has justly remarked, "the point has to be made that Fitzgerald was not 'typical' of his own age or any other. He lived harder than most people have ever lived and acted out his dreams with an extraordinary intensity of emotion."²⁴ His first major hero is made the vehicle not only for his early public themes but for some of his strongest private motifs. For instance, if the apparent frankness of Fitzgerald's discussion of sex is what impressed the novel's first readers, it has become increasingly apparent that that discussion is strongly coloured by an important element in his personal psychology — a conscience so strong that a Freudian analyst would probably describe it as a guilt complex. From the very beginning, Amory's ventures into sexual experience are either accompanied or immediately followed by an overpowering sense of shame. The phenomenon occurs at the moment of Amory's first kiss. "Sudden revulsion seized Amory, disgust, loathing for the whole incident. He desired frantically to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss anyone..." At the climax of his romance with Isabelle "Amory felt strangely ingenuous and made no attempt to kiss her." However, the most powerful expression of Amory's Puritan conscience comes in what is obviously intended to be one of the big scenes of the novel — his vision

of the devil, while in an apartment with Sloane and two prostitutes. The vision is repeated in the hotel room where Amory discovers Alec Connage with a girl. By the end of the book "the problem of evil had solidified for Amory into the problem of sex." The ambivalence of Fitzgerald's attitude towards Amory's problem is clearly indicated when, a few pages earlier, he had Amory think, "Own taste the best; Isabelle, Clara, Rosalind, Eleanor, were all-American." John Peale Bishop early recognized this element in Fitzgerald's personality when he wrote, "At heart, he is a prude and suffers from remorse." In the Amory of This Side of Paradise the trait is projected without being understood; it exists as a psychological phenomenon without being put to the service of an active moral intelligence.

Fitzgerald's parental relationships are incorporated with similar emotional intensity and lack of comprehension into This Side of Paradise, Amory's relation with Beatrice being particularly important, although in later work his father will loom larger and larger in Fitzgerald's imagination. However, in terms of his total career, Fitzgerald's failure, in This Side of Paradise, to understand some of his major themes is not the important point; what is important is the simple fact of the unevaluated presence of almost every idea that he was later to take up.

The treatment of wealth in the novel fits very plainly into this

25 Fitzgerald, TSOP, pp. 15, 97, 302, and 279.

pattern. The whole of *This Side of Paradise* exists in an atmosphere of glamorous, unearned money, money which may diminish in quantity but which never totally disappears. The Blaines are, at the beginning of the novel, an extremely wealthy family; their total expenditure for 1906, for instance, had been $110,000. By 1912 this sum had decreased quite considerable, significantly through a faulty investment on the part of Amory's father. In the world of *This Side of Paradise* money is not earned and spent; it is made and lost on the stock market. Even at the lowest point in his financial fortunes (which corresponds with his emotional nadir) Amory can afford to go on a three-week drinking bout in the course of which he rather haughtily walks out of his job in an advertising firm. At the end of the book, when he is extemporaneously preaching Socialism, Amory is still thoroughly aware of the $10,000 required to educate him; indeed, he bases most of his argument against Capitalism on its misuse of such an expensive education.

In other words, Fitzgerald (through Amory) is simply uncritically responding to that part of the American scene which was to give him one of his first great themes --- the life of the very rich. Making little or no attempt to evaluate his material, he is rather content to get the feel of its quality, its texture. Hence, it is not surprising that one of Amory's early heroes is fitted into this context of aristocratic leisure. Dick Humbird is indeed the prototype of a hero who will continue to command Fitzgerald's attention in his fiction for many years to come. This is how Amory views him:

Dick Humbird had, ever since freshman year, seemed to Amory a perfect type of aristocrat.... Everything he said sounded intangibly appropriate. He possessed infinite courage, an averagely good mind, and a sense of honor with
a clear charm and noblesse oblige that varied it from righteousness. He could dissipate without going to pieces.... Amory decided he probably held the world back, but he wouldn't have changed him.27

There is only one thing which keeps Humbird from perfection, and this is revealed to Amory by Alec Connage. "'Well,' Alec had answered, 'if you want to know the shocking truth, his father was a grocery clerk who made a fortune in Tacoma real estate and came to New York ten years ago.'"28 The snob was sufficiently strong in Amory (and Fitzgerald) to make him desire the company of an established aristocracy at the same time that he threshed wildly around among all the other established conventions.

At least, though, Amory is honest in his statement of social prejudice. He does not like poverty or the poor, and he makes no bones about his feelings. In other places, however, Fitzgerald lots slip rather less honest, because less explicit, manifestations of the same attitude. It is contained for instance in Amory's remark to Eleanor, "You're going to make me stay up all night and sleep in the train like an immigrant all day to-morrow, going back to New York."29 More insidiously, there is the expressed preference for people who do not perspire, presumably because they never had to work. Rosalind's rejection of Amory is largely motivated by his comparative poverty. And it is significant

27 Fitzgerald, TSOP, pp. 85-86.
28 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 86.
29 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 252.
that the only major character to approach real financial hardship is Clara, to whom all may be forgiven because of her surpassing and essentially Fitzgeraldian beauty. Nevertheless, "The idea that the girl was poverty-stricken had appealed to Amory's sense of situation." In those words is contained that snobbish sense of slumming, that passionate identification with the very rich which has always made Fitzgerald the target of sociologically minded critics.

But even in This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald communicates some awareness of social stratification, and of the processes involved in moving from one stratum to another. This is nowhere better done than in the Princeton section of the novel, especially in the description of the club elections. While still an undergraduate, Amory has a sufficiently firm grasp on social nuance to be aware of snobbery as such and to be capable of ironically assuming social attitudes. Thus, "With visitors from Ivy and Cottage and Tiger Inn he played the 'nice, unspoilt, ingenuous boy' very much at ease and quite unaware of the object of the call." Similarly, at his first meeting with Tom D'Invilliers, Amory is acutely conscious of the social pressures caused by the presence of a group of St. Paul's boys at the next table. The whole account of his relation with Rosalind is coloured and controlled by a firm awareness of the minute differences of social status which add up to a large and finally fatal gap between them.

If Fitzgerald thus early shows an ability to comprehend the significance of shifts up and down the social ladder, he also manifests

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30 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 151.
31 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 79.
the beginnings of an understanding of the importance of physical movement in the same context, of the contribution which personal geography can make to social structure. The Blaines are of no fixed city, are in fact the Blaines of Lake Geneva. When, at the age of thirteen, Amory is sent to St. Paul, he is very conscious of a shift to the mid-West and to a very different moral code from that instilled into him by his mother. That is, a distinction between East and West is early fixed in Amory’s consciousness (as it is in Fitzgerald’s). He is not fully aware of the implications of this distinction, but he does see that the East stands for Princeton, New York, glamour, and sophistication, whereas the mid-West represents a much less attractive social milieu. However, Amory’s consciousness of geographic values is much less acute than his feeling for the passage of time. While he was writing The Romantic Egotist, an early version of This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald could say in a letter to Edmund Wilson, "God! How I miss my youth," and he projects into Amory a similar regret at the transitoriness of pleasure and the fleeting nature of time. And Fitzgerald’s attempts to come to terms with this problem, as well as with the problem of his mental geography, will occupy a large part of his attention in the work immediately succeeding This Side of Paradise.

III

If This Side of Paradise provides a reading list for the Twenties, it is, thus, just as important as a source book for Fitzgerald’s imagina-

\[32\] Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 252.
tion. Within its pages and through the figure of Amory Blaine he laid out practically every major theme which was to occupy him in his later fiction. Often, of course, these themes do not possess the importance in his first novel that they were later to take on; but it is important to realize the completeness of Fitzgerald's imagination at the outset of his career. His whole progress reveals not the acquisition of new themes but the application of more and more refined techniques to changing aspects of an already assembled body of materials.

That is, the success of Fitzgerald's literary career must be judged in terms not of a constant search for new material but of his ability to control established themes. And this is the reason for the comparative failure of This Side of Paradise, a failure which has been sensed by almost all its commentators. For in his first novel Fitzgerald was far more concerned with establishing than controlling his material. The fact is nowhere more clearly borne out than in his treatment of Amory, who is the most completely romantic projection of Fitzgerald into his own fiction. If, in the previous sections, it has been possible to use the names of Fitzgerald and Amory almost interchangeably, it is for this reason; in no other major work did Fitzgerald so thoroughly identify himself with one of his heroes. The mid-Western childhood; the prep school background; the spoiled career at Princeton; the brief army service; even the love affairs — all correlate to an extraordinarily high degree with the events of Fitzgerald's own life up to 1920. On his own admission, "This Side of Paradise...treats all this very fully, being to a large extent autobiographical."

33 This remark is recorded in Charles C. Baldwin, The Men Who Make Our Novels (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1924), p. 168.
significant changes wrought in this romanticized projection of himself into fiction — changes which indicate very clearly the nature of Fitz­
gerald's relation to his hero as well as the general quality of the book.

A study of Amory's physical appearance plainly suggests the nature of this relation. At the age of eighteen he is described in these terms:

Amory was now eighteen years old, just under six feet tall and exceptionally but not conven­
tionally handsome. He had rather a young face, the ingenuousness of which was marred by the
penetrating green eyes, fringed with long dark eyelashes. He lacked somehow that intense animal
magnetism that so often accompanies beauty in men or women; his personality seemed rather a mental
thing, and it was not in his power to turn it on and off like a water-faucet. But people never
forgot his face.34

The description fits Fitzgerald almost perfectly — so perfectly that he expanded one of its phrases into one of the most famous entries in his Notebooks: "I didn't have the two top things: great animal mag­
netism or money. I had the two second things, though: good looks and intelligence. So I always got the top girl."35 The difference between the two comments is, of course, that the latter is an honest and extreme­
ly penetrating judgment of his own nature, whereas the first is a half­
understood admission. The quality of the earlier remark is made even plainer when we realize that the physical description is an accurate account of Fitzgerald in all respects but one. Fitzgerald was nowhere

34 Fitzgerald, TSOP, pp. 66-67.

35 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 211.
near six feet tall; as a matter of fact, he was a rather small man (height 5' 7"; weight 138 lbs., according to Mizener\textsuperscript{36}) and quite conscious of the fact. On the other hand, a tall slim man like Dick Humbird he held to be the ideal type. It is quite evident, then, that in physical appearance at least Fitzgerald rendered Amory as an idealized image of himself.

The same process of wish-fulfillment can be seen throughout Fitzgerald's treatment of Amory. The whole environment of the Blaine family is markedly different from that of the Fitzgeralds. The Blaines of Lake Geneva are a far cry from the Fitzgeralds of St. Paul, Minnesota. The life of Fitzgerald's father was a perpetual struggle to make ends meet, the family always moving from one house to another a little further down the street. Fitzgerald would never have been able to attend Newman Academy and Princeton without the assistance of a certain Aunt Annabel. However, Amory always moves in a context of wealth and always with that aura of power which Fitzgerald felt belonged peculiarly to the rich. The whole nature of Amory's social and economic background is perhaps most completely symbolized in the account of his abortive trip to Europe:

However, four hours out from land, Italy bound, with Beatrice, his appendix burst, probably from too many meals in bed, and after a series of frantic telegrams to Europe and America, to the amazement of the passengers the great ship slowly wheeled around and returned to New York to deposit Amory at the pier. You will admit that if it was not life it was magnificent.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36}Mizener, \textit{TFSOP}, pp. 39 and 40. These figures refer to Fitzgerald in 1913, at the time that he entered Princeton.

\textsuperscript{37}Fitzgerald, \textit{TSOP}, p. 8.
If thwarted of a European background, Amory could still make a career of biting the legs of bellboys at the Waldorf Astoria, that shining architectural symbol of all that Fitzgerald yearned for.

At the age of thirteen Amory has the same dream about the Japanese invasion of America on which Fitzgerald was to nourish himself until his breakdown of 1935/36. He goes to St. Regis's school and one glorious fall afternoon satisfies all of Fitzgerald's longing for heroic achievement by "falling behind the Groton goal with two men on his legs, in the only touchdown of the game." Similarly, Amory's Princeton career bears a remarkable resemblance to Fitzgerald's own, but, at crucial points, with significant variations. It had been one of Fitzgerald's cherished ambitions to play varsity football for Princeton, but he was dropped from the freshman squad on the first day of practice because he was too light and probably because he was not good enough. Amory, too, goes out for football, but after a promising start he is forced to withdraw on account of an injury. Another of Fitzgerald's Princeton ambitions was to play a lead in the Triangle Club's musical comedy. He did help to write a number of the shows, but owing to his precarious academic standing he never played in one; he had to be content with publicity stills in which he was billed as Princeton's Most Beautiful Show Girl. This last fact is carefully suppressed in *This Side of Paradise*, but Amory is allowed to be a member of the cast and to make a triumphant tour of the mid-West and upper South.

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38 Fitzgerald, *TSOP*, p. 35.
To be sure, in the end Amory's career at Princeton is relatively a failure, as was Fitzgerald's. However, the author allows his hero a far greater measure of achievement during his participation in the War. For Amory does participate, he does see action in France. He need never be ashamed of the overseas cap never worn overseas. Although Amory's war experiences are treated with extreme brevity and obliquely through letters, he is awarded a measure of success which Fitzgerald felt had been forever denied him.

Amory is, then, unmistakably Fitzgerald, but Fitzgerald wearing a glamorous cloak which covers up for the major failures of his life up to This Side of Paradise. This Side of Paradise, that is, is something of a personal romance for Fitzgerald, in which he set down the pattern of his own career as he would have liked it to be. Just as the novel often unconsciously states the germs of Fitzgerald's later fictions, so it egocentrically displays his desired image of himself. Amory may have meant many things to his contemporary readers; he may yield valuable information to the student of Fitzgerald's imaginative sources; but primarily he is presented in terms of a romantic personality. A projected title of an early version of the novel was The Romantic Egotist (it stands now as the subtitle to Book I), and it suggests as accurately as any single phrase can the true nature of Amory's character. He is the eternally youthful, isolated, romantic hero — presented for the sake of his own personality, heedless in the main of all external influences, aware only of the overpowering interest of his own self. The whole book, insofar as it is directed at all, is directed towards justifying its very last line, "I know myself," he cried, "but that is all." One may validly question the truth of this statement; Amory seems to be remarkably ignorant about
the motivation of much of his behaviour, largely because Fitzgerald was ignorant of it too. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in *This Side of Paradise* external phenomena have importance only to the degree that they impinge on Amory. Girls drift in and out of his life; but they register more as stimuli to his tongue and emotions than as people; even when (as most of them do) they see through Amory's egocentricity, he is not cured of the trait. Actually, of course, there is no reason why he should be. One of the greatest charms of *This Side of Paradise* is its whole-hearted committal to the romance of self-centred youth. Amory's aloneness is not yet felt as loneliness but as the triumphant affirmation of self-sufficiency. The glamour of wealth, the glamour of girls, the glamour of Princeton, even the glamour of hard drinking—all do nothing but feed the glamour which is Amory.

But behind the glamour there is a serious concern for the role of a certain type of personality, the possibility of a certain mode of action. One of Amory's most important serious conversations with Tom D'Invilliers attempts to establish the possibility of heroic individualism in the modern world. Intellectually, the thinking is rather immature, but it does demonstrate a basic element in the pattern of Amory's (and Fitzgerald's) ideas. Amory's strictures against the modern world for not providing a place for him sometimes bear the stamp of petulance, but they do state a question which cannot go unanswered, at least by a man of Fitzgerald's qualities of mind—how is a romantic individualist, committed to an heroic view of life, to adapt to contemporary society?

"How'll I fit in?" asks Amory. "What am I for?"39 He feels he is not yet

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ready for the responsibilities of the artist, contemptuously rejects the world of business. With so much cut off from him, at the end of the book Amory arrives at a tentative position whose thorough examination is to be one of the major themes of Tender Is the Night. "Amory felt an immense desire to give people a sense of security"; and again, "He felt that he was leaving behind him his chance of being a certain type of artist. It seemed so much more important to be a certain type of man." The end of This Side of Paradise, that is, points the way to a possible abnegation of self, but this was a consummation Fitzgerald was never fully to achieve. His creative roots were too deeply embedded in the individual personality, and in taking the self as the central theme of his first novel he set up a pattern to which he was to adhere for the rest of his life. The point has been memorably stated by Weller Embler in his article "F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Future":

But among modern writers F. Scott Fitzgerald best illustrates the agonized search for the true inner self. It was in his first book, This Side of Paradise, that Fitzgerald began to look for the "fundamental" Amory, and from then on through all his stories and novels the search continues.

IV

If self is to be one of a novelist's major themes, his techniques for rendering and evaluating character will obviously be of first-rate importance. We have already seen that in This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald's emotional relationship to Amory prevented him from achieving

\(^{40}\)Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 287 and p. 302.

objectivity about his hero. Nevertheless, the techniques for rendering character in This Side of Paradise do merit attention because again they provide the foundation for Fitzgerald's later development. Furthermore, if Fitzgerald did not achieve emotional objectivity, he did find the means to instill into Amory some sense of fictional life and vitality.

It must be admitted, however, that This Side of Paradise is far from being the work of a master of fiction. Everywhere Fitzgerald's amateur hand is in evidence. He is like a craftsman faced with a whole set of tools, unaware of what effects they are capable, not even sure what effects he wants to achieve. The result is an experimentation with every piece of fictional equipment which lies at hand. Technically, This Side of Paradise can be aptly described as a mélange adulêtre du tout. This can be partly explained by the fact that Fitzgerald incorporated within its covers practically everything he had previously written which bore any trace of literary merit. His contributions to the Nassau Literary Magazine appeared so frequently that one of his reviewers characterised This Side of Paradise as The Collected Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald.\(^2\) The jibe was apt in more ways than one. Not only did Fitzgerald use all his accumulated material but also almost every literary form is represented within the chapters of the novel. It abounds in poetry, poetic prose, semi-dramatic playlets, debates, formal descriptions, epigrams, and conceits. You name it, This Side of Paradise has it.

\(^2\) The comment was originally made in an unsigned review of TSOP in the New Republic. It is reprinted in Kazin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 48. It is usually thought that T. K. Whipple, one of Fitzgerald's Princeton friends, was responsible for the review. I have identified the following pages of TSOP as having previously appeared in the Nassau Lit., either in identical or only slightly altered form: pp. 59-60, 67-78, 147, 160, 168.
Nevertheless, an examination of the novel shows that Fitzgerald did make some attempt to base his characterization of Amory on a consistent fictional device. The technique might well be described as characterization through direct statement. The basic structure of the novel — its division into two books, further subdivision into chapters — is determined by a set of statements about Amory's character. Indeed the subtitles and chapter headings almost take on the character of texts about Amory on which the body of the novel is a commentary and illustration. Amory the Romantic Egotist starts out in life as the Son of Beatrice, passes through the influence of the Spires and Gargoyles of Princeton to a Reconsideration, and finally becomes Narcissus Off Duty. The second half of his career is neatly categorized as The Education of a Personage, and again the chapter headings provide a handy summary of Amory's progress until in the closing section "The Egotist Becomes a Personage." That is, Amory's character is basically understood through a series of tag phrases — egotist, personage, Narcissus, fundamental Amory — which have been arrived at before the novel opens and which provide the controlling ideas about his personality. Those elements of his personality which cannot be comprehended within the limits of these phrases are simply omitted from the novel. The critic who described the Fitzgerald of This Side of Paradise as an allegorist was perhaps not very wide of the mark.43

Since Amory's progress is the illustration of a preconceived personality rather than the record of its formation, at any given point in

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the novel Fitzgerald can call a halt and neatly list his hero's component parts. In point of fact this is exactly what he does at a number of places in the book. Typical is this summation of Amory's character in his last year at Princeton:

1. The fundamental Amory.
2. Amory plus Beatrice.
3. Amory plus Beatrice plus Minneapolis. Then St. Regis' had pulled him to pieces and started him over again:
4. Amory plus St. Regis'.
5. Amory plus St. Regis' plus Princeton. That had been his nearest approach to success through conformity. The fundamental Amory...
6. The fundamental Amory.

Sometimes Fitzgerald allows his hero to do this sort of thing for himself, as when, in the closing pages of the book, Amory subjects himself to a sort of question and answer period. If Amory is not always seeking to understand himself through a series of formal questions and answers, he is in one way or another perpetually analyzing himself, telling others what sort of person he is, asking friends what they think of him (although some of the answers he receives are not designed to flatter him). In particular, all the women in Amory's life notice his fondness for talking about himself. This may be a legitimate attempt to portray character, but it provides Fitzgerald with an extremely obvious device for directing our thinking about his central character.

A slightly more sophisticated, but equally emphasised mode of rendering character in This Side of Paradise is Fitzgerald's use of letters. Amory writes letters to all his girls, to Monsignor Darcy, to Tom D'Invilliers -- and all are concerned with the same subject, himself.

\[^{44}\text{Fitzgerald, TSOP, pp. 108-109.}\]
Again, we might accept this as the valid portrayal of a personality trait, except that Amory not infrequently receives letters in reply, whose subject is quite unchanged. A letter from his mother while he is at Princeton, after urging him not to wear wet clothes, branches out into a general review of his dressing habits and of his character at large; Eleanor writes him poems about their emotional relationships. But Amory's most indefatigable correspondent is Monsignor Darcy. Regularly, after their first meeting, the sophisticated cleric analyses Amory through the post, when he is not doing so in conversation. As a matter of fact, he likes to think of himself as Amory's spiritual father, and certainly it is the priest to whom Amory refers most of his ideas and judgments. Monsignor Darcy is plainly meant to be the measuring stick of the novel against which Amory's performances are to be assessed. It is he, for instance, who coins most of the key phrases which are applied to Amory's character -- in particular, that of "the Personage." One may sometimes disagree with Amory's involuntary exclamation, "How clear you can make things," but there can be little doubt that Monsignor Darcy is more or less the moral sheet-anchor of This Side of Paradise. After his death Amory rapidly loses faith in traditional values, and throughout the novel his analyses are a major device in the creation of the young man's character.

Indeed, most of the minor characters of the novel contribute to this cause. Their own development tends to be subservient to their function of contributing to an understanding of Amory. Most of his college

\[45\text{Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 114.}\]
friends, except Tom, exist more for the sake of demonstrating college glamour than as individuals; or, like Burne Holiday, they represent ideas to which Amory may respond; but always it is their impact on Amory which counts most. Even Tom is just as much the Representative of the Literary Life as plain Tom D'Invilliers, sensitive undergraduate trying hard to write passable poems. The majority of the minor male characters pass in and out of the novel to provide an occasion for Amory to discourse about himself or to indulge in some typical action. Froggy Parker appears in Book I, Chapter II, so that Amory can take Isabelle away from him; he then obligingly disappears from the picture. Rahill, a St. Regis classmate, is introduced in one brief episode so that Amory can discourse smartly about the philosophy of the slicker. Jesse Ferrenby's father drives up out of nowhere to be lectured at on Socialism. Only the women in This Side of Paradise can stand their ground when Amory is in the picture, and this because Fitzgerald has already formulated his image of the eternally unattainable female whose chief role in life is to cause pain to the stricken male.

One of Amory's encounters with the female of the species also illustrates further experiment in characterization that can be noted in This Side of Paradise. It is to be found in the opening chapter of Book II, "The Debutante" — one of the sections transferred almost verbatim from the Nassau Lit. Here Fitzgerald attempts a semi-dramatic form in which all conversation is set down as formal theatrical dialogue and all other description is couched in the form of stage directions. Fitzgerald obviously thought well of the technique, for he used it again, in the big scene of Rosalind's final rejection of Amory and in the section devoted to Clara. It reappears in some later stories, and was more
fully developed to result in what is probably Fitzgerald's most unfortunate production, his play entitled The Vegetable. Even with the vehicle of legitimate drama Fitzgerald created a monumental failure; in the context of fiction, his experiments with the technique become unbearably "cute" and artificial. Far from intensifying the situations in which it is employed, it renders them either embarrassing or remote.

Fitzgerald did much better when he was content to set down dialogue without attempting to do it up with the trappings of the theatre. Even to the end of his life he prided himself on his young people's dialogue. "For nineteen years..." he once wrote to Joseph Mankiewicz, "I've written best selling entertainment, and my dialogue is supposedly right up at the top." There is proof for the justice of his claim even in This Side of Paradise. Actually, an extraordinarily high percentage of the novel is carried on in dialogue. On reflection, it seems that Amory's principal occupation is talking, and his talk is most successful not when it is awkwardly attempting to encompass abstract ideas but when it conveys the honest interplay of young people's personalities. In such incidents Fitzgerald can make a really trivial incident take on the importance it holds for the participants. Thus, by the authentic reporting of undergraduate dialogue, he can make us accept the intensity of the scene in which Amory, surrounded by his friends, discovers the results of the examination which will make or break his campus career:

He walked into the room and straight over to the table, and then suddenly noticed that there were other people in the room.

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46 Mizener, TFSOP, p. 278.
"'Lo, Kerry." He was most polite. "Ah, men of Princeton." They seemed to be mostly friends, so he picked up the envelope marked "Registrar's Office," and weighed it nervously. "We have here quite a slip of paper."

"Open it, Amory."

"Just to be dramatic, I'll let you know that if it's blue, my name is withdrawn from the editorial board of the Prince, and my short career is over."

He paused, and then saw for the first time Ferrenby's eyes, wearing a hungry look and watching him eagerly. Amory returned the gaze pointedly. "Watch my face, gentlemen, for the primitive emotions."

He tore it open and held up the slip to the light.

"Well?"

"Pink or blue?"

"Say what it is."

"We're all ears, Amory."

"Smile or swear -- or something."

"There was a pause... a small crowd of seconds swept by... then he looked again and another crowd went on into time.

"Blue as the sky, gentlemen...."

Such ability to handle dialogue is surely one of the bases of first rate fiction, and it is one of the techniques of characterization which Fitzgerald was to develop most fruitfully in his later work.

Other aspects of This Side of Paradise also hold out rich promise for the future, if they have not yet attained the fluency displayed by the dialogue. For instance, there is already noticeable what was to become practically a trademark of Fitzgerald's fiction -- the equation of intense personal feeling with appropriate natural phenomena. Hence, Amory's emotions immediately prior to his first kiss are accompanied by the following description:

Overhead the sky was half crystalline, half misty, and the night around was still and vibrant with tension. From the Country Club steps the road stretched away, dark creases on the white blanket; huge heaps of snow lining the sides like the tracks of giant moles. They lingered for a moment on the steps, and watched the white holiday moon.

Admittedly the prose is a little full blown, but a similar correlation of natural phenomena and human emotions is used often in This Side of Paradise, and in later work with increasing subtlety. The device is even employed as a background to the last prodigious statement of the whole book: "He stretched out his arms to the crystalline, radiant sky. "I know myself," he cried, "But that is all.""49

If Nature can be pressed into the service of Fitzgerald's attempts to bring fictional reality to his hero's reactions, so can Amory's human surroundings. And Fitzgerald's acutely developed sense of the details of popular culture provided him with what is again a highly personal technique for setting down the quality of a moment, the emotions involved in any given situation. Perhaps no other American writer has had such a detailed awareness of the value of the popular song in establishing a setting for his characters' emotions, for controlling their moods. The essential elements of the trick can be seen in its first appearance in This Side of Paradise. Just after Amory has kissed Myra, the others arrive, and music drifts upstairs to his ears:

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49 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 305.
The sound of the gramophone mingled with the voices of many girls humming the air, and a faint glow was born and spread over him:

Casey-Jones -- mounted to the cab-un
Casey-Jones -- 'th his orders in his hand.
Casey-Jones -- mounted to the cab-un
Took his farewell journey to the promised land.⁵⁰

The symbolic significance of the whole episode is summed up in the last line of a song churned out by the whining, unconscious machine. Exactly the same effect is achieved by the playing of "Babes in the Wood" in a ballroom while Amory and Isabelle are engaged in some mild necking in a room upstairs. The words come floating up to the young pair, sum­ming up, for them and for the reader, the quality of their emotions.

Through means such as these, Fitzgerald strives to give his creation of emotions and character some degree of artistic validity; and at isolated moments in the novel he brings off some extremely successful effects. However, the totality of the work is seriously marred not only by Fitzgerald's uncritical identification with Amory but also by certain technical defects. "The pert, sophomoric wisdom of the book,... its self-conscious, aphoristic style"⁵¹ have been frequently noted. But probably more important in terms of Fitzgerald's technical development are the uncertainty of Fitzgerald's relationship to his material and his uncontrolled point of view. In the main, the relation of the writer to his novel is that of the omniscient manipulator. Fitzgerald knows everything about all of his characters; pushes them around at will; halts the narrative when he is so inclined; frequently interrupts the development

⁵⁰Fitzgerald, T.S.O.P., pp. 16-17.
⁵¹Cargill, Intellectual America, p. 343.
of a scene for an explanatory flashback; lets us know exactly what he wants to about his characters. Occasionally he steps right into the picture with a first person comment. Most of the comments of this nature are designed to suggest an enormous and superior knowledge extraneous to the novel itself, which is the sole possession of the author. This is simply the logical, if unhappy, extension of the basic point of view of the novel — that of author omniscience. Unfortunately, Fitzgerald was not yet sufficiently aware of the novel as an art form to give all of his variations the justification of an artistic logic. Too often the haphazard shifts in point of view are just as irritating as the poetic prose and the pseudo-drama. Naturally enough, it is into Amory's consciousness that shift usually takes place. Indeed, part of the last section of the book is almost Joycean in its stream of consciousness technique. Hatcher has suggested a direct debt to Joyce* and Fitzgerald had certainly read A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by the time he came to write This Side of Paradise. Such an extreme variation in manner is, however, rare. Nevertheless, throughout the novel Fitzgerald displays an alarming habit of slipping from one point of view to another with little apparent knowledge of what he is doing.

Indeed, it is necessary to proceed with caution when examining the technical and stylistic details of This Side of Paradise. One is apt to discover not only the seeds of Fitzgerald's later growth but also all those misspellings, misused words, errors in chronology, and petty

52 Hatcher, Creating the Modern American Novel, p. 80.
mistakes which led Edmund Wilson to describe it as "one of the most illiterate books of any merit ever published." So much has been made of these slips that there need be no more said on the matter. However, more attention must be paid to Wilson's very perceptive critique of the novel. "In short," he wrote, "one of the chief weaknesses of This Side of Paradise is that it is really not about anything: intellectually it amounts to little more than a gesture -- a gesture of indefinite revolt. For another thing, This Side of Paradise is very immaturely imagined: it is always verging on the ludicrous." Here Wilson is stating general objections to the novel which Paul Rosenfeld formulates in specific terms to apply to the problem of most interest in the present study -- Fitzgerald's treatment of his characters:

What one does affirm, however, and affirm with passion, is that the author of This Side of Paradise and of the jazzy stories does not sustainedly see his girls and men for what they are, and tends to invest them with precisely the glamour with which they invest themselves.

Nobody will argue that This Side of Paradise is a great novel or even, perhaps, a first class one; but that it does have permanent literary merit many have felt to be the case. The nature of that merit is suggested in the very terms in which Rosenfeld describes the book's basic immaturity. This Side of Paradise conveys, if nothing else, a

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sense of a whole-hearted committal to a position. As Wilson admits after his catalogue of complaints, "The whole preposterous farrago is animated with life."\(^{56}\) And that life is the life of romantic youth as exemplified by Amory Blaine. For Amory is finally not a character, not a person, not even a personage; he is a feeling, a mood Fitzgerald projects into print. It is the sense of Amory as a vital, pervading attitude throughout the book which justifies the "fine" writing, which gives the eccentric experimentation such artistic unity as it possesses.

For *This Side of Paradise*, in a way, is successful in the measure that it escapes from the logic of conscious art; it is one of the few American novels in the tradition of the Rousseauistic confession book.

We cannot, then, in reason expect a stern intellectual control over the materials of the novel. What we can in reason expect — and what in fact we find — is the admittedly immature but remarkably complete announcement of a Romantic programme in life and art. Such was the youthful exuberance of the announcement that, in Glenway Wescott's phrase, "*This Side of Paradise* haunted the decade like a song, popular but perfect."\(^{57}\) The novel, in a word, represents the summation of the Romanticism of a hopeful but undisciplined writer beginning his career at the beginning of a still hopeful decade. Time has justified Fitzgerald's description of his book as a Romance and a Reading List, which amounts to the same thing as Malcolm Cowley's phrase, "a very young man's

\(^{56}\) Wilson, "Fitzgerald before *The Great Gatsby*," in Kazin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 78.

novel and memory book." Time has further justified Cowley's completed judgment that "for all its faults and borrowings it was held together by its energy, honesty, self-confidence and it spoke in the voice of a new generation."  

