F. SCOTT FITZGERALD:
THE ANATOMY OF FRUSTRATION

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To

ARTHUR CRIGHT

whose enthusiasm for the work

of F. Scott Fitzgerald led me

to attempt this study.

INTRODUCTION

Any study of F. Scott Fitzgerald must take as its starting-point a consideration of the events that brought on the "Roaring Twenties." Both the decade and Fitzgerald were products of forces to be seen clearly only from our vantage point in time. One of the salient aspects of the period was its spirit of revolt. The new generation was rebelling against many things which were loosely labeled Puritanism and Victorianism. The roots of the problem lay far back in American history and to understand the twenties we must examine the course of American development. The sociological changes reflected in Fitzgerald's work of the twenties were brought about primarily by the profound influence of the retreating frontier. Puritanism or "The New England Way" was a vital and valid sociological entity in its original setting. Traditions and inherited values from England were retained by the early colonists and slightly altered to fit the new environment in America. Vital to the development of the New England way of life was a sense of community, and this was retained in their method of settlement.

When the pioneer set out from the sea-board, he took the New England idea with him, but across the

Appalachians it began to go bad. The Puritan principle of being "my brother's keeper" needed the strictness of the centralized village life and in the great western migration few villages were formed. The sense of community was largely gone and new values arose. The Midwesterner was self-reliant and he had a profound trust in the natural goodness of unrestricted man.

The conflict between these two divergent moralities may be seen clearly in the work of Mark Twain. To him the transplanted Puritanism was all meanness and hypocrisy, so that his serious work is one long protest against a morality that neither aided goodness nor sustained honesty. Huck, the exponent of natural Midwestern morality, becomes a notoriously bad boy in the Puritan village strictness of Hannibal.[1]

Ultimately the Midwesterner opposed the Puritan morality with concepts derived from Concord and Walden Pond. The pioneering movement demanded "self-reliance" and the exigencies of such primitive existence often brought forth, of necessity, the better instincts of man.

With industrial development came a gradual perversion of Midwestern self-reliance into the modern concept of "rugged individualism." The irresponsibility which goes with this concept is a natural growth in view of

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1: Bishop, John Peale, "Missing All: Younger Generation," Virginia Quarterly Review, (January, 1937) pp.111-112.

the "laissez-faire" economic principles which were prevalent at that time. The society which prized efficiency above sobriety reached a high point in the Gilded Age and was in direct line of descent from the pioneering background. It has been pointed out that this concept of an irresponsible individualism was the Jazz Age's heritage from the Gilded Age. It was, in its origins, the moral, or immoral, bequest of a new American money society to its children in the second and third generations. The 1920's capped the entire historical cycle from 1860 on, and most sharply illuminated its meaning.[2]

The reason for revolt, as well as the attitude of irresponsibility was inherited largely from the Gilded Age. The "rugged individualism" which had despoiled the resources of a continent and created an aristocracy based on wealth, had also created a middle class and proletariat whose only tradition was the ideal of easy money. One residual element of Puritanism created an appalling conformity to the mores of the village, and another, the belief in the wealthy person as the chosen of God, evolved into a rapacious greed. The whole of society was motivated by the confident hope of material gain. With all aspects of the civilization weighed in terms of dollar return, it is easy to see why the cultural level was debased. The business man, smug as only

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2: Geismar, Maxwell, Last of the Provincials,

one of the elect can be smug, was the arbiter of morals. Horatio Alger set the pace and even William Dean Howells was blinded by "the smiling aspects" of American life.

During the latter part of the 19th. century another element leading to the post-war revolt was beginning to be felt. According to Ludwig Lewisohn, the war brought to a sudden crystallization that neo-nationalism which was the instinctive fear aroused in the Anglo-American population by the gradual articulateness of the later immigrant strains: German, Jewish, Latin and Slav. These people, for the most part, were completely alien to the Puritan tradition. The war did not create but brought into sudden confrontation cultural and racial groups with their antagonisms of instinct and custom. Thus we had with apparent suddenness sharp cultural surfaces and friction among those surfaces. The Anglo-American group, having power, was able to express itself most definitely by participation in the war and enactment of the 18th. amendment.

From the point of view of creative expression the significant fact was that the new generation of American intellectuals who were on the point of open revolt against their cultural environment protested against the precise mores and repressions which the Anglo-American masses now intensified in self-defense. Thus men and women of undivided American and Puritan descent found themselves culturally on the side of the minorities

of other races and produced a literature protesting the morals and institutions of their Puritan parents.[3] We can see that the war, which precipitated the immediate intensification of the Anglo-American cultural tradition, brought the conflict to such a stage that an easy transition to new folkways was impossible. The external change came so abruptly--from one generation to the next--that an intellectual rapport was seldom established between rebellious youth and its conservative elders. It is only in this context that we can understand why Fitzgerald's early work caused such consternation in the genteel ranks of the literary tea clubs.

By 1917, then, the seeds of revolt had been growing for a long time and the catalytic effect of World War I brought them to sudden fruition.. Fitzgerald catches the essence of the period of revolt in the following excerpt:

> The ten-year period that, as if reluctant to die outmoded in its bed, leaped to a spectacular death in October, 1929, began about the time of the May Day riots in 1919. When the police rode down the demobilized country boys gaping at the orators in Madison Square, it was the sort of measure bound to alienate the more intelligent young men from the prevailing order.... But, because we were tired of Great Causes, there was no more than a short outbreak of moral indignation, typified by Dos Passos' Three Soldiers. Presently we began to have slices of the national cake

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3: Lewisohn, Ludwig, Expression in America, (New York, 1932) pp.367-370

> and our idealism only flared up when the newspapers made melodrama out of such stories as Harding and the Ohio Gang or Sacco and Vanzetti. The events of 1919 left us cynical rather than revolutionary.... It was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all. 4

The same disillusionment which had defeated Woodrow Wilson and had caused strikes and riots and the Big Red Scare furnished a culture in which the germs of the new freedom could grow and multiply.

The restraining effect of Puritan conformity was badly shaken due to American participation in the war while the tendency toward irresponsibility was strengthened. A whole generation had been effected by the eat-drink-and-be-merry spirit which accompanied the departure of the soldiers to the training camps and the fighting front.[5] There had been an epidemic, not only of abrupt war marriages, but of less conventional liaisons. In France, two million men found themselves close to death and far from the controls imposed by the American moral code. Prostitution followed the flag and American girls sent over as nurses and war workers had come under the influence of continental manners and standards without being subject to the rigid protections thrown about their continental sisters of the respectable classes. There followed

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4: Fitzgerald, F. Scott, The Crack-up, ed. Edmund Wilson, (New York, 1945) pp.13-14

5: Allen, Frederick Lewis, Only Yesterday, (New York, 1931) pp.94-117, 238-241. Much of the following material dealing with the twenties was taken from this fascinating book.

a very widespread and very natural breakdown of traditional restraints and taboos. It was impossible for this generation to return unchanged when the ordeal was over. Millions of them had been provided with an emotional stimulant from which it was not easy to taper off. They craved the anodynes of speed, excitement, and passion. To settle down in what seemed the Pollyanna land of their elders was impossible, and they let this fact be known in a very disrespectful fashion.

The middle generation was not so immediately effected by the war neurosis. They had had time enough, before 1917, to build up habits of conformity. As the let-down of 1919 followed the war, however, they found themselves restless and in a mood to question everything that had once seemed to them true and worthy. They had spent themselves and wanted a good time. They saw their juniors exploring the approaches to the forbidden land of sex, and presently they began to play with the idea of doing a little experimenting on their own. Fitzgerald pointed up the change when he wrote:

> May one offer in exhibit the year 1922? That was the peak of the younger generation, for though the Jazz Age continues, it became less and less an affair of youth.
>
> The sequel was like a children's party taken over by the elders, leaving the children puzzled and rather neglected and rather taken aback. By 1923 their elders, tired of

> watching the carnival with ill-concealed envy, had discovered that young liquor will take the place of young blood, and with a whoop the orgy began. The younger generation was starred no longer. 6

The revolution was accelerated by the growing independence of the American woman. She won the suffrage in 1920 which consolidated her position as man's equal. Even more marked was the effect of woman's growing independence of the drudgeries of housekeeping. Smaller houses, canned goods, the growth of bakeries, commercial laundries and electrical appliances did much to emancipate the American woman from housework. With the ability to "live their own lives," women increasingly took jobs. Formerly they had been pretty well restricted to school-teaching, social-service, nursing, stenography, and clerical work in business houses. But now they poured out of schools and colleges into all manner of new occupations. With a job came a feeling of independence and a slackening of husbandly and parental authority. Yet even the job did not provide the American woman with that complete satisfaction which the management of a mechanized home no longer furnished. "She still had energies and emotions to burn; she was ready for the revolution."7

6: Fitzgerald, The Crack-up, p.15
7: Allen, Only Yesterday, p.98

Like all revolutions, this one was stimulated by foreign propaganda. It came, however, not from Moscow, but from Vienna. After the war the Freudian gospel began to circulate to a marked extent among the lay public of America. The one great intellectual force which had not suffered disrepute as a result of the war was science. The public began absorbing a quantity of popularized information about biology and anthropology which gave a general impression that men and women were merely animals of a rather intricate variety; that moral codes had no universal validity and were often based on curious superstitions. A fertile ground was ready for the seeds of Freudianism. The first requirement of mental health was to have an uninhibited sex life and Fitzgerald noted:

> By 1926 the universal preoccupation with sex had become a nuisance. (I remember a perfectly mated, contented young mother asking my wife's advice about 'having an affair right away,' though she had no one especially in mind, 'because don't you think it's sort of undignified when you get much over thirty?') 8

The principle remaining forces which accelerated the revolution in manners and morals were all completely American. They were prohibition, the automobile, the confession and sex magazines, and the movies.

8: Fitzgerald, The Crack-up, p.13

When the 18th amendment was ratified, prohibition seemed to have an almost united country behind it. Evasion of the law began immediately, however, and strenuous and sincere opposition to it quickly gathered force. The results were the bootlegger, the speakeasy, and a spirit of deliberate revolt which in many communities made drinking "the thing to do." This in turn brought about the general transformation of drinking from a masculine prerogative to one shared by both sexes. "Under the new regime not only the drinks were mixed, but the company as well."[9]

Meanwhile a new sort of freedom was being made possible by the enormous increase in the use of the automobile, and particularly of the closed car. The automobile offered an almost universally available means of escaping temporarily from the supervision of parents and chaperons, or from the influence of neighborhood opinion.

Finally, as the revolution began, its influence fertilized a bumper crop of sex magazines, confession magazines, and lurid motion pictures, and these in turn had their effect on a class of readers and movie-goers who had never heard and never would hear of Freud and the libido. A storm of criticism from church organizations led the motion-picture producers, early in the

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9: Allen, Only Yesterday, p.99

decade, to install Will H. Hays as their arbiter of morals and of taste. The result was to make a moral ending obligatory, to smear over sexy pictures with pious platitudes, and to blacklist for motion-picture production many a fine novel and play which, because of its very honesty, might be construed as seriously or intelligently questioning the traditional sex ethics of the small town. The end result was that, while giving "...lip-service to the old code, the movies diligently and with consummate vulgarity publicized the new."10

Each of these influences had its part in bringing about the revolution and each was played upon by all the others. None of them alone would have changed to any degree the folkways of America; together their force was irresistible. Indicative of the revolution was the change in women's fashions reflecting the psychological changes.

> ...the quest for slenderness, the flattening of the breasts, the vogue of short skirts even when short skirts still suggested the appearance of a little girl), the juvenile effect of the long waist,--all were signs that, consciously or unconsciously, the women of this decade worshipped not merely youth, but unripened youth: they wanted to be--or thought men wanted them to be--men's casual and light-hearted companions; not broad-hipped mothers of the race, but irresponsible playmates. Youth was their pattern,

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10: Allen, Only Yesterday, p.102

> but not youthful innocence: the adolescent whom they imitated was a hard-boiled adolescent, who thought not in terms of romantic love, but in terms of sex, and who made herself desirable not by that sly art which conceals art, but frankly and openly. In effect, the woman of the Post-war Decade said to man, 'You are tired and disillusioned, you do not want the cares of a family or the companionship of mature wisdom, you want exciting play, you want the thrills of sex without their fruition, and I will give them to you.' And to herself she added, 'But I will be free.' 11

In the hinterlands there was still plenty of old-fashioned sentimental thinking about sex, of the sort which expressed itself in the slogan of a federated women's club: "Men are God's trees, women are His flowers."12 But in spite of many frantic and picturesque attempts to stay the tide of moral change by law, there was an unmistakable and rapid trend away from the old American code.