CHAPTER III

THE DISCOVERY OF EL DORADO

"These are some adventurous mariners who had the misfortune to discover El Dorado," he remarked.

I

Writing on Fitzgerald and Edith Wharton, Frederick J. Hoffman described the 1920's as a "decade of readjustment in which the means of readjustment were not clearly at hand." "The Panic of Wall Street in 1929," he continued, "was dealt with as an economic crisis by nine-tenths of American writers. It led to the documentary literature of the thirties":

The panic of Main Street and Fifth Avenue occurred in 1919, and it was treated as the end result of a cultural failure. What it meant to postwar literature was that there was little or no moral security to be found in any American institution. It meant quite literally that America had no past, that whatever the means of survival, they would have to be formed and used on a day-by-day, hand-to-mouth basis. The forms of life, generally borrowed with modifications from the forms governing society at large, had this time to be improvised. This improvisation led to a complete disintegration of the cultural exchange; improvisation and individual maneuvering with expediants and principles followed.

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1 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," Tales of the Jazz Age (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 166. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TJA.

Hoffman is right in feeling that such a state of affairs was of especial importance to Fitzgerald. Just at the time when he needed moulds into which he might fit the material established in *This Side of Paradise*, he found all the old moulds broken. Temperamentally drawn to institutionalized symbols of achievement, desperately aware of time hurrying by him into the past, urgently needing to find a world fit for heroes, he was faced with institutions he despised, a gap in the American historical continuum, and a world turned topsy-turvy. He was faced with "an awful responsibility — the task of interpreting a generation, describing it, without a clear sense of the means of judging its forms of behaviour." Fitzgerald's writings immediately succeeding *This Side of Paradise* can properly be regarded as a series of manoeuvres, of tactical skirmishes, as he strove to advance the various heroes which constituted Amory Blaine along the road which led beyond Princeton.

The character of many of Fitzgerald's early improvisations was determined by his role as public spokesman for the postwar generation. Temporarily accepting that role with enthusiasm, he was guided into treating certain themes which seemed at the time to be his peculiar field, but which actually had far less vital importance to his imagination than other themes he was also beginning to develop. Thus, it is not surprising to find the subject of the war occurring quite frequently in his early stories. Although Fitzgerald himself had got no nearer the front line than Long Island, he was expected to speak with authority for those who had gone overseas. As a matter of fact, with the exception of

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one negligible piece produced while he was still in Princeton, F. Scott Fitzgerald never wrote anything that can properly be called a war story. The experience of those of his heroes who did take part in the fighting follows the pattern established in Amory Blaine. Anson Hunter sees service as a flyer, and his entire war experience is telescoped into two sentences. "In August Anson's plane slipped down into the North Sea. He was pulled onto a destroyer after a night in the water and sent to hospital with pneumonia; the armistice was signed before he was finally sent home." Jim Powell, the hero of "The Jelly-Bean," "became eighteen. The war broke out and he enlisted as a gob and polished brass in the Charleston Navy-yard for a year. Then, by way of variety, he went North and polished brass in the Brooklyn Navy-yard for a year. When the war was over he came home." The war is treated as a fleeting if unpleasant episode and seems to have little of the traumatic effect on the Fitzgerald hero that it has on the characters of Hemingway or Dos Passos. Even when death strikes down one of his characters, the tragedy tends to be related more closely to frustrated passion than to the horrors of fighting. Gloria, in The Beautiful and Damned, is glad she let Tudor Baird, an old beau, kiss her, "for the

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4 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Sentiment — And the Use of Rouge," Nassau Lit Mag, LXXIII, No. 3 (June, 1917), 107-123. The hero of the story is a young British officer who is initiated into the ways of the younger generation by the girl friend of his dead brother, just before he himself is killed at the front.

5 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Rich Boy," All The Sad Young Men (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 13-14. Hereafter the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to ASYM.

next day when his plane fell fifteen hundred feet at Mineola a piece of
gasoline engine smashed through his heart." The war simply gives Fitz-
gerald's femme fatale opportunity to play rather more destructively than
usual with the emotions of the men she torments.

Nevertheless, Fitzgerald did reach a reasoned intellectual at-
titude about the meaning of the war to the young men of his generation.
He felt that it had caused a moral upheaval, had destroyed the continuity
of historical experience. Commenting on "Echoes of the Jazz Age," Charles
Weir has said:

His analysis by now is a conventional one: the
war is the villain of the piece, leaving behind
it a generation of sad young men, distrustful of
ideas or ideals, shunning any sort of generaliza-
tion, "cynical rather than revolutionary," "tired
of Great Causes."\(^7\)

The same idea plays an important part in Tender is the Night, as Dick
Diver seeks to understand the forces which moulded his moral environ-
ment. He finds one key to his problem in the deserted trenches of
Beaumont Hamel: "'All my beautiful lovely safe world blew itself up
here with a great gust of high explosive love,' mourned Dick persistent-
ly."\(^9\) However, Fitzgerald had not needed fifteen years to reach some con-
clusions about the effect of the war on individual behaviour. He had
much earlier explored a similar theme in "Dallyrimple Goes Wrong," which

\(^7\) F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned (London: The
Gray Walls Press, 1950), p. 367. Hereafter, the title of this work
will be abbreviated in footnotes to TBAD.

\(^8\) Charles Weir, "'An Invite with Gilded Edges': A Study of F.
Scott Fitzgerald," in Alfred Kazin, F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and

\(^9\) F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender is the Night (New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 75.
first appeared in 1920. This is by no means one of Fitzgerald's best stories, though he thought it worth including in Flappers and Philosophers. Yet, its theme is worth noting. Dalyrimple is a war hero, feted and cheered when he arrives home, but quickly forgotten. Soon dissatisfied with his job in a wholesale grocery store, he decides to take the morally drastic step of resorting to robbery. "Dalyrimple Goes Wrong" is possibly unique in the Fitzgerald canon in presenting as its hero, and apparently with approval, an amoral man. For Dalyrimple does not suffer from a sense of guilt. Surveying the world of business from his post-war frame of reference, he simply decides that "cutting corners" is the logical answer to the problem of getting ahead; after all, he is only imitating the example of the politicians who, at the end of the story, adopt him as a promising young man. Jim Cooley, the war hero of "Not in the Guidebook" is treated far less sympathetically. Going back to France to make a new start, he cynically deserts his unhappy wife, gets drunk and makes himself thoroughly objectionable. But both Dalyrimple and Cooley can be read as Fitzgerald's answer to the generation before his, which had fed its sons on the platitudes of patriotism and glory. Those who were conventionally heroic during the war later became either completely worthless or were forced into improvising forms of life entirely devoid of honour.

But if one side of Fitzgerald's mind could see that the war hero could never become an adequate vehicle for the type of life he admired, another side was unable to forget the overseas cap never worn overseas. Just how powerful a personal symbol this remained in his thinking is suggested by the fact that one of his best Esquire stories derived its inspiration from his sense of guilt at his failure to par-
participate in the war. The reason for the sudden reappearance of this theme in 1936 is perhaps suggested by the words of the narrator of "I Didn't Get Over": "I was sixteen in college and it was our twentieth reunion this year. We always called ourselves the "War Babies" — anyhow we were all in the damn thing and this time there was more talk about the war than at any previous reunion; perhaps because war's in the air once more." Within the framework of a class reunion, a college alumnus recounts an incident (the deaths of many men caused by the stubbornness of an officer) far more horrible than anything experienced by those of his hearers who had been in France. At the end of the story the guilty officer proves to be the narrator, and the highly confessional tone of the whole piece indicates the strong grasp which Fitzgerald's sense of guilt had on his mind, persisting, as it did, long after he had ceased to be concerned with the war.

Yet "I Didn't Get Over" shows that Fitzgerald could turn his personal obsessions into controlled fiction, and perhaps the most enduring result that the war had on his work was the equipment it gave him for handling the emotional tensions of his heroes. Malcolm Cowley has pointed out one way in which Fitzgerald uses the imagery of war to accurately transcribe the personal emotions of his characters:

In Fitzgerald's stories a love affair is like secret negotiations between diplomats of two countries which are not at peace and which are not quite at war. For a moment they forget their hostility, find it transformed into mutual curiosity, attraction, even passion... but the hostility will survive even in marriage, if marriage is to be their future.

10F. Scott Fitzgerald, "I Didn't Get Over," Esquire, VI, No. 4 (October, 1936), 45.
Fitzgerald sought to understand more than the nature of love through the vocabulary of war. He describes old age as "ending up at last in a solitary, desolate strong point that is not strong, where the shells now whistle abominably, now are but half-heard as, by turns frightened and tired, we sit waiting for death;" jazz is "not unlike the nervous stimulation of big cities behind the lines of war;" a large part of the self-analysis of The Crack-Up is based on the metaphor of an over-extension of his emotional flank.\footnote{F. Scott Fitzgerald, "0 Russet Witch," TJA, p. 260. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Echoes of the Jazz Age," The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 16. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to C-U.} Hence, as he grew away from the war, Fitzgerald contrived to incorporate what had started out as a theme enforced by public pressure into the core of his fictional method.

The same process can be seen at work in Fitzgerald's treatment of his celebrated flappers and philosophers. Starting out as stereotyped images produced in response to a public demand, they are slowly absorbed into the warm centre of Fitzgerald's imagination. The early Jazz Age boys and girls are created by the very simple method of extending certain aspects of the leading characters of This Side of Paradise into readily identifiable types. Amory the iconoclast, the Ivy League idler, the gentleman drinker and passionate wooer is abstracted from the whole Amory to become the accepted type of the Jazz Age lounge lizard. Wealthy and cultured, he has no other occupation than to fall in love with beautiful and even wealthier girls. As a matter of fact, in stories like "Porcelain and Pink" and "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," Fitzgerald develops the prototype of the flapper rather more fully than he does her male counterpart. Bernice, in the latter, asserts her flapper-
hood by bobbing her hair, but she cannot hope to become a complete Jazz Baby until she deserts the Midwest for the East; the twin centres of the world, for Fitzgerald's flappers, are New York and New Haven (for the latter substitute, if you like, Princeton). It was here that "All night the saxophones wailed their hopeless comment of the Beale Street Blues, while five hundred pairs of gold and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the gray tea hour there were always rooms that throbbed incessantly with this low sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor." It is in this atmosphere of feverish rhythms and sad nostalgia that Fitzgerald's flappers live, that they snatch their brief pleasures from the borrowed time of youth.

If the flapper voluntarily exiles herself from New York, it may be to the beaches of Florida, where is found Ardita Farnam, the heroine of "The Offshore Pirate." The plot of this story, although quite preposterous, serves as a stereotype for the relations which almost invariably hold between the flapper and the young men who pursue her. Several critics have noticed that for Fitzgerald the flapper assumes an importance in excess of her value as a symbol of postwar emancipation. "For Fitzgerald," one has written, "the flapper was a genuine center of young life; she helped him pose a major question and served as its evidence and text." If the flapper is a desirable goal, Malcolm Cowley has pointed out that her relation to men is established in "a basic situation that reappears in

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many of his stories.... a young man of rising income in love with the daughter of a very rich family. Sometimes, however, the flapper met a young man who was her financial equal, and such a situation is found in "The Offshore Pirate." Toby Moreland, the hero of the story, is forced into the most elaborate practical joke (masquerading as a disgruntled jazz musician turned into a modern day Raffles) in order to convince Ardita that he possesses that élán which she demands in any man who would woo and win her. The heroes of "The Unspeakable Egg" and "Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of W-les" are forced into exactly parallel behaviour by the overbearing demands of the fantastically rich girls they love.

Indeed living or dying for a girl provides the only possible source for satisfactory action for many of Fitzgerald's early philosophers. Completely without the need to think about money, completely sure of their social status, their lives take on direction only when they find a woman to whom they can dedicate themselves. Fitzgerald once summed up the whole of his early thinking about the world of the rich in an entry in his Notebooks:

It was the Europa -- a moving island of light. It grew larger minute by minute, swelled into a harmonious fairyland with music from its deck and searchlights playing on its own length. Through the field-glasses they could discern figures lining the rail, and Evelyn spun out the personal history of a man who was pressing his pants in a cabin. Charmed, they watched its sure matchless speed. "Oh, Daddy, buy me that," Evelyn cried.\(^{16}\)


\(^{16}\)Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 118.
And in the golden world of the young and rich, it is such sublimely ego-centric cries from the women which provide the chief motive for action on the part of the men. The mode of action may be fantastic, comic, or even tragic; but whatever the individual tone, there is the common core of the hectic feverishness of the Jazz Age and the desperate struggle to survive as a member of the privileged class which could produce the flappers and philosophers of the 1920's.

And that to drop from that select group was indeed a tragedy is nowhere better demonstrated than in the short, unhappy life of Gordon Sterrett in what is perhaps the very best of Fitzgerald's early pieces, "May Day." The story is unique in a number of respects; it is, I think, the first, last, and only time that Fitzgerald used a technique highly reminiscent of Dos Passos -- the simultaneous conduct of several interweaving but quite distinct plots. The plight of Gordon Sterret, culminating in his suicide, provides the major narrative thread. Round it are bound the histories of Rose and Key, the returned veterans, Edith Bradin and her Socialist brother, Henry, and the crazily comic Mr. In and Mr. Out. In a preface to "May Day" in Tales of the Jazz Age Fitzgerald wrote that:

This somewhat unpleasant tale...relates a series of events which took place in the previous year [1919].... In life they were unrelated, except by the general hysteria of that spring which inaugurated the Age of Jazz, but in my story I have tried, unsuccessfully I fear, to weave them into a pattern which would give the effect of those months in New York as they appeared to at least one member of what was then the younger generation.17

17Fitzgerald, TJA, p. viii.
This statement is a clear indication of his growing intellectual control over his technique, and although he never repeated the method of "May Day," it contains in an expertly patterned design nearly all the important public themes of his first years as a writer of recognized importance. The moral havoc wrought by the war is clearly displayed in Key, Rose and Sterrett, the moral emancipation to which it gave rise in Edith; the brief spurt of postwar political interest in Henry and the anti-Socialist riots, the moral anarchy by the antics of Mr. In and Mr. Out. And again, the whole story is played out in an atmosphere of jazz bands and of dawn coming up in Columbus Circle outside Childs', Fifty-ninth Street. Finally, the disaster which so overwhelms Gordon that in the end he "fired a cartridge into his head just behind the temple,"¹⁸ is caused by the twin evils of poverty and association with a woman of a lower class.

II

However, "May Day" carries a greater weight of serious conviction than many of the stories composed in the years immediately following This Side of Paradise. It is often regarded, indeed, as a definitive fictional statement of the postwar mood. But the conviction is also due to the fact that deeper elements of Fitzgerald's mind were engaged than were required to produce the stereotyped image of the flapper and the philosopher and the tone of disillusioned

romanticism. At the same time as the surface of his mind was sketching in, for his young people, a pattern of moral behaviour remarkably akin to that soon to be enunciated by Hemingway; at the same time, deeper levels of his imagination were responding to problems of more acute personal importance. The success of This Side of Paradise had wrought some fundamental changes in Fitzgerald's relation to the world. For the first time in his life he was actually rich; and his wealth both gave him an entree into that society whose borders he had previously skirted and brought him the girl he loved. Marriage and money — the necessity of a sense of personal responsibility and the enforced awareness of social structure that goes along with wealth — these were probably the basic facts of Fitzgerald's psychological life in the years when, thanks to the enormous success of This Side of Paradise, he at last gravitated to the high society of Manhattan and Long Island. That sense of social stratification which Amory had possessed on the Princeton campus was now to be applied to wider fields; the meaning of a moneved society was now to be investigated (if still uncritically) from within; and if a wealthy society predicates a past on which it was built, there were also to be tentative investigations of the meaning of the American past as well as of his personal relationship to time. These were the forms of life to which Fitzgerald first applied the hastily performed improvisations of This Side of Paradise.

His marriage to Zelda posed for Fitzgerald a peculiarly difficult imaginative problem which he never satisfactorily solved. It made it pressing for him to come to terms with the unique conditions of Southern experience and the Southern past of which she was such a close, intimate representative. It forced into the foreground of his attention at least one aspect of the spiritual geography and history of Americans.
Even in *This Side of Paradise* Amory had boldly announced that "I was for...the Southern Confederacy," while one of Fitzgerald's juvenile pieces in the St. Paul's Academy *Now and Then* had presented a highly romanticized version of the nobility of Southern manhood. His attraction to the Confederacy is entirely understandable in terms of what we know of his early psychological patterns. The Confederacy was the most romantically lost cause that American history could offer; it fitted easily into his picture of a moral Arcadia somewhere back there in the days of American innocence; but most of all it was one of those "badges of honor," "one of those ineffable symbols of aristocracy," which, because it was enshrined in the past, could no longer elude him. As an image of perfection, it could always be present to nourish the weaknesses of his mind, as perhaps a temporary variation on the dreams of the unnoticed quarterback and the Japanese invasion of the Midwest. But now he set himself seriously to the task of examining the Southern tradition as a fit context in which to develop the role of the heroic individualist.

In the ten years following 1920 he wrote some half dozen stories which take up this problem. Even as late as 1940 there suddenly appears a story entitled "The End of Hate," which is his only piece to deal with the Civil War from the Southern point of view. This rather poor potboiler very much in the *Gone With the Wind* manner is organized around

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the love of a Northern girl for a Confederate trooper. While she is temporarily a prisoner, Josie Pilgrim is vouchsafed a fleeting vision of the essence of the Southern cause:

Suddenly Josie had a glimpse of the Confederacy on the vine-covered veranda. There was an egress from the house: a spidery man in a shabby riding coat adorned with fading stars, followed by two younger men cramming papers into a canvas sack. Then a miscellany of officers, one on a crutch, one stripped to his undershirt with the gold star of a general pinned to a bandage on his shoulder. There was disappointment in their tired eyes. Seeing Josie, they made a single gesture: their dozen right hands rose to their dozen hats and they bowed in her direction.  

Even to the end of Fitzgerald's life the image of the Confederacy as a symbol of aristocracy shone bright. To redress the balance, it must be added he was also capable of the sort of sharp, ironic observation which resulted in this comment in a letter to his daughter:

...derive what consolation you can in explaining the Spenglerian hypotheses to Miss ---- and her fellow feebs of the Confederacy. Maybe you can write something down there. It is a grotesquely pictorial country as I found out long ago, and as Mr. Faulkner has since abundantly demonstrated.  

However, it is in the stories of the 1920's that is to be found Fitzgerald's most complete attempt at understanding the meaning of the South. And in a group of four of them — "The Jelly-Bean," "The Ice Palace," "Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar," and "The Last of the Belles" — he made an advance in technique which is of major importance in his fiction. The stories are notable in that they revolve around a central core of constant

20F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The End of Hate," Colliers, CV (June 22, 1940), 9.

21Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 295.
characters. Jim Powell is the hero of two of them — "The Jelly-Bean" and "Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar;" Nancy Lamar, a central figure in "The Jelly-Bean," has a minor role in "The Last of the Belles;" Sally Carrol Napper, the heroine of "The Ice Palace," reappears (with her name changed to Hopper) in "The Jelly-Bean;" while Clark Darrow, Marylyn Wade, and Joe Ewing appear as a sort of minor chorus in one or more of the groups. The use of one or more characters in a series of stories is a technique that Fitzgerald was to employ not infrequently and most importantly in the Pat Hobby series written for Esquire in 1940-41. But in the meantime it indicated that he was developing that Proustian sense of an homogeneous society as a background to the actions of his heroes for whom he has been so justly praised.22 The location of all the stories but "Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar" is Tarleton, Georgia, and on being read together, they convey a remarkable sense of a completely realized community. At times, as in the opening of "The Jelly-Bean," Fitzgerald is ironic, at others more sympathetic towards the South. But over all broods what apparently impressed Fitzgerald most in the Southern environment — its languorous, passive heat. "The Ice Palace," indeed, is based on a contrast between the warmth of the friendly South and the coldness of the wintry, commercially oriented North. Even in "Diagnosis," a much later story, when Charlie Clayhorbe returns to his home in Alabama after a long absence, it is the heat he notices first, even before the sense of a history that has come to a halt:

It was still daylight, the red heat had gathered for one last assault upon the town; he wanted to wait until dark. He looked from the window at the proud, white-pillared Acropolis that a hundred years ago had been the center of a plantation and now housed a row of stores, at the old courthouse with its outside staircase, and at the brash new courthouse being built on its front yard, and then at the youths with sideburns lounging outside the drugstore.23

The heat and the slow moulderings of time make Southern women lazy and attractive, Southern men lazy and unprogressive. To Clark Darrow's anguished protests against her engagement to a Yankee, Sally Carrol Happer replies:

"Oh, Clark, I love you, and I love Joe here, and Ben Arrot, and you—all, but you'll—you'll—"

"We'll all be failures?"

"Yes. I don't mean only money failures, but just sort of—of ineffectual and sad, and—oh, how can I tell you?"

"You mean because we stay here in Tarleton?"

"Yes, Clark; and because you like it and never want to change things or think or go ahead."

However, once away from the South, she feels an immense nostalgia for Tarleton, with its summery climate, its swimming hole, its Confederate dead; and the story ends with her rejection of her Northern lover after

23 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Diagnosis," SEP, CCIV, No. 34 (Feb. 20, 1932), 90.

the terrifying experience of being lost in a palace of ice, her return
home, and her reconciliation to the way of life she had always known.

As a matter of fact, in Fitzgerald's stories Northern men are
nearly always strongly attracted to Southern girls. And on a number of
occasions Fitzgerald uses his own experience in a Southern training camp
to examine this relation. This is done notably in "The Last of the Belles,"
while similar material figures prominently in *The Beautiful and Damned*.

Ailie Calhoun, the last of the belles, is attractive to all the Northern
men she meets — mainly standard Fitzgerald types, Harvard and Princeton
men. But she herself is most powerfully drawn to a rather brutal Northern­
er who has once been a ticket collector on a streetcar. Like Sally Carrol,
she finally rejects her Northern lover, and when, some years after the
War, the narrator of the story returns to the site of the camp, all he
can say is, "All I could be sure of was this place that had once been so
full of life and effort was gone, as if it had never existed, and that in
another month Ailie would be gone, and the South would be empty for me
forever."25

If Southern girls are alluring to Fitzgerald's heroes, Southern
men he finds ultimately unsatisfactory. Like the Jelly-Bean, Jim Powell,
they can rouse themselves to feats of momentary gallantry but are incapable
of sustained effort. Amnthis in "Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar," sees
Jim's lazy attractiveness; but he is out of place in the restless Northern
world and has sense enough to know it. At the end of an idyllic summer,

25 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Last of the Belles," *Taps at Reveille*
of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TAR.
he turns back to Tarleton, driving his preposterous automobile, raising the dust, and "leaving only a faint brown mist to show that [he] had passed." And this is Fitzgerald's final position about Southern men as adequate vehicles for heroic action. He is wistfully forced to reject the representatives of a region made beautiful by the ideals and achievements of its past but now rendered impotent by its failure to make contact with the vital forces of a new, economically and socially dynamic America. But he never completely conquered his emotional attachment to the South, so that in the end his exploration of a great American region was rendered abortive by the conflict between his mind and his emotions.

After 1929, he increasingly abandoned the South as a subject for his fiction, and what he retained of his Southern experience is comparable to what he retained of his investigation of the war. Just as the latter provided him with a vocabulary for defining emotional tension, the South gave him a set of images which might render a transitory sense of honour and duty well done. It is Basil suddenly noticing "a white linen suit and a panama hat, under which burned fierce, undefeated Southern eyes," or Eddie Stinson watching "the shining orchid on Ellen's shoulder as it moved like Stuart's plume about the room" who embody the most lasting contribution that the South made to Fitzgerald's writing.

26 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar," Hearst's International, XLIII, No. 5 (May, 1923), 149.

All his Southern stories are plainly coloured by his relationship to Zelda, but the piece in which he deals most directly with this is "The Sensible Thing." The condition of the young hero at the beginning of the story is almost exactly Fitzgerald's own in 1920. George O'Kelly, employed by an advertising agency in New York, is desperately in love with a girl in Nashville, but lacks the money to marry her. Receiving a rather cool letter from Jonquil, he throws up his job in despair and goes down to see her. But now the languid Southern heat becomes the setting for emotional violence: "In the heat of the next day the breaking point came. They had each guessed the truth about the other, but of the two she was the most ready to admit the situation." After a quarrel, they break off the engagement, and George romantically heads for Peru, where quite by chance he wins fame and fortune as an engineer. Returning to Nashville, he finally wins Jonquil, but on terms much different from those of their first relationship. "Well, let it pass, he thought; April is over, April is over. There are all kinds of love in the world, but never the same love twice." Here Fitzgerald's attempt to understand his own experience of Southern romance has forced him to face up to another of his major problems (and in this story he is partly successful in solving it) — the transitory nature of youthful romance and the necessity of accepting the passage of time and the alteration of emotions.

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29. Fitzgerald, ASYM, p. 238.
The resolution of "The Sensible Thing" (together with that of "The Last of the Belles") can be validly interpreted as a personal decision by Fitzgerald that although he owed a wife to the South, he could not confuse his individual good fortune with a way of life. He must look for other areas of American experience wherein to practice his moral improvisations. If the South seemed to represent the inadequacy of a lost tradition, the America of his own boyhood provided themes far more fruitful to his imagination and his fiction. The secret of the age was to be found in the Midwest and East — in the dynamic society of commercialism and money-on-the-make and in the established aristocracy of Eastern fortunes. His imagination had always fed on wealth — being preserved, being created, being acquired. Now he turned his attention to examining the society congregated about money as a possible context for romantic individualism. It has been enough for Amory Blaine to know himself; now Fitzgerald's hero must test himself against society.

It was the East which first of all dazzled him, provided his ideal image of society, gave him the radiant setting for the exploits of his flappers and philosophers. But if many of the tales are crassly designed to glorify the Jazz Baby, if many of them only cheaply glitter, there are others which demonstrate a remarkable understanding of the sources of the glitter and of its cost to those who would live in its reflected brightness. Fitzgerald once summed up his own career in these words:

In thirty-nine years an observant eye has learned to detect where the milk is watered and the sugar is sanded, the rhinestone passed for diamond and the stucco for stone.30

30 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 82.
And even in the early stories, if he has not yet learned to discriminate between the value of his observations, they have already attained a very great degree of clarity and accuracy. Still committed to a passionate identification with the very rich, to a worship of wealth, the stories of these years might be described as the analysis of a liturgy and a ritual which can be properly understood only by a devotee and an initiate.

Thus, in his Notebooks Fitzgerald recorded the entry, "He had a knowledge of the interior of Skull and Bones." And his grasp on the inner life of the very rich, its partly hidden tensions, its most petty relationships, is singularly complete. Simply on the great universities he is subtly discriminating, gauging the differences between the Harvard man, the Eli, the Princetonian to a nicety. Needless to say, he felt that the Princeton man was the ideal type, most adapted to aristocratic life in modern America. But he was also aware that the great Eastern universities could not maintain their special tone without the prior existence of a definite leisure class to supply their students. And that all of his university graduates represent primarily a social rather than an academic, intellectual culture is made abundantly clear in the most trivial of his stories. Even a piece like "The Unspeakable Egg" can convey the sense of a clearly defined leisure class:

The engagement was not announced on the sporting page, nor even in the help-wanted column, because Fifi's family belonged to the Society for the Preservation of Large Fortunes; and Mr. Van Tyne was descended from the man who accidentally founded that society, back before the Civil War.32

31Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 170.

32F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Unspeakable Egg," SEP, CXCVII, No. 2 (July 12, 1924), 12.
Here Fitzgerald's awareness takes a more ironic form than usual, but it is the irony not of critical understanding but of personal depreciation. Yet, although it is a trivial, thoroughly snobbish performance, "The Un-speakable Egg" offers interesting evidence of Fitzgerald's treatment of the milieu of the very rich. George Van Tyne is typical of all of Fitzgerald's Eastern heroes in that he never works. This might strike a Marxist as the sign of a decadent democracy, but to Fitzgerald the fact suggests completely different fictional values. In his Notebooks he wrote of "Metropolitan days and nights that were tense as singing wires" and "the rhythm of the weekend, with its birth, its planned gaieties, and its announced end." These tense days and nights, these planned weekends would obviously be impossible without the existence of a leisure class; and if one is content to accept that existence, they provide a magnificent setting for the development of personal tensions, the interplay of emotions—i.e., the stuff of fiction. As Henry James discovered, precisely because a leisure class has plenty of leisure, it also has plenty of time to develop a wide range of subtle and sophisticated emotions. This is not to say that Fitzgerald is capable of an analysis of a Jamesian subtlety and depth, but it does suggest that such morit as his preoccupation with the society of the rich does possess comes from the same source as James' fictional virtues.

Thus, infinite leisure is the very prerequisite for the existence of such a plot as is recounted in "What a Handsome Pair." The story pres-

33 Fitzgerald, C-U, pp. 105 and 108.
ents a contrast between two individuals who embody differing modes of action available to members of an aristocracy. Teddy Van Beck chooses music to give direction to his life; Stuart Oldhorne, on the other hand, elects to marry into money and live a life of wealthy athleticism. He is, in a small way, a forerunner of Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*. In "What a Handsome Pair" Fitzgerald unmistakably sets up the musician as the superior personality. Through his art he reaches a maturity which is inaccessible to Oldhorne and his wife, who are reduced to squabbling and petty competition in athletic skills. However, Oldhorne is allowed his moment of greatness — he dies a hero in the War. Perhaps at heart Fitzgerald felt that this was the true destiny of gilded youth — to die nobly for a cause. If this chance was missed, there was no point in adopting any course of action other than the round of tea dances and debutante balls of postwar New York. If youth could not sacrifice itself, it must not be wasted.

And New York was the perfect environment in which youth might be served. It was the warm centre of the world of the rich. And the achingly nostalgic prose with which Fitzgerald describes Manhattan is a characteristic of his early stories. It was the ideal setting for the pursuit of romance, which seems to be the principal activity that Fitzgerald deems possible for those of his heroes who are accepted members of Eastern aristocracy. Every story which has a hero of this type is concerned with his love for a beautiful but unattainable girl and his

agonized manoeuvrings to gain her affection. The best thing that he can do with his money is to put it at her service for vast and expensive pranks, as has been noted in connection with "The Offshore Pirate" and "Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales." But in "The Unspeakable Egg" the heroine plays not with the hero's money but with his personality. George Van Tyne is forced to degrade himself in order to demonstrate his devotion to Fifi. It is only its humorous treatment which saves the story from the grossest snobbery. Similarly, "The Camel's Back," another humorous story, is based on the pranks of an established aristocracy. The humor is, however, less objectionably snobbish in that it arises more from situation than from character. Perry Parkhurst arrives at a party disguised as the front end of a camel (whose rear is formed, with perhaps unconscious snobbery, by a captured cab driver). In the end, what is meant to be a mock wedding ceremony is discovered to have been the real thing, but after some confusion everything is straightened out. But before the fortuitously happy ending, Perry in his unpenetrated disguise has had the opportunity of viewing his fiancée as others view her (a structural example of that double vision in Fitzgerald which Malcolm Cowley so discerningly noted). However, both Perry and his fiancée accept each other's faults and are happily married.

Even in his comic vein, then, Fitzgerald seems to suggest that a good many sacrifices of integrity are worthwhile in order to fight one's way into the upper bracket; but once arrived, integrity, honour, a sense of duty are virtues that are the necessary concomitants of valuable aristocratic behaviour. That membership in the aristocracy of wealth does involve certain duties as well as opening the way to most of the pleasures is made plain in "The Love Boat," when his mother dissuades Bill Frothington from marrying below his station.
"...you have a name that for many generations has stood for leadership and self-control... Toss your pride away and see what you've left at thirty-five to take you through the rest of your life."

"But you can only live once," he protested — knowing, nevertheless, that what she said was, for him, right. His youth had been pointed to make him understand that exposition of superiority. He knew what it was to be the best, at home, at school, at Harvard. In his senior year he had known men to dodge behind a building and wait in order to walk with him across the Harvard Yard, not be be seen with him out of mere snobbishness, but to get something intangible, something he carried with him of the less articulate experience of the race."

Fitzgerald's worship of wealth was not, that is, based entirely on the romantic glamour he associated with it; he also felt that it fostered a type of behaviour that carried with it some of the finest possibilities of American life.

Hence, the efforts of his Midwesterners to become accepted members of Eastern society is often based on more complex motives than mere snobbishness. And his investigation of the relation between East and Midwest provides Fitzgerald with some of the finest of his early fiction. Indeed, his understanding of Midwestern aping of Eastern manners is perhaps more sensitive than his comprehension of the thing itself. For Fitzgerald was a Midwesterner. Born and bred in St. Paul, he could understand perfectly the nature of the Eastward pull of the shining cities and great universities. And the chronicling of the passage from West to East, with its consequent emotional and intellectual readjustments, is one of Fitzgerald's major tasks in his early years and remains a basis for much of his best fiction throughout his career.

However, it is not always possible or even necessary to make the physical transplantation to the East coast and New York. This perfect solution is usually reserved for sons who have places secured for them in an Ivy League college (and attendance at a State university can be a major tragedy for a young Fitzgerald hero). Sometimes it is possible to reproduce the conditions of El Dorado actually in the Midwest. Thus the narrator of "A Short Trip Home" is endowed with all the characteristic responses of Fitzgerald's established aristocracy. This is exactly as it should be, because "For fifty years my family had owned the land on which the train depot was built."

Fifty years, three generations, is about as long an ancestry as it was possible to have in the Midwest of the 1920's, but that it was sufficient to build up the sense of an aristocracy at the top of a stratified society Fitzgerald shows very thoroughly in "The Ice Palace," "The Camels Back," "A Short Trip Home," and "Winter Dreams." In one respect at least these Midwestern aristocracies are more flexible than their Eastern originals; they are perhaps a little easier to break into. Precisely because they can offer at the most only three generations of money, it is comparatively easy for a young man with some drive and a sound commercial sense to break through the protective barriers. This is exactly what Dexter Green, in "Winter Dreams," contrives to do. Owing to the success of his laundry, he finishes up as the social equal of men he had caddied for as a boy. The heroes of "The Baby Party" and "Gretchen's Forty Winks" are, similarly, successful first generation business men.

Fitzgerald, TAR, p. 336.
Fitzgerald shows himself so attracted to this pattern that Riley Hughes has written that "In the years of his early novels of disillusion Fitzgerald was also producing short stories which embodied an abject surrender to what Edward J. O'Brien has called the Puritanical dance of the machines, to commercialism as the highest good." Although in large measure true, the judgment is rendered too harsh by the epithet "abject." Fitzgerald certainly surrendered himself to the dream of El Dorado (surrender was an indispensable part of his imaginative method), but the surrender was not entirely abject nor was it entirely to commercialism as the highest good. The business of America was not, in Fitzgerald's view, business for its own sake. Commerce was justified only when it resulted in a leisure class able to produce honourable and morally intelligent individuals. Intellectually at least, he never paid homage to the captain of industry as the possible vehicle for the romantic strivings he struggled to project onto an adequate form. Emotionally, he revered the sons and grandsons of the captain of industry. Here, to be sure, is a dilemma, for money cannot be enjoyed unless someone has previously done the dirty work of making it. And in his early explorations of the moneyed classes Fitzgerald did not satisfactorily resolve the discrepancy between his admiration of established wealth and his contempt for those who established it.

The closest that Fitzgerald came to posing a solution to the problem of finding a laudable line of conduct in the business world was in a few unimportant short stories -- "Your Way and Mine," "Hot and Cold

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"Blood," and "The Four Fists." In these tales he set himself the task of creating heroes who, while applying themselves successfully to business, yet bring to their calling a firm sense of ethical values. The stories lack conviction chiefly because the ethical tests that Fitzgerald applies are grossly oversimplified for what is a highly complex situation. Jim Father, the hero of "Hot and Cold Blood," for instance, manages to reconcile being a good man with being a business man by the simple moral expedient of lending money to a down-and-out friend of his father's. In "Your Way and Mine," Henry Comomas' recipe for retaining moral purity in the business world is to sleep late and have a kind word for your neighbor. Both solutions are remarkably naive, but at least they indicate that even while Fitzgerald was most involved with his dream of El Dorado he was making some attempt to work out a plan for the good life within its confines.

His solutions in "Hot and Cold Blood" and "Your Way and Mine" are not so much naive as innocent. This innocence, too, is a part of the complex pattern of Fitzgerald's Midwestern background. He felt that it was in the Midwest, if anywhere, that resided the ideal, innocent Arcadian past of America. This fact is made very plain in a rather neglected story, "A Freeze-Out," written some time (1931) after most of the stories so far discussed. The great-grandmother of the hero is described in the following terms:

Old Mrs. Forrest was entirely solid; with convictions based on a way of life that had worked for eighty-four years. She was a character in the city; she remembered the Sioux war and she had been in Stillwater the day the James brothers shot up the main street.
Her own children were dead and she looked on these remoter descendants from a distance, oblivious of the forces that had formed them. She understood that the Civil War and the opening of the West were forces, while the free-silver movement and the World War had reached her only as news. But she knew that her father, killed at Cold Harbor, and her husband the merchant, were larger in scale than her son or her grandson.38

Although she is laughed at for her foibles, her principal role in the story is that of a chorus figure providing not only moral comment on the plot but moral guidance for the two young people involved.

The problem which enmeshes these two might well be taken as the prototype for some of Fitzgerald's most successful fiction in this early period, and "A Freeze-Out" itself is a quite commendable performance.

The plot is centred in one of Fitzgerald's standard Midwestern heroes. After a successful career at Yale, where he has wielded considerable social power, Forrest Winslow returns to his home in the Midwest and to his father's business. However, once having been inside the gates of Paradise, he finds its provincial equivalent no longer satisfactory and lives from one out-of-town visitor to the next. The only thing that can jolt him into vital action is falling in love. Unfortunately he chooses to do so with a socially unacceptable girl — the daughter of a successful businessman who once served a jail term. Once this situation has been set up, the rest of the story is devoted to examining the tensions created by Forrest's attempts to break through the barriers of class and social prejudice. Love, of course, in the end wins out, but the conclusion gains strength through the sanction given to the love match by the wisdom of an older America represented by great-grandmother Forrest.

An even better story dealing with much the same problem is "Presumption." Here the difficulties are those of a young Midwesterner trying to gain acceptance in Boston society in order to win a wealthy girl. His intense discomfort in the presence of his Back Bay cousin, his painful embarrassment in talking to the girl he loves, his persistent drive to succeed in the accumulation of wealth, and his gradual infiltration into a society at whose edges he has hovered so long all receive first rate treatment. "Presumption" (whose very title suggests something of Fitzgerald's perceptions) is spoiled only by the conventional and unconvincing happy ending.

As a matter fact, it is the ending which usually causes the weakness in the early stories. Fitzgerald's solutions are too frequently cheap concessions to the slick magazines or satisfactions of his own imperfectly understood fantasies. Nevertheless, throughout most of the stories immediately succeeding This Side of Paradise he is highly successful in creating the sense of an homogeneous society in which his various extensions of Amory Blaine may test themselves. And it is in the recounting of the testing rather than its results that he is most successful. In his initial explorations of the spiritual geography of Americans Fitzgerald displays considerable ability to penetrate into the conflicts set up by the possession and acquisition of wealth, the tensions behind an apparently static glamour; but as yet he has found no proper solution to those conflicts and those tensions. He is still too attached to the context of wealth to abandon it as a suitable sphere of action for his heroes, but within that context he can find no completely satisfying mode of action. If his heroes are the inheritors of El Dorado, he is reduced to making them sentimentally successful or
If Fitzgerald's earliest moral improvisations were not completely satisfactory, nevertheless a growth in technique was necessary to make possible such subtlety of vision as he did attain. That there is an advance in fictional skill is plain enough. He is becoming conscious of the devices of fiction in a manner that he certainly was not while writing This Side of Paradise. "The writer, if he has any aspirations toward art," he is recorded as saying in 1924, "should try to convey the feel

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39 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Six of One," Red Book, LVIII (Feb., 1932), 88. The story is concerned with the attempt to prove that underprivileged boys have the same capabilities as the sons of the Midwestern aristocracy. To do this the central character selects six boys from a poor area and gives them equal educational opportunities with the sons of a wealthy friend. The result of the experiment is to show that six of one amount to very much the same as half a dozen of the other.
of his scenes, places and people directly -- as Conrad does, as a few Americans (notably Willa Cather) are already trying to do. As usual, Fitzgerald's comment has extraordinary relevance for his own case. But another reason for his increasing technical facility was his growing ability to discriminate between methods, to isolate an appropriate device and apply it consistently to the work in hand. Never again does he use the unorganized profusion of This Side of Paradise. Even the tiresome semi-drama is isolated into stories like "Porcelain and Pink" and is soon completely discarded from his technical equipment. Every story has a much more consistent emotional tone, while pieces like "The Ice Palace" and "What a Handsome Pair" reveal a growing sense of formal, meaningful structure.

But most important of all is the refinement of his relationship to his heroes. He still transposes elements of his own experience into his work; "The Sensible Thing," "May Day," "The Camel's Back," among others, contain autobiographical material. But he is beginning to fit such material into an imaginative pattern, no longer setting it down just as it happened. Further, though all the heroes exhibit traits of Fitzgerald's personal psychology, he is now prepared to dissect his personality into its constituent elements to enable a closer scrutiny of its various aspects. Toby Moreland, in "The Offshore Pirate," is Fitzgerald day-dreaming; George O'Kelly, in "The Sensible Thing," Fitzgerald seriously working out a specific emotional problem; San Juan Chandler, in

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"Presumption," Fitzgerald working to understand his relation to society. No longer are the various Fitzgeralds lumped together to make the single exhilarating but confused character that was Amory Blaine.

The beginnings of self-knowledge at which this fragmentation of personality and experience is aimed is helped by Fitzgerald's increasing control over the prose into which he projects his characters. It is losing the often frantically confessional air of much of *This Side of Paradise*, and its moods are more sharply discriminated. Further, the direct relation between author and created character is taking on a more definite outline. It is possible to note a groping toward that semi-detached commentary which is one of Fitzgerald's most unique contributions to the techniques of fiction. For instance, the last section of "Winter Dreams" opens with the comment, "This story is not his biography, remember, although things creep into it which had nothing to do with those dreams he had when he was young." Somehow, this does not intrude itself as first-person comment by the author, nor does it suggest the presence of a fully developed narrator. Yet its anonymity gives the story a sense of ironic control which makes the presentation of some dangerously slippery sentiments fairly successful. Almost exactly the same tone, with exactly the same effect, is achieved in the opening paragraphs of "The Jelly-Bean," while the value of the anonymous comment is strikingly demonstrated in the beginning of "Hay Day."

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But if Fitzgerald seeks to control his character by the elevation of his own reactions to the status of anonymity, he also injects into his own writing that "light yet jewel'ed style" for which he is so famous. It is usual to think of this element of his prose as of something quite divorced from anything he had to say about persons and places. But surely in the early stories it is quite as vital a part of his heroes' context as their social, geographical, or historical environment. If Fitzgerald attempts to control his heroes through the attainment of impersonality in his style, he simultaneously tries to ensure their vitality through the warmth and beauty of the prose in which they are embedded. Indeed, I suspect that Fitzgerald's early heroes owe much of what life they possess to their verbal context. Divorce them from the prose in which they are brought to life and they become lifeless dolls only too obviously cut from a pattern -- the pattern of a mind extending the frontiers of its awareness.

III

The most ambitious of Fitzgerald's early improvisations is, of course, his second novel, The Beautiful and Damned, published in 1922. Critical commentary on this work is remarkable for its paucity. In 1924 Charles Baldwin made it the basis for a prophecy of Fitzgerald's future greatness, and in 1940 Oscar Cargill described it as "possibly the great-

t est piece of balderdash ever penned by a capable author."\(^4\) Expressions of opinion between these extremes have been quite limited, but they are adequately represented by some remarks of Arthur Mizener:

\[\text{The Beautiful and Damned is an enormous improvement on This Side of Paradise, more than anything else because Fitzgerald, though he has not yet found out how to motivate disaster, has a much clearer sense of the precise feel of the disaster he senses in the life he knows. The book is also a great advance on its predecessor technically, much more unified, much less mixed in tone.}\(^4\)

Whatever may be the final critical evaluation of The Beautiful and Damned, there can be no question that it represents Fitzgerald's most complex attempt to integrate the various themes he explored after This Side of Paradise into the single framework of a wealthy society. Every motif uncovered by the stories of the period is here — flappers, philosophers, the war, the South, the Midwest, but above all, aristocracy and New York. Thus Gloria herself is little more than Fitzgerald's most completely individualized flapper. Before she meets Anthony she revels in the notoriety of being Coast-to-Coast Gloria, Gloria Gilbert of Kansas City. And her triumphal progress from Kansas to New York is nothing but all the dreams of all Fitzgerald's Midwestern heroines come true. But something of Fitzgerald's growth is indicated by the presence in the book of Muriel Kane, a figure through whom he neatly satirizes the Jazz

\(^4\) Charles C. Baldwin wrote, "If I were given to prophecying I should certainly predict, once his mania for writing ephemeral short stories is done with, a great and glorious future for F. Scott Fitzgerald; and I should base that prediction upon the irony, the beauty, the wit of This Side of Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned," The Man Who Make Our Novels (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1924), p. 166.

Babies of his own creation. Even in her mid-twenties, Lurie is still going to New Haven proms, humming the latest jazz tunes, swinging her hips, and in general being embarrassingly arch and coy.

Even against competition such as Muriel's, the philosophers more than hold their own. Maury Noble's harangue from the roof of a railway station in the middle of the night matches, in its own line, any of the antics of the female of the species. That Fitzgerald was not altogether happy about this rhetorical exercise in youthful disillusionment is made clear by a letter to Edmund Wilson, and certainly it is not very happily integrated into the structure of the novel. Yet its theme is not irrelevant; Maury's tirade is, in fact, a formal statement of the moral code by which Anthony and Gloria try to live. Even at the lowest point in their personal relationships and financial status, they refuse to relinquish their creed of not giving a damn. It is this Hemingwaysque pose which enables them to go on living even when their friends turn against them. It is the same pose which makes Gloria in her youth one of the most famous debutantes on the East Coast and elevates her concern with her inevitably tanned legs into practically the status of a character trait.

The never-give-a-damn attitude is, indeed, rather more Gloria's than Anthony's. In his brief career as a spiritually and literally unmarried man, Anthony is far more interested in realising in himself the concept of an American honnête homme — the keen, penetrating intellect

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45 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 256.
nourished by a cultured education and the infinite leisure of enormous wealth, the mind uncommitted but alert, prepared at some stage to make its small but memorable mark on an immediate circle of acquaintances. Major evidence of Anthony’s disintegration after his marriage to Gloria is the slowing up of his mind until he finally loses all contact with intellectual pursuits. But not losing the desire for them, he turns, for this among other reasons, to the solace of drink; and if Amory could be on occasion a hard drinker, Anthony becomes a chronic alcoholic.

Yet he starts out with every influence apparently working for his success, blessed with every advantage of that aristocracy which he is so fond of discussing. Both before and after his marriage he is perpetually concerned with the possibility of turning the philosopher into the *honnête homme*, of making idleness into a social virtue:

"...But I want to know just why it's impossible for an American to be graciously idle" — his words gathered conviction — "it astonishes me. It — it — I don't understand why people think that every young man ought to go down-town and work ten hours a day for the best twenty years of his life at dull, unimaginative work, certainly not altruistic work."^46

Anthony’s ardent defence of the virtues of a leisure class is made possible chiefly by a single fact — his abiding consciousness of his grandfather’s millions. When Adam Patch dies, Anthony stands to inherit the better part of seventy-five million dollars, and a sense of money as money is never far below the surface of his mind. In this respect at

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least, Fitzgerald displays a deeper and more honest awareness of the conditions of existence of Anthony's type than in any of his short stories of the period. In these there are many putative Anthonys, but they never think beyond the specifically social nature of the group to which they belong. It is only in the figure of Anthony that Fitzgerald is perceptive (or honest) enough to see that such a society is founded on a very tangible substance, money. And money for its own sake — not as a medium of exchange, not as a symbol of power, but simply as money — exercises an enormous fascination over Anthony:

From these financiers he derived the same sense of safety that he had in contemplating his grand-father's money — even more, for the latter appeared, vaguely, a demand loan made by the world to Adam Patch's own moral righteousness, while this money down-town seemed rather to have been grasped and held by sheer indomitable strengths and tremendous feats of will; in addition, it seemed more definitely and explicitly — money.47

Throughout the novel Anthony's mind is never far from wealth in particular forms — the buying (or more usually the selling) of bonds, the amount of cash in hand, the size of the balance in the bank, the necessity of borrowing some change from Gloria for the price of a drink. The only sort of life that Anthony deems possible requires money for its creation. Without money he cannot be the sort of man who is "aware that there can be no honor and yet have honor, who knows the sophistry of courage and yet be brave."48 Without money the bachelor apartments, the tea dances,

47 Fitzgerald, TBAD, pp. 11-12.
48 Fitzgerald, TBAD, p. 1.
the theatres, the gay parties, the little houses in the country become
the means to disaster instead of gracious living.

On the few occasions when Anthony actively tries to make money
for himself not only is he a hopeless failure, but he finds the process
positively distasteful. He is fatuous as a popular writer, a fiasco as
a bond salesman. Yet he has an extreme dislike for his grandfather
Adam Patch, on whom all his hopes depend. Admittedly, in his old age,
the captain of industry has become a psalm-singing busybody. But Fitz­
gerald's own comments make it clear that he, as well as Anthony, recoils
from the way of life necessary for the accumulation of the Patch fortune.
Again Fitzgerald was faced with the dilemma of his adoration of huge
quantities of money and his contempt for those who make it.

He attempts some solution through the demonstrated behaviour of
Anthony. So long as Anthony is a bachelor, has sufficient money for the
time being and can look forward confidently to more, the world (and New
York in particular) is his own private oyster. But as soon as he is
faced with the exigencies of day-to-day living as well as dwindling
capital, his behaviour becomes less and less satisfactory. He fails in
all those social amenities which Amory at the end of This Side of Paradise
had felt to be so important. Towards the end of The Beautiful and Damned
Anthony is anything but that certain type of man which Amory had postulated
as his ideal.\footnote{See Chapter II, p. 54.} Indeed, he is a hopeless alcoholic, thoroughly vicious,
capable of being involved in senseless brawls, and is overloaded with self-
pity. Early in their married life, Gloria thinks she detects the basic flaw in Anthony's character: "Gloria knew within a month that her husband was an utter coward toward any one of a million phantasms created by his imagination." Yet it seems to me that the fundamental weakness in Anthony's character (though Fitzgerald may not have been fully aware of it) is his emotional selfishness. He is not prepared to give himself to others; he is strongly retentive, psychologically as well as economically. He declines to spend on anybody but himself that bank account of emotional vitality of which Fitzgerald was so strongly aware. And the correlation between the imagery of wealth and mental health is here significant. The pattern of Anthony's behaviour suggests that for the first time Fitzgerald is dimly realizing the inadequacy of mere money as a firm foundation for valuable action or as a proper context for modern romanticism. Anthony's failure is largely in relation to society and is caused by a lack of a proper sense of the responsibilities of his position. Without the backing of a tradition (available in America in the South or New England) money alone cannot produce the ideal modern man.

If Anthony is a failure in relation to society, his personal relationships are even less successful. In a sense, The Beautiful and Damned is any one of Fitzgerald's Jazz Age stories extended beyond the happy ending. It is understandable why he had the courage to make such an extension only so rarely; for it is hard to imagine any more dismal failure than the seemingly perfect marriage of Anthony and Gloria. It is difficult

50 Fitzgerald, _TEAD_, p. 155.
to apportion the blame for the deterioration of their relationship, for their life together develops into one of mutual recrimination. Nevertheless, the exploration of this match, endowed apparently with every advantage, is at the core of the novel's meaning. Although so beautiful, why so damned?

Indeed, the whole of the first Book of the novel is little more than a prelude to bringing Anthony and Gloria together. It is on the last page of Book I, when "Together they crushed out the still folds of her dress in one triumphant and enduring embrace,"\footnote{Fitzgerald, 
\textit{TBAD}, p. 126.} that \textit{The Beautiful and Damned} may be said truly to begin. Their first months together are radiantly happy (they are both "blowy clean"), with mutual passion blinding them to each other's faults. Yet even towards the end of their honeymoon quarrels start to flare up. Anthony is irritated by Gloria's dilatoriness about the laundry, her finicky appetite; Gloria, on her part, is annoyed by the streak of cowardice she finds in Anthony. A small gray house in the country just out of New York — discovered as the result of an argument about Gloria's driving — prolongs their happiness together, although Anthony's income is already beginning to dwindle. For the first time, both of them realize that they are growing older. The sense of the passage of time frightens Gloria far more than Anthony; indeed, for her the loss of her youth and beauty is the major tragedy of the novel. She may be beautiful, but she feels herself damned when she discovers that she cannot indefinitely retain her beauty. At thirty the wrinkles are beginning to appear. When she fails in her screen test, she breaks down completely.
But long before this point, the marriage has started to disintegrate. No longer content simply with each other's company, they require more and more stimulation in the form of wild parties in order to make life bearable. During these parties they commit all sorts of foolish indiscretions, such as re-renting the house they have learned to hate, which only make the next party more urgently necessary. The first major climax of their dissipation occurs at a weekend house-party. Both the Patches are drunk, as are the house guests; Tana, the Japanese servant, is tootling on his flute; it is all very reminiscent of Maury's song, rendered at a previous party, "The — pan-ic—has -- come -- over us,/ So ha-a-as -- the moral decline!" Into this hilarious scene bursts none other than Adam Patch. Furious, the senile moralist storms out and lives just long enough to cut Anthony out of his will.

The rest of the novel is the story of Anthony's slow decline as he waits while his lawyer contests the will. The War does nothing but physically separate him from Gloria. Without any sense of direction, he drifts into a languid affair with a Southern girl, while Gloria flirts circumspectly with ex-boy friends at home in New York. Anthony finally becomes deliriously ill and in a moment of hallucination sees what is obviously meant to be the truth about Gloria:

Early in his confinement the conviction took root that he was going mad. It was as though there were dark yet vivid personalities in his mind, held in check by a little monitor, who sat aloft somewhere and looked on. The thing that worried him was that the monitor was sick.

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52 Fitzgerald, *TFAD*, p. 236.
and holding out with difficulty. Should he give up, should he falter for a moment, out would rush these intolerable things — only Anthony could know what a state of blackness there would be if the worst of him could roam his consciousness unchecked. 53

Geismar's comment on this passage is illuminating:

The 'monitor' has of course been Anthony's image of Gloria Gilbert as an absolute ideal to which he can dedicate himself: this absolute and impossible ideal which he has used to shield his own temperament from himself — he now realizes, 'the chief jailor of his insufficiency.' 54

Anthony, that is, is one of Fitzgerald's first serious attempts to deal with that need for illusion which was a major need in his life. If Gloria is damned because she will not accept the fading of her youth and beauty, Anthony is damned because of his perversely held illusion that these are unchangeable qualities. He has dedicated his life to a mistaken ideal.

Nevertheless, after his moment of insight Anthony, with the War's end, returns to Gloria and stupidly reconstructs the image of the monitor. Consequently, after the initial passion of reunion they drift further down the road to damnation until, in a rather contrived ending, Anthony is forced into a complete mental breakdown at the very moment that litigation finally proves favorable to him and he becomes the inheritor of the Patch millions.

53 Fitzgerald, TMD, p. 348.

In the last scene he is on an ocean liner, his broken mind concentrating on the phrase, "I showed them.... It was a hard fight, but I didn't give up and I came through". The ending is a somewhat heavy-handed enforcing of the epigraph to *The Beautiful and Damned* — "The victor belongs to the spoils," a phrase which has implications other than economic. Anthony, to be sure, is a slave to his money, both before and after he finally gets it; but he is also a slave to his own conception of society and an ideal woman. When he encounters the realities of society and sex he refuses to view them as realities; instead he treats them as he would his ideal illusions, with the result that his whole world crumbles to dust. *The Beautiful and Damned* comes nearer than any of the short stories of the period to understanding (if not controlling) Fitzgerald's enormous need for illusions — about youth, beauty, money, or the past.

Plainly *The Beautiful and Damned* is a more penetrating manipulation of Fitzgerald's themes than the uncritical record of *This Side of Paradise*. Yet all the ideas treated in the later novel were present in the earlier; it is simply that they are arranged into new patterns and tested against contexts of which Fitzgerald was at the most only dimly aware in *This Side of Paradise*. The technique of *The Beautiful and Damned* shows a corresponding growth in control, as it responds to the need of rendering the more subtly realized hero. The whole book is much more tightly planned than *This Side of Paradise*, more distinctly organized around a central unifying purpose — the tracing of the disintegration of Anthony and of his marriage to Gloria. The methods used are few in number. There are only a very few instances of the pseudo-drama, one of which, the scene climaxed by the appearance of Adam Patch, seems remarkably success-

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ful. On the other hand, the debate between Beauty and the Voice is
enormously embarrassing. But this is perhaps the only piece of genuinely
bad writing in the whole book. Most of the rest is very competent, his
management of the humorous scenes, for instance, being probably better
than anything else that Fitzgerald had so far attempted in this vein.

In particular, his control over his use of point of view has
been considerably strengthened. He retains that omniscient attitude
towards his material he so loved to exercise, but he never enters overtly
into the conduct of the plot. He makes, indeed, a good deal of comment
about the action (retaining the device of direct statement), but the
comment is saved from becoming overt author-interposition through its
impersonal irony, of which the opening paragraph of the novel is a fair
sample:

As you first see him he wonders frequently
whether he is not without honor and slightly
mad, a shameful and obscene thinness glisten­
ing on the surface of the world like oil on a
clean pond, these occasions being varied, of
course, with those in which he thinks himself
rather an exceptional young man, thoroughly
sophisticated, well adjusted to his environment,
and somewhat more significant than anyone else
he knows.56

Usually when Fitzgerald abandons this ironic impersonality, it is to ap­
proach Anthony's consciousness, although he frequently views scenes from
Gloria's point of view. In occasional moments of stress he moves right
into his hero's mind. But for the main part, Anthony's reactions are
represented through generalizing statements about them, the creation of

56 Fitzgerald, TBAD, p. 1.
a dominating tone throughout a scene, or through the undertones of an apparently superficial conversation.

Fitzgerald has also learned some new tricks. Gloria's passion for gum drops, for instance, is a neatly calculated device, whose effect is gauged with accuracy and tact. He has come to be more successful in revealing personality through bringing his characters together in scenes of emotional stress. In This Side of Paradise they talked about each other; in The Beautiful and Damned they talk at each other. There is indeed still a good deal of pseudo-intellectual conversation, reaching its peak in Maury's monologue but continuously carried on in the early sections of the novel between Anthony, Maury, and Richard Caramel. The conversation is perhaps no better than that of This Side of Paradise, but in both novels it indicates fairly accurately the intellectual capacity of those who indulge in it.

Furthermore, in The Beautiful and Damned, instead of trying to cram everything into a single portrait, Fitzgerald spread his themes more evenly over a variety of supporting characters, who generally have much more life than the minor figures of This Side of Paradise. The two principal supporting roles are filled by Maury Noble and Richard Caramel. It is their function to represent for Fitzgerald parts of himself that he did not project onto Anthony. Maury Noble (as is suggested by the name) represents the ideal aristocrat after whom Anthony tries to pattern himself. His role is much the same as that of Dick Humbird in This Side of Paradise, though it is developed more fully. Both names are patently symbolic, and this device, used inconstantly in the earlier novel, is a standard trick in The Beautiful and Damned. The name of Patch suggests Anthony's basic lack of integration; Richard Caramel,
somebody vaguely ridiculous, surfeiting, and lacking in real staying power. And in Richard, Fitzgerald presents an extraordinarily honest, ironic portrait of the possible development of one side of his own nature — the development of the serious artist into a good-natured, pompous, stupid hack writer, unconsciously prostituting his art to the glamour of money. Richard is another illustration of the text of The Beautiful and Damned — the victor belongs to the spoils.

Richard, then, is Fitzgerald the writer; Luray, Fitzgerald the thinker and imagined aristocrat; Anthony, Fitzgerald in society. In thus fragmenting the basic elements in his personality he displays a greater intellectual control of his basic material, himself, than was evident in This Side of Paradise. Of the three Fitzgeralds, perhaps Richard is the most fully comprehended. The disintegration that overtakes both Luray and Anthony is not based on the same firm understanding of motivation. And if emotional horror and collapse are to have tragic force, there must be a sense of conguity between the fate which overtakes the characters and its stated cause. It is in this respect, particularly with reference to Anthony and Gloria that The Beautiful and Damned fails. "The disaster which overtakes this marriage is never actually centered in the marriage itself....The horror is now on the exterior. It is a sense, vague and diffuse, of prevalent disaster; but the forms it takes, while indirectly the result of the increasing tensions within the marriage, stem from those other circumstances of which the marriage is merely an accident." 57

In other words, Fitzgerald is trying to force into the marriage of Anthony and Gloria emotions which are strong within himself but which are not war-

ranted by the created fictional situation. Thus what is intended to be a full-scale tragedy of the Jazz Age turns instead into the sputtering pathos engendered by the collision between a philosopher manque and his mistaken vision of the ideal flapper.

IV

In a famous passage from "Early Success" Fitzgerald wrote that "All the stories that came into my head had a touch of disaster in them — the lovely young creatures in my novels went to ruin, the diamond mountains of my stories blew up, my millionaires were as beautiful and damned as Hardy's peasants." 58 The strength of this personal obsession has been frequently noted by critics, whose remarks are fairly represented by these of Maxwell Geismar: "The sense of dark dissolution and of death diffusively brooding" over This Side of Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned (1922) — over this whole lucent postwar panorama from absinthe to yachts — is at the center of Fitzgerald's work. 59 Indeed, the touch of disaster communicated itself not only to The Beautiful and Damned but to countless of the short stories written during the same period — the horror of Sally Carrol's imprisonment in "The Ice Palace," of Charley Abbott's loss of memory in "Diamond Dick," of the murder of Marie Bannerman in "The Dance," of Lieutenant Canby's senseless death in "The Last of the Belles." The theme occurs too frequently and in too wide a range of situations to be a consciously controlled writing device; it is in the nature of an obsessional compulsion. Hence Fitzgerald's whole problem was to find proper

58 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 87.

objects or situations to act as the vehicles of his graphic sense of horror and disaster. His failure to do so in *The Beautiful and Damned* is responsible for the fundamental weakness of the novel, and a similar criticism can be made of many of the stories. However, we have seen that in his second novel Fitzgerald did make a slight attempt to equate the cause of Anthony's disaster with the corrupting power of his unearned wealth, and of Gloria's with her desperate attachment to youth and beauty. In later fiction these two themes were to give powerful sanction to the operation of Fitzgerald's sense of disaster, but at the time of *The Beautiful and Damned* he was still too strongly attached to his illusions about youth and money to let them stand as the cause of tragedy. He might investigate the nature of his illusions, assess the chance of successful action in their context, but make them the source of tragedy he was not prepared to do. Hence the most important fictions of his early career are devoted to bringing his heroes into contact with society, investigating their response to money and social tensions, and developing an awareness of an American past which might be the source of valuable fiction just as much as American geography. These are the contexts against which he tests himself and his created heroes in his major artistic accountings with the world.

But in one minor mode he was able to give his obsessions free play and create a sort of writing which within its special limits reaches a kind of perfection. For some five years after *This Side of Paradise* Fitzgerald periodically produced prose fantasies, whose most important examples are "Head and Shoulders," "His Russet Witch," "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," and "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz.‖ "Head and Shoulders" expresses all of Fitzgerald's fantasies about a
preposterous but ideally happy love match; "His Russet Witch," all that he felt about the desirability of eternal youth and beauty; "Benjamin Button," his abiding sense of the passage of time, of "the room filled with clocks and calendars"; but it is with "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" that I wish to be chiefly concerned, since it is the most perfect example of Fitzgerald experiments in the art of fantasy.

Arthur Mizener has written that "wealth was Fitzgerald's central symbol; around it he eventually built a mythology which enabled him to take imaginative possession of American life." 60 "The Diamond" gives that mythology its archetypal expression. John Unger, the hero of the tale, comes from Hades, situated on the Mississippi River—a provincial hell in the lower Midwest. Like Fitzgerald, he is introduced to Eastern society through a not very happy attendance at a prep school, symbolically named St. Midas'. The only friend he makes is Percy Washington, who invites John to his home for the summer holidays. This home is situated in the Far West, Montana (a region which scarcely had any real existence in Fitzgerald's mind), and is built on a mountain which is one enormous diamond. The Washingtons are the richest people in the world, and their menage is described in fittingly luxuriant prose.