As in the case of every revolution, the general public deprecated or enjoyed the changes, while the intellectuals sought to explain them. This new generation was decidedly articulate, and hopefully foresaw the end of Puritanism and Victorianism---but they couldn't find a new way of life in which they could believe. The keynote of the period was disillusionment about everything except science, business, and the physical luxuries and improvements which business would

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11: Ibid., pp.108-109
12: Ibid., p.117

bring. With the majority of Americans this disillusionment was perhaps subconscious; they felt that life wasn't giving them all it should, that some of their values were melting away, but they remained cheerful. Most of the intellectuals, however, knew all too well that they were disillusioned. Most of them believed in a greater degree of sex freedom--and many of them found it disappointing when they got it. They found that love was becoming too easy and too biological to be an object of respect. As enemies of standardization and repression, the intellectuals believed in freedom--but freedom for what? Uncomfortable as it was to be harassed by prohibition agents and dictated to by chambers of commerce, it was hardly less comfortable in the long run to have their freedom and not know what to do with it. These were the type described by Fitzgerald in a book of short stories entitled All the Sad Young Men. Walter Lippman caught the essence of their difficulty when he wrote:

> What most distinguishes the generation who have approached maturity since the debacle of idealism at the end of the War is not their rebellion against religion and the moral code of their parents, but their disillusionment with their own rebellion. 13

The intellectuals also believed in scientific truth and in the scientific method--and science not only took

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13: Lippman, Walter, A Preface to Morals, (New York, 1929) p.17

their God away from them but reduced man to a creature for whose ideas of right and wrong there was no transcendental authority. The certainty had departed from life. And what was worse still, it had departed from science itself. In the earlier days those who denied the divine order had still been able to rely on a secure order of nature, but now even this was wobbling. Einstein and the quantum theory introduced new doubts. Nothing, then, was certain.

Although many will quibble about Fitzgerald's stature as an intellectual; no one will deny that he reflected the time perfectly and, in large measure, helped to create it. Glenway Westcott wrote: "In the twenties, his heyday, he was a kind of king of our youth;..."[14] In the spate of novels which reflected the new spirit of revolt, Fitzgerald's first novel, This Side of Paradise, led the way. In the next chapter the importance of this novel will be discussed more fully; for the present it need only be pointed out that the book made articulate the spirit of the new generation.

Fitzgerald was eminently suited to the role of historian of his own generation. He did not have to create the "lost generation" legend because the legend was his own life as he was its most native voice and

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14: Westcott, Glenway, "The Moral of Scott Fitzgerald," in The Crack-up, p.323

signal victim; and his own career was perhaps its central story.[15] Fitzgerald was born in September of 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota. The importance of the time of his birth is obvious; the place is equally important. The fact of his having been born in the new "cultural center" of the nation colors all his work. Inevitably he judged other worlds from a Middle-western viewpoint and, being a Midwesterner of his time, Fitzgerald was always seeking other worlds. He travelled with his family during his childhood and was sent to Newman School in Lakewood, New Jersey, in 1911. The fact of his Catholic background and education in this Catholic "prep" school also leaves many traces in his writing. In the fall of 1913 he went to Princeton, where he plunged into extra-curricular activities much to the detriment of his health and academic standing. In November of his Junior year he was forced to retire to St. Paul because of illness. He returned in 1916 to repeat this year, but his Senior year lasted only a couple of months, for he left Princeton in November to join the army.[16]

His career as "the army's worst aide-de-camp" was short and he didn't get overseas. When he was released he went to New York for a dismal period of writing for

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15: Mazin, Alfred, On Native Grounds,

16: Mizener, Arthur, "Scott Fitzgerald and the Imaginative Possession of American Life," Sewanee Review, 54, January 1946, pp.69-70

a street car advertising firm. Naturally, he detested the job and its attendant poverty, but there was a more pressing anxiety:

> My friends who were not in love or who had waiting arrangements with "sensible" girls, braced themselves patiently for a long pull. Not I--I was in love with a whirlwind and I must spin a net big enough to catch it out of my head, a head full of trickling nickels and sliding dimes, the incessant music box of the poor. It couldn't be done like that, so when the girl threw me over I went home and finished my novel. 17

Then came fabulous success, wealth, and marriage to Zelda Sayre. Still in their twenties and with money to burn, the Fitzgeralds plunged into the carnival of the Jazz Age. Everything they did was front page news and as Fitzgerald later wrote: "...in those days life was like the race in Alice In Wonderland, there was a prize for everyone."18

As the decade grew older Fitzgerald continued to work and play at a furious pace. In 1924 they went abroad to "do" Europe. In 1925 Fitzgerald's masterpiece, The Great Gatsby, was published and in 1926 he brought out a volume of short stories entitled All the Sad Young Men. But things were changing rapidly by then:

> By 1927 a wide-spread neurosis began to be evident, faintly signalled, like a nervous beating of the feet, by the popularity of cross-word puzzles. I remember a fellow expatriate opening a letter from a mutual

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17: Fitzgerald, The Crack-up, p.86
18: Ibid., p.21

> friend of ours, urging him to come home and be revitalized by the hard, bracing qualities of the native soil. It was a strong letter and it affected us both deeply, until we noticed that it was headed from a nerve sanitarium in Pennsylvania. 19

The Big Bull Market was in full swing, records were being set on the Exchange one day and broken the next as the dizzy upward spiral of frenzied finance continued. The nation was living on borrowed time, "...with the insouciance of grand ducs and the casualness of chorus girls....This was rather splendid but things were getting thinner and thinner as the eternal necessary human values tried to spread over all that expansion."[20] When the fateful year of 1929 arrived the Fitzgeralds were abroad:

> We were somewhere in North Africa when we heard a dull distant crash which echoed to the farthest wastes of the desert.
> "What was that?"
> "Did you hear it?"
> "It was nothing."
> "Do you think we ought to go home and see?"
> "No---it was nothing." 21

But it was something indeed! It was the end of the most frenetic period in American history and it seemed that it was also the end of F. Scott Fitzgerald as an artist.

The critics of the thirties, wearing the blinders of one "cause" or another, pronounced him dead artistically and, except for popular magazine potboilers,

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19: ibid., pp.19-20
20: ~~ibid.~~, pp.21-22
21: ibid., pp.31-32

Fitzgerald did not appear in print again until 1934. It was a novel called Tender Is the Night and in some ways it was Fitzgerald's finest work up to that time. It received little notice, however, and was soon a back number along with a volume of short stories entitled Taps At Reveille which he published the following year.

One major reason for these apparent failures was Fitzgerald's seeming inability to mirror the times as he had in the twenties. The vast sociological and economic changes seemed to find no echo in his work and when he went to Hollywood in 1937 there seemed to be little doubt that he was finished as a serious writer. He had, himself, announced in a series of articles published in Esquire in 1935, that he was a "cracked plate." That this was far from true is immediately evident when one examines his unfinished novel The Last Tycoon.

His sudden death on December 21, 1940 in Hollywood marked the end of a generation which had gone through two unprecedented periods in American history. Springing up after the first World War, his generation had taken over and had run wild. Their youth had been lost in the bottomless pit of the depression, and the death of Fitzgerald, a kind of king of their youth, found them on the verge of another war, soon to hand over the country to another post-war generation.

CHAPTER TWO

Fitzgerald's literary career began in 1920 with the publication of a brash novel of youthful rebellion. This Side of Paradise was an enormous and instantaneous success. Fitzgerald completed the first of three versions of it before he left Princeton in 1917. This appears to have contained almost nothing of what was in the final version except the early scenes of Amory's arrival at Princeton, and one of the few people who have seen it has remarked that "it was actually flat, something Scott's work almost never was."[1] He spent most of his military career in Alabama and it was there that he met Zelda Sayre and rewrote his novel. He submitted it under the title The Romantic Egotist and it was rejected. After Zelda had broken off with him, he left New York and rewrote the novel a third time. As This Side of Paradise it was accepted and published. In a review of it his friend, T. K. Whipple, called the book "the collected works of F. Scott Fitzgerald."[2]

The theme of the novel is an obvious one. Amory Blaine, sensitive, poetic, intellectual and handsome, goes to a good prep school, misses distinction at Princeton, writes some poetry, falls in and out of love several times, and, at the end, broke and baffled and rootless, is flirting with the idea of socialism.

1: Kazener, "Scott Fitzgerald and the Imaginative Possession of American Life," p.70
2: Bishop, "Missing All: Younger Generation," p.109

It is a decidedly "young" book and was very much up to date when it was published. Freud is first found on page six, and Amory's mother is a glamorous set. There is a strong contempt for the Victorians, democracy, American life, and, because of Mencken, there is a flavor of Nietzsche.

> It championed youth as against the old, the rebels against the conformists. It presented the arguments of the young plausibly and ingratiatingly....It dignified their philosophy. It encouraged them in defying their elders and following their freest desires. It cast over their doings and dreams a wistful, poetic, and nostalgic haze. 3

The brashness and intellectual naivete of the book brought forth many exasperated reviews. One anonymous article, authoritatively attributed to Edmund Wilson, was typical. He pointed out that the novel is not only highly imitative but imitated from a bad model. Fitzgerald was fascinated by Compton Mackenzie at the time and the book sounds like an American attempt to rewrite Sinister Street.[4] Amory is an uncertain quantity in a phantasmagoria of incident which has no dominating intention to give it unity and force. In short, This Side of Paradise is not really about anything; intellectually it amounts to little more

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3: Cleaton, Irene & Allon, Books & Battles, (New York 1937) p.10

4: In a letter to John Peale Bishop reprinted in The Crack-up, p.269, Fitzgerald remarks on Bishop's ability to recreate 15th century Italy and goes on to say: "But then I wrote T. S. of P. without having been to Oxford."

than a gesture of indefinite revolt. For another thing, Wilson goes on to say, the novel is very immaturely imagined: it is always just verging on the ludicrous. And, finally, it is one of the most illiterate books of any merit ever published. It is not only full of bogus ideas and faked literary references but it is full of English words misused with the most reckless abandon. After flailing poor Fitzgerald in this manner, Wilson, like the rest of the critics, concludes:

> I have said that This Side of Paradise commits almost every sin that a novel can possibly commit: it is true that it does commit every sin except the unpardonable sin: it does not fail to live. The whole preposterous farrago is animated with life. 5

As we read the novel we find that the progress of Amory Blaine's education--or disillusionment, since it comes to the same thing--is effected principally by five members of the opposite sex: Beatrice,(Amory's mother), Myra, Isabelle, Rosalind, and Eleanor.

From Beatrice, Fitzgerald tells us, Amory inherited "every trait, except the stray inexpressibly few, which made him worth while." She is an American exotic, brought up on the continent. For purposes of distinction, she cultivates a delicate physical and spiritual hypochondria:

> Though she thought of her body as a mass of frailties, she considered her soul quite as ill, and therefore important in her life. She

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5: Anonymous, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," Bookman, March, 1922, p.22

> had once been a Catholic, but discovering that priests were infinitely more attentive when she was in process of losing or regaining faith in Mother Church, she maintained an enchantingly wavering attitude. 6

When Amory was five he was already a delightful companion for Beatrice and until the age of ten he toured the country in his grandfather's private car. While more or less fortunate little rich boys were defying governesses on the beach at Newport, or being tutored or read to from Do and Dare,

> ...Amory was biting acquiescent bell-boys in the Waldorf, outgrowing a natural repugnance to chamber music and symphonies, and deriving a highly specialized education from his mother....She fed him sections of the "Fetes Galantes" before he was ten; at eleven he could talk glibly, if rather reminiscently, of Brahms and Mozart and Beethoven. 7

Beatrice as a direct influence was cut off when Amory was thirteen. Amory had appendicitis, "probably from too many meals in bed" and after the operation Beatrice had a nervous breakdown that bore a suspicious resemblance to delirium tremens. Amory was left in Minneapolis, destined to spend the ensuing two years with his aunt and uncle. "There the crude, vulgar air of Western civilization first catches him..."[8]

It was in this "crude, vulgar air" that Amory encountered his first adolescent romance with Myra

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6: Fitzgerald, F. Scott, This Side of Paradise, (New York 1920) p.7
7: Ibid., pp.4-5
8: Ibid., p.8

St. Claire. It was merely a fumbling "puppy love" but Amory's reaction is very interesting. It will be discussed later.

Amory's next affair, his first real romance, introduces us to a budding flapper. Isabelle is a "Speed;" sixteen years old and in possession of "a desperate past."