John is absorbed into these surroundings as into a dream world, particularly because they include an extremely attractive and co-operative daughter. The only unpleasant feature is the presence of "some adventurous mariners who had the misfortune to discover El Dorado" and who are

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kept perpetual prisoners. Once they have seen the Washington's fantastic estate, they must never be allowed out to tell the world. John learns that he is included in the embargo, that he is in fact under sentence of death. When he has sufficiently entertained the Washingtons there is nothing else to be done with him. However, he is not expected to be sad; after the ecstasy of life on a diamond mountain, death can be the only satisfactory consummation. Fortunately, just as he is about to be assassinated, bombers guided by an escaped prisoner arrive to destroy El Dorado. John flees with the two Washington girls, and on the side of the mountain they see an extraordinary spectacle -- Braddock Washington trying to make an economic pact with God for the preservation of his fortune. When the rising dawn indicates the rejection of his plea, he dynamites his mountain, and the whole fantastic kingdom is blown sky-high. John and the girls, left with a few worthless rhinestones they have brought away by mistake, head back to Hades on the Mississippi, as John sums up the tale:

"There are only diamonds in the world, diamonds and perhaps the shabby gift of disillusion. Well I have that last and I will make the usual nothing of it....His was a great sin who first invented consciousness. Let us lose it for a few hours." 61

In this fantasy Fitzgerald could legitimately give all his daydreams free rein -- the dream of wealth, of the glamour of youth, of the sense of disaster. But more than that, through the technique of dream he momentarily saw the connection between horror and money. Wealth, in order to preserve itself, must enslave or destroy those whom it absorbs and

61 Fitzgerald, TJA, p. 191.
finally reaches its consummation in an orgy of self-destruction from which only the lucky few escape. When he let his fancies run riot, Fitzgerald could establish an extraordinarily powerful myth of wealth, could suddenly see the dangers involved in the discovery of El Dorado. In his realistic fiction, he had so far been content to play happily in that golden country. His next artistic advance was shown to him in the dream world of "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz." The myth he created in that story revealed to him the nature of the connection between the various fantasies which gave his fiction its underlying tone. However, if the invention of consciousness was a sin, it must be faced. Fitzgerald could not leave his solution in the world of fantasy forever. It was to be his prime task in The Great Gatsby to translate the myth into fictional reality; by finding an adequate object for his sense of disaster, to create a novel with truly tragic import and a hero equal to the role assigned him.
CHAPTER IV
THE GREAT GATSBY

... the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James....

I

In the same letter that contains the epigraph to this chapter, T. S. Eliot told Fitzgerald that "When I have time I should like to write to you more fully and tell you exactly why /The Great Gatsby/ seems to me such a remarkable book." Unfortunately the promised commentary has never been made, and Fitzgerald criticism has thus been deprived of what would probably have been a most discerning and stimulating analysis of the novel. Nevertheless, The Great Gatsby has not been lacking in students of its art, nearly all of whom have joined with Eliot in according it the highest praise. To some it has been an unqualified masterpiece; to others, its value has been tempered by the presence of one or another weakness. But whatever the degree of absolute merit accorded to the work, it is almost universally placed, with occasional dissension in favour of Tender Is the Night, at the pinnacle of Fitzgerald's achievement.

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There is, too, a fair measure of agreement about the reasons for the superiority of *The Great Gatsby* over the rest of Fitzgerald's fiction. *The Great Gatsby*, it is felt, is his most nearly perfect work of art. Its principal themes had all been adumbrated before 1925 and were to reappear intermittently for the rest of his career; but in this single novel Fitzgerald not only saw his personal obsessions clearly and complete but contrived to embody them in a beautifully ordered fictional form. *The Great Gatsby*, that is, displays all of Fitzgerald's early virtues, but displays them under the control of a newly found intellectual clarity and a growing sense of the nature and scope of fiction.

Hence it is just to praise the novel for one of Fitzgerald's most early noted and most easily understood virtues — his grasp on contemporary life. Katherine Brégy has described *The Great Gatsby* as an "almost perfect novel of manners,"³ and the accuracy of her judgment is obvious to any reader of the novel. In the course of its something less than two hundred pages *The Great Gatsby*, thanks to Fitzgerald's unerring eye for detail, captures the essence of an age. Everything which gave the 1920's their peculiar spirit is to be found in this book — the development of Long Island as the playground of New York society, the frenzied drinking of Prohibition, the sinister characters like Myer Wolfshiem who made that drinking possible, Wall Street and bonds, easy money, the determinedly earnest immorality of Myrtle Wilson

and her sister. In the slight narrative of *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald found a vehicle which might legitimately embody, through its selected details, the living heart of a decade. Perhaps the flavour of the period is nowhere better suggested than in the list of visitors to Gatsby's mansion in the fantastic summer of 1922 — a list which Nick Carraway jots down on an old railway timetable. Its first paragraph is sufficient to suggest its nature:

> From East Egg, then, came the Chester Beckers and the Leeches, and a man named Bunsen, whom I had known at Yale, and Doctor Webster Civet, who was drowned last summer up in Maine, and the Hornbeams and the Willie Waltaires, and a whole clan named Blackbuck, who always gathered in a corner and flipped up their noses like goats at whatsoever came near. And the Ismays and the Chrysties (or rather Hubert Auerbach and Mr. Chrystie's wife), and Edgar Beaver, whose hair, they say, turned cotton-white one winter afternoon for no good reason at all.4

It might be argued that the major contribution of the 1920's to the American social structure was the creation of what has since become known as "cafe society" — a social group within whose limits mix the respectable, the not-so respectable, the definitely shady, the representatives of the professions and of the fringe professions of the entertainment world, all bound together by the common elements of money and sophistication. Nick's catalogue is the birth certificate of this new element in American culture.

But Fitzgerald's vivid ability to suggest social dynamics simply through the manipulation of proper names indicates a knowledge

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4F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), pp. 73-74. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to *TGG*. 
of something more than contemporary social groupings. It implies a greater feeling for the forces which moulded the present surface of America than had hitherto been present in Fitzgerald's work. Indeed, the progressive discovery of Gatsby's relation to American history and the meaning of both his and Nick's experience in relation to the past form a basic ground theme to the entire novel. This fact is made plain at the end of the novel, when Nick meditates on the significance of the events he has recounted. He contemplates the dawn of American experience, the springtime of Long Island's history:

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes — a fresh green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.5

Gatsby, that is, is not an isolated phenomenon; Fitzgerald quite consciously links him with the whole sweep of American experience, creates him as the archetypal representative of one of the central elements in the collective American imagination — the capacity to dream. This mythological character of Gatsby's being is not confined to the closing pages of the novel. It has, for instance, been pointed out that the schedule that he made out for himself as a boy is a deliberate parody of Franklin's

famous regimen in the Autobiography.\(^6\) It is not even accidental that this schedule is copied out on the flyleaf of Hopalong Cassidy, whose hero is perhaps the most complete, because the most naively imagined, literary representative of the experience of the American frontier. Gatsby is even more directly linked to the vital stream of American history through his connection with Dan Cody, the old-style millionaire, who was "a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five."\(^7\) Cody, as one of the great robber-barons, is the epitome of a whole epoch in the history of American wealth, just as Meyer Wolfshiem, Gatsby's second mentor, sums up in his person the economic morality of the 1920's. The Jew who fixed the World Series in 1919, who wears human teeth as cuff links, is just as much an historical symbol as the Anglo-Saxon Cody.

Inevitably Nick Carraway, too, is caught up in this archetypal treatment of history. His family is "something of a clan," with a tradition stretching back to the Civil War.\(^8\) He feels at home in West Egg only when a stranger asks him for some directions. Then he can see himself as "a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler."\(^9\) He finds emotional security by fitting himself into the large pattern of American history. And if the hero of the novel is unable to find a comparable


\(^7\)Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 120.

\(^8\)Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 3.

\(^9\)Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 4.
security, it is true that "with The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald first
brought his vision of America to full and mature realization."\textsuperscript{10}

However, if the novel is Fitzgerald's most complete attempt to
understand, on native grounds and in historical terms, what it is to be
an American, the sense of history does not overshadow his already
developed sense of geography. \textit{The Great Gatsby} continues Fitzgerald's
attempts to understand America in regional terms and to assess the
contribution which their regional backgrounds might make to his heroes'
worth. New York remains one of the centres of interest, but the focus
of the novel moves out to Long Island and the twin communities of East
and West Egg. The final tragedy is precipitated in Long Island's val-
ley of ashes, and Gatsby's career reaches its end in the swimming pool
of his fantastic mansion.

After Gatsby's death, Nick first of all turns to New York in
his attempt to regain his spiritual balance, but ultimately he is not
at home in the East, although in the spring of 1922 he felt that he had
permanently settled there. He is not himself a member of Eastern
society — at best he is more or less a hanger-on, a poor relative of
the Buchanans. Tom and Daisy, particularly Tom, fit much more readily
into the patterns of behaviour proper to the East. Tom, early in the
novel, aggressively asserts that he would be a fool to live anywhere
else; and his whole background of tremendous wealth (he gives Daisy a
\$350,000 diamond necklace as a wedding present), successful athleticism
at Yale, and big business connections makes him very apt to fit into

\textsuperscript{10}Edwin S. Fussell, "Fitzgerald's Brave New World," \textit{ELH}, \textbf{XIX}
(Dec., 1952), 294.
Fitzgerald's established image of Eastern society. Like many of Fitzgerald's early heroes, he has married a Southern girl — Daisy is originally from Kentucky, although she adopts Chicago as her home; but in the case of the Buchanans, the fortunes that both bring to the marriage are approximately equal. And that possession of wealth is a cardinal element in Daisy's character is made plain by Gatsby's famous remark, "Her voice is full of money."

The Great Gatsby, then, is based on Fitzgerald's normal assumptions about the relationship between regional heritage and economic status. The rich are either from the East or else they are Midwestern parvenus trying to ally themselves with the Eastern aristocracy. And with the various gradations of wealth go certain appropriate modes of social behaviour. Nick, the outsider trying hard to get in, does his best not to be snobbish, but is betrayed by his hesitancy in admitting his residence at West Egg — "I lived at West Egg, the — well, the less fashionable of the two."

And the economic differences between West and East Egg continually result in subtle manifestations of social snobbery which are nowhere better displayed than at Gatsby's parties, where East Egg meets West Egg on the neutral ground of their host's anonymity and mystery. When Gatsby finally emerges from that anonymity and that mystery he fits into the pattern of Fitzgerald's geographical thinking as easily as any of the other characters in the novel. Like Nick, like Tom, he is a Midwesterner. But unlike them, his origins were as far

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11 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 144.

12 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 6.
removed from wealth as possible. James Gatz started his climb to the
seats of the mighty when, at the age of seventeen, he changed his name
to Gatsby and attached himself to Dan Cody's personal retinue. Gatsby
represents in an extreme form one of Fitzgerald's basic themes — the
struggle of the West to achieve social equality with the East by the
amassing of equal wealth. Thus, Nick can finally say, with justice,
that "I see now that this has been a story of the West after all — Tom
and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps
we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable
to Eastern life."  

However, Gatsby wishes to acquire wealth for a far more specialized
purpose than simply to buy his way into a select social group; he wishes
to buy back the past and the girl he loves; he absolutely requires wealth
in order to nourish his private illusions and ideals. If Nick is right
in describing his narrative as a story of the West, the novel is never­
theless primarily concerned with individuals rather than with types.
Like the myth of American history which lies at the base of the work,
the investigation of the facts of American geography is a steady under­
tone in The Great Gatsby rather than its major theme. This, of course,
is embodied in Gatsby's addiction to a personal illusion and his attempt
to reconstruct the past. These motifs are no more new to Fitzgerald's
imagination than those previously discussed, but they receive especial
intensity through their concentration in the single enigmatic figure of
Gatsby himself. On the few occasions that he does speak, Gatsby makes quite
clear what his attitudes are. Discussing the past with Nick, he cries

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13Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 212.
incredulously, "Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can!" The discovery of the tragic limitations of this point of view constitutes one of the major interests of The Great Gatsby.

As a young Army officer, Gatsby had met Daisy in 1917 and immediately fallen in love with her, attracted by her vitality and wealth. But Daisy, "gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor," somehow eluded James Gatz, however loud the drums of his destiny might beat in his own ears. So he lost her and went to war, his natural capacity for illusion, for seeing "the unreality of reality," heightened and given point by a specific object to which it might attach itself, and directed towards a single moment in the past when he had found Paradise. While still overseas, sent by bungled orders to Oxford, Gatsby had learned of Daisy's marriage to Tom Buchanan. He was sure that she did not love Tom, that she accepted him simply for his money. His obvious course, then, was to buy her back. Thus the psychological force which nourished his illusions drove him into the highly practical activity of making a lot of money as quickly as possible, by any means possible. At last, when he sees Daisy again, "his count of enchanted objects...diminished by one." By recapturing reality, he has only betrayed the illusion which was the motivating force of his life.

And if there is any truly new theme added to Fitzgerald's range

14 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 133.
15 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 179.
16 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 119.
17 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 113.
in *The Great Gatsby*, it is that of betrayal. Gatsby betrays himself; Daisy betrays Gatsby; Tom betrays Daisy; Jordan betrays Nick. It is the motif which finally allows Fitzgerald to make a synthesis out of the disparate elements in his thinking. The betrayal of the West by the East, of the middle class by the rich, of the individual by his illusions at last gave Fitzgerald a precise and adequate motivation for that sense of disaster which hitherto he had felt but not understood. When at the end of the novel, Nick returns to the Midwest with the wish for "the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever," his response is the inevitable end-product of the interaction of Fitzgerald's normal themes at last operating in a controlled and fully understood situation.

II

Hence, *The Great Gatsby* owes part of its excellence simply to Fitzgerald's increased understanding of the materials of his fiction. This novel is plainly preceded by far more intellectual effort than went into either *This Side of Paradise* or *The Beautiful and Damned*. Its themes are at once universalised through the growing perception of historical patterns and intensified by their concentration in controlled narrative. As Maxwell Geismar has noted, in *The Great Gatsby*, "Fitzgerald has used all the elements of his hitherto dominant pattern, but he has broken the pattern and regrouped the elements." However, this

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18 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 2.

regrouping was not merely — or even mostly — the result of increased intellectual clarity about the issues involved. It also consisted in — and it is this element in the novel which probably accounts for Eliot's extravagant praise — the statement of meaning as a function of form. This Side of Paradise had derived its merit almost from its very lack of art, from its nature as a piece of romantic, confessional outpouring. The Great Gatsby, on the other hand, owes much of its reputation to the fact that it is perhaps the first modern American novel to put into significant practice the theory of organic form. Its real meaning can be arrived at only by a study of its artistic strategies.

In The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald showed himself to be the first American in the twentieth century seriously concerned with the art of fiction, with fiction as an end in itself, capable of expressing important ideas in terms of style and structure.

It is easier to describe the nature of Fitzgerald's newly acquired technical virtues than to establish their sources. However, it is possible to hazard a few suggestions concerning the origins of Fitzgerald's artistic development. Edith Wharton has been put forward as one major influence, while Fitzgerald himself acknowledged a debt to Thackeray, a

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20 See Geismar's note, The Last of the Provincials, p. 315: "In fact, Gatsby was probably the most perfect example of a planned novel in our modern tradition up to this point — planned, I mean, in this mathematical sense of a Bach concerto — though The Sun Also Rises, a year later, was to match it and The Sound and the Fury, in 1929, was to outdo it."
debt of which Gertrude Stein was conscious when she read *The Great Gatsby*.\(^{21}\) Yet, probably the most powerful aesthetic influence on Fitzgerald at this time was that of Joseph Conrad. Some years afterward, Fitzgerald recalled that while he was writing *The Great Gatsby*, "I had just re-read Conrad's preface to *The Nigger*,"\(^{22}\) and the abiding influence of Conrad is further borne out by the remark cited earlier in this study.

Several critics have made detailed examinations of the relationship between Conrad and Fitzgerald,\(^{23}\) but it is possible to descry two principal directions into which Fitzgerald was led in *The Great Gatsby*, probably as a result of his profound respect for the older writer's methods. The first of these takes as its starting point a new quality

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in Fitzgerald's prose. Gertrude Stein once astutely commented that "Fitzgerald was the only one of the younger writers who wrote naturally in sentences." In *This Side of Paradise* he had put this talent chiefly to the service of creating flashy epigrams and pseudo-aphorisms, and in the early stories to the recording of a moment-by-moment sense of a warmly relished experience slipping all too rapidly into the past. But in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald's sentence rises to previously unattempted tasks. His style gives convincing proof that he had thoroughly absorbed the lesson of the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* — that the prime task of the creative artist is "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel — it is, before all, to make you see."  

In *The Great Gatsby* the Conradian concept of "rendering" is fused onto the normally evocative nostalgia of Fitzgerald's prose to create a literary impressionism remarkable at once for its economy and its suggestive power. An excellent example of the technique is to be found in Nick Carraway's first meeting with Meyer Wolfshiem: "A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness." The type of action in which *The Great Gatsby* is centred is peculiarly suited to this type of treatment — based, as it is, in hurried, semi-hysterical, rapidly changing scenes and emotions. The application of the impressionist technique

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to the party in Tom's 158th Street apartment, for instance, succeeds brilliantly for exactly this reason. Similarly, the changing moods of Gatsby's gaudy but unforgettable parties are precisely rendered in all their tones rather than externally described. "A tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight,"27 writes Nick, thus defining the manner not only of a single scene but of the whole novel.

What is perhaps the most striking example of Fitzgerald's controlled impressionism occurs quite early in the last, fatal afternoon. When Nick arrives at the Buchanans' house, he hears the butler's telephone conversation fantastically distorted by the heat:

"The master's body!" roared the butler into the mouthpiece. "I'm sorry, madame, but we can't furnish it -- it's far too hot to touch this noon!"

What he really said was: "Yes...Yes... I'll see."28

The surrealistic absurdity of what the butler appears to say does more than to vividly suggest the oppressive heat of the day; its sinister note symbolically foretells the climax which is to follow later in the afternoon. And throughout The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald makes consistent use of symbolism as a literary device by which to intensify the emotional impact of the novel and to elucidate its themes.

The first major symbol of the novel is stated at the end of the opening chapter. Gatsby has already been identified as the owner of the "factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy" next door to

27 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 52.
28 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 137.
Nick's own "small eyesore" but the first time that Nick sees him is on his return from his first visit to the Buchanans. He is standing on his lawn when he sees the shadowy figure of his neighbour straining, with arms outstretched, towards a green light apparently at the end of somebody's dock. The green light, in fact, is at the end of the Buchanans' dock, and thus becomes for Gatsby the symbol of all his need and desire for illusion. When he at last is reunited with Daisy, the light ceases to have meaning for him ("Possibly," notes Nick, "it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever"). Indeed, the importance of the light is completely transferred to Nick, who, at the close of the novel, fastens on it in his attempt to understand Gatsby's life. "Gatsby believed in the green light," he finally decides, "the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us." And it is precisely this article of belief which is at the centre of Gatsby's existence.

Hence, Fitzgerald's use of symbolism allowed him to achieve a more complete grasp on his characters than had hitherto been possible for him. Up to The Great Gatsby the characters he wrote of had been personal symbols of his own desires; in his third novel he was enabled to take hold of the lives of his created characters by an understanding of their need for symbols and badges of achievement. By projecting into his fiction a highly characteristic need of his own he achieved a greater distance from and objectivity about his characters than in any of his previous work.

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29 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 6.
30 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 112.
31 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 218.
How fully Fitzgerald developed symbolism as a method of characterization is indicated by Marius Bewley's belief that "It is hardly too much to say that the whole being of Gatsby exists only in relation to what the green light symbolizes." And the light, of course, basically stands for Gatsby's incorruptible dream. Illusion, that is, is at the centre of Gatsby's psychology. His pink suits, his ostentatious car, his life in the service of a "vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty" may indicate his lack of taste; but they also indicate the continuing strength and purity of his illusions about Daisy.

However, that the object of his illusion is inadequate is suggested by the second major symbol of The Great Gatsby — the Wasteland of Long Island, presided over by the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg. Through this Eliot-esque valley of ashes Fitzgerald symbolizes his attitude toward life when it cannot be conducted above the hot struggles of the poor or given a pattern through the strength of illusion. It is in the valley of ashes that the undistinguished mass of humanity — the Wilsons and Michaelises — must live out their span. Long Island's valley of ashes is Fitzgerald's symbol for the sterility and disenchantment of modern life; and his symbolism gives to his disillusionment a dignity and sense of universal validity which it had previously lacked.

The eyes of Dr. Eckleburg, which brood over the Wilson's service station, apparently represent modern man's image of God. Their meaning,

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33 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 118.
as a decipherable symbol, is made clearest in the scene where Michaelis
tries to calm the hysterical Wilson:

Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with
a shock that he was looking at the eyes
of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just
emerged, pale and enormous, from the dis-
solving night.

"God sees everything," repeated
Wilson.

"That's an advertisement," Michaelis
assured him.34

The irony of the double-entendre is here apparent enough. The eyes of
Dr. Eckleburg are literally an advertisement, but to a modern man like
Michaelis, so is the whole idea that God sees everything. But in spite
of Michaelis, Dr. Eckleburg, with his vast, ironic impersonality, does
preside over the valley of ashes, providing an anonymous, unvarying
moral norm for the novel. Fitzgerald, that is, uses his symbols not only
to define his characters but also as a means of reaching a controlled
judgment about them. Thus, although the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg are fixed,
they have a peripatetic representative who can pass implied, ironic judg-
ment on Gatsby as well as on Tom Buchanan and the Wilsons. A constant
visitor at Gatsby's parties is a man whom Nick calls Owl-eyes — a term
intentionally reminiscent of the monstrous eyes which oversee the valley
of ashes. Owl-eyes is first discovered by Nick and Jordan during one of
Gatsby's parties; he is alone in the library, examining the books, on
which he comments, "Absolutely real — have pages and everything. I
thought they'd be nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're abso-
lutely real."35 Again Fitzgerald's symbolism gives him a firm, disinterested

34Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 192.
35Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 55.
foundation on which he can build the moral judgments implied by his irony; only in this case the irony is aimed at Gatsby rather than the very rich. This is not the last of Owl-eyes' comments. He is one of the very few present at Gatsby's funeral, and his pungent remark adequately states the realistic view of Gatsby's career and final tragedy — "the poor son-of-a-bitch."36

Similarly, our response to Tom Buchanan is controlled in a considerable measure by his relationship to the major symbols of The Great Gatsby. His willful alliance with the ashheaps, through his liaison with Myrtle Wilson, objectifies the disapproval which Nick expresses throughout the novel. Early in the book he describes Tom's body as "capable of enormous leverage — a cruel body,"37 and it is important that in The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald overtly questions the values of athleticism, as they are embodied in Tom Buchanan. Tom's early physical success had caused him to "drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game."38 Similarly, his inherited wealth has only encouraged in him a senseless self-indulgence. Even during the first months of his marriage with Daisy he seeks other women, and there are hints of dark scandals which force the Buchanans to leave Chicago. And, of course, a large part of the final tragedy is set in motion by Tom's affair with Myrtle. Tom is vaguely aware of his own unsatisfactoriness; but since he has no personal resources, his uneasiness

36 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 211.
37 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 8.
38 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 7.
can find an outlet only through his hysterical attempts to grasp at a scientific justification of white (and hence his own) superiority and discussions of possible global calamity, which may include himself but which will certainly do away with everybody else. In either case, his petty mind will be relieved of the strain to which it is unwillingly subjected. The final evidence of Tom's stupidity and emptiness is in his defence of the double standard in the climactic quarrel in the Plaza suite.

If Tom is unacceptable to both Nick and Fitzgerald, it might be expected that Daisy would pass their scrutiny, but this is not the case. In spite of the sensuous attraction of her voice, Fitzgerald finally realizes that because there is money in its tone, she is dangerous and must be rejected along with Tom. In the course of the novel Nick passes from a snobbish awareness of Daisy's membership in the "rather distinguished secret society" of the rich to the realization that "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy — they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made..." Daisy, the concrete goal of all Gatsby's illusions, is finally unworthy of him, betrays him. By allying herself with Tom, by refusing to admit her guilt in running over Myrtle Wilson, Daisy identifies herself with the foul dust that preyed on Gatsby's dream. And the point to note is that her betrayal of Gatsby and Tom's stupidly effective arrogance are both the direct result of their association with money. Through-

39 Fitzgerald, TGG, pp. 22 and 216.
out *The Great Gatsby*, failures of individual personalities are consistently equated with the accumulation and preservation of money for its own sake. The novel is no less concerned with wealth and the society of the very rich than Fitzgerald's previous fiction, but instead of manifesting an unthinking identification with the rich, *The Great Gatsby* can be validly construed as a comprehensive criticism of the corruptive power of money on the individual soul.

However, if Tom and Daisy enjoy a vital, independent, if criticised existence, they are also important as they contribute to an understanding of Gatsby's behaviour and as they offer a set of values against which it can be judged. Lionel Trilling has noted this quality in the lesser figures of *The Great Gatsby* in his essay in *The Liberal Imagination*:

> ...the characters are not "developed"; the wealthy and brutal Tom Buchanan, haunted by his "scientific" vision of the doom of civilization, the vaguely guilty, vaguely homosexual Jordan Baker, the dim Wolfsheim /sig/, who fixed the World Series of 1919, are treated, we might say, as if they are ideographs....

This seems to me to be an acute and valuable comment, drawing attention to Fitzgerald's skill in creating sharply etched outlines around a personality whose major qualities are sufficiently suggested to convey a feeling of solidity. But Trilling goes on to say that "Gatsby, himself, once stated, grows only in the understanding of the narrator." And here, I think, his view requires some modification. It is quite true in terms of

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41 Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, p. 252.
the normal methods of characterization — the methods which Fitzgerald had used in *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*. And, of course, it is thematically necessary that Gatsby should remain mysterious, almost unreal, throughout a large part of the novel. But if, as Maxwell Perkins felt,\(^2\) he remains dim as a personality to the very end, as an incarnate idea Gatsby is defined with considerable precision by the pervasive extension of Fitzgerald's overt symbolism into a consistently applied thematic imagery.

Hence the colour symbolism which is evident in Fitzgerald's treatment of the green light is present throughout the novel in less overt forms. The cheap, tasteless side of Gatsby's nature is always suggested by references to pink and yellow. He constantly wears a preposterous pink suit, drives an ostentatious yellow automobile (which, incidentally, is instrumental in causing his death), and the whole extended description of the party which opens Chapter IV takes yellow as its prevailing tonal colour. Further, while he is at the cheap party held by Tom, Myrtle, and Myrtle's sister, Nick feels that "high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets."\(^3\) This consistent association of yellow with cheap behaviour suggests an interesting interpretation of Jordan's character, who is frequently described by Nick as golden, i.e., as something which (like money) pretends to be of greater value than it really is, a rich cousin of yellow, a slightly snobbish, dishonest version of the real thing — and this, of course, is Nick's final evaluation of Jordan.

\(^3\)Fitzgerald, *TGG*, p. 43.
Daisy, on the other hand, is typically presented as a white figure (as is Jordan, when the two are associated). Thus, the description of Daisy and Jordan in Chapter I is a quite brilliant impressionist tour de force. At the beginning of the climactic afternoon, they are described as "silver idols." The night, five years before the opening of the story, when Gatsby makes love to Daisy, is "white with moonlight." Whiteness, connoting apparent purity, becomes disquietingly sinister. Gatsby knew that once he kissed Daisy, "his mind would never romp again like the mind of God." He would become a prisoner to his dream. And the final, tragic absurdity of that dream is ironically reinforced by Tom's stupid insistence on the superiority of the white races and Jordan's comment at the height of the hysterical argument, "We're all white here."

The dramatic economy of Jordan's statement is typical of Fitzgerald's control over his material in The Great Gatsby. Throughout the novel he is capable of producing similar flashes of dialogue which are both excellent as dramatic conversation and capable of conveying to the reader a greater wealth of meaning than any of the participants are aware of. The style itself provides a mode of irony by which the characters may be judged. And the style is never verbose or unduly intrusive. Scarcely a single image or metaphor is introduced into The Great Gatsby which does not have some direct bearing on the organic structure of the novel. Hence, it is no accident that Fitzgerald speaks of Gatsby's mind as romping like the mind of God. Douglas Taylor has clearly shown that there is a definite strain of religious imagery running through The Great Gatsby applied direct-

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Fitzgerald, TOG, pp. 138, 133, 134, 156.
ly to Gatsby himself.45 Perhaps Taylor slightly overstates the case, but there can be no quarrel with his basic point. The novel, indeed, contains a clear statement of the apotheosis of Jay Gatsby:

The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God — a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that — and he must be about his Father's business, and service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty.46

Dr. Eckleburg may be the modern conception of the Eternal, but for Nick the human spirit reaches its most divine expression in the hopelessly tragic naivety of Jay Gatsby.

III

Hence, his admiration for the Conradian concept of "rendering" led Fitzgerald to control the vague, evocative symbolism of his prose and to turn it into a rigorously disciplined means of effecting an imaginative rearrangement of his themes. His new approach to language resulted in both a dramatic economy and the fusing of style and theme until one was indistinguishable from the other. The characters — Gatsby in particular — are inseparable from the metaphors through which they are understood and evaluated. And as a result of these same metaphors, they become not only orthodox fictional characters but the embodiments of a set of ideas. Fitzgerald's controlled use of language provides a mythological ground tone to The Great Gatsby (the myth of American history and the American dream


46 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 118.
together with the myth of divinity), forces him to a reassessment of the very rich and an understanding, at last, of their faults, and provides a series of images which embody the positive values of Gatsby's struggles and career. To complete the repatterning of his themes, it remained for Fitzgerald to put into practice the second lesson he had learned from Conrad — the lesson of significant form.

The magnificent patterning of The Great Gatsby has long been admired, with its one possible weakness astutely diagnosed by Fitzgerald himself in a letter to Edmund Wilson. "The worst fault in it," he wrote, "is a BIG FAULT: I gave no account (and had no feeling about or knowledge of) the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe." In the same letter he went on to answer Mencken's criticism that the story was too slight: "Mencken said... that the only fault was that the central story was trivial and a sort of anecdote (that is because he has forgotten his admiration for Conrad and adjusted himself to the sprawling novel)... Without making any invidious comparisons between Class A and Class C, if my novel is an anecdote so is The Brothers Karamazoff. Fitzgerald's defence of his narrative is basically sound. If the events of the plot are slight, their presentation allows Fitzgerald to deal as fully as possible with the themes he wished to explore. The formal ordering of the story, for instance, arranges events, characters, symbols in clearly understood and evaluated groups. After Chapter I has taken us into the world of the very rich, Chapter II introduces us immediately to the valley of ashes and Kyrtle Wilson's

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47Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 270.
coarsely vital contrast to Daisy. Gatsby's party, which opens Chapter III, brilliantly counterpoints the tawdry affair in Tom's New York apartment. Unlike Tom, Gatsby, the host, is anything but the centre of attention; he is in fact the subject of the wildest gossip and the most mysterious rumours, occasioned by his anonymity. After a brief interlude with Jordan Baker, Nick at last reaches some sort of intimacy with Gatsby, who pours out an extraordinary fabrication of an autobiography as the two drive up to New York. Nick's understanding of Gatsby is increased by the conversation he has with Jordan about Daisy's conduct in the early days of the war.

From this point on, the march of events speeds up. In a scene of great emotional intensity, Gatsby and Daisy meet again, and renew their former relationship. Gatsby throws his last and gayest party, and then stops entertaining entirely, since Daisy's taste is offended. Nick and Gatsby are invited to the Buchanans', where a scene takes place which closely parallels Nick's first visit in Chapter I. In the midst of a violent heat they decide to drive to New York and stop for a moment at the Wilson's service station, where Nick discovers that Wilson is suspicious of his wife's behaviour. Having arrived in the city, they hire a suite for a drinking party, which develops into a quarrel, balancing the earlier fight in Tom's apartment. Tom's arrogant personality beats down Gatsby, and all return to Long Island. Gatsby and Daisy are together in Gatsby's yellow car, which Myrtle mistakes for Tom's. Trying to stop him, she is run over by Daisy. The next day, Wilson, distraught with jealousy and sorrow, tracks down the owner of the yellow car and murders Gatsby in his swimming pool. The closing chapter brings the narrative full circle, being patterned exactly along the lines of Chapter I. After Gatsby's
funeral, the disillusioned Nick returns West, in symbolic repudiation of
the hopefulness of his trip East, recounts his final, matured view of the
Buchanans, in formal contrast to his former snobbish attraction, and final­ly closes his narrative as he had begun it — with a meditation on the
meaning of the events he has set down.

Within this formal structure, all the elements of the plot are
neatly balanced off against each other. Wolfshiem balances Cody; Daisy's
affair with Gatsby is set off against Tom's affair with Myrtle; West
Egg is opposed to East Egg; Nick is played off against Jordan; narrative
is balanced with interpretation. Indeed, there can be little question
that The Great Gatsby is Fitzgerald's most brilliantly fashioned piece
of fiction. But one is never conscious of the structure of the novel as
artificial, for against the formal neatness of the pattern is set up Nick's
growing awareness of Gatsby's nature, and all the events of the narrative
contribute to that growth. Any possible sense of formalism in the plotting
of The Great Gatsby is finally destroyed by the major structural device
of the novel — a device entirely new in the Fitzgerald canon, that of
the involved narrator. By using Nick to recount the story Fitzgerald
found a magnificent solution to the problem of rendering the improbable
career of Jay Gatsby fictionally credible as well as a means for controlling
the ironic moral evaluations constantly operating in the novel.

Thus, Nick narrates Gatsby's tragedy two years after it has taken
place — a period of time sufficient for him to objectively assess its
significance but not too long for the events to lose their vividness to
his imagination. The use of Nick as a narrator further provides an excel­lent justification for the gradual unfolding of Gatsby's mystery. We can
only learn the truth as the facts are made known to Nick's limited point
of view. Indeed, as much as anything else, The Great Gatsby is the record of Nick's growing awareness of Gatsby's true nature and his increasingly complex response to his knowledge.

But primarily the device of the narrator allows Fitzgerald's irony to operate far more successfully than it had ever previously done. In Gatsby we are confronted with a man deeply committed to a view of life, capable of holding up positive images suggestive of the value of that view but unable to judge it objectively. Gatsby's illusion is plainly at the core of the novel's meaning, but to recount the events with Gatsby as the focus of consciousness would have mitigated against any statement of his very real limitations. John Farrelly may be correct in claiming that The Great Gatsby is successful precisely "because he made fantasy — illusion — the preposterous subject of his book," but to allow the vehicle of that illusion to be its own judge is plainly out of the question. Nick, on the other hand, although involved in the major events of the story, is sufficiently removed from them to stand as their judge. He has a private life entirely unconnected with Gatsby's tragedy, but his contending emotional relationships with the Buchanans, Gatsby, and Jordan force him into a moral evaluation of their situation. He becomes, that is, a sort of chorus figure at once engaged in and separated from the main action.

The device is particularly successful with Fitzgerald because it obviously provides the perfect mode for the fictional operation of one of the major patterns of his mind — his double vision. The two sides of

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43 John Farrelly, "Scott Fitzgerald: Another View," Scrutiny, XVIII, No. 4 (June, 1952), 270.
Fitzgerald's mind — the ironic observer and the passionate romantic — at last find their proper forms within the single artistic structure. As Arthur Mizener has said, "His use of a narrator allowed Fitzgerald to keep clearly separated for the first time in his career the two sides of his nature, the middle-western Trimalchio and the spoiled priest who disapproved of but grudgingly admired him."\(^49\) Technically, this projection of his double vision onto separate characters results in a new control over his irony; "In The Great Gatsby irony has a fulcrum. Not only are there the standards provided by Doctor Eckleburg, there are the judgments, mid-western and therefor not decadent, of the narrator, Nick Carraway."

This correspondence between Gatsby and Nick, on the one hand, and his own compulsive habits of mind, on the other, is probably the main reason for the artistic success of The Great Gatsby. By viewing his hero through the eyes of a narrator Fitzgerald found a device equal to the task of controlling and ordering his fantasies, a device by which he might complete the rearrangement of his themes begun by the new dramatic economy and patterned symbolism of his language. And it is Nick's narration which defines the mode of the novel. Myth elements, archetypal patterns, are present; but they are subordinate, in their aesthetic effect, to the dramatic immediacy with which Fitzgerald presents the plight of a precisely understood group of individuals.

\(^49\)Mizener, TFSOP, p. 171.

\(^50\)Riley Hughes, "F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Touch of Disaster," in Fifty Years of the American Novel: A Christian Appraisal, ed. Harold C. Gardiner, S. J. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 142. The technical effect achieved by the device of the involved narrator is suggested by two of Nick's own remarks in TGG: "Life is much more successfully looked at from a single window" (p. 5), and "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life" (p. 43).
Nearly every critic of The Great Gatsby has been prepared to admit this: The Great Gatsby, it is the general consensus, is Fitzgerald's most perfect work of art, superior in form and style to practically everything else he ever wrote. In the treatment of its themes, it probably represents the best that Fitzgerald could do as a criticism of wealth, as an evaluation of the power of illusion, as an understanding of Americans in relation to their past and domestic geography. But when this praise had been given, there sometimes enters a note of doubt. Hence Hoffman writes that "For all its grace of style and tightness of structure, The Great Gatsby was a sentimental novel, with several fatal lapses of taste and judgment." Aldridge's comment expresses a similar reservation: "Scott Fitzgerald also believed in the 'green light.'" In other words, it is felt that although The Great Gatsby gives consummate artistic expression to Fitzgerald's themes, they are perhaps a little unworthy of such skill, and that Fitzgerald himself is still too thoroughly identified with the objects of his compassion to have created a thoroughly mature novel.

It seems to me that much of this is a posteriori argument. Many of the critics who see a weakness in The Great Gatsby do so, I believe, because they transfer their knowledge of Fitzgerald's life to the content of his fiction. However, some attempt has been made to

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justify the criticism on the basis of internal evidence within the novel itself, and this can be nearly always reduced to a consideration of the role of Nick. Nick, it is contended, tries to have the best of both worlds — he continually betrays sneakingly snobbish desires to belong to the Buchanan's world of wealth at the same time as he romantically approves of Gatsby's attachment to the green light. And Nick, it is argued, is the moral sheet-anchor of the novel, is Fitzgerald's mouth-piece (if he is not Fitzgerald himself).

Hence, it becomes vitally important to understand the true role of Nick Carraway, in particular to establish whether he is an uncriticised chorus figure or whether he is included in the general judgment. So far as I know, only one critic — Robert W. Stallman — has argued that he is. His view that "Nick is the window of our viewpoint of Gatsby's dream.... But Fitzgerald has placed before us a very deceptive piece of glass"53 is almost diametrically opposed to the ideas usually held about Nick. It must, of course, be admitted, that at key points in the story Nick makes comments which are plainly intended to be pointers towards the correct response to the situation. When he writes of Gatsby that "if personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life,"54 we are clearly meant to take this as an objectively true statement. A similar response is elicited by his shouted comment

53 Robert W. Stallman, "Gatsby and the Hole in Time," Modern Fiction Studies, I, No. 4 (November, 1955), 4. The whole of this article is useful for its analysis of Fitzgerald's thematic imagery, in addition to its commentary on the nature of Nick's role and the quality of Gatsby's illusion.

54 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 2.
towards the end of the book, "They're a rotten crowd. You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." Throughout the novel, Nick does make a number of remarkably acute comments which indicate that he has a status greater than simply that of an actor within the plot.

However, it must be recalled that a good deal of Nick's reporting is in dialogue form, and that this dialogue contains quite as many of the moral judgments established in The Great Gatsby as Nick's own statements. Frequently, that is, Nick is the reporter of events which bear within themselves their own evaluation; all we need to accept is the accuracy of his reported dialogue. And since on several occasions Nick stresses his conscious arrangement of the narrative, this should not present any problem.

Furthermore, it must be recalled that Nick's character is not static. In the course of the events he recounts he grows considerably in knowledge and maturity; in the end he is still given to moral hedging but is able to understand his position with far greater clarity than when he came East in 1922. All over The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald drops hints which include Nick in the general judgment. Nick is very proud of his honesty, but as Stallman has pointed out, he is not infrequently caught in barefaced lies. He is attracted to Jordan Baker, and although he is thoroughly aware of her dishonesty, he feels no moral discomfort in her presence. He is snobbish, and even Nick himself feels this to be

\[55\text{Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 185.}\]
\[56\text{See Fitzgerald, TGG, pp. 2, 121-122, 187.}\]
\[57\text{See Stallman, "Gatsby and the Hole in Time."}\]
a fault; he lives by standards which "my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat." He has curiously equivocal moral standards; when Tom lies he is shocked not be the untruth but by the "elaborateness of the lie." He admits that under different circumstances he might have accepted Gatsby’s openly offered bribe.

Hence, during the events that he described Nick is a highly doubtful moral quantity. He has sufficient sensitivity to make accurate statements about the other actors in the drama, but he himself is not exempt from judgment, is indeed finally seen to be a moral failure. His failure is in his retreat to the West, his retreat from "riotous excursions with privileged glimpses of the human heart." For one who has, like Nick, grown enormously in moral awareness to retreat from contact with life to the probably not very innocent scenes of his childhood is a signal admission of defeat. By recognizing that defeat Fitzgerald divorced himself and his novel from the sentimental ambivalence which is Nick’s basic weakness.

D. S. Savage has declared that The Great Gatsby is "a parable of Innocence and Experience," and his claim is justified by the careers of both Nick and Gatsby. Nick, relying on the assumed innocence of the Midwesterner, cannot cope with Eastern experience and withdraws from life. Gatsby, basing his actions in the innocence of his incorruptible dream, engages to the fullest extent of his limited vision with life.

58 Fitzgerald, TGG, pp. 2, 40.
59 Fitzgerald, TGG, p. 2.
It is Gatsby's greatness to make of his life a positive thing, to rise above the merely personal, to realize that the individual can fully realize his possibilities only through the abnegation of self. It is his tragedy that his limited background and imagination lead him to practice that abnegation for misguided ends. Seeing Daisy, he thinks her worthy of his dreams and so "Like Icarus, Gatsby soars against the tyranny of space-and-time by which we are imprisoned, only to be tragically destroyed by his own invention." Gatsby, then, lacks the intelligence to be Fitzgerald's ideal hero. His tragedy was the limited tragedy of a man who lacks self-knowledge. Fitzgerald's search for his ideal hero was to lead him beyond Gatsby in the hope of finding a man who would have the nobility of Gatsby's drive, with the moral intelligence to keep its manifestations within the bounds of human possibility and the knowledge to direct it towards a worthy cause. That man he thought he found in Dick Diver. But in the meantime, he had wrought in The Great Gatsby an achievement which more than lived up to Conrad's definition of a work of art: "an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its shadows, in the aspect of matter and in the facts of life what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential — their one illuminating and convincing quality — the very truth of their existence."

61See Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p. 252: "...when he is forced to admit that his lost Daisy did perhaps love her husband, he says, 'In any case it was just personal.' With that sentence he achieves an insane greatness, convincing us that he really is a Platonic conception of himself, really some sort of Son of God."


CHAPTER V

A WILLINGNESS OF THE HEART

France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still that quality of the idea, was harder to utter — it was the graves at Shiloh and the tired, drawn, nervous faces of its great men, and the country boys dying in the Argonne for a phrase that was empty before their bodies withered. It was a willingness of the heart.¹

I

Some months after the appearance of The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald published one of his longest and best short stories — "The Rich Boy."² Beyond its considerable merit as an independent work of art, the piece also represents both an end and a beginning to certain of Fitzgerald's literary preoccupations. With the memory of The Great Gatsby still fresh in his mind, Fitzgerald not unnaturally returned to his newly discovered technique — that of the involved narrator. And if "The Rich Boy" was the first of Fitzgerald's major short stories to make use of the method, it was followed by a number of pieces whose excellence is

¹F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Swimmers," SEP, CCII, No. 16 (October 19, 1929), 154. Fitzgerald thought the comment sufficiently valuable to record it in his Notebooks. The Notebook entry is to be found in F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 197. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to C-U.

notably dependent on their dramatic use of a first-person narrator. In stories like "The Last of the Belles," "The Bowl" and "The Dance" Fitzgerald uses the device to obtain exactly those effects of dramatic immediacy and imaginative double vision which he had discovered were available to him in The Great Gatsby. The technique provided him with one of his surest means of understanding and judging the precise value of the fictional heroes he created after 1925.

He was able to achieve considerable variation in the method by shifting the narrator towards either the centre or the periphery of the action. In "The Rich Boy," for instance, the narrator is further from the centre of the significant action than is Nick Carraway; he is more of an observer than a participant in the events he recounts. This fact enables Fitzgerald to achieve that tone of almost complete objectivity and anonymity which distinguishes what is perhaps the most perfectly controlled opening in all his fiction:

Begin with an individual, and before you know it you find that you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find that you have created — nothing. That is because we are all queer fish, queerer behind our faces and voices than we want anyone to know or than we know ourselves. When I hear a man proclaiming himself an "average, honest, open fellow," I feel pretty sure that he has some definite and perhaps terrible abnormality which he has agreed to conceal — and his protestations of being average and honest and open is his way of reminding himself of his misprision.


F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Rich Boy," All The Sad Young Men (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1926), p. 1. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to ATSYM.
"The Rich Boy," of whose style this is a fair sample, heralds not only Fitzgerald's continuing sense of the fictional value of a controlled point of view but also a new spareness and economy of style. In the important stories after "The Rich Boy" it becomes increasingly difficult to find "purple passages," quotable examples of Fitzgerald's "fine" writing. These later short stories demonstrate an increasing attempt by Fitzgerald to give his heroes imaginative importance, not by embedding them in a lush verbal texture, but by letting the intensity of their emotions and moral commitments stand on its own.

If "The Rich Boy" points the way to some of Fitzgerald's most important later experiments in the verbal control of his heroes, it also marks the disappearance at least from his major fiction of some of his personal preoccupations. The third paragraph of the story opens with the words, "Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me," whose fame is matched only by Hemingway's retort, "Yes, they have more money." Hemingway is usually thought to have expressed the superior point of view, but Lionel Trilling has put forward a compelling defence of Fitzgerald's side of the argument. Writing in The Liberal Imagination, he makes this point:

It is usually supposed that Hemingway had the better of the encounter and quite settled the matter. But we ought not to be too sure. The novelist of a certain kind, if he is to write about social life, may not brush away the reality of the differences of class, even though to do so may have the momentary appearance of a virtuous social avowal. The novel took its rise and its nature from the radical revision of the class

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5 Fitzgerald, ATSWM, p. 1.
structure in the eighteenth century, and as
the novelist must still live by his sense of
class differences, and must be absorbed by
them, as Fitzgerald was, even though he
despises them, as Fitzgerald did. 6

In other words, Fitzgerald's early investigation of the meaning of
American wealth and social structure was in the central stream of the
development of the novel; his search for a hero within the dynamics of
the American socio-economic structure was potentially one of the richest
fields of endeavour for a twentieth century American novelist.

However, if Jay Gatsby is Fitzgerald's last word on the hero as
the young man rising in the economic and social worlds, in Anson Hunter
he says farewell to his serious concern with the hero as the aristocrat
who has never had to rise. After "The Rich Boy" Fitzgerald will never
again concern himself with the study of the world of the very rich as
an end in itself or even as an item of major importance in his thinking.
His portrait of Anson Hunter contains some brilliantly sympathetic in­sights into the lives of an American aristocracy, but it is coloured by
a detachment of judgment which indicates a finality of evaluation entirely
absent from his early picture of the ideal gentleman of leisure in the
person of Dick Humbird. Fitzgerald still felt the glamour of Anson's
environment, but he now realized that glamour was necessarily concomitant
with a happy ending. As a matter of fact, Anson's life has no real ending
and only a few genuine climaxes; the essence of Anson's career is that it
lacks fulfillment. The ultimate horror of wealth lies not in any explosive

6Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (London: Secker and
disaster but in the incompleteness it fosters in its possessors. Even
the world of the very rich, Fitzgerald had at last discovered, ends not
with a bang but a whimper.

And with this discovery, expressed with such authority in "The
Rich Boy," Fitzgerald seems to have dismissed from his fiction (if not
from his personal life) that attempt to identify wealth with the good
life which had dominated his early work. At least, after The Great
Gatsby and "The Rich Boy" the themes related to this idea disappear from
his serious writing. Certainly, his sense of the glamour of money, of the
pleasure of being bery rich, of the gay times available to a leisure class
continues to assert itself in many of his frankly commercial short stories,
but in the work to which Fitzgerald seriously committed his imagination
new and different methods of coping with his basic theme start to appear.
Just as, at the end of "The Rich Boy," Anson Hunter sets out on a trip to
Europe, so after this story Fitzgerald set out on a fresh stage of his
voyage of discovery — searching for new ways of understanding Americans,
for new ways of approaching individual values, above all for new standards
by which to formulate his image of the ideal modern man and new means by
which to project that image into fiction.

II

Fitzgerald and Zelda themselves actually made the pilgrimage to
Europe in the summer of 1928 and again from 1929 through 1931, spending
most of their time in the cosmopolitan society of the French Riviera which
was to play such an important part in Tender is the Night. And if that
novel is basically an attempt to sum up and evaluate his relationship
with Zelda from 1925 to 1934, the stories which appeared in these years
can similarly be regarded as preliminary exercises in working out the themes of his last completed major work. The hectic life of European society, Zelda's increasingly rapid disintegration, his own destructive alcoholism — all occur repeatedly in the stories of the late Twenties and early Thirties. But in their fictional context, these personal experiences are directed towards the clarification of the new problem which gripped Fitzgerald's imagination. That problem is an extension and a refinement on certain of the concerns of The Great Gatsby — there is a continued interest, in a new context, in defining the nature of American experience as it appears in the individual life, but there is a new and intense desire to establish the nature of the good life as it exists quite apart from the pressures of society or economics. The moralist in Fitzgerald, in gaining ascendancy in his literary endeavours, focussed his attention on the formulation of an ethical code for the single individual operating to the fullest extent of his powers in the modern world. For an American, the older culture of Europe offered some very special opportunities for arriving at such a formulation and for defining the nature of individual American experience.

It has earlier been suggested that the essential inspiration of Fitzgerald's fiction bears a marked resemblance to that of Henry James. The parallel is strengthened by an examination of Fitzgerald's treatment of the lives of expatriate Americans in Europe in a series of stories which includes some of his very best shorter works. The fact that the interplay of transatlantic cultures suggested itself to both men as an important theme is in itself significant. However, it can also be shown that Fitzgerald develops certain attitudes towards European life which are directly descended from those of James and which are in the central stream of American thinking
about the older civilization. For one thing, Fitzgerald thought that European life in the 1920's (and his stories of expatriates are set almost exclusively in that decade) was more intense than that of America, more taut, more on edge. Such an atmosphere might not be designed to bring out the best in people, but it would almost certainly elicit their most characteristic responses in extreme form, a fact which should recommend itself to any novelist. In "The Bridal Party," for instance, Michael Curly finds himself at a party drawn from the cosmopolitan society which typically forms the background of Fitzgerald's European stories:

> It was a champagne dinner from the start, and toward the end it reached a pleasant level of conviviality, but Michael saw that all these people were too weary to be exhilarated by any ordinary stimulant; for weeks they had drunk cocktails before meals like Americans, wines and brandies like Frenchmen, beer like Germans, whisky-and-soda like the English, and as they were no longer in the twenties, this preposterous mélange, that was like some gigantic cocktail in a nightmare, served only to make them temporarily less conscious of the mistakes of the night before. Which is to say that it was not really a gay party; what gayety existed was displayed in the few who drank nothing at all.  

In such a society, wealth is taken for granted; one assumes the necessary pre-conditions of such living and is most interested in the opportunity afforded "to discuss each other at the bar." Hence, Michael is suffering from a characteristically Fitzgeraldian problem — the loss of an idealised girl to a superior (because richer) suitor. But the emphasis

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of the story is not on the facts of wealth; rather, the situation is resolved into a personal problem, in which the hero is forced to probe his own inner reserves in order to find the strength to accept and go on from the marriage of the girl to the other man. This he is able to do quite convincingly, and we are prepared to accept Fitzgerald's final statement in the last paragraph of the story:

Michael was cured. The ceremonial function, with its pomp and its revelry, had stood for a sort of initiation into a life where even his regret could follow them. All the bitterness melted out of him suddenly and the world reconstituted itself out of the youth and happiness that was all around him, profligate as the spring sunshine. He was trying to remember which one of the bridesmaids had made a date to dine with him tonight as he walked forward to bid Hamilton and Rutherford good-by.  

In all the stories involving American expatriates in Europe the characteristic modes of action resorted to by Fitzgerald's heroes are heightened by the environment in which they are placed. Europe, that is, was for Fitzgerald a more stringent testing ground for his own emotional and moral commitments and for those of his protagonists than any cultural context available in America. Whether his theme is the alcoholism of Dick Ragland in "A New Leaf," the remorse of Charlie Wales in "Babylon Revisited," or the unsatisfactory marriage of Henry Clay Marston in "The Swimmers," in every case the intensity of the personal problem is increased simply by virtue of its taking place in Europe.

This increased personal awareness and involvement of his American heroes is due partly to the fact that in Europe Fitzgerald brings them

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9Fitzgerald, Stories, p. 286.
up against a far wider range of experience than they have hitherto encountered. By confronting his heroes with Englishmen, Germans, Russians, and Frenchmen, Fitzgerald not only widened their sensibilities but also provided himself with new standards for judging the behaviour of Americans. Since Fitzgerald spent most of his time on the French Riviera or in Paris, it is the English or the French who most frequently provide the external standards of comparison by which his understanding of American experience is brought into fresh perspective. On the whole, Fitzgerald does not like Englishmen and finds that Americans compare more than favourably with them. He resents their snobbishness towards others (particularly Americans), their irritatingly frequent, if often unconscious, expressions of national superiority. Hence, in Tender Is the Night Baby Warren's anglophilia became a major device in rendering Fitzgerald's disapproval of her personality and attitudes. But before 1934 he injected a similar feeling into a number of his stories. In "The Hotel Child," for instance, he puts these thoughts into the mind of a singularly unpleasant Englishman:

A minute later Bopes sat down beside Fifi with a shadow of fine tolerance on his face. This was not a thing he could help; in fact, he constantly struggled against it, but it was something that happened to his expression when he met Americans. "The whole thing is too much for me," it seemed to say. "Compare my confidence with your uncertainty, my sophistication with your naivete, and yet the whole world has slid into your power." Of late years he found that this tone, unless carefully guarded, held a smoldering resentment. 10

A passing reference in Tender Is the Night to "Three British nannies... knitting the slow pattern of Victorian England, the pattern of the forties,

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the sixties, and the eighties, into sweaters and socks" suggests that Fitzgerald was also aware of the British virtues. And although he admired them principally for their institutionalized management of the social structure, their ideal of aristocratic service, he could occasionally respond to what he felt was an underlying warmth of personality, as in the opening paragraph of "Love In the Night":

The words thrilled Val. They had come into his mind sometime during the fresh gold April afternoon and he kept repeating them to himself over and over: "Love in the night; love in the night." He tried them in three languages — Russian, French, and English — and decided that they were best in English. In each language they meant a different sort of love and a different sort of night — the English night seemed the warmest and softest with a thinnest and most crystalline sprinkling of stars. The English love seemed the most fragile and romantic — a white dress and a dim face above it and eyes that were pools of light.12

The French, however, he more consistently admired. It is not insignificant that Tommy Barban, whose vitality finally wins Nicole in Tender Is the Night, is half-French by birth and more French than anything else in his culture. Certainly, the French, with their Gallic mixture of reason and sensuality, represented continental Europe far more completely for Fitzgerald than did the English.

11. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender Is the Night (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 5. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TITN.

Precisely because they did so, they also represented the corrupt elements in Europe's ancient culture. Charlie Wales, for instance, becomes aware of this fact in "Babylon Revisited"; while walking through Montmartre he suddenly realized the meaning of the word "dissipate" — to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something. And now Fitzgerald's affinity with James becomes most apparent. Both investigated European experience in terms of an American sensibility, and both came to approximately the same conclusions. H. S. Canby has argued in *Turn West, Turn East* that in the history of American ideas there have been perpetually present two major alternatives — a turning to the unknown, pristine newness of the frontier or to the knowledge and experience of European culture. In both cases, the innocent American mind is confronted with a new situation; in the latter, with the sophisticated attitudes of a civilization much older and more versed in worldly wisdom. The normal relationship of America to Europe is that of innocence to experience. This is certainly how James presented the case in such a story as "Daisy Miller," in which Daisy's innocence is so complete that it is utterly misinterpreted by her European acquaintances. And in essence, Fitzgerald's attitude continues that of James. He felt that in transplanting his heroes to Europe he was taking a group of innocents abroad and subjecting them to a concentrated education of the emotions.

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13 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited," *Taps At Reveille* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 388. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TAR.

Of course, there are many reasons why Fitzgerald's Americans leave their native land. Val Rostoff's mother, in "Love In the Night," marries a Russian prince out of pure social snobbery: "There was always a faint irony when she mentioned the land of her nativity. Her America was the Chicago of the nineties which she still thought of as the vast upstairs to a butcher shop. Even the irregularities of Prince Paul were not too high a price to have paid for her escape." Further, many of Fitzgerald's expatriates are Americans who, having made some quick money during the boom, think there may be some more exciting ways to spend it in Paris than in New York. However these are in the main, like Albert McKisco in Tender Is the Night or many of the characters in "The Bridal Party" and "Babylon Revisited," cultural babes in the woods. Those who are not, who have completely immersed their national identity into an alien culture are for Fitzgerald plainly bad people. He speaks in "The Hotel Child" of "very Europeanized Americans... who had reached a position where they could hardly be said to belong to any nation at all; certainly not to any great power, but perhaps to a sort of Balkanlike state composed of people like themselves." To consciously discard one's national identity was a step towards violating the sanctity of one's own personality; hence, in the light of his strongly developing interest in personal codes of conduct, to do so became for Fitzgerald something in the nature of a

15 Fitzgerald, "Love In the Night," 19.

mortal sin. However, the good Americans do contrive to retain their national identity as well as their innocence. An excellent example of such a character is the heroine of "The Hotel Child," a story which might well be described as Fitzgerald's attempt to bring "Daisy Miller" up to date and to translate it into his own idiom. Fifi Schwartz is a young and beautiful American Jewess who is naively enjoying the life at a series of European watering spots normally frequented by a set of characters far more sinister and sophisticated than she. Like Daisy Miller, she is suspected of all sorts of dark purposes precisely because of her innocent enjoyment of the entertainment spread out before her. However, her innocence is strong enough and active enough to bring her through to a more or less happy ending.

What makes Fitzgerald's treatment of American innocence at large in Europe important is not simply the staging of Jamesian dilemma in a Hemingway setting but the especial quality he ascribes to the American character when it is preserved pure and whole in the European scene. Thus, at the end of "The Bridal Party" Michael Curly thinks to himself, "This is our way of doing things.... Generous and fresh and free; a sort of Virginia plantation hospitality, but at a different pace now, nervous as a ticker tape."\(^\text{17}\) In other words, at its best the American character is not merely innocent. It possesses the ability to commit itself intensely to life at the same time as it retains a sort of natural morality, an innate goodness which expresses itself most successfully in the outpourings of itself for the benefit of others. By projecting his heroes into a European setting Fitzgerald helped himself to formulate a quality of

\(^{17}\) Fitzgerald, Stories, p. 286.
character on which he might base a code of conduct for any individual, regardless of his social or economic station; he found that quality most clearly displayed in a certain type of American and defined it most succinctly in the closing words of "The Swimmers" — "a willingness of the heart."

III

In "The Swimmers" Fitzgerald recounted the life of Henry Clay Marston, a Virginian who embodies the best of the plantation ideal. He marries a French girl he meets during the war and lives in France for a number of years, thus experiencing life on both sides of the Atlantic. However, after returning home and losing his wife to a representative of some of the worst elements in American culture, he can still think that "all his old feeling that America was a bizarre accident, a sort of historical sport, had gone forever. The best of America was the best of the world." This excerpt suggests that Fitzgerald ascribed a certain universal validity to that "willingness of the heart" by which he judged the ethical worth of his American heroes. And in point of fact, concurrently with his stories of American expatriates, he had been producing a series of pieces whose concern was with characters as individuals rather than as representatives of groups, classes, or nations, and which arrived at almost the same conclusions about personal conduct as those to be drawn from the European stories.

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This new emphasis on the individual personalities of his heroes is quite plain in one of his best stories, "Babylon Revisited." Charlie Wales certainly has many standard characteristics of the Fitzgerald hero; the story is undoubtedly a brilliant evocation of a period ("....the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money"). But these are incidental virtues. What gives the piece its very great merit is its sparse, tough-minded recording of a painfully moving personal history. Fitzgerald never directs our emotions; the situation itself is strong enough to carry the requisite feeling. And what sets Charlie Wales off from Fitzgerald's early heroes is not merely the newly acquired economy of the reporting but the motivation of his remorse by the learned desire to control himself, to put his life to the service of a little girl.

However, Fitzgerald's interest in the personal, inner lives of his heroes was not a sudden growth. As early as 1924 he wrote "Absolution," whose flavour, strongly reminiscent of Sherwood Anderson, is curiously unique in the Fitzgerald canon. The story is centred in a Catholic priest who is tortured by various neurotic drives, which apparently spring from his awareness of the "blonde Northern girls and the tall young men from the farms lying out beside the wheat, under the moon." To him comes a small boy in confession. Rudolph Miller (clearly based on Fitzgerald himself), having taken communion while in a state of mortal sin, is driven at last by fear to the priest. The priest's advice to go to an amusement

park but not to get up close "because if you do you'll only feel the heat and sweat of life." is a typical formulation of Fitzgerald's standard wish to be at once a participator in and an observer of life; but the principal interest of the story is the investigation of two personalities, one neurotic, the other adolescent. No judgment is attempted on either of the characters; their situation is simply presented and allowed to stand more or less as a slice of life.

The fact that one of the major characters of "Absolution" was modelled on himself indicates that Fitzgerald remained true to his fundamental approach to fiction even when he submerged his private obsessions in the objective study of personality. Similarly, the various figures that appear in the later stories are still facets of F. Scott Fitzgerald; Charlie Wales, Michael Curly, Dick Ragland, Henry Clay Marston — all are based on his own intimate experiences. But what was probably Fitzgerald's most direct attempt to understand himself in the light of his new techniques and his groping towards a personal morality is to be found in a series of eight stories, all centred in a single hero — Basil Duke Lee. Basil is clearly fashioned after his creator, and his life up to his freshman year in college (when the series ends) closely follows the pattern not only of Fitzgerald's career but also of Amory Blaine's. And a comparison of the

21 Fitzgerald, ATSYM, p. 130.

22 The following are the Basil stories: "The Scandal Detectives," "A Night At the Fair," "The Freshest Boy," "He Thinks He's Wonderful," "The Captured Shadow," "The Perfect Life," "Forging Ahead," "Basil and Cleopatra." All these were published in the SEP during 1928-29. Fitzgerald collected five of them in TAR, and a ninth, "That Kind of Party," was published for the first time in PULC, XII, No. 4 (Summer, 1951), 167-180. The name of the hero is changed to Terence, but Mizener's introduction makes it clear that the story was originally intended to be part of the Basil series.
Basil stories with the early sections of *This Side of Paradise* gives a clear insight into the growth of Fitzgerald's control over his own personality as a subject for his fiction. Apart from economic status, the personal backgrounds of Amory and Basil are very similar. Both are Midwesterners, both have almost identical dreams of the glory awaiting them in the fabulous East, dreams centred in the football field of Princeton. Both attend the same prep school (St. Regis), both are at times unbearably egocentric. Both are made the vehicle for comment on the split between the post- and pre-War generations.

Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between Fitzgerald's approaches to Amory and Basil. Basically it can be stated as the difference between the uncontrolled projection of desired wish-fulfillments onto a fantasy image of youth and the critical re-creation and evaluation of one's personal past. And it must be stressed that the Basil series does give a sense of a living environment quite as real as that of the early novel. But whereas Amory's is a highly selective, glamorous environment, Basil's life is made up of far more prosaic details. He suffers agonies over the change from short to long trousers, he goes through a stage of depressing piety inspired by a misguided and athletic alumnus of St. Regis, he has his first sneaking sexual adventure at a fair ground — petty pieces of living which are not present in Amory's story but which are nevertheless the vital stuff of growing up. Hence, even in the selection of material from his own experience which he deems worthy of fiction Fitzgerald shows a growth in skill and self-awareness from the days when he wrote *This Side of Paradise*. And throughout the Basil series he maintains an ironic detachment about his hero at the same time as he suggests the heartbreak and the pain of boyhood and adolescence — again a complexity of achievement which had been beyond the creator of Amory Blaine.
The Basil stories, then, give evidence of a consistent attempt on Fitzgerald's part in the late Twenties and early Thirties to arrive at some objective knowledge of his own personality, an attempt which is probably connected with the far more ambitious project he was working on at the same time — the tapping of his own experience in order to create the intricate personality of Dick Diver which is at the centre of Tender Is the Night. Emotionally, if not physically, Dick is in large measure based on Fitzgerald himself, and it seems likely that Fitzgerald felt the need to put the house of his own personality in order so that he might project it clearly and meaningfully into the complex piece of fiction which at this time was his major concern. Hence, in addition to the Basil stories, there appeared a number of pieces which attempted (often with considerable success) to get some part of Fitzgerald's personality fully and objectively onto paper. Among these are to be numbered such pieces as "The Swimmers" (an attempt to understand his relations with Zelda), "A New Leaf" (a bitterly accurate comment on his increasing addiction to alcohol), and "The Last of the Belles," (an effort to get the war out of his system).