> Her education or, rather, her sophistication, had been absorbed from the boys who had dangled on her favor; her tact was instinctive, and her capacity for love-affairs was limited only by the number of the susceptible within telephone distance. Flirt smiled from her large black-brown eyes and shown through her intense physical magnetism. 9

Amory and Isabelle are both too selfish to do anything but reflect the other's glory for their own enhancement and the affair is short-lived. Little notice would be taken of such an adolescent affair today but it was one of the most shocking things to be found in <u>This Side of Paradise</u> when the book was published. In a patently autobiographical novel such adolescent cynicism was bound to raise a flurry of doubtful protestation from the parents of the younger generation. Such passages as the following were decidedly disturbing:

> None of the Victorian mothers--and most of the mothers were Victorian--had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed.... 10

9: <u>Ibid.</u>, p.70
10: <u>Ibid.</u>, p.68

> 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, yet with a furtive excitement that Amory considered stood for a real moral letdown. But he never realized how wide-spread it was until he saw the cities between New York and Chicago as one vast juvenile intrigue. 11

Amory recovers from Isabelle in a fairly short time and proceeds to a third cousin named Clara. While Isabelle is one of the most significant of the feminine characters, Clara is one of the most enigmatic. Actually, Clara is only half a character. The other half is to be found in Eleanor, the last of Amory's loves. The two women are curiously unreal and unalive--they are descended from Poe, even to the names. Clara, "of ripply golden hair," diffused a "golden radiance." Amory thinks of her as St. Cecilia and says, "I think...that if I lost faith in you I'd lose faith in God."[12] She tells Amory that she has never been in love:

> She seemed suddenly a daughter of light alone. His entity dropped out of her plane and he longed only to touch her dress with almost the realization that Joseph must have had of Mary's eternal significance. 13

Eleanor is the antithesis of Clara. She is "the last time that evil crept close to Amory under the mask of beauty...."[14] Their meeting is so very much like a

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11: Ibid., p.65
12: Ibid., p.157
13: Ibid., p.158
14: Ibid., p.238

tale by Poe that the inference is obvious. Amory, who is in the habit of wandering through the Maryland countryside reciting "Ulalume," finds himself lost in the woods, the sky black with storm and the rain splattering through the trees which have become suddenly "furtive and ghostly." Thunder rolls and lightning flashes and when he stumbles into an open field he hears a low, husky voice weirdly chanting some verses by Verlaine. It was Eleanor with dark hair and eyes that gleamed like a cat's. "She was a witch, of perhaps nineteen,... [with] pale skin, the color of marble in starlight, slender brows, and eyes that glittered green as emeralds in the blinding glare."[15] They fall half in love, but when she later tries to commit suicide Amory finds that there is insanity in the family. Amory's love "...waned slowly with the moon." and as he "...had loved himself in Eleanor, so now what he hated was only a mirror. Their poses were strewn about the pale dawn like broken glass."[16]

Clara and Eleanor are like the representations of Good and Evil in the black and white etchings of Durer. They seem to be primarily of religious significance, and a deeper analysis of this problem will be attempted later.

15: Ibid., p.243
16: Ibid., p.258

Of the women in the book, it is definitely Rosalind who is Fitzgerald's heroine and Amory's great love. She is the first of the long line of flappers who give Fitzgerald's work such a distinctive flavor; immature young women

> ...whose usual attire is a diaphanous gown and a cigarette case, and whose usual occupation is yawning; whose favorite sound is a plaintive African rhythm at three o'clock in the morning and whose favorite argument is "Shut Up"; whose zenith is a new hair-bob and whose nadir is to be seen talking to a boy.
>
> These are the undergraduate Madame Bovarys; this is the revolt of some very odd angels. 17

Rosalind first enters the story on the evening of her coming-out party. Two facts are established immediately: that she is beautiful and that she is selfish. She is one of those girls who need never make the slightest effort to have men fall in love with them. Fitzgerald tells us that she is prone to make every one around her pretty miserable if she doesn't get what she wants--but in the true sense she is not spoiled. Her fresh enthusiasm, her will to grow and learn, her endless faith in the inexhaustibility of romance, her courage and fundamental honesty--these things are not spoiled.

There are long periods when she cordially loathes her whole family. She is quite unprincipled; her philosophy is "carpe diem" for herself and "laissez faire" for others. She loves shocking stories: she has

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17: Geismar, Last of the Provincials, p.294

that coarse streak that usually goes with natures that are both fine and big. She wants people to like her, but if they do not it never worries her or changes her. She has been disappointed in man after man as individuals, but she has great faith in man as a sex. Women she detests. They represent qualities that she feels and despises in herself--incipient meanness, conceit, cowardice, and petty dishonesty. Fitzgerald points out, rather inadequately, that she "is by no means a model character."[18]

One of the most striking things about Rosalind, and it is a hall-mark of all Fitzgerald's flappers, is her utterly cold and calculated materialism. Speaking of herself, Rosalind says: "Oh, it's not a corporation---it's just 'Rosalind, Unlimited.' Fifty-one shares, name, good-will, and everything goes at $25,000 a year."[19] Even after falling deeply in love with Amory, and it seems to be a genuine love, she decides to marry Dawson Ryder, who is "floating money," and who would provide a "sort of background." We shall see this tragic flaw in a more developed form in later heroines and we shall find that it is a tragic flaw in the classical sense because it is the element which brings about the disintegration of their characters.

18: Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, pp.182-183
19: Ibid., p.187

Amory, too, is very interested in money. When his shadowy father dies, Amory "...looked at the funeral with an amused tolerance."[20] What interested him much more than his father's death was the state of his inheritance. In Amory we have the first glimpse of Fitzgerald's infatuation with wealth. The problem comes to its fullest development in The Great Gatsby and shall be reserved for a later chapter.

Amory Blaine is primarily interesting in a study of this kind as a vehicle for Fitzgerald's ideas or attitudes. It is always dangerous to identify the author too closely with his hero but in this case it seems not only safe but necessary. We get a picture of Amory, and, one may suppose, to some extent of Fitzgerald, as a young man at St. Regis and Princeton who felt particularly superior. Amory tries to live by a code of "aristocratic egoism," to move toward a "more pagan attitude," by being versed in the Byronic dicta plus Keats and Swinburne. He also has a rather distant knowledge of Marx, who can be invoked, upon occasion, to put the New Jersey bourgeoisie in its place. In fact, as Maxwell Geismar points out, Amory seems to recall at times a certain "ultra-poetical, super-aesthetical, greenery-gallery, Grosvenor Gallery, je-ne-sais-quoi young man."[21]

20: Ibid., p.109
21: Geismar, Last of the Provincials, pp.292-294

One of the unknown quantities which effected the growth of Fitzgerald as an artist was his religious proclivities. It would seem that he did not regard the outward forms of religion as a vital factor in his life but, like so many writers, its profound influence on his thinking is reflected throughout his work. In the person of Amory and, in This Side of Paradise more than any other book, Fitzgerald puts before us some very curious attitudes toward sin and sex.

> In this volatile youth [Amory] there are intimations of a vicious emotional circle from which Amory's successors in Fitzgerald's work, and Fitzgerald himself, are not to be exempt. 22

The religious theme is most apparent in This Side of Paradise and in the short story entitled "Absolution."[23] Rudolph, the young hero of "Absolution," is obsessed with guilt feelings of sex and sin. He instinctively lies and retreats into his alter ego where he tries to trick God. He feels that he has sinned for the greater glory of God by brightening up his confessions and at the same time he felt a "dark poison in his heart." As he braces himself in the conviction of his immaculate honor, "horror entered suddenly in at the open window." This horror is like that which forms a somber background for Amory Blaine.

22: Ibid., p.295
23: Fitzgerald, All the Sad Young Men, (New York 1926) p.109

Soon after the death of his father, Amory, rather significantly, has his first mystical experience at a party which is rapidly approaching debauchery. Fitzgerald writes: "The problem of evil had solidified for Amory into the problem of sex....Inseparably linked with evil was beauty....Beauty of great art, beauty of all joy, most of all the beauty of women."[24] The first intimation of this sex-sin identification is found at the beginning of the book when Amory is attempting an adolescent affair with Myra. After the first tentative 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 any one;...and he wanted to creep out of his body and hide somewhere safe out of sight, up in the corner of his mind. 25

Amory's sense of moral isolation and hounded flight is inextricably involved with these fits of sexual revulsion.[26] Fitzgerald's later heroes, from Gatsby to Munroe Stahr in The Last Tycoon, are living in dreams and in love with dream-women. Gatsby is attempting to recapture the past and Stahr is still haunted by his dead wife's smile. They are lovers for whom real love seems to be impractical. On the other hand, the young

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24: Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, p.302
25: Ibid., pp.15-16
26: Geismar, Last of the Provincials, p.296 and following. Unfortunately I have only the vaguest knowledge of abnormal psychology so I shall rely almost completely on Geismar's analysis of this problem.

men who stem from Beatrice Blaine--from Amory to Dick Diver in Tender Is the Night--are essentially feminine. The Fitzgerald heroines in turn, from Rosalind to Nicole Diver, are given essentially masculine attributes. Following this pattern, the symptoms of sexual ambivalence run throughout Fitzgerald's work.

Geismar points out the similarity of Fitzgerald's heroines to Poe's dream women. Very much like Fitzgerald, Poe is concerned with the mutual adoration of these related, extravagantly beautiful, and finally altogether perverse lovers. Poe is concerned with the love of "cousins"; Clara is Amory's third cousin and the two protagonists of The Beautiful and Damned declare themselves to be "twins." Poe is directly involved with the emotional consequences of the incest taboo; a taboo which is hardly less directly implicit in the whole range of Fitzgerald's work. This may clarify that "inexpiable, mysterious crime" of Manfred's to which Fitzgerald's first hero refers, since we know that Byron's emotional life flowed in similar channels. In Fitzgerald's work it is impossible to identify the real origins of this web of feeling. It may be a final literary identification with Poe himself, or it may derive from some early, unrecorded childhood relationship. Beatrice Blaine is apparently a completely fictional mother. Yet the entire emotional sequence may refer

back to some such feminine image of whatever complex origin; an image that colors almost every thought and feeling of Amory, that is almost expunged at the end of the novel, but that continues to be prismatically refracted in a series of Fitzgerald's glittering and neurasthenic heroines. From this viewpoint, the apparent obscurities of Tender Is the Night are partially clarified. The "hidden" emotional relationship of Nicole and her father, who is the true source of destruction in the novel, becomes a shield for the emotions of a mother-son relationship. If this is true, Dick Diver's suffering would become in turn an act of penance and purgation---and purged, he is free at last to return to the home of his fathers. We shall see, in the course of this study, how this sex-sin dualism crops up in all of Fitzgerald's work, but nowhere is the religious significance made so apparent as in This Side of Paradise.

A note of caution should be sounded in regards to the foregoing analysis of Fitzgerald's psychological peculiarities. It must be remembered that Fitzgerald was a complete romantic in the tradition of Keats. He saw women in terms of the ideal and therefore as unattainable. Fitzgerald's early heroines are, in a special sense, artists---Rosalind in This Side of Paradise, Gloria in The Beautiful and Damned, and the two women

protagonists of The Great Gatsby---all are consummate actresses on the stage of society. As artists Fitzgerald's glamor girls are egotists par excellence and thus incapable of "giving" love. Fitzgerald's psychic masculinization of his early heroines may stem from his incorrigibly romantic attitude rather than any desperate neurosis. This would also effect the characterization of his heroes who are romantic in the extreme. Whatever the explanation of this problem may be it must wait for one fully qualified to make an authoritative analysis.

It has been mentioned before that Fitzgerald was a leader in the post-war revolt and that This Side of Paradise set the tone of the Jazz Age. It should be pointed out, however, that Fitzgerald was not an intellectual in the sense of formulating a new way of life. He did not explain the new changes; he mirrored them and with his "heightened sensitivity" did much to shape and direct the development of the revolution in manners and morals. Glenway Westcott wrote: "He always suffered from an extreme environmental sense."[27] And it is Fitzgerald's way of refracting, rather than reflecting upon the world about him which so inhibits the intellectual content of his early work. Later on, in The Crack-up, we shall see that Fitzgerald matured considerably, but during the twenties his ideas were the young ideas of

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27: Westcott, "The Moral of F. Scott Fitzgerald," p.327

the time and he took them at face value. The depth of Fitzgerald's philosophical and sociological thinking may be measured by his pronouncement: "I am a pessimist, [and] a communist (with Nietschean [sic] overtones)...."[28] While it is apparent that Fitzgerald was not an abstract thinker, he must not be written off too lightly. Ideas came to him in concrete form and movement, and his ability to catch the elusive nuance often throws more light on a situation than ever could be done by stating its essence in abstract terms.