However, there are only a very few stories in which, as in "Absolution," Fitzgerald was content to present a hero with absolutely no attempt at evaluation of his motivation and action. With his increasing interest in the individual, he more and more felt the need to discover what made one man ethically effective in his chosen environment, what made others collapse and fail. The chances of history gave him a ready-made answer to the second question. The stock market crash of 1929, the end of the boom, and the subsequent depression gave Fitzgerald a substitute cause for personal disaster and moral failure with which to replace the corruptive power of
riches, a theme which by now he had quite thoroughly worked out. The end of the boom is a major factor in the psychology of the characters of "The Bridal Party" and "Babylon Revisited." The depression figures prominently in "A Change of Class," and it is the direct cause of the suicide of the hero of "Between Three and Four." But if the facts of economics enabled Fitzgerald to retain his sense of horror as a valid ingredient in his fiction, he also made some attempt to relate this new theme to his new concept of the hero. Hence, he describes the central figure of "Between Three and Four" in these words: "Howard Butler had never believed in anything, including himself, except the system, and had not believed in that with the intensity of men who were its products or prophets.23 And it is generally true that Fitzgerald allows the crash to destroy only those who have made no effort to develop some personal articles of belief, some personal code of conduct.

On the positive side, he wrote stories like "The Adolescent Marriage," which deals with two young people, whose marriage, although starting out badly, is salvaged by the intervention of an older man, who says to the young couple at the end of the story: "You see, I never bothered to get that annulment, after all.... I thought it over carefully and I saw that you two were good people. And I had an idea that eventually you'd do the right thing. Good people — so often do."24 In other words, approaching the problem through the investigation of the individual personality, Fitz-

23 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Between Three and Four," SEP, CCIV, No. 10 (September 5, 1931) 8.

gerald arrived at the same conclusion as he had been led to in his study of American expatriates. Not only the good American but the good man also is characterised by the possession of a simple natural morality, which can usually be trusted to operate effectively without the intervention of a sophisticated intellect.

Again Fitzgerald was faced with the question—how is this natural innocence, this Huckleberry-Finn-like virtue, this evidence of the good life to be put to the most effective use? His answer is perhaps most clearly expressed in a fairly late story, "Family In the Wind." The story concerns an alcoholic but talented doctor in a rural Alabama area who has abandoned a good city practice and is, to all intents and purposes, a failure. Just as Forrest Janney is about to be embroiled in a family argument, the community is swept by two tornadoes, which cause considerable loss and suffering. Janney is the only medical man within call, and in the face of human need his natural goodness triumphs and he ministers to the needs of the society of which he is part. His virtue finds adequate expression through the selfless, unrewarded expending of his talents for the sake of others. Forrest Janney, at least momentarily, finds what is in Fitzgerald's view the secret of the good life. He has achieved a "willingness of the heart." And this quality becomes for Fitzgerald more than a catch phrase by which to designate the national character. It is the designation of a moral quality which, starting from Amory Blaine's vague yearnings to be a certain sort of man has become the basis of a precisely realized code of behaviour by which Fitzgerald now felt entitled to evaluate the achievements of his fictional heroes.
Obviously, once Fitzgerald's personal morality was formulated, his next task was to demonstrate its effectiveness in a series of fictional portraits. The problem became to establish the most suitable context that the modern world could provide for this abnegation of self which Fitzgerald had come to regard as the highest fulfillment of the personality. One answer, which he investigated thoroughly in *Tender Is the Night* and tentatively in a number of short stories both before and after the major work, is suggested by "Family in the Wind." The profession of medicine is an institutionalized form of service; its code of ethics was set up to direct its practitioners into a mode of conduct which Fitzgerald could only regard as admirable. His interest in the medical profession as a fit sphere of activity for his heroes was intensified by his own shift to Baltimore in 1931 and his consequent proximity to the great Johns Hopkins medical centre. Furthermore, he himself was not a well man and was necessarily in contact with doctors rather more than most people. All his life Fitzgerald was something of a hypochondriac, but he often had objective basis for his recourse to medical attention. The miserable state of his health towards the end of his life is suggested by an entry in his Notebooks which is eloquent in its comprehensiveness:

List of Troubles: Heart burn, Eczema, Piles, Flu, Night Sweats, Alcoholism, Infected Nose, Insomnia, Ruined Nerves, Chronic Cough, Aching Teeth, Shortness of Breath, Falling Hair, Cramps in Feet, Constipation, Cirrhosis of the Liver, Stomach Ulcers, Depression and Melancholia.  

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25 Fitzgerald, C-U, pp. 168-169. In the Notebook entry the list is arranged vertically without any punctuation between the items. The arrangement in the text has been followed for the sake of convenience.
However, the seriousness of his engagement with the profession of medicine is evidenced by its frequent recurrence as a topic for his fiction during the Thirties. As always when he became involved with a theme, he started to build up a small fictional world in which it might be embodied. Apparently fascinated by the Johns Hopkins medical centre, he introduced it several times into his fiction, only thinly disguised as the Luke Harkness Hospital. Dick Diver actually attends the Hopkins Medical School. As a student, he was a "tornado who...hurried through the old red buildings of Hopkins...unstayed by the irony of the gigantic Christ in the entrance hall." Fitzgerald seems to have found this image of Christ suffering for the sins and pains of the world particularly moving, for he refers to the same statue in several of his stories. He seems to have been most strongly aware of the irony in its powerful symbolic message unnoticed by students too busy getting a degree to realize that they are going to be doctors.

Within the atmosphere of the busy learning of the Luke Harkness Hospital Fitzgerald puts some of his new heroes on trial. Bill Tulliver plays a central role in two — "One Interne" and "Zone of Accident." Neither story possesses great aesthetic value, although Fitzgerald thought the first good enough to include in his last collection, Taps at Reveille. "One Interne" pursues a double idea — Bill Tulliver's maturing realization of his ethical role as a doctor and his effort to fit a personal, emotional life into that demanding pattern. "Zone of Accident" is built on

26 Fitzgerald, TITN, p. 156.
the same theme; Bill is forced into a personal maturity parallel to that of his public role through the necessity of choosing between two girls. "Trouble," a third story set within the Like Harkness Hospital, is probably the weakest. It attempts a slightly comic treatment of the central idea of "One Intern" and "Zone of Accident" without a great deal of success.

Fitzgerald conveys his sense of the ideal of devotion which is at the heart of the medical profession most successfully through two stories which take nurses as their central figures — "Her Last Case" and "An Alcoholic Case." In the former, Bette Weaver is going to marry a young New York doctor as soon as she has completed the case which forms the plot of the story. As she sets out, she thinks, "So — off then for the last time with the starched white uniforms, the sense of adventure, of being used for some purpose larger than herself, some need greater than her own."27

The nurse in "An Alcoholic Case" has much the same feeling:

Getting off the bus she went down the long steps to the hotel, feeling a little exalted by the chill in the air. She was going to take care of him because nobody else would, and because the best people of her profession had been interested in taking care of cases that nobody else wanted.28

In the medical profession, that is, Fitzgerald saw a unique way of translating the moral code he had formulated into rewarding action. The measure of the rewards he was not fully to gauge until he had completed his portrait of Dick Diver in Tender Is the Night.


But in the meantime he recognized that the practice of medicine could bring help to the weak and the helpless — even to alcoholics like himself, for the patients in "Her Last Case" and "An Alcoholic Case" are clearly patterned in the image of their creator. And the brutal detachment with which he dissects his own character weaknesses in these stories compels respect for both the man and the artist. But if Fitzgerald needed a strict medical regimen, by now Zelda was in far greater need of extremely specialized, expert attention. As early as 1927 she had shown signs of serious mental disturbance, and after 1930 her life was rarely free from symptoms of the schizophrenia of which she was never to be cured. Hence, Fitzgerald's personal difficulties directed him towards the contemplation of a very special branch of medicine — psychiatry. Zelda's constant need for care and the harrowing story of their relationship reinforced his view of doctors as manipulators of people (psychiatrists are doubly important since they control the mind rather than the body), and led him into a new set of interests in his fiction, which again find their culmination in Tender Is the Night.

Fitzgerald's first fictional dealings with psychologists had been brief and frivolous. In "The Unspeakable Egg" he had introduced a not very comic psychiatrist who is viewed as rather stupid, not very effective, and generally is held up as a figure of fairly cheap fun. However, Fitzgerald soon realized that a man whose life is dedicated to the adjustment of personality to objective reality was not somebody at whom one so addicted to fantasy as himself could well afford to sneer. And the next time he used a figure whose role was that of counselor to troubled minds, his tone was serious and interested. Dr. Moon appears as the name character in a story entitled "The Adjuster." Simply his presence in her
house forces Luella Hemple to adjust satisfactorily to the admittedly tragic but not insuperable events of her married life — the loss of her baby and the grave illness of her husband. Before the end of the story Luella learns to hate the ubiquitous Doctor Moon, but when at last she asks him who or what he is he replies, "I am five years," the length of time which elapses in the story. He is the voice of conscience, making an accounting with wasted time, forcing Luella to come back into the world and to operate as an effective and admirable human being.

In "The Adolescent Marriage" Doctor Moon's rather shadowy figure is replaced by the highly concrete flesh and blood of Mr. Garnett, who, although not a professional psychologist, is prepared to use his talent with people in order to save a youthful marriage after an unhappy start. He is extremely successful in the role of amateur guidance officer, but the complexity of the situation has taken its toll on his own personality, a fact which is indicated in the closing words of the story and which is of considerable importance for the later development of Dick Diver:

When he reached the curb he looked back at the house. Again his mind — or his eyes — blurred and it seemed to him that it was that other house of forty years ago. Then, feeling vaguely ineffectual and a little guilty because he had meddled in other people's affairs, he turned and walked off hastily down the street.29

The role of Marsdon Raines in "Diagnosis" is very similar to that of Mr. Garnett. The central character, Charlie Clayhorne, is suffering from a psychological disturbance dating from his boyhood relations with his

brother and readily definable as a guilt complex. His fiancee insists that he visit Raines, who is perceptive enough to see the unconscious tensions at the root of Charlie's trouble. He forces them into the open with the remark, "You believe in something that's crouching in this room very near you now — something you tried to do without and couldn't do without. And now it's gradually taking form again and you're afraid." By the strength of his personality he forces Charlie to return to the scenes of his boyhood on Alabama, where he dredges out the cause of his unconscious guilt and is cured.

Obviously with a story like "Diagnosis," which depends on some rather elementary Freudian theory, Fitzgerald was moving into the realm of technical psychiatry. And in stories like "I Got Shoes" and "The Long Way Out" he continued to investigate the plight of the neurotic and psychotic personality. The latter is particularly poignant, being a literary treatment of Zelda's illness. But it is characterised, in spite of the strong personal meaning it must have had for Fitzgerald, by a clear attempt at clinical accuracy and psychiatric correctness. Indeed, Fitzgerald seems to have made a considerable effort to inform himself on at least the basic theory and practice of clinical psychology. From his own personal experience he had a painfully acute knowledge of the personal stresses involved in dealing with a psychotic personality, but he felt that Tender Is the Night must be based on more than the personal observations of a highly strung sensibility; it must also be grounded in objective

30 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Diagnosis," SEP, CCIV, No. 34 (February 20, 1932), 90.
knowledge if it was successfully to convey the idea of psychiatry as one of the most fitting occupations for whoever might try to lead the good life.

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However, it is a mistake to read Tender Is the Night as nothing more than a psychological novel. That, of course, it is, but the composition of his fourth novel was Fitzgerald's major preoccupation for nine years, and in it he incorporated, as fully as he knew how, the themes he had been tentatively exploring in the short stories of that period. Indeed, the stories of the late Twenties and early Thirties can perhaps be most profitably read as preliminary exercises for his last completed novel. Tender Is the Night attempts to grapple with far more complex themes than anything Fitzgerald had undertaken in his previous novels, and on its writing he lavished tremendous pains. Just how deeply he was engaged in its composition can be deduced from Mizener's account of plots started, abandoned, reworked, and corrected, as well as the superabundance of entries in the Notebooks relating to the various stages of its development. When a Modern Library reissue was projected in 1936 Fitzgerald was still not satisfied with what he had done, and contemplated a complete reordering of the narrative sequence — a task performed by Malcolm Cowley in a posthumous edition.  

See Arthur Mizener, The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), pp. 189-237. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to TFSOP.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender Is the Night, with a preface by Malcolm Cowley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951). Throughout my commentary on TITN I shall use the text of Scribner's 1951 edition, which is identical with the first (1934) edition of the novel. My use of the original text is based on two reasons — convenience, and a belief that the original structure of TITN comes closer to properly embodying its theme than Cowley's revised version.
Such enormous literary labor pains indicate perhaps something more than difficulty in imposing form on an understood body of material; it may be that there was some hidden psychological block in the way of the successful completion of the work. And apart from the sociological objections of its first critics, most recent commentators have fastened on this view as an explanation of what is usually taken to be the ultimate failure of *Tender Is the Night*. Margaret Marshall, writing in the *Nation* soon after Fitzgerald's death, described *Tender Is the Night* as a "confused exercise in self-pity,"\(^{33}\) thus setting the tone for much of the critical writing about the novel. Her phrase suggests that the fault of *Tender Is the Night* lies in too close an identification between the author and the major character, and it cannot be denied that Dick Diver (although modelled externally on Gerald Murphy) is in large measure drawn from Fitzgerald himself. Various reasons have been put forward for the special difficulty Fitzgerald seems to have encountered in *Tender Is the Night* in converting his own personality into the substance of fiction. D. W. Savage sees the weakness of the novel in the fact that one of Fitzgerald's own subconscious complexes, the incest motive, is "openly faced, or half-faced, only in *Tender Is the Night*."\(^{34}\) Fitzgerald, that is, was blocked because he was dealing with themes so intensely personal that it would have been too painful for him to bring them into full consciousness.

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\(^{33}\)Margaret Marshall, "Notes by the Way," *Nation*, CLII (February 8, 1941), 159.

Hence, the fumbling, muddy nature of the novel. Riley Hughes, ironi
cally enough, invokes Fitzgerald's own phrase in order to explain the novel's failure:

Fitzgerald was himself aware that *Tender Is the Night* is "the story of deterioration," but he could scarcely have intended it to be what Maxwell Geismar has pointed out it really is, a documentary on the novelist's own collapse. Once more Fitzgerald had identified himself, this time more thoroughly than before, with the objects of his horror.35

*Tender Is the Night*, in the view of its detractors, represents a retro-
gression in Fitzgerald's fictional merit, going back to the unconcealed autobiography of *This Side of Paradise*, but now unexcused by the exuberant romanticism of youth and rendered morbid and sickly by its excessive stress on personal deterioration.

This generalized argument is usually substantiated from within the pages of the novel itself by reference to the central character, Dick Diver. Within its own limits and on its own terms, it is argued, *Tender Is the Night* gives no adequate motivation for the slowly accelerating decay and final downfall of the man who at the beginning of the narrative is such a brilliant and promising young psychiatrist. And whether or not we accept this view, plainly any assessment of the meaning and value of *Tender Is the Night* must be based on our response to Dick Diver's recorded experience. In this, more than perhaps any other of Fitzgerald's novels, the central character is most fully responsible for the success or failure of the total work.

And when we do turn to a close examination of Dick, we find him embodying exactly those themes which we have seen recurring again and again in the short stories of the period. Thus, the theme of the expatriate Americans is superficially dominant in the novel. As usual, Fitzgerald manages to set up an extraordinarily precise sense of place and time. He makes it quite clear that his story is played out by Americans living in the Europe of the 1920's. The movements up and down the Riviera from one undiscovered spot to the next, the mass of American money which makes possible this leisurely living, the visit to the battlefield at Beaumont Hamel, the peculiar flavour of post-war Paris with its all-night parties ending on vegetable carts—all these add up to a vivid and definitive historical placing of the events of the novel. And this was what many of the book's early critics objected to. Fitzgerald, it was claimed, was fixated on a period. However, I think it can be shown that in Tender Is the Night Fitzgerald uses the decade of his own youth, not because of a slavish attachment to it but because his almost instinctive acquaintance with its pitch and beat left him free to concentrate his attention on the individual personalities who make up his story.

Furthermore, although admitting in "Echoes of the Jazz Age" to a certain affection for the period of the boom, through the hero of Tender Is the Night Fitzgerald attempts a definitive judgment on the era. Frederick J. Hoffman has admirably expressed the point:

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36 See Fitzgerald, C-IV, p. 22: "...it all seems rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings any more."
The hero, Dick Diver, sacrifices his every talent...to keep alive an illusion that has been doomed from the start. His struggle is not with the 1920s but with a complex of enemies who, in Fitzgerald's view, had made the decade what it was.... In the end Diver, "on his way out,"...pauses for a final "benediction" of that "prayer-rug" of Riviera beach that had been the scene of his greatest triumphs and his most painful defeats.... In the quiet blasphemy of this gesture Diver dismisses the decade and himself; he had been identified with it and his talents and charm were exhausted to preserve in it a quality it had not wanted. He is through with it, and it with him.  

It is part of Dick's burden to carry in his person a judgment on a significant decade in American history. The McKiscos, Baby Warren, Dumphry and Campion — these are the "typical" representatives of the 1920's, and through them Fitzgerald expresses his considered moral judgment that "normal" living in the 1920's is inadequate living because it fails to exploit the total resources and sensibility of the human organism. It is part of Dick's virtue that he is never identified with such people, is indeed despised and rejected by them.

However, the use of Dick Diver as a moral yardstick for measuring the 1920's is only an incidental interest in the novel. It is vitally American in a far more important sense. As Geismar has pointed out, 38 Tender Is the Night is crammed full with allusions to historical American experience. Almost every character in the novel is defined at some stage


or other by his or her relationship to the American past. Rosemary is described as "embodying all the immaturity of the race"; with the Divers she has a sense "of a return from the derisive and salacious improvisations of the frontier"; in an extended passage Nicole is described as the inevitable product of American capitalism — "For her sake trains began their run in Chicago and travelled the round belly of the continent to California; chicle factories fumed and link belts grew link by link in factories.... She illustrated very simple principles, containing in herself her own doom." And a similar allusive technique is central to the understanding of Dick. He feels that he draws all his moral worth from his father, a retired clergyman in Buffalo, who represents the wisdom of that older, Arcadian America which had intruded itself so strongly into the closing pages of *The Great Gatsby*. Hence his grief at the death of his father is far more than personal:

"He knelt on the hard soil. These dead, he knew them all, their weather-beaten faces with blue flashing eyes, and spare violent bodies, the souls made of new earth in the forest — heavy darkness of the seventeenth century.

"Good-by, my father — good-by, all my fathers."

One of the major thematic metaphors devoted to Dick is drawn from American history — the comparison to Grant at Galena, which occurs with a formal impersonality at the opening and close of his career. At the beginning of the narrative, he is "like Grant, lolling in his general store at Galena....ready to be called to an intricate destiny."

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Hence, *Tender Is the Night* becomes a further attempt on Fitzgerald's part to understand the nature of American experience, to define the qualities of being an American in a specifically modern situation. And he insists on the modernity of the problem in *Tender Is the Night* far more than in *The Great Gatsby*, where he allows his historical frame of reference to transform his story into a timeless parable. If Dick is defined in terms of historical experience, he is viewed quite definitely as an end-product of history. He is for Fitzgerald the type of the modern man — more particularly, the modern tragic hero. His modernity is asserted by the profession that Fitzgerald assigns to him — that of psychiatry. In his profession, Dick is pictured as a man of brilliant promise, a Rhodes scholar, the author of an excellent short treatise on psychopathology. And *Tender Is the Night* is, in general, full of psychological material. Its heroine has been raped by her father; Rosemary Hoyt is abnormally fixated on her mother; Abe North is a chronic alcoholic; Dumphy and Campion, type-cast homosexuals. Standing out from this group is Dick Diver, who has willingly channeled his great natural talent for manipulating people into the acquiring of the most advanced techniques for the controlled adjustment of personality.

Yet one must beware of regarding *Tender Is the Night* simply as a psychological novel. To do so is to run the risk of misunderstanding Dick's motivation and the entire course of his career. In an early review John Chamberlain tried to justify Dick's disintegration on entirely psycho-

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logical grounds: "...some seemed to think that Doctor Diver's collapse was insufficiently documented," he wrote. "With this we can't agree. It seemed to us that Mr. Fitzgerald proceeded accurately, step by step, with just enough documentation to keep the drama from being misty, but without destroying the suggestiveness that added to the horror lurking behind the surface."\(^{42}\) This is courageous, partially correct, but more or less misguided. What Chamberlain and other less sympathetic critics have failed to establish is the nature of Dick's (and Fitzgerald's) attitude towards the value of psychiatry in the specific situation posed in *Tender Is the Night*. Hence, although he is a rising young psychiatrist when he first meets Nicole, he is repelled by the coldly professional nature of their relationship: "During the next weeks Dick experienced a vast dissatisfaction. The pathological origin and mechanistic defeat of the affair left a flat and metallic taste."\(^{43}\) It is only when he can express himself as a human being and not as a doctor that he can meet her on satisfactory terms. And throughout the story of the marriage he is forced to be aware of the dual nature of their relation. He is at once doctor and husband — at once professional and simply human.

Dick's problem thus becomes particularly acute whenever he is forced to decide between regarding his relationship to Nicole as a human or a professional situation. When the necessity for such a decision does arise, Dick feels compelled to adopt the former alternative. Hence, after


\(^{43}\) Fitzgerald, *TITN*, p. 192.
he has been married to Nicole for some time he comes to have strong doubts concerning the ethical value of his profession in his own special situation: because of his commitment to life with Nicole, "Not without desperation he had long felt the ethics of his profession dissolving into a lifeless mass." In order to be rid of his doubts, he leaves the clinic and dissolves his partnership with Franz Gregorovious. But before he does so he has formed a highly significant relationship with one of his patients, an American woman painter who is suffering from a terrible psychosomatic skin disease. On one of his visits to her, she and Dick have the following exchange:

"I am here as a symbol of something. I thought perhaps you would know what it was."

"You are sick," he said mechanically.

"Then what was it I had almost found?"

"A greater sickness."

"That's all?"

"That's all." With disgust he heard himself lying, but there and now the vastness of the subject could only be compressed into a lie. "Outside of that there's only confusion and chaos. I won't lecture to you — we have too acute a realization of your physical suffering. But it's only by meeting the problems of every day, no matter how trifling and boring they seem, that you can make things drop back into place again. After that — perhaps you'll be able to examine —

He had slowed up to avoid the inevitable end of his thought: "—the frontiers of consciousness." The frontiers that artists must explore were not for her, ever. She was fine-spun, inbred — eventually she might find rest in some quiet mysticism. Exploration was for those with a measure of peasant

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blood, those with big thighs and thick ankles who could take punishment as they took bread and salt, on every inch of flesh and spirit.

He stooped and kissed her forehead.
"We must all try to be good," he said.\[45\]

The frontiers of consciousness — this is one of the major themes of Tender Is the Night; not the threshold of consciousness (that is the region of the neurosis and psychosis) but an even more dangerous realm where only the slightly coarse can survive but to which all artists are committed. And Dick is fundamentally an artist. In other words, Fitzgerald demands of Dick, in order to fulfill his qualifications as a hero, an existence on the frontiers, a whole-souled committal to life which cannot be achieved by those who limit themselves to the disinterested classification and manipulation which is clinical psychology. Dick, that is to say, must (and does) give evidence of a "willingness of the heart." And again in Tender Is the Night, Fitzgerald insists that this quality demands an ethical as well as an intense approach to life — "We must all try to be good." It is Dick's attempt to combine ethical conduct with an intense committal to a specific situation which constitutes the major action of the novel.

He gives ample evidence of his fine sensibility in his talent for bringing the best out of people, to lift them above their ordinary emotional capacities; on a beach, in a trench, at a party, in a consulate, his talent is always available and, at least in the early part of his life,

\[45\] Fitzgerald, TITN, p. 242.
always successful. Because of his immense natural capacity to integrate
groups of people, "In his last year at New Haven some referred to him
as 'Lucky Dick' — the name lingered in his head"; however, "Lucky Dick
can't be one of those clever men; he must be less intact, even faintly
destroyed.... He knew, though, that the price of his intactness was in-
completeness."46 The last part of this quotation seems to give a clue
to the deterioration of Dick's personality (which provides most of the
plot elements in Tender is the Night); but to take it as a definitive
statement about his pathetic decline is improperly to limit Fitzgerald's
theme and accomplishment. Certainly, if we view Dick's disintegration
as being of the same nature as those exhibited by the other characters
in the novel we shall be justified in regarding it simply as personal
inadequacy, a lack of psychological backbone. For such is the cause of
most of the declines and falls which counterpoint Dick's story. Mrs.
McKisco, for instance, becomes practically unbearable with the success
of her second-rate-novelist husband, mainly because she has refused to
participate in any of the fundamental human decencies. Violet's is
a failure not of social amenities but of personal sensibility. Similarly,
Baby Warren in her self-satisfied egocentricity, never bothers to under-
stand the real nature of the human relationships which are formed around
her; she is never even aware of the true cause of Nicole's psychosis; hers
is a very straightforward case of Narcissism. Dumphry and Campion are
entirely lacking in any personal control. Francisco Real, the young homo-
sexual whom Dick is called upon at one stage to treat, is even worse. In
spite of great personal charm, morally he is so decadent that not even

46Fitzgerald, TITN, pp. 152-153.
psychotherapy can reach him. He is completely beyond redemption.

And "redemption" is not an inept word to use in discussing Tender Is the Night, in spite of its apparent emphasis on psychology. For the basic point to grasp about this novel is that Fitzgerald is discussing two quite distinct types of sickness — a disease of mind and a dis-ease of soul. Most of the characters are subject to the former. However, in addition to Dick, Abe North suffers a genuine dis-ease of soul; and his collapse is correspondingly one of the most complete and disastrous in the whole novel, ending, as it does in violent and horrible death. It is insufficient to say that Abe's death is caused by excessive alcoholism; his addiction to liquor is a symptom not a cause of his decay. The real cause of Abe's collapse is an intense imaginative concern for the state of the world; he is a soured idealist who, disillusioned with himself and the human race at large, deliberately invokes a regimen designed inevitably to end in self-destruction. The beating he suffers in a New York speakeasy does nothing but hasten the process. Abe's redemption, if it is one, is a bitter, tortured, ingrown affair; he has seen that the world is not good and he has given up the battle. Possessed of an ability to handle people very similar to Dick's he simply lets his talent dry up.47

Dick's redemption, on the other hand, although it also ends in destruction, is based on a positive gesture and by virtue of this fact approaches a genuinely tragic stature; like Grant, he rises to his destiny when the moment presents itself. His destiny is of course

47 Abe North was modelled after Ring Lardner, and Fitzgerald's article on "Ring" (C-U, pp. 34-40) is valuable in understanding his approach to Abe.
intimately bound up with his marriage to Nicole. Deeply loving her, he commits himself to a relationship which he knows can end in nothing but personal disaster for himself. In his dual capacity of husband-physician, it is his duty to take Nicole from the threshold of consciousness, which she has just crossed, to the frontiers of experience, where she belongs with the chosen few. In order to achieve this end, he devotes all his energies and talents to the task of making Nicole a complete and independent personality. He gives up his career, turns his ability with people to the specific goal of creating a charmed little circle around his wife, which will be at once worthy of her and designed to make her whole. And the final sign of her wholeness must be her ability to stand alone, her need to break the bonds which tie her to Dick. That is to say, Dick dedicates his life to the destruction of the relationship which gives his life point and purpose, in order to save Nicole from herself and her past. And in so doing, he consciously pours out all of his personal vitality so that when at last Nicole is a glowingly independent woman, he has become an empty shell. Fitzgerald wrote in a letter to Edmund Wilson that he thought of Dick "as an 'homme épuisé,' not only an 'homme manqué.'"^48 And when we realize that Fitzgerald's portrayal of Dick is based on his theory of personal vitality as an unreplenishable bank balance, when we realize that Dick consciously courts his own doom, his career becomes far more heroic than perhaps the novel itself manages to convey.

It has sometimes been argued that Dick's gesture fails of the tragic because, like Gatsby, he chose an inadequate object to which he

^48Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 278.
might attach his imagination. Nicole, "with her great beauty and greater wealth, a flowering epitome of the rich," is sometimes felt to be a poor reason for Dick's sacrifice. After all she is the product of that very complex of wealth and leisure which Fitzgerald had come to recognize as one of the greatest corruptive powers of the individual personality. This is quite true, and Fitzgerald recognized that although Nicole represented wealth at the attractive apex of its perfection, she yet contained in herself her own doom. For precisely this reason, Dick's achievement becomes more admirable; by the end of the novel he has succeeded in divorcing Nicole from the corrupt forces which produced both her beauty and her psychosis and has transferred her imaginative commitments to the brimming vitality and independence of Tommy Barban. Again, Fitzgerald perhaps failed to objectify in his novel the importance he attached to this transferrence. A French critic, J. Simon, has claimed that Barban is based on Ernest Hemingway: "l'homme fort et sûr de soi auquel Dick abandonne sa Nicole est calqué sur Hemingway, et l'étonnante Lady Caroline sur un autre personnage du petit clan: celui dont Hemingway avait fait Lady Brett Ashley." Now throughout their various quarrels, Fitzgerald attached a very special significance to Hemingway. In making plans for an abortive historical novel, The Count of Darkness, Fitzgerald wrote, "It shall be the story of Ernest.... just as Stendahl's

49 John Farrelly, "Scott Fitzgerald: Another View," Scrutiny, XVIII (June, 1952), 270.

50 J. Simon, "Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940)," Études Anglaises, V (November, 1952), 331.
portrait of a Byronic man made *Le Rouge et Noir* so couldn't my portrait of Ernest as Phillipe make the real modern man. In Fitzgerald's mind at least, Barban represented the modern man of action, capable of taking the world forward, where Dick could achieve only tragic heroic failure. Hence, Dick's commitment to Nicole is by no means attachment to an inadequate image. In the course of their relationship he frees her from the vicious and destructive past and makes her capable of going forward, allied to the most vital, positive elements in the modern world.

Hence, it is my view that, in conception at least, Dick Diver is Fitzgerald's most complete attempt at a tragic hero. He is intended to represent the most admirable type of modern man (if not the most durable), thrown into a situation aimed to test his ethical stamina, to measure the quality of his "willingness of the heart." Unfortunately, what seems to be a valid and potentially great theme becomes in execution blurred and indistinct. This is partly due, as I have suggested, to the fact that Fitzgerald took for granted certain theories of personality and ethics which he did not adequately objectify in the novel. He also failed to eliminate from Dick's character certain traits which detract from his tragic stature. The flaw in Dick's character is pathetic and painful rather than tragic; it is very simply a slight element of conceit. He is proud of his ability to manipulate people and sometimes indulges his talent merely for his own pleasure. As he grows older his

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vanity grows increasingly evident, reaching its painful climax in the harrowing scene of the water skiing. It is this slight streak of vanity which makes him susceptible to Rosemary Hoyt. It flatters him to be admired by this pretty, innocent, perhaps slightly phony American girl; and as his vanity increases he is further drawn to her. And his desire to preserve his talent for the sake of a passing affair brings him at last to the appalling anarchy of the vulgar brawl in a Roman street. Hence, it seems to me that there is a basic weakness in Fitzgerald's portrayal of Dick, but not of the type usually described. His destruction through his willing committal to the care of Nicole is necessary and tragic; his stupid vanity, acted on like a catalyst by Rosemary, is perhaps necessary but not tragic. Furthermore, there is no real connection established between the two modes of his downfall. The grand manner of his tragic relation with Nicole and the sordid pettiness of his later scenes with Rosemary have little in common. We can be thankful that Fitzgerald allowed Dick to recover his true manner at least for his last, moving appearance in the novel — his farewell to the beach he had created:

"I must go," he said. As he stood up he swayed a little; he did not feel well any more — his blood raced slow. He raised his hand and with a papal cross blessed the beach from the high terrace. Faces turned upward from several umbrellas. 52

In moments such as these Fitzgerald displays a restrained technical mastery of his material quite equal to the situation. But in the large

view, his failure to render Dick Diver in the full complexity with which he conceived his character is perhaps as much a result of uncertain technique as poorly imagined emotional relationships. In presenting a figure like Dick Diver Fitzgerald was faced with a problem he had never before encountered in his major fiction — the creation of the positive image of a good man. If he did not early give a convincing demonstration of the rather simple bases of Dick's goodness operating in their complex environment, his novel was defeated from the outset. Further, a good man must appear good to more than a single man and by comparison with a wide range of figures. Hence, the limited method which he had used so successfully in The Great Gatsby was quite insufficient to accomplish the effects necessary to Tender Is the Night. In order, therefore, to establish Dick's goodness by contrast he surrounded him with a wider range of minor characters than had been present in any of his previous novels. In order to establish at the outset of the novel the beauty and value of Dick's achievement he started the narrative at the point where Rosemary appears on the scene instead of at the chronological beginning of the story; once Dick is seen through her perceptive, sympathetic, but as yet not involved point of view, and seen at the very pinnacle of his powers, we are never inclined to doubt the value of the course of action he has undertaken. In order to suggest the pervasive quality of Dick's personality, he attempted those sudden and numerous shifts in point of view which certain readers have found so disturbing. And it must be granted that Tender Is the Night possesses nothing like the technical deftness of The Great Gatsby; but in its complex structure and its richness of style and texture, it does represent a determined effort on Fitzgerald's part to adapt his technique to the increased complexity of his central character.
For, in the words of Arthur Mizener, "The scope of Tender Is the Night is such that, for all the book's faults, its 'philosophical' impact is unforgettable. It makes The Great Gatsby, which in structure so perfect satisfies 'the cannons' of the dramatic novel, seem neat and simple." There is a scene just before Dick and Nicole decide on a divorce which allows the former a moment of insight into his situation:

She went up putting her arm around his shoulder and touching their heads together said:

"Don't be sad."