Fitzgerald said that the Jazz Age was not concerned with politics and we can see this feeling reflected in his early work. The shady political sleight-of-hand at Versailles and the collapse of Wilsonian idealism produced an apathy which opened the way for the disgraceful Harding administration. In The Vegetable, Fitzgerald's only play (and a painful failure), he satirizes American politics and American society. The treasury becomes a sort of private checking account for the President, the Senate is where the real graft is to be found, and the Supreme Court, led by Judge Fossile, is little more than a clumsy farce. The comedy clearly shows Fitzgerald's own bias. He is not concerned with the cultural implications of such a political situation; he merely

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28: Baldwin, C. C., Men Who Make Our Novels, (New York 1925) p.172

represents the distaste of the moneyed elite for the bourgeois makers of money. While clutching after the spoils himself, Fitzgerald regards the victors with contempt. "His satire of the golden calf is directed against the owners of the herd, not against the animal..."[29] The play shows the complete identification of diplomacy with dollars in the political reign of Harding and Coolidge, but the value of the play derives from the fact that Fitzgerald himself so perfectly and unconsciously illustrates the national trait he is attacking. In spite of the fact that he lays most of the world's ills at the door of Victorianism, he wishes that America had the system that largely produced the Victorian period:

> Why is it that the pick of the young Englishmen from Oxford and Cambridge go into politics and in the U.S.A. we leave it to the muckers?--- raised in the ward, educated in the assembly and sent to Congress, fat-paunched bundles of corruption, devoid of 'both ideas and ideals' as the debaters used to say. Even forty years ago we had good men in politics, but we, we are brought up to pile up a million and 'show what we are made of.' Sometimes I wish I'd been an Englishman; American life is so damned dumb and stupid and healthy. 30

Allied with Fitzgerald's distaste for bourgeois politics is his dislike of American democracy. Amory goes to St. Regis "because it's a gentleman's school, and democracy won't hit you so early." The immigrant

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29: Geismar, Last of the Provincials, p.312
30: This Side of Paradise, p.175

strains that were concentrated in the East filled Fitzgerald with revulsion. When the war is finally brought to the attention of Amory

> He thought how much easier patriotism had been to a homogeneous race, how much easier it would have been to fight as the Colonies fought, or as the Confederacy fought. And he did no sleeping that night, but listened to the aliens guffaw and snore while they filled the car with the heavy scent of latest America. 31

Poverty also disgusted Fitzgerald. He hated it partially because he was infatuated with youth and wealth and beauty, but he also hated it because he felt that he had much in common with the alien and the poor. We are apt to be somewhat annoyed when Fitzgerald has Amory think:

> I detest poor people,...I hate them for being poor. Poverty may have been beautiful once, but it's rotten now. It's the ugliest thing in the world. It's essentially cleaner to be corrupt and rich than it is to be innocent and poor. 32

Yet when Fitzgerald uses two drunken soldiers "devoid of all except the lowest form of intelligence" to represent the lower classes in the short story "May Day,"33 it is significant that one of the soldiers bears the proudest part of Fitzgerald's own name---Carrol Key. Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald--descended from American aristocracy and Irish immigrant stock--could sympathize with poverty but he hated its ugliness.

31: Ibid., p.160
32: Ibid., p.275
33: Fitzgerald, Tales of the Jazz Age, (New York 1922)

We have seen that This Side of Paradise embodied most of the ideas which brought about the revolution in the Jazz Age. Perhaps equally important, however, is the manner in which these ideas were presented. Much later Fitzgerald wrote a letter to his daughter which helps explain the marvelous effectiveness of his style:

> ...I mean that what you have felt and thought will by itself invent a new style, so that when people talk about style they are always a little astonished at the newness of it, because they think that it is only style that they are talking about, when what they are talking about is the attempt to express a new idea with such force that it will have the originality of the thought. 34

When he wrote This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald was probably not conscious of the implications of his style. This would seem apparent from the anonymous article referred to in the introduction of this study. The author tells us that someone has said that to meet Fitzgerald was to think of a stupid old woman with whom someone has left a diamond; she is extremely proud of it and shows it to everyone; and in nothing does she appear so stupid as in the remarks she makes about the diamond. There is a symbolic truth in the statement; it is true that Fitzgerald had been left with a jewelled

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34: Fitzgerald, The Crack-up, p.304

style which he didn't fully understand:

> For he has been given imagination without intellectual control of it; he has been given a desire for beauty without an aesthetic ideal; and he has been given a gift for expression without many ideas to express. 35

In spite of this Fitzgerald had the style to catch the twenties in their golden bowl. He delighted in the external forms and colors without being taken in by them; but he was pre-eminently a part of the world his mind was always disowning. He caught the carnival of the world of his youth, and its welling inaudible sadness. Much of his writing hovered on the verge of fantasy. The world swam through his senses without being defined by him and he could catch all its lights and tones in his prismatic style without having to understand them too consciously. Fitzgerald's pride in his craft saved his style from extravagance but it was the style of a craftsman profoundly absorbed in the romance of glamor.[36]

For all its faults, This Side of Paradise is a good book. There is in the writing some of the intensity which will be found in Fitzgerald's most mature work. His judgment and technique are inadequate almost everywhere in the book, but the fundamental attitude toward

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35: Anonymous, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," p.20
36: Mazin, On Native Grounds, pp.317-320

experience which emerges is serious and moving. Sixteen years later, Fitzgerald wrote of This Side of Paradise: "A lot of people thought it was a fake, and perhaps it was, and a lot of others thought it was a lie, which it was not."[37]

37: Fitzgerald, The Crack-up, p.83

CHAPTER THREE

The Beautiful and Damned is a great advance over Fitzgerald's first novel. The same type of characters found in This Side of Paradise are in this second novel but with decided changes. The story is the old one of character eroded by idleness and love by time. Anthony and Gloria start with double gift, or curse, of wealth and beauty. This plus intelligence and an insatiable thirst for today, are their undoing. Unlike This Side of Paradise, it is not a novel of disillusionment but of decay.[1] It is not a mature novel, either in conception or content; it suffers badly from lack of discipline and poverty of esthetic ideas. Its importance, however, lies in the fact that it shows Fitzgerald's moral anarchy, and that in the confusion of his revolt he is typical of his generation.

The hero of The Beautiful and Damned, Anthony Patch, is a projection of Amory Blaine. "At sixteen he had lived almost entirely within himself, an inarticulate boy, thoroughly un-American, and politely bewildered by his contemporaries."[2] His father had died--a little more conspicuously than Amory's--in Lucerne, leaving Anthony an income of slightly under $7000 a year. His

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1: Littell, Robert, New Republic, v.30, 1922, p.348
2: Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned, (New York 1921) p.7

Grandfather, whose fortune will fall to Anthony, is a reformed robber-baron "for [whose] will to power was substituted a fatuous puerile desire for a land of harps and canticles on earth."[3] He was so wealthy that "...the men in the republic whose souls he could not have bought directly or indirectly would scarcely have populated White Plains,..."[4] After graduation from Harvard, Anthony goes to Rome for a three-year period of artistic dalliance but is called home to attend his grandfather's anticipated funeral. By the time he arrives old Adam Patch is well again and Anthony conceals his disappointment as best he can. He settles down in New York where "He did nothing---and contrary to the most accredited copy-book logic, he managed to divert himself with more than average content."[5] To motivate the disaster which ultimately overtakes Anthony, Fitzgerald make an effort to portray him as a sensitive and intelligent man who, driven into a difficult place by his refusal to compromise with a brutal and stupid world, finds his weaknesses too strong for him. He is tempted to cowardice and drifting by his own imagination and sensitiveness; he cannot blame and fight others because he "understands too well to blame."[6] This sense of futility is interesting when we recall Amory Blaine. It is implicit

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3: Ibid., p.15
4: Ibid., p.14
5: Ibid., p.16
6: Mizener, op.cit., p.74

in This Side of Paradise, but Amory has spurts of striving and at the end of the book is ready to try Socialism. In The Beautiful and Damned even the intense love affairs have faded. Anthony has what can only be called a friendship with an usher called Geraldine. ""Strange as it may seem," continued Anthony, "so far as I'm concerned, and even so far as I know, Geraldine is a paragon of virtue.""[7] She was merely company, familiar and faintly restful. Anthony's life goes along evenly and graciously until he meets Gloria Gilbert.

His friends are Maury Noble and Richard Caramel. The latter represents the active intellectual element in the novel and through him as a writer, we get Fitzgerald's rather negativistic view of his own profession. Caramel, who publishes one good novel and proceeds to compromise with popular demand, is too stupid to know he is compromising or that the success he has won is not worth having. The superiority of Anthony and Maury is taken for granted and Caramel seems to point up, not only the futility of serious effort, but the superiority of the aristocrat to the artist. Caramel is a perfect foil for Maury's "divine inertia"--behind which lay a relentless maturity of purpose. He was to spend three years in travel, three years of complete leisure

7: Beautiful and Damned, p.45

and then to become immensely rich as soon as possible. Much more important, however, is the fact that Maury recalls the conjunction of sin and fertility which was found in This Side of Paradise and "Absolution." Maury, like Rudolph in the short story, is adept at fooling the deity. He says: "I prayed immediately after all crimes until eventually prayer and crime became indistinguishable to me." In a tortured and confused sermon which follows in some part the career of Fitzgerald himself, Maury describes his flight from the Hound of Heaven who still prowls the Jazz Age.[8] Seek refuge as he may in beauty or in the intellect, in vice, in skepticism or boredom, he is still pursued and overtaken.

> This suave nobility and sense of panic, these private reservations, this flight from life, and premonition of a death that waits at every corner---of a dark poison and cloven hoofs: it is this entire cluster of psychological elements, presented here in their religious guise, that has rested at the bottom of Fitzgerald's work and that is now rising to the surface. 9

A further development of the feminine image in Fitzgerald's work is found in Gloria Gilbert. Gloria, the heroine of The Beautiful and Damned, is Fitzgerald's full-length flapper, and through her he portrays the

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8: Ibid., pp.252-258
9: Geismar, Last of the Provincials, pp.66-67

true quality of his typical heroine: her impatience with men and her masculine vanity, her beautiful and immaculate body that is incapable of passion; the gum drops that she must chew to avoid chewing her fingernails; and by contrast the cool perfection of her brow. She is a fully developed Rosalind and she writes in her diary:

> April 24th---I want to marry Anthony, because husbands are so often 'husbands' and I must marry a lover...a temporarily passionate lover with wisdom enough to realize when it has flown and that it must fly. 10

With the marriage of Anthony and Gloria the interaction of their narcissism produces a rapid deterioration in Anthony. As he traces each developing "wrongness in the case" of Gloria, the unraveling of her temperament leads him in turn to a parallel realization of his own imperfections. Fitzgerald's mythological reference is apt: clinging to this shining, hard, dominant Ganymede, Anthony himself takes on the role of the volatile, uneasy, and perhaps even betrayed un-Nordic woman. Meanwhile his erotic sensibilities which remained calm with Geraldine are stirred by Gloria's coldness and this desire is matched by a passion "to possess her triumphant soul---to break her." The narcissism of both becomes more pronounced and the pathological interdependence becomes more obvious---"Her arms sweet and strangling were around him."11

10: Beautiful and Damned, p.146
11: Geismar, op.cit., pp.300-301

Gloria sums up her code in the negative principle "Never give a damn...for anything or anybody...except myself and, by implication, for Anthony."[12] Soon, however, the implication is barely stressed. As Anthony's personality disintegrates, quarrels with Gloria become more frequent and bitter. There are wild parties from which they awaken to physical and spiritual nausea, and to which they are irresistibly drawn back. Anthony's realization of Gloria's true nature brings him to the last reaches of disintegration and at the end of the book, after a long lawsuit to get his grandfather's money and a long period of drunken degradation, Anthony has a complete breakdown. Both he and Gloria are no longer beautiful; they are only damned.

In this novel Fitzgerald's ideas are basically unchanged but we can now begin to trace a definite pattern. In This Side of Paradise his ideas were confused and presented in a confusing way. He disliked immigrant Americans, poverty, democracy---the American form of civilization in general. In The Beautiful and Damned Anthony tries to imagine himself in Congress, in "that incredible pigsty" with those "Little men with copy-book ambitions who by mediocrity had thought to emerge from mediocrity into the lustreless and unromantic heaven of a government by the people."[13] American "aliens"

12: Beautiful and Damned, p.230
13: Ibid., pp.55-56

assume a new perspective to Fitzgerald's tortured aristocrats. Anthony sees the Jews as maggots becoming the rulers of "his" country and Gloria's friend Bloeckman comes to stand for the race. The profound sexual frigidity of Gloria extends to the whole concept of fertility, and to these immigrants as the products of a conspicuous fertility.[14]

In This Side of Paradise these attitudes might be accepted as bravura, shock-troops for a novel of revolt but we can see that Fitzgerald had a very definite reason for admiring the English social system when he writes in The Beautiful and Damned:

> Aristocracy's only an admission that certain traits which we call fine---courage and honor and beauty and all that sort of thing---can best be developed in a favorable environment, where you don't have the warpings of ignorance and necessity. 15

Without inquiring too deeply into the English equivalent, Fitzgerald decided that the American aristocracy must be the very wealthy and should embody the ideals of a ruling class. This is the crux of Fitzgerald's artistic problem: wealth meant freedom and freedom meant the opportunity to cultivate beauty, courage and honor---the traits of an ideal ruling class in a stable society.