He looked at her coldly.

"Don't touch me," he said.

Confused she moved a few feet away.

"Excuse me," he continued abstractedly. I was just thinking what I thought of you —"

"Why not add the new classification to your book?"

"I have thought of it — 'Furthermore and beyond the psychoses and neuroses —'"

Working from a theory of heroic action he had formulated in his short stories, Fitzgerald attempted in Tender Is the Night to put it in operation in a truly modern situation. The hero of his story is privileged to see that the practice of the theory involved him in a sphere of action which transcended that of the psychoses and the neuroses. He was committed to action in the realm of ethical consideration, which in turn is the

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53 Mizener, TFSQP, p. 251.
54 Fitzgerald, TITN, pp. 388-389.
realm of tragedy. And if within its own pages *Tender Is the Night* fails to objectify the tragic concept on which it is based, at least it movingly conveys Fitzgerald's imperfect vision of the good life.
CHAPTER VI

THE NEW DISPENSATION

I shall manage to live with the new dispensation...

I

The effects of Fitzgerald's breakdown of 1935-36 were transmitted into his literature as well as his life. After the period of painful readjustment which he recorded in the three "Crack-Up" articles, he could write that "I had weaned myself from all the things I used to love"; and in the place of his youthful optimism he took hold of the belief that "the natural state of the sentient adult is a qualified unhappiness." In his personal affairs these changed attitudes resulted in a far more austere approach to living than the world had come to expect of the fabulous F. Scott Fitzgerald. They had equally important effects on Fitzgerald as a writer. Indeed, he found refuge in the cultivation of his role as professional author — "I have now at last become a writer only" — ascribing to that role a much greater degree of detachment and objectivity than he had hitherto. But equally significant to the development of his fiction was the discovery that "there was not any "I" any more — not a basis on which I could organize my self-respect — save

1F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 84. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to C-U.

2Fitzgerald, C-U, pp. 72, 84.
my limitless capacity for toil that it seemed I possessed no more. It was strange to have no self..." In other words, in the inevitable self-analysis which followed his crack-up Fitzgerald, by destroying his belief in the value of his own personality, destroyed also what had been the imaginative mainstay of his fiction.

If he could no longer probe within his own nature to find the basic materials for admirable, individual action, where was he to turn? For, if he had lost confidence in the worth of his own "self," he still clung to a belief in the idea of individualism. One answer is to be found in the historical novel he had begun in 1934, *The Count of Darkness*, whose plot is set in ninth century France. Phillipe, its hero, was modelled directly on Hemingway and, for perhaps the first time in Fitzgerald's career, bore no resemblance to his creator. Unfortunately, Fitzgerald had never developed a technical equipment to deal with historical fiction, and his efforts to give events a thousand years old a modern ring and relevance often border on the ludicrous. Nevertheless, he does succeed in suggesting the type of man he wanted Phillipe to be. His hero uses a forceful, ruthless personality to bring order to a land emerging from chaos by subduing all around him to the dictates of his own will; historically (as Fitzgerald understood history) Phillipe stands for the type of man who developed the rule of personal power which became the feudal system. Certainly, his character is diametrically opposed to that of Dick Diver; Phillipe may not be a good man, but he is an effective one. Although

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3 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 79.
he lacks Dick's personal charm and fine intelligence, he has considerable native shrewdness and common sense, which he is prepared to apply to the practical affairs of the day. And that Fitzgerald now regarded his failure to participate in such affairs as a definite weakness he made clear in "The Crack-Up":

...my political conscience had scarcely existed for ten years save as an element of irony in my stuff. When I became again concerned with the system I should function under, it was a man much younger than myself who brought it to me, with a mixture of passion and fresh air.4

Under this new impulse to understand the political structure of the society of which he was a part, he started to read thinkers like Marx and Spengler. And although he could never ally himself with the philosophy of Communism, he was sufficiently perceptive to see that it would be one of the dominant forces of the twentieth century. "Some time when you feel very brave and defiant and haven't been invited to one particular college function," he wrote to his daughter, "read the terrible chapter in Das Kapital on The Working Day, and see if you are ever quite the same."5 His political consciousness continued to grow more powerful until the time of his death, so that if The Count of Darkness is a tentative effort to create a hero operating in a pseudo-political context, the investigation of current political problems became in The Last Tycoon one of his major themes.

However, although Fitzgerald, living in the new dispensation, turned to others for images of positive action, he did not completely discard his own personality as a source for his fictional heroes; the method

4Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 79.
5Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 290.
was too deeply a part of his creative mechanisms ever to be fully abandoned. Yet there is discernible a definite change in the treatment of those characters who are modelled on Fitzgerald himself. They are often the vehicles of a harsh, bitter irony, which, in the light of Fitzgerald's own experience, takes on an almost recriminatory tone. This is especially true of the stories in which he subjects his alcoholism to the critical light of his own fiction; in such pieces he does not spare himself anything in either the accuracy of the clinical analysis or the severity of the judgment. Thus, the last words of the nurse in "An Alcoholic Case" are, "It's not like anything you can beat — no matter how hard you try. This one could have twisted my wrists until he strained them and that wouldn't matter so much to me. It's just that you can't really help them and it's so discouraging — it's all for nothing." There is a similar tone of self-reproach in the coldly objective prose of "Two Wrongs." The story, superficially the account of the marriage (and its final dissolution) between a successful Broadway producer and a dancer, is clearly Fitzgerald's judgment on his failure to contribute adequately to his marriage with Zelda.

His personal relationships and behaviour were not the only themes which he subjected to re-examination in the last years of his career. The actual conditions of his life now forced him to take a second

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look at certain of his preoccupations which he had once succeeded in bringing under control in his fiction. The Great Gatsby, by virtue of its consummate technique, had enabled Fitzgerald to assemble his thinking about time, the past, and the illusions of youth into a mature imaginative pattern. However, when he emerged from his breakdown, Fitzgerald realized that he was, in sober truth, growing into middle age. The rather pathetic foolishness of a twenty-year old writer, at the outset of his career, regretting his lost youth now took on a peculiar poignance when the fact caught up with the illusion. At last actually bordering on middle age, how was Fitzgerald to reconcile himself a second time to the fleeting passage of the years? As early as 1924 he had toyed with the problem of middle age in "John Jackson's Arcady"; but the story, couched in that youthfully nostalgic prose so adequately calculated to embody his Jazz Age heroes, can claim nothing more than a slight sentimental success. A more tough-minded and intense handling of the theme is to be found in "At Your Age," in which a middle aged man falls in love with and becomes engaged to a radiantly youthful and beautiful girl. During their engagement he cherishes all of Fitzgerald's old dreams, but in the end he rejects the course of action he has been contemplating. He realizes that youth, although infinitely desirable, cannot be recaptured, and that middle age possesses its own special virtues. However, it is in "The Lost Decade" that Fitzgerald embodies most completely his feeling about the years which led up to his collapse. Its central character has been out of circulation for ten years — one discovers that he has been drunk for most of that time — but he is prepared to set down that time as a total loss and start afresh in the world of concrete perceptions. Learning the feel of the
world again is for Mr. Trimble an exhilarating experience, and he com-
municates some of his renewed wonder and gladness at the concrete texture
of living to the younger man who has been showing him around New York.
As Trimble walks away from Orrison Brown, the younger man "suddenly felt
the texture of his own coat and then he reached out and pressed his thumb
against the granite of the building by his side."7

Fitzgerald, then, was prepared to use the revaluation of his
personal failures as the basis for some of his later fictional heroes.
But there was one sphere of his activity in which he refused to consider
himself entirely blameworthy — the profession of writing, to which he
hoped to devote himself completely after his convalescence from his break-
down. Fiercely resenting his dismissal by contemporary critics, he
insisted in a number of stories on the positive achievements of his career
and on the possibilities that still lay within him. Sometimes, as in
"Family In the Wind," he discussed his own situation as a writer in terms
of other professions. But on other occasions he did not hesitate to make
his central character a literary figure with a clearly personal reference.
Quite early, in "The Rough Crossing," he had discussed the strains imposed
on private life by the fact of celebrity. A good deal later, in 1936, he
published in Esquire a simple little piece, "An Author's Mother," based on
the death of his own mother, in which he contrasted his own artistic ideals
to the simple platitudes on which his mother based her reading and her life.
Actually, beneath the surface simplicity of plot and presentation, there
lies a quite complicated emotional reaction to an intensely experienced

event. This complexity of attitude at the base of an apparently simple situation is even more important in "Financing Finnegan," one of Fitzgerald's best pieces in the mode of his later irony. The writer, Finnegan, is clearly identified as Fitzgerald by the inclusion in the story of several thinly disguised events in the author's own life. The general pattern of Finnegan's career bears a marked resemblance to that of Fitzgerald:

His was indeed a name with ingots in it. His career had started brilliantly and if it had not kept up to its first exalted level, at least it started brilliantly all over again every few years. He was the perennial man of promise in American letters — what he could actually do with words was astounding, they glowed and coruscated — he wrote sentences, paragraphs, chapters that were masterpieces of fine weaving and spinning. It was only when I met some poor devil of a screen writer who had been trying to make a logical story out of one of his books that I realized he had his enemies.

The normal tone of the story is set by this detached but complex irony directed at its central character. Finnegan is apparently nothing but a perpetual drain on the bank balances of his publisher and agent, but the constant willingness of these two shrewd business men to give him financial assistance suggests some virtues in Finnegan which are not immediately clear to the narrator, whose initial response is direct and

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8 The most clear reference to Fitzgerald is the description of Finnegan diving into a half-empty pool and breaking his shoulder while still in mid-air. Almost exactly the same incident occurred to Fitzgerald in 1936.

unflattering; "If this Finnegan is a four-flusher you can't go on giving him money indefinitely." The reason for the faith of the publisher and agent in their man is demonstrated to the narrator when he reads a short story that Finnegan has finally produced:

It was a short story. I began it in a mood of disgust but before I'd read five minutes I was completely immersed in it, utterly charmed, utterly convinced and wishing to God I could write like that. When Cannon finished his phone call I kept him waiting while I finished it and when I did there were tears in these hard old professional eyes. Any magazine in the country would have run it first in any issue.

But then nobody had ever denied that Finnegan could write. And this is the one positive quality in his career which Fitzgerald allowed himself the luxury of defending. If the bases of his personal existence had been inadequate, if the subjects of his fiction had at times been unworthy, Fitzgerald felt (and with justification) that nobody could take away from him the mastery he had achieved over the details of his craft.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in some of the later stories there is a growing sense of the value of the writing profession as a new source for valuable individual activity. This sense is extended into a respect for any sort of dedicated, professionally creative activity. Even in "What a Handsome Pair," published in 1932, he had set up a musician as a definitely superior type of individual. It had been part of the tragedy of Abe North's collapse in Tender Is the Night that he was such a talented

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11 Fitzgerald, Stories, pp. 451-452.
and promising composer. And when Fitzgerald came to write *The Last Tycoon* he was to put these words into the mouth of the narrator, Cecilia Brady: "...I like writers -- because if you ask a writer anything, you usually get an answer...." However, she goes on to remark, "...still it belittled him in my eyes. Writers aren't people exactly. Or, if they're any good, they're a whole lot of people trying so hard to be one person."¹²

Later on in the novel the central character, Monroe Stahr, has this comment to make: "I never thought that I had more brains than a writer has. But I always thought that his brains belonged to me -- because I knew how to use them."¹³ That is to say, Fitzgerald had come to feel, like Hemingway, that writing carried with it a very special form of honesty and clarity of vision. But he still felt the need for some more positive type of action than the uncommitted objectivity of the writer could allow; he felt the need for that forceful individualism he had tried to project on to Phillipe. In a letter to his daughter, he wrote, "Business is a dull game, and they pay a big price in human values for their money."¹⁴ Fitzgerald finally arrived at the view that if a big price were to be paid, it should be expended on an endeavour more valuable than the exchange of money, and that it should be carried out by an individual who would combine the effectiveness of Phillipe, the charm of Dick Diver, and the creative honesty of the

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¹⁴Fitzgerald, *C-U*, p. 299.
writer. He thought he had found the proper environment for such action in Hollywood and the embodiment of its agent in Monroe Stahr.

II

At the end of "Zone of Accident" Bill Tulliver remarks, "The movies give, and the movies take away, and it's all right with me." And it was with a personal and professional immersion in the life of Hollywood that Fitzgerald brought his career to a close. The peculiar fitness of such a conclusion to such a life has been well pointed out by Maxwell Geismar:

It isn't a far jump in one respect from the French to the American Riviera of The Last Tycoon in 1941.... Fitzgerald... — almost as if he were drawn to the furthest reaches of the American West by the memory of a lost frontier — arrives for his salvation — in Hollywood.... Although Hollywood isn't the most propitious home for an American writer to return to, it was almost Fitzgerald's only possible home.16

The peculiar amalgam of big business, creative endeavour and illusion which is Hollywood was perhaps the last remaining environment for the Fitzgerald who had lessened his expectations of life but still demanded that the individual should pattern his experience into meaningful and creative conduct.

15 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Zone of Accident," SEP, CCVIII, No. 2 (July 13, 1935), 52.

Actually, his imagination had been drawn to the motion picture industry long before his final sojourn in Hollywood from 1937 to 1940. Even in The Beautiful and Damned Joseph Bloeckman is one of the early executives of the industry and, in some respects, is not unlike Monroe Stahr. Both men, for instance, are Jews, although at the outset of his career Fitzgerald had not rid himself of that slight streak of prejudice which is completely absent from the portrait of his later hero. Furthermore, both men reach a state of heightened sensibility through their association with the motion pictures. Bloeckman, on his every appearance in the novel, demonstrates an increasing poise and \textit{savoir-faire} which are the direct result of his success in the profession to which he has devoted himself. The manufacture of dreams, Fitzgerald early realized, can be an ennobling task, so long as its magnitude and ethical responsibilities are fully comprehended. For the motion pictures were identified in his mind with some of the basic drives to effective action in any individual. An imperfect understanding of this identity is Gloria's, who equates the loss of her youth with her failure at the screen test arranged by Bloeckman. It is the business of some of Fitzgerald's later heroes to make a mature statement of the basic truth of Gloria's perception.

Hence, in "Jacob's Ladder" the middle aged hero falls in love with a very young and beautiful girl and, through his influence, transforms her into a leading screen actress. In the transformation he loses his personal grasp on her allegiance, but he finally comes to understand the larger use which the motion pictures can make of her youth and beauty. Seeing her name over a marquee, he realizes that youth is not a private matter (as Gloria had believed it to be), but is a quality to be put to the service of others:
Jenny Prince.
Now that she no longer belonged to him, the name assumed a significance entirely its own. It hung there, cool and impervious, in the night, a challenge, a defiance....
Jenny Prince.
She was there! All of her, the best of her — the effort, the power, the triumph, the beauty. Jacob moved forward with a group and bought a ticket at the window.
Confused, he stared around the great lobby. Then he saw an entrance and walking in, found himself a place in the fast-throbbing darkness.

Jenny has renounced her personal life for the greater task of bringing happiness and peace of mind to far more people than Dick Diver could ever hope to reach. Of course the quality of the dreams she creates is important, but this is the responsibility of her producers and directors. In any case, the illusions she projects on to the screen make her a person of large importance; Fitzgerald early recognized that, for good or bad, the motion picture industry was destined to become a vital force in the shaping of popular American culture.

More specifically, he saw that it would have a vital effect on the practitioners of his own craft. In "The Crack-Up" he recorded this comment:

I saw that the novel, which at my maturity was the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another, was becoming subordinated

17 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Jacob's Ladder," SEP, CC, No. 8 (August 20, 1927), 64. Jenny Prince is a preliminary study for Rosemary Hoyt in Tender Is the Night, and several sentences of the story were transferred verbatim into the novel. Rosemary represents quite a complete statement of Fitzgerald's thinking about the significance of motion pictures.
to a mechanical and communal art that, whether in the hands of Hollywood merchants or Russian idealists, was capable of reflecting the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion.

If such indeed was the case, it was vitally important for writers of genuine talent and honesty to become involved with the motion pictures. Only thus could the tremendous power of the film for influencing the mass mind be directed into aesthetically and ethically acceptable channels. He must learn the industry from the inside rather than scoff from without. And Fitzgerald's very real attempt to comprehend the nature of Hollywood society is manifested in several stories of the early Thirties. In "A Millionaire's Girl," he wrote that "Thinking of that long ride to California, it does not appear remarkable that people should lose their sense of proportion on the way." The same story contains a description of a Hollywood opening night, which "is like a fairy-tale affair...There is no expectancy in the air; it is the dumb hero worship of fans gathered in the gloom like medieval serfs awaiting a conquering baron that dominates the atmosphere — that and the shining assurance that insecure people must adopt in places of authority." But behind the immense unreality, Fitzgerald knew that there lay a vicious, complex, aggressive society. Such a society he strove to define

18 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 78.


in stories like "Magnetism" or, rather later, "Discard" and "The Last Kiss," but nowhere more successfully than in "Crazy Sunday." The story of the writer Joel Coles, who tries desperately to gain admission into the closed circle of studio society only to discover, with his success, that he is trapped — this story is full of brilliant perceptions of the Hollywood scene, "its color and scale, its fantasy, the sadness of the occasional fine mind caught in all this falseness and shoddy."  

Hence, even before he started to write The Last Tycoon, Fitzgerald had arrived at a complex perception of the environment in which his last hero was to work out his personal destiny. Aware of its bizarre extravagance, even of its decadence, he yet saw the film capital of the world as a focussing mirror held up to the American mind. If it could bring out the worst in an individual, it could also provide opportunities for the most admirable and most intense type of activity — activity worthy of the concentrated powers of his last romantic hero.

III

Unhappily, Fitzgerald did not live to complete his portrait of Monroe Stahr. However, during his lifetime he did complete a series of stories which not only have considerable relevance to The Last Tycoon but which also present his last fully realized fictional hero. These are the Pat Hobby stories, which appeared in Esquire during 1940 and 1941. Malcolm Cowley is certainly correct in claiming they "weren't very good by

his own Fitzgerald's standards," but as a group they do merit more attention than has hitherto been accorded them.

For Pat Hobby, in the course of the seventeen stories in which he appears, becomes a fully developed individual who embodies certain of Fitzgerald's later techniques and preoccupations and whose creation was probably psychologically important to the author of The Last Tycoon. In one sense, Pat can be regarded as an extension into the Hollywood scene of the sort of image of himself Fitzgerald had projected on to Finnegan. "Pat wasn't the author himself, but in his comic degradation he was what the author sometimes feared that he might become." Certainly, the fairly detailed account of Pat's life which emerges from the series bears a significant resemblance to some of the major features of Fitzgerald's own career. Pat is forty-nine years old and has been in the moving picture business for twenty years, having made his appearance in the palmy days before sound. His career as a script writer had in those days blossomed exceedingly. His salary had been over $1,000 a week; Pat even "had a pool in those fat days of silent pictures." At some stage in his colourful life he "had once been the 'buttons' in the D.K.E. House


23Fitzgerald, Stories, p. 384.

24Fitzgerald, Stories, p. 456.
at the University of Pennsylvania, and somewhat later he had made two unsuccessful attempts at matrimony. This, of course, was in the days when he could afford a wife, in the days when he "had been a familiar figure at the Big Table; when in his golden prime he had dined in the private canteens of executives."

Now, however, Pat is little better than a broken-down has-been, drawing his emotional sustenance from memories of his past glory, hopelessly addicted to alcohol and losing whatever he earns at Santa Anita. His average day is a "long empty dream," intermittently enlivened by clashes with studio executives or trips to Louie, the studio bookmaker. His body is no better preserved than his mind. His eyes are permanently bloodshot, his hair is thin and grey, his frame is scrawny. In a word, he is nothing more than a studio bum. Whenever he is put on the payroll he makes a nuisance of himself, but he is kept on because he has become something of an institution. If the idea of belonging to the movie industry is essential to Pat's image of himself, the industry is more or less prepared to tolerate him. "Except in great scandals like the Arbuckle case the industry protects its own — and the industry included Pat, however intermittently."

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26 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Boil Some Water — Lots of It," Esquire, XIII, No. 3 (March, 1940), 30.


28 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Pat Hobby's Secret," Esquire, XIII, No. 6 (June, 1940), 107.
Pat Hobby is, then, a comically ironic portrait of what Fitzgerald felt might become his own case. And the epithet is here important, for Pat is the only one of Fitzgerald's fully developed characters to be based on a fundamentally comic conception. In his early work Fitzgerald had been noted for the epigrammatic wit of his style and the farcical humour of his plots, but the best of the humour of the Hobby stories derives from a genuinely comic conception of character. Admittedly a good deal of the fun in the series is situation comedy, as in a story like "Fun In an Artist's studio," which depends for its effect on the rather obvious device of having Pat pose more or less nude for a celebrated woman painter; "Pat Hobby's College Days" is a more skillfully restrained manipulation of a farcical situation.

However, in the better stories, the source of the humour can be ascribed to a consistently ironic attitude towards certain aspects of Pat's personality. Foremost among these is Pat's feeling about the movie industry. In spite of his steady decline, he feels a tremendous allegiance to the czars of the industry and the code on which it is based. The point is well made in "Boil Some Water -- Lots of It." Pat has taken a nurse to the studio commissary, when he sees what is apparently an extra making a nuisance of himself at the executive table. Unable to bear this flouting of authority, Pat leaps to the defence of his gods, and floors the infidel with a tin tray. "The dirty rat!" he cried, "Where does he think —.

He is dismayed to find that the man he has felled is a highly paid writer indulging in a practical joke. When he is blamed, "a sense of injustice came over Pat. He alone in this crisis had acted." And this is the basis of Pat's whole psychology — he fawns on the hand that starves him.

As a result of this basic orientation, Pat adheres strictly to the rather curious code of Hollywood behaviour and ethics. The code is based on the necessity of keeping up appearances while one does one's best to outsmart one's nearest competitor. The result is a system of vicious personal competition carried on within the limits of a rigid code of acceptable public behaviour. Obeying this code to the letter, Pat is led into admiring the man who can fool the most people most of the time, into professing knowledge of his proper station at the same time as he tries to cut a collaborator's throat. But even in his most amoral escapades, he never abandons the formalized ritual of Hollywood manners. His attitude is summed up in his feelings about an author who has refused to behave in the proper manner: "They were all guilty but guiltiest of all was Rene Wilcox for refusing to play the game. Always, according to his lights, Pat had played the game."

The other basic contributing factor to the essentially comic inspiration of Pat Hobby lies in his attitude towards his own calling — that of a screen writer. He is never known to read a book. Nor for that


31See for instance, "Teamed With Genius," Esquire, XIII, No. 4 (April, 1940), 44. "Though Pat Hobby was not offended either as a man or writer, a formal protest was called for."

matter, does he write a great deal. A good morning's work is the single sentence, "Boil some water — lots of it." Most of his "original" ideas come from the pages of Life, while his advice to a budding writer runs like this: "Give the book to four of your friends to read it. Get them to tell you what stuck in their minds. Write it down and you've got a picture — see?" Most of all Pat hates imported writers of genuine talent and honesty. These he regards as either unwanted outsiders or suckers to be played for all they are worth. He is deeply wounded when, as in "Teamed With Genius," the outsider plays him for a sucker. In "Mightier than the Sword," when both Pat and the Eastern author are rejected by the studio, he can be more sympathetic; but his answer to T. Brunswick Hudson's question, "Who'd make up the stories — these feebs?" is "Well anyhow, not authors. They don't want authors. They want writers — like me." And this is the essence of the comedy of Pat Hobby — the discrepancy, ironically displayed by Fitzgerald, between the high possibilities of Pat's calling and his stupidly petty practice of it.

Hence, if the creation of Pat Hobby enabled Fitzgerald to evaluate his own situation with detachment and precision, it also enabled him to express certain reservations he felt about the quality of Hollywood life. If Monroe Stahr was to represent the man who had conquered and controlled Hollywood, it was valuable for Fitzgerald to present, as a preliminary exercise, a man who had capitulated to it. And the Hobby stories give a

33 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "A Man In the Way," Esquire, XIII, No. 2 (February, 1940), 38.

34 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Mightier Than the Sword," Esquire, XV, No. 4 (April, 1941), 183.
very complete picture of the forces to which Pat had surrendered. The
studio world is presented with extraordinary fullness and consistency
of vision — from Louie the bookmaker, through Jack Berners the executive
producer, to Mr. Marcus, one of the magnates of moviedom, who actually re-
appears in essentially the same form in The Last Tycoon. And there is a
closer bond between the seemingly inconsequential Esquire stories and
Fitzgerald's last major piece of fiction than a decaying old financier.
Basically, they present the obverse and reverse sides of the same object —
the Hobby stories give Fitzgerald's lighthearted, satirical view of the
society which he thought found its most intense and valuable consummation
in the person of Monroe Stahr.

IV

Unlike many Hollywood novels, The Last Tycoon is not a sardonic
satire on the more obvious eccentricities manifested on the corner of
Hollywood and Vine. Rather, it is a positive attempt to understand this
unique American phenomenon, an attempt which focuses itself on the person
of Monroe Stahr. That Fitzgerald was well aware of what he was trying to
do in his last novel is clearly indicated in a letter he wrote to his
publisher:

There's nothing worries me in the novel,
nothing that seems uncertain. Unlike
Tender Is the Night, it is not the story
of deterioration — it is not depressing
and not morbid in spite of the tragic
ending. If one book could ever be "like"
another, I should say it is more "like"
The Great Gatsby than any other of my books.
But I hope it will be entirely different —
I hope it will be something new, arouse new
emotions, perhaps even a new way of looking
at certain phenomena.  

Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 141.
He wrote in a very similar vein to Edmund Wilson only a few months before his death:

I think my novel is good. I've written it with difficulty. It is completely upstream in mood and will get a certain amount of abuse but it is first hand and I am trying a little harder than ever to be exact and honest emotionally. I honestly hoped somebody else would write it but nobody seems to be going to.36

That Wilson agreed with Fitzgerald's feeling about his book is suggested not only by the fact that he edited it but also by his comment that "this imperfect work had almost the look of a classic."37 Wilson's opinion has received confirmation from many sources, particularly among Fitzgerald's writer-friends.38 However, there is a strong faction which enters a dissenting vote against the greatness of The Last Tycoon. Their views are suggested by Riley Hughes' remark that "It is difficult to agree with those who see in the pages we have of The Last Tycoon the framework of a masterpiece."39 The novel, it is argued, is not complete enough and not good enough to become the basis of a belief that at the last Fitzgerald's genius was about to express itself fully and complete.

However, there is general agreement that, as always, discussion of the work must centre in its protagonist. And in the figure of Monroe

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38See for instance the articles by Stephen Vincent Benet and John Dos Passos in Kazin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, pp. 130-132, 154-159.

Stahr, Fitzgerald returned to the problem which had engaged him in *Tender Is the Night* — the principles governing the good life, but now viewed in a larger context than the private little world of the Divers. But, now distrusting his own "self" to supply the materials of heroic conduct, he created a central figure largely independent of his own image. Inevitably there are some points of resemblance; but the chief model for Monroe Stahr was Irving Thalberg, the boy wonder of filmdom who for slightly over a decade directed the policies of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and who, even before his death in 1936, had become one of the patron saints of the motion picture industry. Here, in Fitzgerald's view, was a modern Phillipe bringing order to the chaos of a new art form. Here was the ideal modern man at last made flesh, a man worthy of sustaining the central role in the tragic pattern that Fitzgerald planned for *The Last Tycoon*.

As a tragic figure, Monroe Stahr inevitably has a strong resemblance to Dick Diver. Both men possess great personal charm, both are finer grained than l'homme moyen sensuel, both have advanced to a realm of intuitive knowledge far in advance of their colleagues. Of Stahr, Fitzgerald wrote that "he had a long time ago run ahead through trackless wastes of perception into fields where very few men were able to follow him." Yet, if the essence of Stahr's temperament is practically identical with Dick Diver's, there are significant differences between the two men. The very fact that Stahr is a Jew indicates a broadening of Fitzgerald's sympathies, a willingness to find virtue wherever it may exist. And Stahr's personality does convey a sense of breadth lack-

ing in Dick's. Further, Stahr seems to be more of a fatalist than Dick. "You do what you are born to do," he once says. "About once a month somebody tries to reform me, tells me what a barren old age I'll have when I can't work any more. But it's not so simple." Certainly Stahr's career seems to be more an acceptance of the burdens of destiny than Dick's, founded as it is on conscious choice. Nevertheless, Monroe is just as much an artist as Dick. Dick may subordinate his skill as a psychiatrist to the care of Nicole, but Stahr pours his entire energy into the making of films something influential and worthwhile. Dick devotes his life to an individual; Monroe Stahr is perhaps a greater man in the dedication of his whole soul to an idea. Doing what he has to do, he yet indulges in no half-measures, does not draw back from his fundamental commitments.

The nature of these commitments is defined by Stahr's relation to the whole Hollywood scene. Cecilia, the narrator, says of him that he saw in Hollywood "a new way of measuring our jerky hopes and graceful rogueries and awkward sorrows," and to make of that measurement a noble thing becomes his life's work. He had early allied himself symbolically to the very heart of the industry by his marriage to Minna Davis — until her death several years before the opening of the novel one of the biggest film stars in the country. With her death, Monroe had cut himself off from all personal relationships and given himself entirely to the industry of which she had been such a splendid product. The pace that he keeps up, as described by Cecilia, is literally killing, and far beyond

\[\text{41 Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 82.}\]
anything the other executives are capable of. Thus Brady, officially Stahr’s partner, becomes little more than an extremely well-paid office boy, delegated to the routine work of administration. Since even Cecilia, his daughter, can recognize the enormous limitations of his petty mind, it is not surprising that he hates Stahr and refers to him as that "Vine Street Jesus." Stahr’s subordinates, however — men like the cameraman, Pete Zavras — literally adore him. Throughout the novel there is constantly associated with Stahr the imagery of an almost mystical reverence. And wherever he goes, he invariably elicits a strong response. Nobody from Mr. Marcus the magnate and Fleishacker the company lawyer to Robby, the trouble-shooter, can remain neutral to the force of his personality. Even Boxley, the disgruntled English writer, falls under the spell of his charm. In talking to Boxley, Stahr makes a point of generalised significance:

"That’s the condition. There’s always some lousy condition. We’re making a life of Rubens— suppose I asked you to do portraits of Bill Brady and me and Gary Cooper when you wanted to paint Jesus Christ! Wouldn’t you feel you had a condition? Our condition is that we have to take people’s own favorite folklore and dress it up and give it back to them. Anything beyond that is sugar. So won’t you give us some sugar, Mr. Boxley?"

By focussing his story on its universal man Fitzgerald is enabled to give a precise account of the complex condition which is Hollywood and to suggest the means of its salvation.