14: Geismar, op.cit., p.302
15: Beautiful and Damned, p.407

Fitzgerald sought this in the American rich and never found it---nor did he really expect to do so. He found a ruling class without a sense of responsibility for the country which had furnished the sources of its power. To be sure, he is dealing chiefly with the third generation. "He is writing a sort of postscript to the Great American Fortunes: he is recording the history of this class as it may occur to a Tommy Manville rather than a Jay Gould--"[16] Thus accepting all the benefits of their social status without a notion of their status in society, Fitzgerald's young men are no longer even "wild." They have lost their initial flair for adventure and become respectable dilettantes. They haven't as yet, however, lost all contact with reality. In the dialectic of Fitzgerald's evaluation, the "thesis" of glamor has its antithesis in the accompanying sense of horror that is always in the background of his work. The whole glittering post-war picture unveiled in The Beautiful and Damned springs in large part from a darker search for deception. Jazz Age disillusionment left a vacuum and Fitzgerald's characters are searching for new illusions. The hero of "The Diamond As Big As the Ritz"[17] says "His was a great sin who first invented

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16: Geismar, op.cit., p.306
17: Fitzgerald, Tales of the Jazz Age, 1922

consciousness." The obsessive nature of this search is the dominant theme of the novel. In its forced and confused ending the destructive element, "some aghast and irreparable awakening," has broken through the surface. In Fitzgerald's work of the thirties this counter-theme will become more and more compelling.[13]

Wealth, then, was not an absolute goal to Fitzgerald. We need only consider the fate of his characters to see that. It was only when Amory lost his money and social position that he felt he know himself. Anthony, a projection of Amory, after gaining his grandfather's money, is bundled off to Europe: a completely disorganized and half-mad cripple. Fitzgerald does not establish a clear perspective on the problem of wealth, and the related problem of social position, until his next novel, The Great Gatsby.

At the beginning of the chapter I said that The Beautiful and Damned was an advance over Fitzgerald's first novel. It is a more consciously artistic piece of work and is nearer maturity. Fitzgerald still employs the various genres found in his first novel--dialogue, dramatic scenes, poetry, etc.--but less often and with less effect. This Side of Paradise was "instinct with life" and, as the record of youthful confusion and revolt,

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13: Geismar, op.cit., p.306

the loss of unity resulting from the use of those various forms was compensated for by the over-all impact. The novel, paradoxically, could not have been as effective without the stylistic confusion. This is not the case with The Beautiful and Damned and that is why its greater stylistic maturity resulted in a loss of stylistic effectiveness. Fitzgerald has almost eliminated his early tendency to substitute lectures for dialogue although he runs wild in the scene where Maury Noble delivers an harangue which, as The Dial's reviewer remarked, sounds "like a resume of The Education of Henry Adams filtered through a particularly thick page of The Smart Set."[19] Fitzgerald also allows himself the pleasure of a Shavian scene between Beauty and The Voice by way of introduction for Gloria. Nevertheless, The Beautiful and Damned is much more successfully focussed on a central purpose than This Side of Paradise, and much less often bathetic in its means; Fitzgerald's ability to realize the minutiae of humiliation and suffering seldom fails him.[20]

In a letter to John Peale Bishop, Fitzgerald gives us the reason for the comparative failure of The Beautiful and Damned: "I devoted so much more care...to the detail

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19: Shaw, Vivian, The Dial, v.LXII, 1922, p.420
20: Mizener, op.cit., p.74

of the book than I did to thinking out the general scheme..."[21] It is the muddiest in conception of all Fitzgerald's books. We find this most clearly illustrated in his handling of Anthony and Gloria. Fitzgerald introduces Anthony with pages that blaze with irony. Later, however, we find Fitzgerald standing aside and acting as the intimate psychological confidant, which often betrays the autobiographer. As the story progresses, Anthony becomes incapable of that devotion to abstractions which made him so entertaining before, and he becomes impotent. Starting as a brilliant dilettante, Anthony becomes a brutal and stupid drunkard. Fitzgerald's development of Gloria is more intricate and less effective. She is introduced rather deftly and, by means of light touches, Fitzgerald makes of her the essence of the beautiful, self-centered flapper. She is not really human but she is extremely interesting. As the story goes on, however, she deliquesces and loses her uniqueness. As she acquires being, she becomes more and more ordinary, frustrated, and merely selfish. Fitzgerald's treatment of these two characters leaves the curious impression that he was at first inside Anthony's soul

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21: The Crack-up, p.258. In connection with this it might be pointed out that at one place in the novel Gloria becomes definitely pregnant and nothing further is said concerning it. A rather large "detail" and an embarassing one to overlook.

and watched Gloria from without, and gradually changed these positions.[22] The deterioration of Anthony's character can be attributed, in large degree, to the catalytic effect of his love for Gloria, but the change in Gloria can only be attributed to a shift in artistic emphasis resulting in a basically changed character.

Perhaps the most obvious reason for the failure of the book is that Fitzgerald was not able to provide an adequate cause for the suffering of Anthony and Gloria nor an adequate reason within their characters for their surrender. In the end you do not believe that they wanted the opportunities for fineness that the freedom of wealth provides, you see them only as people who wanted luxury. The Beautiful and Damned is not so much a study of disaster as a study of the atmosphere of disaster; of a world in which no moral decisions can be made because there are no values in terms of which they may be measured.[23] Although the book is extremely unsatisfactory, it is a decided step forward for Fitzgerald. He began to sense the full implications of his material and the result was his masterpiece, The Great Gatsby.

22: Littell, op.cit., p.348
23: Troy, Wm. "Scott Fitzgerald: The Authority of Failure," in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. Wm. V. O'Connor, p.81

CHAPTER FOUR

> You are creating the contemporary world much as Thackeray did his in Pendennis and Vanity Fair and this isn't a bad compliment. You make a modern world and a modern orgy strangely enough it was never done until you did it in This Side of Paradise. My belief in This Side of Paradise was alright. This is as good a book and different and older and that is what one does, one does not get better but different and older and that is always a pleasure. 1

This excerpt from a letter to Fitzgerald from Gertrude Stein set the tone for the critical reception of The Great Gatsby. There were some of the usual carping reviews, one of which actually placed the book in the "class of negligible novels,"[2] but intelligent critics everywhere hailed it as a milestone in Fitzgerald's career. In the work he had done previous to this novel he combined a natural gift with an exuberant self-confidence, producing work that was youthful and brilliant. But as brilliant as some of the passages are, the reader was usually left with an aura of glamor, and after the glamor faded there was little for the mind to retain. With The Great Gatsby, however, Fitzgerald definitely left the ranks of the experimenters, the bright young men, and produced a mature, well-constructed and evenly written novel.[3]

1: The Crack-up, p.308
2: The Springfield Republican, July 5, 1925, p.7a
3: Cleaton, Books & Battles, p.232

Jay Gatsby, like all of Fitzgerald's heroes, is a projection of a part of Fitzgerald's own personality. He is a highly romantic character like the author's first heroes but with this difference; Gatsby objectifies that part of the author's personality which can only lead to disaster in the materialism of modern America. Fitzgerald says of Gatsby:

> If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away....---Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams... 4

James Gatz was born of an impoverished family in North Dakota. During the war his uniform gains him access to the gracious homes of Louisville where he meets Daisy Fay. They fall in love and James Gatz, who has become Jay Gatsby by this time, goes overseas. After the war Gatsby is kept abroad and Daisy marries Tom Buchanan, an ex-football star and extremely rich. Gatsby returns, penniless, to find Daisy married and he starts his quest for wealth to win her back. The story begins <u>in medias res</u>, and we find Gatsby established in a tremendous mansion across Long Island Sound from Daisy's home. He gives bacchanalian parties hoping that the Buchanans will happen in but this never occurs. Five years had

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4: Fitzgerald, <u>The Great Gatsby</u>, (New York 1925) p.2

passed since he left Daisy, and Nick Carraway, the narrator whose little house adjoins Gatsby's property, first sees him looking across the Sound in the dark:

> ...he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, as far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward---and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. 5

It was this green light at the end of the Buchanan's dock which symbolized Gatsby's dream; it meant Daisy and the fulfillment of Gatsby's love for her. Nick Carraway, who is Daisy's cousin, arranges a meeting between Daisy and Gatsby and for a brief time Daisy's love is renewed. But even without the intervening five years and her marriage to Tom, Daisy could not have lived up to Gatsby's dream of her:

> ...the colossal vitality of his illusion.... had gone far beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart. 6

The resolution of the story is tragically ironic. Tom Buchanan, whose mistress lives nearby, discovers Gatsby's relationship to Daisy and, reacting in a completely bourgeois fashion, is properly outraged. During an

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5: Ibid., p.20
6: Ibid., pp.88-89

indignant "showdown" in a New York hotel, Tom breaks Daisy's will and, in a contemptuous moment, lets Gatsby take her back to Long Island in his car. Daisy drives the last part of the trip and Tom's mistress, seeing the approaching car and thinking Tom is in it, comes out to intercept them and is killed by Daisy. Tom later tells the dead woman's husband to whom the car belongs and Gatsby is murdered.

Gatsby is a new social character in Fitzgerald's work---one who had no proper education and not the slightest pretense to breeding. He is diametrically opposed to Fitzgerald's handsome and luxurious young men.

> For F. Scott Fitzgerald,...James Gatz of North Dakota--granting the inevitable exception of his millions---is almost the equivalent of a proletarian protagonist. Yet as the Great Gatsby, he is more than a class symbol. He is a sort of cultural hero, and the story of Gatsby's illusion is the story of an age's illusion, too. 7

Gatsby's rise is the American success story in its most primitive form. He is the Emersonian man brought to completion and eventually to failure. He had returned to the East where conditions which could tolerate his self-reliant romanticism no longer exist.[8] It is ironic that his money is made outside the law, but the structure of American society was no longer such as to provide an easy release for the old ideas of universal success. The

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7: Geismar, op.cit., p.319
8: Bishop, op.cit., p.115

frontier tradition of rugged individualism, the Horatio Alger legend of the sudden emergence of the poor boy into the golden upper world, might take strange forms. Gatsby must dominate his environment to win back Daisy and he creates an illusory character for himself, a precarious and impossible glamor out of a hundred half-truths and falsehoods. When these crumble at the end, the final irony of the novel resides in Fitzgerald's uncovering of their genisis. Gatsby's father, who has come East to attend his son's funeral, shows Nick Carraway the self-improvement schedule which Gatsby had made as a boy. In it we see all the pathetic reminders of an outworn American tradition. The childhood dreams of a Franklin or an Edison lay behind the scrawl---the tradition that every American boy could make a million dollars or become President.[9] Gatsby's upward struggle, his naive aspirations to refinement; the fixation of his provincial soul upon a childlike notion of beauty and grace and the reliance upon material power as the single method of satisfying his searching and inarticulate spirit---these are the elements of a dominant cultural legend in its purest, most sympathetic form.

We have seen that Gatsby was a reflection of one side of Fitzgerald's personality, but the character of

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9: Weir, Charles, "An Invite With Gilded Edges," Virginia Quarterly Review, Winter, 1944, pp.110-111

Nick Carraway is even more central to an understanding of the author's attitude toward American society. Nick stands with less distortion for Fitzgerald than probably any other character he created---the initiated but detached Midwesterner, the moralist. He is carefully placed so far as his attitude is concerned. He has come East to be an Easterner and rich, but his moral roots are in the West. In the most delicate way Fitzgerald builds up these grounds for his final judgment of the story. In the first scene Nick's humorous awareness of the greater sophistication of Daisy's life is marked: "You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy...Can't you talk about crops or something?"[10] A moment later, when Daisy has confessed her unhappiness with Tom, Nick suddenly realizes her basic corruption:

> The instant her voice broke off, ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributary emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged. 11

Nick says of Daisy, "'She's got an indiscreet voice,'" and Gatsby replies, "'Her voice is full of money.' 'That was it...It was full of money---that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it,...'"[12] That was Daisy's

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10: The Great Gatsby, p.12
11: Ibid., p.17
12: Ibid., p.110

entree to the "distinguished secret society" of the rich and that was the essence of her corruption. Daisy finds her counterpart in Jordan Baker, a famous woman athlete. She and Nick have an affair that is a subtle, carefully muted parallel to Gatsby and Daisy's early love. But there is one major difference, unlike Daisy, Jordan is corrupt when Nick first meets her:

> Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men, and now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. 13

This basic dishonesty of Daisy, Jordan and Tom is the "foul dust" that floated in the wake of Gatsby's "incorruptible dream." In spite of Gatsby's shady business life, Nick tells him: "'They're a rotten bunch... You're worth the whole damn bunch put together.'"14 But Nick had been brought up in a spirit of tolerance for other peoples' faults and, at the end of the book, he says of Tom:

> I couldn't forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. 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.... 15

Nick goes back to the West and the East remains for him

13: Ibid., p.54
14: Ibid., p.142
15: Ibid., p.166

"a night scene by El Greco." In moral terms, to Fitzgerald the East was the exemplar of urban sophistication and corruption and the West the exemplar of virtue.[16] It should be noted that it is the same vulgar air of Western civilization which had once caught Amory Blaine "in his underwear, so to speak," which now gives Nick his sense of perspective. He sums it up by saying:

> 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. 17

In view of this East-West dichotomy there is little doubt that The Great Gatsby as a whole is a response to a major strain in Fitzgerald's temperament---the strain of the outsider, the "unadjustable" boy so evident in the Basil Lee stories. It was certainly Fitzgerald at Newman as well as Basil Lee at St. Regis who "writhed with shame...that...he was one of the poorest boys in a rich boys' school." In another respect, however, Fitzgerald was proud of his family in its connection with Francis Scott Key, once calling them "the few remnants of the old American aristocracy that's managed to survive in communicable form."[18] Fitzgerald at Princeton, in spite of the fact that he wore the right clothes and did the right things, was not typical and remained the outsider,

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16: Mizener, op.cit., pp.77-78
17: The Great Gatsby, p.163
18: Mizener, op.cit., pp.68-69

romanticising the snobbish, highly competitive life of Princeton into an heroic world. But perhaps the most significant event in crystallizing Fitzgerald's ambivalent attitude toward wealth and social position occurred just after the war. Fitzgerald was in love with Zelda Sayre and he later wrote in The Crack-up:

> It was one of those tragic loves doomed for lack of money, and one day the girl closed it out on the basis of common sense. During a long summer of despair I wrote a novel instead of letters, so it came out all right, but it came out all right for a different person. The man with the jingle of money in his pocket who married the girl a year later would always cherish an abiding distrust, an animosity, toward the leisure class---not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smouldering hatred of a peasant. In the years since then I have never been able to stop wondering where my friends' money came from, nor to stop thinking that at one time a sort of droit de seigneur might have been exercised to give one of them my girl. 19

Fitzgerald saw that the segment of society which might exercise this "droit de seigneur" was not only supported but insulated by wealth. Aware that they could buy their way out of any situation, they cared not what kind of a situation it was. Fitzgerald insisted that this was their attitude and it did more than characterize the privileged products of American success. It expressed the national frame of mind during a period when the maximum of national prosperity coincided with the maximum of national corruption. It was the coincidence of these two factors which gave a peculiar tone to life in

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19: The Crack-up, p.77

the twenties. In Fitzgerald it produced an "abiding distrust" which was really intellectual and moral. It was the resentment which any intelligent American might feel after exposure to, and disillusionment by, the world he had been bred to revere. Like most middle-class Americans, Fitzgerald had been shaped by a primarily Puritanical environment in which the acquisition of wealth was the sole test of worth, and the ways of those who possessed it the sole criterion of excellence. Two of his novels show the disastrous results of these standards when deliberately applied or successfully imposed. Gatsby--poor, highly imaginative--was led to his doom by a single-minded pursuit of the stereotyped American dream. Making quick millions by alliance with racketeers, he succeeded in entering the American world of presumptive excellence only to be destroyed by its degraded ethics. Equally destroyed, as we shall see, was Dick Diver in the society of decadent expatriates in Tender Is the Night. In Fitzgerald's view, there was something inherently evil in a society which elevated as models those who were so demonstrably rotten at the core. The average American was being deceived and ruined by what his environment posed for his emulation. Fitzgerald's "outsiders," like Ring Lardner's "little people," were pathetic victims of a myth. The function of the myth was to keep prosperity going.[20]

20: Morris, Lloyd R., Postscript to Yesterday, (New York 1947) pp.151-152

It is in The Great Gatsby that Fitzgerald finally clarifies this problem. Against Nick Carraway's gradual understanding of the incorruptibility at the heart of Gatsby's corruption, Fitzgerald sets his gradual penetration of the charm and grace of Tom and Daisy's world. What he penetrates to is dishonesty, grossness and moral cowardice. In contrast to the outward charm of their world, Gatsby's fantastic mansion, his absurd pink suits, and his elaborate formality of speech appear ludicrous; but against the corruption which underlies Tom and Daisy's charm, Gatsby's essential incorruptibility is heroic.[21] It is in the tragedy of Jay Gatsby that we find Fitzgerald's renunciation and repudiation of the great American myth.

William Troy has an interesting explanation of how Fitzgerald came to a clarification of this sociological phenomenon. He says that in this book we find a remarkable instance of the manner in which adoption of a special form or technique can profoundly modify and define a writer's whole attitude toward his world. In the earlier books author and hero tended to melt into one because there was no internal technical principle of differentiation by which they might be separated. But in The Great Gatsby is achieved a dissociation, by which Fitzgerald was able to isolate one part of himself, the

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21: Mizener, op.cit., p.79

spectatorial or esthetic, and also the more intelligent, in the person of the ordinary but quite sensible narrator, from another part of himself, the dream-ridden adolescent from St. Paul and Princeton, in the person of Jay Gatsby. It is this which makes the latter one of the few truly mythological creations in recent literature--for what is mythology but this same process of projected wish fulfillment carried out on a large scale and by the whole consciousness of a race? Gatsby becomes much more than a mere exorcising of whatever false elements of the American dream Fitzgerald felt within himself: he becomes a symbol of America itself, dedicated to "the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." It is not mythology, however, but the technical device of the narrator brought to high development by Conrad and James which made this dissociation possible for Fitzgerald. The device imposes on the novelist the necessity of tracing through the narrator himself some sort of growth in general moral perception, which will constitute in effect <u>his</u> story. In so far as the book is Gatsby's story, it is a story of failure---the prolongation of the adolescent incapacity to distinguish between dream and reality, resulting in disaster. But as Nick's story it is a successful transcendence of a bitter set of experiences localized in the sinister, distorted Long Island atmosphere of the twenties into a world of restored

sanity and calm, symbolized by the returning trains and fine winter nights of the Midwest.[22] In the light of this theory we can begin to understand the incredible technical development from the shambling structure of The Beautiful and Damned to the intensely economical unity of The Great Gatsby.

We have seen in the foregoing analysis that The Great Gatsby is indeed a literary landmark of the twenties, so important that a critic of T. S. Eliot's stature said of the book:

> ...it has interested me and excited me more than any new novel I have seen, either English or American, for a number of years....In fact it seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James. [23]

Unfortunately for American literature, The Great Gatsby was Fitzgerald's apotheosis. He did not lose his skill (vide The Last Tycoon) but something in him died con-

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22: Troy, Wm., op.cit., pp.81-82. There seems to be a difference in critical opinion as regards the above development in Fitzgerald's literary career. Maxwell Geismar, in The Last of the Provincials, takes the opposite view: that Fitzgerald "blocked out the discordant areas in his own temperament and objectified them in terms of the characters and groups of characters who form the novel's tension..." (p.320) It seems rather "chicken-or-eggish" but I am inclined to accept Mr. Troy's explanation. Not only because Fitzgerald was more of a craftsman than an intellectual but because, if we refer to The Crack-up, we will see that Fitzgerald did not really consider the full implications of his life and work until he had his breakdown. Perhaps even more damaging to Mr. Geismar's case is a letter Fitzgerald wrote to John Peale Bishop (Crack-up, p.271). Speaking of Gatsby he wrote: "I never at any one time saw him clear myself--for he started out as one man I knew and then changed into myself--...")

23: The Crack-up, p.310

currently with the dying of his world. "His fairy world decomposed slowly, lingeringly; and he lived with its glitter, paler and paler, to the end."[24] The twenties were rapidly approaching catastrophe when he wrote The Great Gatsby, and Fitzgerald, a "sort of King" of the decade, danced in the lead. The intellectual perspective he gained on his own problems and the problems of society in The Great Gatsby might have saved him when his world went smash in 1929. Instead we find that the geographical and psychological conditions of Nick Carraway's decision to go back home are fulfilled only in The Last Tycoon in 1941. The return home of this "western spectator" at the novel's end is a splitting-off of Fitzgerald's personality--an illuminating flare, but one that fades. The emotional compulsion still persists and almost a decade after Fitzgerald had reached his conclusion as to wealth and social position, he has become, in Tender Is the Night, more "Eastern," wealthier---and more despairing.[25] In view of this, Gatsby's tragedy is even more poignant and ironic because Fitzgerald did not yet realize the full implications of what he had written. His tragedy came about because he, like Gatsby,

> ...believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms farther.... And one fine morning---- 26

24: Kazin, op.cit., p.322
25: Geismar, op.cit., p.347
26: The Great Gatsby, p.168

CHAPTER FIVE

After publication of The Great Gatsby in 1925, Fitzgerald set himself a task which, as Edmund Wilson remarked, would have given Dostoievski pause. It was to be a story of matricide, and, although a good deal of work was done on it, the central idea of the novel was dropped in 1929.[1] The material Fitzgerald had prepared was carried over in part and incorporated in Tender Is the Night. He worked for nine years to complete this novel and, when it was published in 1934, it was barely a nine days' success.

Fitzgerald called the book a "novel of deterioration" and, as in his earlier work, the destructive element dominates. It is the difference in the quality of the gradual change that distinguishes Tender Is the Night. The characters are more highly civilized and their disintegration has always a highly sophisticated veneer to shield it from the raw physical violence found in The Great Gatsby. We are given our first glimpse of the Riviera Divers through the eyes of Rosemary Hoyt, a young, beautiful and successful Hollywood actress. To the comparitively naive Rosemary they represented "...the exact furthermost evolution of a class...," she "...responded wholeheartedly to the expensive simplicity

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1: Mizener, op.cit., p.80

of the Divers, unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence,..."[2] We are shown what would seem to be Fitzgerald's perfect aristocrats---charming, intelligent, a couple whose "...day was spaced like the day of the older civilizations to yield the utmost from the materials at hand, and to give all the transitions their full value..."[3] The first hint of disaster comes when Dick Diver gives a party to which he invites a heterogeneous group which includes people who represent all the rawness and lack of sophistication which so distinguishes his own clique. He want to give a "really bad party," one at which "...there's a brawl and seductions and people going home with their feelings hurt and women passed out in the cabinet de toilette."[4] At the party we are shown Dick's "extraordinary virtuosity with people."

> Save among a few of the tough-minded and perenially suspicious, he had the power of arousing a fascinated and uncritical love. The reaction came when he realized the waste and extravagance involved. He sometimes looked back with awe at the carnivals of affection he had given, as a general might gaze upon a massacre he had ordered to satisfy an impersonal blood lust. 5

The party breaks up when one of the women finds Nicole in a demented condition. The details are supplied later in the narrative. We are told that Dick, a brilliant young psychiatrist, originally meets Nicole Warren as

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2: Fitzgerald, Tender Is the Night, (New York 1934) p.192
3: Ibid., p.191
4: Ibid., p.199
5: Ibid., p.199

a mental patient due to an incestuous relationship forced on her by her father. She is in a clinic in Switzerland and, when Dick returns to France to resume his war-time duties, Nicole writes him frequently. She falls in love with him and, due to this outside influence, begins to recover. After the war Dick comes back to the clinic to break off this attachment she has formed. During the short period that follows Dick falls half in love with her but, acting on his better judgment, breaks off the affair and leaves. Nicole is released from the clinic and several weeks later they meet again. Her beauty and obvious adoration of Dick are sufficient and he falls completely in love with her. "Baby" Warren, Nicole's sister, feels that Dick is something of an adventurer but because he is a psychiatrist she allows them to marry. The story from that point on shows the gradual deterioration of Dick and the emergence of Nicole as a complete and normal personality. The plot is resolved when Nicole divorces Dick for another man and Dick disappears into the anonymity of a small-town general practitioner in the States.