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Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 105.
For it is intensely important to Stahr that he save Hollywood from its own commercialism. There is one scene in which he and Kathleen, the girl he loves, walk along a beach and meet an old Negro who reads Emerson and never goes to the cinema. The existence of such a man presents a challenge to Stahr both as an individual and as a symbol. He must convince the Negro, as a man, that films are worth seeing, and he must make the industry worthy of that great stream of American thought represented by Emerson. As he had done in his earlier work, Fitzgerald again tries to elucidate his characters and his themes by reference to American history. He sees in Hollywood the debasement of Transcendental idealism into the popular idea of the American Dream and the American Success Story. It is Hollywood's sin that, although the product of history, it makes no effort to understand its relation to the past which formed it. Hence, in the symbolic visit to the home of Andrew Jackson in the first chapter, Wylie White, Manny Schwartz, and Cecilia — the most "typical" representatives of the Hollywood mind — are unable to see the great historical symbol clearly. Fitzgerald had planned a counterbalancing trip by Stahr to Washington in the end of the novel, which presumably would have demonstrated his real affinity with the American tradition. But the norm of the motion picture industry is to be found in the person of Mr. Brady, who is in the total novel condemned, partly on the grounds that "he had not learned much about the feel of America as a bar boy in Ballyhegan." He stands for the worst side of

43 Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 28.
Hollywood — the bizarre result of some of the finest intellectual and imaginative traditions in America, dealing with the very life of the land, but turning those traditions and that life into cheap dreams and illusions. It is part of Stahr's destiny to bring Hollywood's actual achievement and its historical heritage into coalescence. He is, thus, the first of Fitzgerald's heroes who not only embodies the historical experience of Americans but actually tries to interpret it to his contemporaries.

However, history is not static; it is being created even as it is being interpreted. And if Stahr attempts, through the medium of the film, to form an articulate interpretation of his times, he also becomes involved in one of the most potent forces in the formation of any country's history — practical politics. The fruits of Fitzgerald's recently acquired political consciousness are to be seen in The Last Tycoon — it is the first of his novels to grapple with a political theme in specifically political terms. The Hollywood of the early Thirties was an apt environment for Fitzgerald's new experiment. Growing, in its early years, through the application of some of the elementary principles of American capitalism, the motion picture industry was going through a violent organizational convulsion in which political and destructive elements figured prominently. The representatives of both gangland and communism were attempting to dominate the studios through the formation and control of technicians' unions. By means both legitimate and illegitimate, a major change in Hollywood economics and managerial techniques was taking place. And it is this politico-economic struggle which brings all the personal tensions in Stahr's studio into focus, and which was intended to motivate the final tragedy of plot and counterplot, culminating in murder.
Even Stahr's private life is drawn into the pattern; Kathleen has lived for a number of years with the exiled king of a small European state — the political symbol of exactly that order of existence of which Stahr is the artistic-commercial representative. Stahr is intensely proud of the happily paternalistic situation he has created in his studio and resists strongly any attempts to change it — attempts which come mainly from left wing organisers imported from the East. Stahr's concern for such activity results in his meeting with the intellectual young left-winger, Brimmer, in an interview arranged by Cecilia, who apparently earlier in her college career had been a liberal and a Communist sympathiser. Brimmer is astonished when he actually sees this Hollywood god, this single handed preserver of the capitalist tradition — "There was an odd expression in his face, and afterwards I thought it looked as if he were saying, 'Is this all? This frail half-sick person holding up the whole thing?'" Stahr's response is quite as typical — he takes on Brimmer single handed in a pathetically one-sided slugging match. But the incident makes the point quite clearly; Stahr is Fitzgerald's picture of the completely self-reliant individual, ready to accept defeat if victory require him to yield up one jot of his freedom or individuality.

Thus, Stahr's view of the menace of Communism is rather like Fitzgerald's own — theoretically more than a little naive, but on the level of individual personality remarkably perceptive. However, Stahr was to be finally defeated not from without but from within. During his trip to

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44 Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 127.
Washington, Brady was to agree to union terms at the price of a salary cut, only to go back on his own word treacherously. In the new managerial capitalism that the studio was seeking to evolve, the brilliant individualist would have no place. "I'm the unity," Stahr had once remarked; to ensure the new-style collective unity, the only solution was the removal of the man who had gained his personal authority simply through his immense talent with people and his unceasing concern for motion pictures. Managerial capitalism required IBM machines not mercurial individuals.

Hence, the political point of the novel is to establish the validity of its title. Stahr is the last tycoon; he is the last possible representative in the last possible environment of Fitzgerald's dream of "an entire man in the Goethe-Byron-Shaw tradition, with an opulent American touch, a sort of combination of J.P. Morgan, Topham Beauclerk and St. Francis of Assisi." At one point in the novel Fitzgerald says of Stahr that "he had just managed to climb out of a thousand years of Jewry into the late eighteenth century." And the essential tragedy of his situation (not the accidental death in an airplane crash) is that, representing at once the consummation and end product of a certain culture, he has dedicated himself to a new idea; and when he has pushed the idea beyond the limits of his own usefulness, he must be prepared to be cast aside. But until that point he will give his entire effort to the cause he has espoused. In a sense, his portrait of Monroe Stahr is Fitzgerald's rec-

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45 Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 58.
46 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 84.
47 Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 108.
cognition that the image of individualism to which he had dedicated his life was no longer feasible in the conditions imposed by the modern world.

Stahr is given increased stature by his own awareness of this fact. And perhaps it is his desire to do as much as possible in the little time allotted him that leads to one of the most marked features of his character — a feature new in the Fitzgerald hero — his death-wish. Stahr's personal physician recognizes the trait most clearly:

You couldn't persuade a man like Stahr to stop and lie down and look at the sky for six months. He would much rather die. He said differently, but what it added up to was the definite urge to total exhaustion that he had run into before.\textsuperscript{43}

The drive is, of course, closely associated with his memory of his dead wife, whose ever-present image is a constant source of tenderness and pain. The closeness of his will to die to his memory of Minna is further demonstrated by the nature of the love affair which is one of the main narrative threads of the novel. Stahr is drawn to Kathleen chiefly because of her marked physical similarity to Minna, although he discovers later that there is a definite difference in personality. And by virtue of his relation with Kathleen, Stahr is privileged to accomplish something which all the rest of Fitzgerald's heroes had desperately wished for — as nearly as is literally possible he is able to recreate the past. Through his affair with Kathleen he strives to recapture the happiness he had known with Minna. However, their emotions are transformed into genuine passion only when he is prepared to accept their

\textsuperscript{43} Fitzgerald, \textit{TIT}, p. 140.
relationship on its own terms, without reference to his dead wife. So accepted, it seems to give him a new lease of life. Learning to amalgamate what was good from the past with the materials available in the present, Stahr discovers the way to replenish his reserve of emotional vitality. To a writer with Fitzgerald's theories such a discovery was of tremendous importance. It opened the way to a whole new grasp on life, to that "upstream mood" which he had felt in his themes. In the case of Stahr, it enabled him to such a new joyousness from life while the sands of his greater destiny ran out.

One might have expected that the techniques for presenting Monroe Stahr would have taken a new turn to correspond with the upstream mood of the novel. This, however, is not the case. The methods used for rendering the central figure of The Last Tycoon are as severely simple as any Fitzgerald had ever employed. If the conditions of the new dispensation had inclined him to expect very little of his own life, they had not encouraged him to seek solace in the tenderness of his early prose style. In The Last Tycoon Fitzgerald posed for himself some of the most difficult technical problems of his whole career. Basically his task was the same as that of Tender Is the Night — to give a convincing portrait of the life and death of a good man. However, in his last novel Fitzgerald reverted to the method of The Great Gatsby — that of the involved narrator. By so doing he hoped to "get the verisimilitude of a first person narrative, combined with a Godlike knowledge of all events that happen to my characters." 49 The Last Tycoon was to be narrated by Cecilia Brady, the daughter of one of Stahr's greatest

49 Fitzgerald, TLT, p. 163.
enemies, who is yet desperately in love with him. Indeed, at a key point in the plot she was to have a short affair with him, thus becoming far more implicated in the story than Nick Carraway ever was in his narrative. However, the novel was to be related five years after the events of the novel from a sanitarium, where Cecilia is recovering from a physical and mental collapse.

The difficulty of maintaining the limited point of view and of developing an appropriate dramatic style was thus enormous. However, there is clear evidence that Fitzgerald was well on the road to accomplishing the task he had set himself with a large measure of success. There are of course many rough passages and transitions in the novel as it stands, but there are also manifest many deftly handled devices that enable Fitzgerald to introduce material which the canons of dramatic propriety would otherwise have forbidden to appear. There is a similar indication of a thematic structure which would have been closely knit and clearly integrated with the main themes of the novel. It is necessary, however, to turn to the notes accompanying the novel to arrive at some sense of the probable pattern of The Last Tycoon. In the section that he had completed Fitzgerald had done little more than state the major themes.

However, a good deal of the success of the portrayal of Monroe Stahr is due to Fitzgerald's success in handling a technique he had been striving towards throughout the latter part of his career. "ACTION IS CHARACTER" he reminded himself in a note, and he remembered this advice throughout the completed pages of the novel. Abandoning the extended and universalising metaphors by which he had striven to ennoble the character of Dick Diver, he presented Monroe Stahr almost completely
in terms of observed action. The brilliant series of dramatic scenes in Chapter II give quite as convincing a picture of a supremely valuable individual as the opening pages of Tender Is the Night. And throughout the novel, there are equally good pieces of sustained writing. The whole of Chapter I, with its long cross-country flight, for instance, is a magnificent introduction to the unreal world of the films. And everywhere, even in the love scenes, Fitzgerald allows the actions and the emotions to speak for themselves. Mizener's summation of the style of The Last Tycoon is accurate and penetrating: "Fitzgerald's writing is finer than anything he had ever done before...Its scenes are sharp, clean, and beautifully clear....Fitzgerald's essential, poetic gift for getting at the quality and feel of a situation with muted, figurative language never worked more unremittingly or more tactfully."

Thus, with his unfinished portrait of Monroe Stahr, Fitzgerald came to the end of his search for a hero who might adequately embody that romantic individualism which he valued so much; for a fitting environment wherein his heroes might operate; and for a fictional technique whereby he might transform his own experience into the significant record of a literary personality. The search had been sometimes exhilarating, sometimes distressing, but almost always accompanied by a sense of incompleteness. It may be that in the figure of Monroe Stahr Fitzgerald was striving towards the noblest individual his imagination, at once tragic and contemporaneous, could comprehend. Certainly,

50 Mizener, TFSOP, p. 296
the finished pages of The Last Tycoon are full of promise; the techniques and themes all give evidence, in the phrase of John Berryman, of "a reassembled gift"; but, finally, its incompleteness forbids any definitive judgment on Fitzgerald's last attempt at major fiction.

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Show me a hero and I will write you a tragedy.¹

I

"There are but two kinds of hero in Fitzgerald," wrote Riley Hughes: "The man who had money and must now live without it; and the man who was born without money and who has, by one species of outlawry or another, come late to the acquiring of it."² Too often criticism of Fitzgerald has taken its tone from a cursory and unsympathetic examination of the work produced at the height of his contemporary fame. The result is an estimate such as Hughes¹, which gives an unnecessarily limited view of Fitzgerald's achievement. If it is measured against the sum of Fitzgerald's actual performances, the judgment is simply seen to be untrue. Dick Diver is certainly allied to wealth by marriage; but he scrupulously refuses to touch his wife's money, and he certainly makes no attempt to amass a fortune of his own by any type of outlawry. Money, insofar as it is a theme of Tender Is the Night, is only a subsidiary one and is the subject of fairly detailed criticism. Monroe Stahr bears even

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¹F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 122. Hereafter, the title of this work will be abbreviated in footnotes to C-U.

less resemblance to the pattern predicated by Hughes. His life, indeed, started out in the poverty of the Bronx, but his career is directed towards anything but the accumulation of wealth.

Indeed, as Maxwell Geismar has pointed out, "It is difficult to ignore Fitzgerald's final stress on poverty as against wealth, on character as against charm, on energy and work as against grace and ease, and even on the alien toilers as against our native Princetonians." The only major heroes of Fitzgerald's creation who fit easily into Hughes' formula are the two earliest — Amory Blaine and Anthony Patch. Yet Hughes' assertion is typical of a considerable amount of Fitzgerald criticism. Commentators have too often been too easily content with facile generalizations based on the best known and most accessible of Fitzgerald's novels and short stories, and then have unthinkingly applied them to the whole pattern of his writing.

In the light of the present study, it is critically inadequate to make Fitzgerald's relation to wealth the key to the understanding of his protagonists. If the preceding chapters have shown anything, they have shown that there is a larger quality which stands as the common denominator of all the heroes of his significant fiction. This is a Romantic concept of Self. Fitzgerald's concern with his own personal experience was transmuted in his writing into a literary expression of Romantic individualism. The egocentric concern with his own personality which is the sum and substance of Amory Blaine's career is refined and evaluated throughout the

rest of Fitzgerald's writing life. The Beautiful and Damned takes as its major theme the abuse of one's own personality in a potentially valuable social context; The Great Gatsby is the record of a tragic misconception of the nature and limitations of self-expression; Tender Is the Night is the story of a personality nobly sacrificed that others might live; The Last Tycoon was to have been the consummation of effective individual action in the modern world. And from even the most trivial stories there emerges an abiding sense of the power and importance of the individual soul.

For, unlike many of his contemporaries and successors, Fitzgerald never once questioned the existence within each human being of a life force which may be variously designated as the soul, the self, individuality, or personality. His is not the tortuous epistemological fiction of Robert Penn Warren, obsessed with the semantics of the question — What am I? Neither does it provide the sketchy outlines of a behaviouristic understanding of Man which emerge tentatively from some of Hemingway's writing and far more strongly from the work of John Steinbeck. Nor does it express the socio-economic definition of Man afforded by Dos Passos. For Fitzgerald, the existence of the Self as the sacred possession of every individual is an axiomatic and fundamental article of his creed. Further, the operations of this Self provide the highest values in the scale of human worth. He once recorded this entry in his Notebooks:

A large personality is built on such a structure that we scarcely realize its dimensions while it is being built; it keeps up its monstrous development, flinging out as many unaccountable commitments as the limbs on an octopus, growing until we scarcely recognize its shadows — so large has it become beyond that of ordinary people....
It becomes such a valuable thing that it is a pity when it is killed, and those nature lovers among us should watch its growth; it is difficult to reproduce scientifically; and if allowed to die, may not re-occur for many years.\(^4\)

Once he had stated his basic materials and method in *This Side of Paradise*, it was the creation and understanding of such "large personalities" which gave to Fitzgerald's career its unity and motive.

However, Fitzgerald's attempts to embody his Romanticism in a series of personalities based on his own did not lead him into fiction like that of Thomas Wolfe, America's other great Romantic novelist of the early 20th century. Indeed, he wrote of Wolfe that "he has a fine inclusive mind, can write like a streak, has a great deal of emotion, though a lot of it is maudlin and inaccurate but his awful secret transpires at every crevice — he did not have anything particular to say! The stuff about the GREAT VITAL HEART OF AMERICA is just simply corny."\(^5\) His main objections to Wolfe were that he did not subject his own experiences to the austere purification of a controlled technique and that he seemed content with the indiscriminate, undirected exercise of the Romantic ego. To most Romantics — Wolfe, Byron, Shelley, Musset — the mode of self-expression is unimportant so long as the resulting frisson is sufficiently thrilling to the writer's psyche. But Fitzgerald could not tolerate merely the operation of the Self in the world; that operation must be controlled and guided by an active moral intelligence. His heroes, that is, must represent a means of discovering the contemporary version of the good life.


\(^5\) Fitzgerald, *C-U*, p. 305.
Hence, it is again limiting and misleading to characterise Fitzgerald unthinkingly as one of the leaders of the post-World War I revolt against established morality. Plainly, he felt that the generation before his had made the practice of the morality they preached stupid, vicious, and utterly impossible to himself and his contemporaries. But a study of his fictional heroes shows with equal plainness that he did not reject the value of all morality; rather he sought through them to understand and define the bases of a modern morality and the conditions wherein it might be put into effective operation. After the almost Wolfeian performance of This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald demonstrated through his created heroes a view of the ethical responsibilities of the artist which may be not ineptly compared to that of the later Faulkner. Certainly, Fitzgerald would have thoroughly understood the attitude expressed in the closing words of Faulkner's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech: "It is the writer's privilege to help man endure by lifting up his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail."\(^6\)

The first ideal image of the individual that Fitzgerald was capable of was that of the honnête homme, the American aristocrat; and he felt that such a figure could operate most effectively in the world of wealth and glamour which presented itself to his imagination during the 1920's. Since his intellectual convictions blended so easily at this point

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with his temperamentally nourished illusions he concentrated his fiction on the lives of a certain type of American in a certain decade. And even when that riotous decade was ended he continued to use it as the almost exclusive context for the action of his heroes, so congenial an influence had it been on his creative imagination. This fact has led certain critics to view his total achievement in somewhat mistaken terms. Thus Maxwell Geismar has written that "His achievement is as a chronicler of atmosphere and manners, and his position is among the artists of sensibility." This is partly true, but it fails to do justice to the full extent and nature of Fitzgerald's work. His case is surely very similar to that of Charles Dickens, who likewise found all that he needed to create his most lasting fiction within a single period — the Regency. It has frequently been noted that this most representative of the Victorian novelists is at his best when he ignores the Victorian scene as a source for his material. In the same way, Fitzgerald's fictional clock may have stopped on October 29, 1929 (it started again for The Last Tycoon), but the development of his mind continued. Even though the majority of Fitzgerald's heroes act out their various roles in the setting of the 1920's, the range of their experience and the variety of contexts to which they are subjected is constantly expanding.

Hence, it did not take Fitzgerald long to grow out of his somewhat immature admiration for a figure like Dick Humbird and of the environment which produced the type. If The Great Gatsby is still centered in the

7 Maxwell Geismar, "And the other side was Hell," SRL, XXXIV (January 27, 1951), 11.
glamorous world of Fitzgerald's early fiction, it is also true that "the great achievement of this novel is that it manages, while poetically evoking a sense of the goodness of that early dream, to offer the most damaging criticism of it in American literature." The Great Gatsby may have been Fitzgerald's definitive statement about the opportunity provided for romantic individualism by certain great American regions and by the socio-economic stratification of American life, but his search for suitable spheres of action for his heroes did not stop within the limits framed by his greatest work of art. He sought in Europe for possible contexts for heroic action, and in so doing arrived at a new sense of the virtues of his American individualists; he forsook the world of business and turned to the creative professions and to medicine; he tested the American past as a possible source of his heroes' strength; and in the end, in his search for new frontiers, he arrived at that last and most fabulous outpost of the American West, that embodiment of the American Dream — Hollywood. Fitzgerald's entire career gives evidence of a restless search for proper environments for heroic individual action — a search conducted simultaneously with the increasing refinement of his conception of the nature of the good life as it might be embodied in modern Americans.

However, although by the end of his life Fitzgerald's examination of the opportunities offered by the modern world for the practice of Romantic individualism had been both varied and extensive, his concept of the nature of that individualism was never fundamentally altered. In the

Midwest or New York, in America or Europe, in medicine or the motion pictures, rich or poor, all his heroes are judged by a remarkably constant set of standards. Fitzgerald's career was simply the record of his increasingly precise definition of those standards and of the type of behaviour they demanded. From Amory's vague yearnings to be a certain kind of man, he passes to Anthony's narcissistic desire to admire within himself the aristocratic idleness of the race, to Gatsby's tragically nourished illusions, to Dick's noble sacrifice, and finally to Stahr's whole-souled commitment to an idea. The pattern is twofold. Along with the constant requirement that his heroes should commit themselves passionately and completely to life, there develops an increasingly precise set of moral demands, culminating in the belief that the highest fulfilment of self lies in its dedication to the service of others.

Yet as Fitzgerald made heavier and heavier demands on the moral capacities of his heroes, he was also forced into a realization of the tragic limitations of the sort of individualism he postulated as the highest type of behaviour. When he created Amory and Anthony he felt that to the rich young aristocrat anything was possible -- Anthony's is not so much the failure of a type as the failure of an individual to make proper use of the incomparable advantages offered him. In The Great Gatsby he recognized the inadequacy of aristocracy, or wealth, or even glamorous youth as the basis for the sort of action he admired, and that the possession of a dominant personality did not necessarily bring success in its wake. But after his own breakdown had forced Fitzgerald into an imaginative readjustment of his attitudes, the failures he records are of a very different nature from that experienced by Anthony Patch, or even Jay
Gatsby. Dick Diver and Monroe Stahr are noble and (in intent at least) tragic failures. In the former, Fitzgerald demonstrated his belief that the good life demanded a sacrifice of extraordinary dimensions, but that when that sacrifice was made within a defined context and for the sake of other individuals it was infinitely worthwhile. Monroe Stahr, on the other hand, represents his realization that the same kind of action, if applied to a whole life, can result only in self-destruction.

And this is the final tragedy of Fitzgerald's situation. He saw in the modern world the growth of certain ideas which inevitably meant the end of that heroic, individual action which he had set up as his ideal. Still convinced of the value of such action, he was not prepared to abandon his position; hence Monroe Stahr must concentrate all his powers into the fierce blossoming of the brief career permitted him. After his death, the world was to be the province of those forces whose logical extension was ironically envisioned in 1932 by Aldous Huxley in the pages of Brave New World. If the Englishman held out a warning against the dangers of a dehumanized society, Fitzgerald attempted to create a positive image of the beauty and value of the type of life which those forces would destroy. He once commented in his Notebooks on "those terrible sinister figures of Edison, of Ford and Firestone"; and in the role assigned to him in Brave New World Ford was indeed to become a terrible sinister figure. There is another, more practical note which defines the same attitude in slightly different terms: "Not a word in the Roosevelt inaugural was as logical as Zangara saying he shot at

Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 151.
Roosevelt because he had a stomach ache. In that remark is contained all the distrust felt by a believer in the sanctity of the individual personality for the anonymous, alphabetical agencies of the New Deal. Fitzgerald, in the heroes he created, recorded the passing from fiction and perhaps from life of one of the great modes of human action. Lionel Trilling has made the point well:

Fitzgerald engages our attention so deeply because he realizes something actual and immediate in our contemporary life, but this kinship of his with the romantics suggests that he interests us for another reason as well, because he begins to seem an anachronistic figure — he is legendary in the sense of being a figure of the past.... It was not only the old virtues that he saw doomed but also the energy of will and imagination.

Fitzgerald was able to bear the thought of the coming destruction of the image which had dominated his creative life partly because of the development of that stoicism he incarnated in The Last Tycoon: you do what you have to do; you accept your role in the world, whether it be doctor, motion picture executive or writer, and you do not complain that you are cast to appear in the last act of a Spenglerian historical drama. However, Fitzgerald's was not a passive stoicism. He wrote in his Notebooks that "We can't just let our worlds crash around us like a lot of dropped trays"; and if the sort of world which made possible the existence of his ideal man was becoming obsolete, Fitzgerald refused merely to

10 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 122.

11 Lionel Trilling, "Fitzgerald Plain," New Yorker, XXVI (February 3, 1951), 92.

12 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 99.
be a spectator at its passing. If in his later years he learned to expect less from life, he did not demand less from his heroes. Although they are living in a doomed age, they flaunt the freedom of their wills in the face of destiny. In other words, by the time he came to write The Last Tycoon Fitzgerald had been forced into what is often regarded as the tragic view of life — a refusal, in the presence of an inevitable destiny, to surrender one's individuality, and a belief that "life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat, and that the redeeming things are not 'happiness and pleasure' but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle."  

II

However, throughout his career Fitzgerald had maintained a fundamentally tragic orientation towards his writing. His "sense of disaster" has already been noted in this study, together with his ability, in some of his more important later fiction, to make it amalgamate with his major themes. It is partly this ability which led Mark Schorer to write of Fitzgerald that "The tragic sense is his." But there were other elements within Fitzgerald's personality which inclined him to this tragic sense; they are intimately connected with the illusions which his early life and background made such an inerasable

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13 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 306.

14 See Chapter III, pp.115-119.

part of his personal psychology. The nature of these illusions is well known — they are concerned principally with youth, beauty, glamour, money, and the passage of time. It has not been so frequently pointed out that their cultivation could lead to nothing but a sense of loss, of tragedy. All the attitudes which obtained an obsessive hold over Fitzgerald's mind were, by their very nature, transitory; and the vision of their loss in the real world must have led Fitzgerald to a sense of tragedy, growing from his own internal organization rather than from an imaginative interpretation of observed reality.

Hence, even before experience had led to his understanding the nature of the tragic view of life, it was inevitable that he should record the comment which stands as the epigraph to this chapter. Granted a set of heroes created in his own image, they were bound to succumb to a sense of loss, whether that loss were motivated by actuality or not. Fitzgerald's talent expressed itself most naturally through the creation of potentially tragic situations. As his understanding of his fictional heroes and of the contexts in which they operated matured, so their tragic careers grow in literary validity. In one respect, the whole of Fitzgerald's career can be viewed as the attempt to convert a tragic sense, formed within his own mind, into a genuinely tragic imagination, on the basis of his observed experience of the world and of his increased understanding of the limitations of his ideal hero.

One test, then, of the stature of Fitzgerald's achievement becomes his ability, in individual works, to transform this tragic sense into a tragic imagination. Too often the success or failure of the various novels and short stories has been decided on the basis of a critic's prior knowledge of Fitzgerald's life. The only just test for
assessing Fitzgerald's success as a writer of modern tragedy is a separate scrutiny of each work; and any critical judgment arising from such scrutiny must be based on the artistic, technical skill displayed in the novel or story, not on its relation to the author's life. Hence the importance to this study of the development of Fitzgerald's technical ability to convert his personal experience into universalised art, as well as the analyses of the methods adapted to specific works. It is only through such analyses that it can be decided whether or not Fitzgerald left in the canon of his writing any work of genuinely tragic import.

The development of his fictional technique is closely parallel to that of his thematic material. The main outlines of the development have been usefully stated by R.W.B. Lewis:

...Fitzgerald mastered what must be the supreme problem of the American novelist, in his steadily more successful accommodation of the visible and concrete to the ethical and ideal. The story of the style would be one of a development towards this end, and it could be summarized in three stages: in the first, the fusion is imperfect, and the prose consists of conventional phrasing interrupted by darts of realistic detail; in the second, the convention acts as a counter-poise — it is being used to designate possible false habits of perception; and in the third, the convention has been absorbed and reprojected in a fresh and vital form.16

This statement can easily be adapted to a discussion of Fitzgerald's success in giving his major heroes tragic stature. This, for instance, is the best that Fitzgerald can do in *This Side of Paradise*: "Then tragedy's emerald eyes glared suddenly at Amory over the edge of June."\(^{17}\) The style is obviously forced; Fitzgerald is aware of tragedy as something extraneous to his purpose and which has to be given importance by this somewhat inflated prose. Like most of the elements in his first novel, Fitzgerald's grasp on tragedy is immature and is certainly not an integral part of his creative thinking. In this respect, *The Beautiful and Damned* is not much better: "Late in June horror leered out at Gloria, struck at her and frightened her bright soul back half a generation."\(^{18}\) This is hardly better than Fitzgerald's first attempt at fiction.

However, in *The Great Gatsby* it is impossible to isolate single sentences in which Fitzgerald has obviously worked to convey a tragic emotion. The tragedy is embodied in the style and structure of the whole work. And if *The Great Gatsby* is Fitzgerald's most perfectly structured work of art, it is also his most fully realized tragedy, even if it is tragedy in the minor mode. The work fails of major stature in this respect only because of the stature of its central character. For Gatsby was created -- intentionally -- on a minor scale. The inspired impersonality of his dedication to a cause does indeed give him (and the book) a true measure of greatness; but the mystery which surrounds him, his lack of self-knowledge, and the limitations of his intelligence prevent him from being a tragic hero on the grand scale.

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\(^{17}\) F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 94. Hereafter abbreviated in notes to TSOP.

It was *Tender Is the Night* that Fitzgerald hoped would be the major work of his tragic imagination. It may not be, as Bennet Cerf has claimed, "one of the great American novels of the century"; yet, as the discussion of the work in Chapter V attempts to demonstrate, as a tragedy *manque*, its failure is far more significant and moving than many successes. If Fitzgerald did not create a perfectly fashioned tragedy, at least his novel is impregnated with the force of an imagination which has envisioned high tragic aspirations and which, in flashes, realizes them. The same is true not only of *The Last Tycoon* but also of many of the short stories. *The Great Gatsby* may be the only work whose form and guiding purpose fuse to result in truly tragic fiction; but throughout the canon of Fitzgerald's writing there occur intensely moving scenes, situations, even moments, which give a glimpse into the tragic view of life. It may be that in according Fitzgerald the tragic sense, Mark Schorer was not far wrong in his further claim that "as a writer he won the tragic struggle* more often than the quality of our age has led us to hope men frequently can." 20

In any case, it is the coalescence of Fitzgerald's Romantic individualism with his tragic sense in the various contexts available to twentieth century Americans that provides the basic criterion for assessing the worth of his total performance and that must form the basis of any study which would come to grips with Fitzgerald's literary career.

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It is the various moral ordeals undergone by Fitzgerald's heroes which must bring order to what must now be seen as the peripheral interest of many themes established in the Fitzgerald critical tradition — the sense of social stratification, the worship of wealth, the addiction to illusion. Some of the themes and techniques predicated by the tradition Fitzgerald may have brought to perfection; but the basic literary condition of his writing is its quality as a sustained effort to plot the course of Romantic individualism in a series of tragic situations. That Fitzgerald chose to use the form of the novel rather than the drama does not seriously affect the point. As he himself was well aware, the novel was the most vital and significant literary form available to any writer in the days of his maturity. Certainly, we are accustomed to think of tragedy in terms of five-act dramas (and here it might be pointed out that a late outline for The Last Tycoon was set down in the form of five act-divisions). But, in the creation of tragedy, it is not so much the specific literary form which is important as the nature of the creating imagination. And it is perhaps not too much to claim that the nature of Fitzgerald's imagination (although not its stature) was essentially the same as Shakespeare's or Keats', whose "Ode to a Nightingale" Fitzgerald could "never read through without tears in my eyes." All three men had minds which,


22 Fitzgerald, C-U, p. 298. It was the same poem, of course, which provided the title for Tender Is the Night.
for want of a better word, we must call creative. That is to say, they
did not express themselves most successfully in terms of the abstract,
generalizing intellect. They worked (and thought) through images, through
metaphors, through all the rich resources of the English language. Even
in This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald wrote: "'Wait a minute till I think
this out....' He paused and tried to get a metaphor." And in these
words he defined an unchanging quality in his own mental processes.
Just as Shakespeare expressed himself most completely through the drama
and Keats through verse, so Fitzgerald committed the whole of his mind to
the forms of fiction, and brought to those forms a view of life which
strove towards the tragic. His work is not intellectualized — there is
no reason why it should be. It is fiction, not philosophy. Ideas (con­
trary to the opinion of some commentators) are not missing from his work,
but it was foreign to his modes of thought to discuss intellectual mat­
ters intellectually. Again like Shakespeare, he thought about ideas in
a manner natural and proper to the creative artist. For this reason, the
absence from the pages of his mature books of prolonged abstract discussion
must be considered a merit in his practice of the art of fiction. In the
words of Frederick J. Hoffman, "Fitzgerald did succeed in avoiding the
pitfall of a too easy ideological support for fiction, a trap most of his
contemporaries of the 1930's were caught in (many of them went so far as
to set the trap themselves."  

23 Fitzgerald, TSOP, p. 255.

24 Frederick J. Hoffman, The Modern Novel in America 1900-1950
In conclusion, it will be useful to return briefly to the basic concept from which this and nearly all studies of Fitzgerald take their origin — the intimate relationship between the man and his work. Too often for the purposes of sound literary judgment, knowledge of Fitzgerald's life has been used to evaluate the worth of his writing. The approach is valid for the interpretation of a career but not in a literary study of Fitzgerald's various performances. And if any simple, single conclusion can be drawn from the foregoing chapters, it is this; an unbreakable bond between Fitzgerald's life and the materials of his fiction there may be, but between the man and the artist there is frequently a marked disparity. Fitzgerald may have failed in his own life, but as a writer he succeeded more often than he is usually given credit for. Singly, the novels present at least one brilliant success, one magnificently moving failure, and one exciting fragment; the twenty-eight short stories collected by Malcolm Cowley constitute one of the finest such volumes assembled by a modern American author. Taken as a sequence, the complete works manifest a pattern, admittedly closely parallel to that of the life, but which must be allowed independent and significant literary existence. As such, they reveal more than anything else the steady development of an ideal image we may not ineptly characterise as the Fitzgerald hero. And that hero, like Fitzgerald himself, remains, in the words of Malcolm Cowley, "an exemplar and archetype, but not of the 1920's alone; in the end he represents the human spirit in one of its permanent forms."  

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