In the character of Dick Diver, Fitzgerald has again created his typical hero. Although more mature and urbane, Dick is essentially Gatsby; just as Gatsby is a development of Amory Blaine. Dick, too, has a "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" and

he is also betrayed by his own inability to make the right distinctions. In Gatsby this fault has some validity in that he was obsessed by an illusion and ruined by an incorruptible dream. His love went beyond reality and brought disaster. With Dick Diver, however, the process is reversed. He wanted to be brave and wise, and above all he wanted to be loved. This is the flaw in his character and when he is faced with the problem of Nicole's love for him, he fails as a psychiatrist to make the correct decision. Professor Dohmler, the head of the clinic, reminds him that it is a professional situation but for Dick it is a human situation also. He accepts the responsibility of being loved by Nicole and gradually by all the others whom his life drew around him. To them he gave lavishly of his strength, of his ability to translate into their terms the necessary human values and so remind them of their best selves. But the people he did this for had no energy of their own, and gradually the "carnivals of affection" Dick inspired exhausted his own supply of energy: "...if you spend all your life sparing other people's feelings and feeding their vanity, you get so you can't distinguish what should be respected in them."[6] Devoting his life

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6: Ibid., p.381

to the cure of Nicole, Dick finds that the Warren money has lulled him into dilettantism:

> He had lost himself--he could not tell the hour when;...[but]...the spear had been blunted.
>
> Watching his father's struggles in poor parishes had wedded a desire for money to an essentially unacquisitive nature. It was not a healthy necessity for security---he had never felt more sure of himself,...than at the time of his marriage to Nicole. Yet he had been swallowed up like a gigolo, and somehow permitted his arsenal to be locked up in the Warren safety-deposit vaults. 7

As Nicole regains her mental stability it becomes apparent that Dick is losing his grip. "The dualism in his views of her--that of the husband, that of the psychiatrist--was increasingly paralysing his faculties."8 He relies more and more upon alcohol for stimulus and when, due to his steady drinking, his partner in the clinic suggests that he withdraw his interest, Dick is given more evidence of his failure. "Not without desperation he had long felt the ethics of his profession dissolving into a lifeless mass."9 Even when the charm of the Divers' life is at its height we are told that "...a qualitative change had already set in..." and towards the end Dick shows his awareness of the process in words that remind us of The Crack-up: "The change came a long way back--but at first it didn't show. The

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7: Ibid., pp.409-410
8: Ibid., p.394
9: Ibid., p.473

manner remains intact for some time after the morale cracks."[10] Dick knows that Nicole's love for him is bound up with her dependence and has declined with the decline of her need for him. Knowing that he has exhausted his own power to love her or anyone else, Dick, by a last effort of the will, breaks Nicole's psychological dependence on him. In a cold, cruel scene brought on by Dick, Nicole struggles to free herself from his influence:

> And suddenly, in the space of two minutes she achieved her victory and justified herself to herself without lie or subterfuge, cut the cord forever.
>
> Dick waited until she was out of sight. Then he leaned his head forward on the parapet. The case was finished. Doctor Diver was at liberty. 11

By a terrible irony it comes about that what he has refused to treat as a merely professional situation is just that.

Nicole, like all of Fitzgerald's heroines, is very beautiful and very rich.

> For her sake trains began their run at Chicago and traversed the round belly of the continent to California; chicle factories fumed and link belts grew link by link in factories;...half-breed Indians toiled on Brazilian coffee plantations and dreamers were muscled out of patent rights in new tractors---these were some of the people who gave a tithe to Nicole,... 12

She is a very appealing character throughout the early

10: Ibid., p.509
11: Ibid., p.529
12: Ibid., p.233

part of the book, but we are given an occasional foreshadowing which prepares us for her change of heart toward Dick. She was aware of the magic power of her money, that the Warrens "...were an American ducal family without title..."[13] She felt no compunctions about making Dick fall in love with her and placing upon him the terrible responsibility of her cure. Always standing behind her was the wealth and power of the Warrens, personified by the "wooden and onanistic" Baby Warren. It is she who suggests the plan of getting a doctor in Chicago to marry Nicole. She takes it for granted that there would be many who would jump at the chance. Dick solved that problem for her but she never really accepts him as a proper brother-in-law. At one point later in the marriage, Dick suggests that perhaps he was the wrong person for Nicole. "'You think she'd be happier with somebody else?' Baby thought aloud suddenly. 'Of course it could be arranged.'"[14] And when Dick is beaten up and jailed after a drunken brawl, Baby procures his release:

> It had been a hard night but she had the satisfaction of feeling that, whatever Dick's previous record was, they now possessed a moral superiority over him for as long as he proved of any use. 15

This attitude could not help but have some effect on

13: Ibid., p.357
14: Ibid., p.427
15: Ibid., p.452

Nicole, and it enables her to justify her divorce. Nicole is attracted to the atavistic Tommy Barban and, as "Her ego began blooming like a great rich rose..." she began to hate all the places where she had played planet to Dick's sun. Feeling the nearness of her completion she has an affair with Tommy:

> With the opportunistic memory of women she scarcely recalled how she had felt when she and Dick had possessed each other in secret places around the corners of the world, during the month before they were married. Just so had she lied to Tommy last night, swearing to him that never before had she so entirely, so completely, so utterly.... 16

After that it was but a matter of time before the marriage was terminated. Nicole was not wholly vicious, she knew what a tremendous debt she owed Dick but she seemed to agree with Daby, who says in regards to Dick's love and tender care---"That's what he was educated for."[17] Nicole Warren, like Daisy Buchanan, had too much money.

Rosemary Hoyt represents a departure from Fitzgerald's usual feminine type. Physically she is in direct line her predecessors but she is also quite moral, hard-working and, with her "virginal emotions," specifically American, "...embodying all the immaturity of the race..."[18] She is very different from the anguished butterflies of Fitzgerald's youth. So too, Rosemary's mother, the tough

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16: Ibid., p.526
17: Ibid., p.542
18: Ibid., p.250

and devoted Mrs. Elsie Speers, hardly resembles the fabulous Beatrice Blaine. The delight with which Rosemary comes upon the gracious life of the Divers recalls perhaps the similar apostrophes of a Eugene Gant upon the first glimpse of that cultivated Rosalind in her feudal castle on the Hudson. Here Rosemary has a sense "...of a return from the derisive and salacious improvisations of the frontier."[19] This is a typical scene in the annals of provincial American writing. There are also Howells and Garland in Boston, Willa Cather in the musical circles in Chicago, Dreiser among the financial titans of New York. The Riviera Divers represent the last and desperate attempt of Fitzgerald himself to grasp that vision of ease and grace he has pursued from Minnesota to the Cote d'Azur.[20]

Rosemary also represents a new departure in technique for Fitzgerald. After the brilliant effectiveness of the central narrator device in The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald attempts it again in Tender Is the Night; only this time he uses a feminine figure. The difficulty, however, is that he does not use this device consistently. The emphasis shifts from Rosemary to Dick to Nicole and the result is structural confusion. Fitzgerald didn't decide whether the story should center around a single hero or deal with a whole group. Both approaches are

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19: Ibid., p.207
20: Geismar, op.cit., pp.327-328

present and interfere with each other. This artistic confusion seems to reflect the difficulties Fitzgerald himself was going through in that period. It seems that his feelings were too close to his characters, his own story too much theirs---so that in his attempt to formalize them in detached characters, he could not separate himself except by deliberately falsifying the truth. It is precisely where artfulness is substituted for reality that the book fails to convince and continues downhill with its characters.[21]

The fact that Fitzgerald worked for nine years before he finally produced the novel may account for some of its episodic qualities. That plus the fact that it appeared as a serial in Scribner's Magazine. During those nine years his attitude inevitably changed, and no matter how he revised his early chapters, he could not make them wholly agree with the later ones. As Malcolm Cowley points out, once a chapter has assumed what seems to be a final shape, it crystallizes and cannot be remolded. The result is that several of the characters are self-contradictory; they don't merely change as living creatures do; they transform themselves into different people.[22]

In spite of the fact that it contains some of Fitzgerald's most brilliant writing, Tender Is the Night fails

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21: Ross, Alan, "Rumble Among the Drums," Horizon, Dec. 1943, p.423

22: Cowley, Malcolm, New Republic, June 6,1934, p.106

primarily because we don't know what really caused the moral and psychological disintegration of Dick Diver. Is it that once Nicole is cured of her disease she no longer has need of his kind of love; is it the old story of the physician unable to heal himself? Has Nicole's money destroyed him and his work or is he simply weak, unable to resist temptation and concealing the fact with alcohol? All these causes are indicated, and each is sufficient but the author's unwillingness to choose and his uncertainty communicates to the reader and the result is depressing in the way that confusion in a work of literature is always depressing.[23] On the credit side we find that Fitzgerald has greatly developed his sense of American cultural patterns. In Paris Dick meets an American, "...a type of which he had been conscious since early youth---a type that loafed about tobacco stores with one elbow on the counter...in boyhood Dick had often thrown an uneasy glance at the dim borderland of crime on which he stood."[24] Of the idle-rich Nicole Warren, Fitzgerald says that she "...illustrated very simple principles, containing in herself her own doom...."[25] Fitzgerald's characters have reflected this before but Fitzgerald is now conscious of it and the new intellectual framework is clearly articulated. Fitzgerald has not

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23: Troy, Wm. "The Worm i' the Bud," Nation, May 9, 1934, p.539
24: Tender Is the Night, p.279
25: Ibid., p.233

only disentangled himself from his own earlier aspirations, he has stepped outside of the American leisure class. When Dick Diver returns to America at the end of the book, Fitzgerald has learned the lesson implicit in Nick Carraway. The author has returned to his home and we shall see that in his last novel, he is completely immersed in America and American civilization.

CHAPTER SIX

In 1936 Fitzgerald published a series of articles in Esquire Magazine under the general title of The Crack-up. It was, as Glenway Westcott said: "...self-autopsy and funeral sermon."[1] These articles, with excerpts from Fitzgerald's notebooks and other items of interest to the student of Fitzgerald's work, were edited by Edmund Wilson and published in 1945. The book as a whole is one of the most fascinating volumes in American literature but, for the purposes of this study, the articles centering around Fitzgerald's breakdown are primarily important.

Fitzgerald's crisis, in 1935 and 1936, was caused by a series of big and little misfortunes: serious illness, family troubles, drinking, reduced earning power, debts, and, worst of all, a feeling that he had used up and wasted his abilities. He tended to think of spiritual resources---of courage, generosity, kindness---in the same way he thought of physical resources, as a sum in the bank to be drawn against:

> ...I began to realize that for two years my life had been a drawing on resources that I did not possess, that I had been mortgaging myself spiritually up to the hilt. 2

At the age of thirty-nine Fitzgerald broke down and, in the

1: Westcott, op.cit., p.327
2: The Crack-up, p.72

following period, began seriously to consider the implications of his life and work. He came to the conclusion that:

> ...I had done very little thinking, save within the problems of my craft. For twenty years a certain man had been my intellectual conscience...; That a third contemporary had been an artistic conscience to me---...That my political conscience had scarcely existed for ten years save as an element of irony in my stuff. 3

These are damning admissions and Fitzgerald found that he was unable to live up to his test of a first-rate intelligence: "...the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."[4] He found that he had become identified with the objects of his horror or compassion; an identification which spells the death of accomplishment.[5] When he had reached this nadir Fitzgerald made a token renunciation of his humanity. He would continue to be a writer because that was his only way of life but he would stop being generous or just:

> There were plenty of counterfeit coins around that would pass instead of these and I knew where I could get them at a nickel on the dollar. 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. There was to be no more giving of myself---all giving was to be outlawed henceforth under a new name, and that name was Waste. 6

3: Ibid., pp.78-79
4: Ibid., p.69
5: Ibid., p.81
6: Ibid., p.82

Even at this lowest point of demoralization some quality of toughness or Irish Puritanism would not let Fitzgerald give up. He went to Hollywood in 1937 to make a new start. In the next four years he stopped drinking, worked at writing second-rate movies, paid off most of his debts, and started The Last Tycoon. We know that Fitzgerald did not stop being generous or just, but his breakdown took a terrible toll of his physical and spiritual resources. He had lost the old dream of being "...an entire man in the Goethe-Byron-Shaw tradition..."[7] but had attained a full maturity. He was coming to know himself, to evaluate his talent and propensities in the context of his time and place. He assessed the dualism in his approach to writing and recognized the ambivalence of his attitude toward wealth and society. Even after a long period of hack-writing, he wrote his daughter:

> ...I guess I am too much a moralist at heart, and really want to preach at people in some acceptable form, rather than entertain them. 8

From his ordeal he learned

> ...the wise and tragic sense of life....the thing that lies behind all great careers... ---the sense 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. 9

It is this new element of maturity and understanding that we find in his unfinished novel, The Last Tycoon.

7: Ibid., p.84
8: Ibid., p.305
9: Ibid., p.306

Of The Last Tycoon it may confidently be said that it is the best piece of creative writing we have about one phase of American life---Hollywood and the movies. Of all the American novelists, Fitzgerald was by reason of his temperament and his gifts the best suited to re-create that world in fiction. The subject needed a romantic realist, which Fitzgerald had become; it required a lively sense of the fantastic, which he had; it demanded the kind of intuitive perceptions which were his in abundance.[10] Fitzgerald realized that the Hollywood atmosphere was highly congenial to his temperament. It apparently had an insulating effect, and he writes:

> I have a novel pretty well on the road...as detached from me as Gatsby was, in intent anyhow. The new Armageddon, far from making everything unimportant, gives me a certain lust for life again. This is undoubtedly an immature throw-back, but it's the truth. The gloom of all causes does not affect it---I feel a certain rebirth of kinetic impulses---however misdirected.... 11

Fitzgerald was very serious about the book, sure of himself and his ability to exploit his materials fully. In a letter to Edmund Wilson he wrote: "...I am trying a little harder than I ever have to be exact and honest emotionally."[12] From a study of this tragic fragment we can surmise what the finished novel would have been although it is very difficult to speak with any real

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10: Adams, J. Donald, The Shape of Books to Come, (New York 1945) p.90
11: The Crack-up, p.282
12: Ibid., p.285

assurance. The published draft of the novel represents that point in the author's work where he has assembled and organized his material and acquired a firm grasp of his theme, but has not yet brought it finally into focus.[13]

The Last Tycoon doesn't depend for success on sets or atmosphere, local color or inside stuff; it doesn't even depend for effect on the necessary exaggerations of the life it describes. It is character that dominates the book, the complex yet consistent character of Monroe Stahr, dominating and dominated, as much a part of his business as the film in the cameras and yet a living man. It is an extraordinary portrait, and the tragedy of the book is implicit in Stahr himself, in his strength as well as his weaknesses.[14] The figure of this Hollywood producer is certainly the one of Fitzgerald's central figures which he had thought out most completely and which he had most deeply come to understand. Amory Blaine and Anthony Patch were romantic projections of the author; Gatsby and Dick Diver were conceived more or less objectively, but not very profoundly explored. Monroe Stahr is really created from within at the same time he is criticized by an intelligence that has now become sure of itself and knows how to assign him to his proper place in a larger scheme of things.[15] Stahr is Fitz-

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13: Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon, ed. Edmund Wilson, (New York 1941) Foreward p.ix
14: Bonet, S. V., Saturday Review of Literature, Dec. 6, 1941, p.10
15: Last Tycoon, pp.ix-x

gerald's most highly developed and most sympathetic hero:

> He had flown up very high to see, on strong wings, when he was young. And while he was up there he had looked on all the kingdoms, with the kind of eyes that can stare straight into the sun. 16

He is "the last of the princes," a paternalistic employer who takes care of his employees and feels that their loyalty should be directly to him. He is overworked and very ill, "...ruling with a radiance that is almost moribund in its phosphorescence."[17] He has had everything in life but the privilege of giving himself unselfishly to another human being, and this opportunity is presented to him when he meets Kathleen. While the character of Kathleen is a rather uncertain factor, we find that she reminds Stahr of his dead wife and that Fitzgerald planned a love affair between Stahr and Kathleen which would be "the meat of the book."[18] With this as the central theme, Fitzgerald shows the inside workings of Hollywood and the struggle of Stahr, as the last tycoon, to fight off the encroachments of Wall Street capitalism and corrupt labor unions. Just as the love affair is to be unsuccessful, so Stahr loses his fight against the anti-paternalistic forces and is killed in an airplane crash.

16: Ibid., p.20
17: Ibid., p.139
18: Ibid., p.139

Edmund Wilson has pointed out that Stahr is the first of Fitzgerald's heroes to be shown completely against the background of an industry or profession.[19] While Fitzgerald considered the love-affair to be the "meat of the book"; a student of Fitzgerald's work finds the handling of the socio-economic background much more interesting. It is here that we find evidence of Fitzgerald's intellectual development. Just as Fitzgerald had described himself as being strategically placed between the pre-war and post-war generations of the twenties, so we find Stahr placed, or rather caught, between the expanding forces of labor and capitalism; both working in sinister collusion with the racketeering element as exposed in the Willie Bioff case. Stahr is the "...frail half-sick person holding up the whole thing."[20] While Brady, a co-producer, is scheming with Wall Street capitalists to oust Stahr, the long negotiations with the union come to a dead end. Stahr couldn't find a common ground with the new forces of labor.

> ...his mind was closed on the subject. He was a rationalist who did his own reasoning without the benefit of books---and he had just managed to climb out of a thousand years of Jewry into the late eighteenth century. He could not bear to see it melt away---he cherished the parvenu's passionate loyalty to an imaginary past. 21

19: Ibid., Foreward, p.x
20: Ibid., p.127
21: Ibid., p.118

We find that Fitzgerald's gradual realization of American cultural patterns is the factor that so distinguishes this novel from his other work. As Maxwell Geismar points out, Stahr is an archtypal American whereas a whole row of early Fitzgerald figures have tried desperately to become archtypal European figures.[22] Fitzgerald's treatment of Negro and Jewish characters also shows his realistic perspective on American society. It is a poor Negro whose opinion of the movies "...had rocked an industry";[23] and the "slithering aliens" of Fitzgerald's early work have evolved through the strange figure of Bloeckman in The Beautiful and Damned to become Monroe Stahr and many of the other characters in The Last Tycoon. Stahr is described with a combination of intimacy and detachment; with no trace of envy or adulation. Fitzgerald writes about Stahr, not as a poor man writing about someone rich and powerful, nor as the impotent last upthrust of some established American stock sneering at a parvenu Jew; but coolly, as a man writing about an equal he knows and understands. Immediately a frame of reference is established that takes into comprehension the Hollywood magnate and the workers on the lot. In that frame of reference acts and gestures can be described on a broad and to a certain degree passionlessly impersonal terrain of common humanity.[24]

22: Geismar, op.cit., p.344
23: Last Tycoon, p.93
24: Dos Passos, John, "A Note on Fitzgerald," in The Crack-up, pp.242-243

The technique of The Last Tycoon is deliberate in a way that only Henry James of the novelists of this century has been deliberate. Fitzgerald approaches his material first objectively through his synopsis narrative, then discusses the reactions of each character at their intersecting points, and finally recasts characters and episodes in the light of the conclusions he comes to after his "horizontal" analysis. The result, even in its unfinished form, shows the seriousness with which Fitzgerald approached this task of writing, for the first time, "from the outside."[25] Part of Fitzgerald's success is derived from his sense of balance. We believe in Stahr's genius because his virtuosity is shown in a brilliant chapter where we see him decisively handling script-writers, actors, directors; and exposing with organic clarity the whole cross-structure of the picture-making industry. Fitzgerald shows us the society and business of the movies, no longer from the point of view of the outsider to whom everything is glamorous or ridiculous, but from the viewpoint of people who have grown up or lived most of their lives in Hollywood, and to whom its laws and values are their natural habit of life. Those are criticized by higher standards and in the knowledge of wider horizons, but the criticism is implicit in the story.[26]

25: Ross, op.cit., p.435
26: Wilson, Edmund, Boys In the Backroom, (San Francisco 1941) p.71

Fitzgerald again used the central narrator device in the person of Cecilia Brady, a producer's daughter who "...is of the movies but not in them...So she is, all at once, intelligent, cynical, but understanding and kindly toward the people, great or small, who are of Hollywood."[27] It is impossible to say how well Fitzgerald would have succeeded with this device but it is apparent that he was having some difficulty. Cecilia reminds us somewhat of Rosemary Hoyt in Tender Is the Night but, due to the unfinished state of The Last Tycoon, it is fruitless to speculate on how far the parallel would have gone or whether Fitzgerald could have resolved his technical troubles completely. The latter seems possible since, in a letter to his publisher, Fitzgerald wrote: "There's nothing that worries me in the novel, nothing that seems uncertain."[28] In spite of the fact that the reader faces many uncertainties in the novel as it now stands, Fitzgerald's progress would seem to indicate that his technical resources were indeed adequate to the demands of the work.

In The Crack-up we find a brilliant essay on The Last Tycoon by John Dos Passos in which he says that the work may well turn out to be one of those literary

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27: Last Tycoon, p.138
28: Ibid., p.141

fragments that appear occasionally in the stream of a culture and profoundly influence the course of future events. Fitzgerald's unique achievement, in this unfinished work, is that here for the first time

> ...he has managed to establish that unshakable moral attitude towards the world we live in and towards its temporary standards that is the basic essential of any powerful work of the imagination. A firmly anchored ethical standard is something that American writing has been struggling towards for half a century. 29

Fitzgerald emerged an intellectually and spiritually mature artist from the sodden-dark self-immolation described in The Crack-up. His fascination with what Glenway Westcott termed the "fiddledoodee of boyhood,"[30] was gone and an artist worthy of the front rank of American literature emerged. Fitzgerald's untimely death deprived us of a work that not only dealt with what is perhaps the most important single aspect of our civilization, Hollywood and the movies, but prevented him from completing what would have been a technical milestone in American literature. Dos Passos indicates the future importance of the work when he writes:

> Even in their unfinished state those fragments, I believe, are of sufficient dimensions to raise the level of American fiction in some such way as Marlowe's blank verse line raised the whole level of Elizabethan verse. 31

29: Dos Passos, op.cit., p.339
30: Westcott, op.cit., p.329
31: Dos Passos, op.cit., p.343

The Last Tycoon is an ironic finale for Fitzgerald's career. His life and work run a curious parallel; a brilliant surface with undertones of disaster; illimitable promise and partial fulfillment. The fatal heart attack that stopped him just this side of the paradise of complete artistic fulfillment seems to have been timed too ironically well. It is almost as though some second-rate movie producer had employed his best scenarists to bring about a tragic climax---but this was a very unhappy ending and it couldn't have happened in the "real" Hollywood.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing study we have traced, through his novels, the artistic development of F. Scott Fitzgerald. It is obvious that his gift was channeled by his personality, his time and the society in which he lived. It would have taken a cool head indeed to retain a perspective in the flood of adulation which met Fitzgerald in his early twenties---and his was not a cool head. He was suddenly catapulted into the national limelight, given wealth and love and notoriety. His myths, like Gatsby's, were conceived early in his life and, in the character of Gatsby, Fitzgerald described a single-mindedness that he himself lacked. His own weaknesses both broke him and gave him a tragically short-lived rebirth in the last years of his life. But it was a different person who struggled to finish The Last Tycoon; the real Fitzgerald had died with the Jazz Age, a decade before.

Dos Passos suggests that Fitzgerald was another victim of the American double standard of morals. He was plagued by the difficulty of deciding whether to do "good" writing for his conscience or "cheap" writing for his purse. Since the standards of value have never been strongly established it is often difficult to tell which is which. The effort to do both "good" or "cheap" work, alternately or simultaneously, and the subsequent failure to make good either aim, has produced paroxysms of moral

and intellectual confusion. A great deal of Fitzgerald's own life was made a hell by this sort of schizophrenia.[1] It seems apparent that, after publication of The Great Gatsby in 1925, Fitzgerald became a popular writer in the most obvious sense. Perhaps the only notable aspect of his work from then until the publication of Tender Is the Night was the fertility of invention displayed. He earned about half a million dollars but it cost him a great deal. It cost him, first, the criticism that might have saved him: by shaming him from his bad work, stiffening his conscience, protecting him against his abasement. The old association with Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop seems to have been his only link with the critics of his day. He even went so far as to prostrate himself before Hemingway, finding in To Have and Have Not "...pages that are right up with Dostoiefski [sic] in their undeflected intensity."[2] This hurt his work and no body of responsible judgment was close to show him Hemingway's feet of clay or the superiority in certain ways of his own highest work.[3] Perhaps the most disastrous result of his popular writing was that it cost him his faith in art for a time. We find him writing in The Crack-up of "...a rankling indignity, that to me had

1: Dos Passos, op.cit., pp.339-340
2: The Crack-up, p.284
3: Berryman, John, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," Kenyon Review, Winter 1946, p.111

become almost an obsession, in seeing the power of the written word subordinated to another power, a more glittering, a grosser power."[4] By this he meant the movies. While Fitzgerald has often been excoriated for this attitude, it might be well to point out the fact that his fears had a very real basis. Fifty years ago the reading of the Bible in every home supplied a floor of literacy under literature as a whole. Today the bottom level of the common education is the visual and aural culture of the movies, not a literary level at all.[5] It must be remembered, however, that Fitzgerald wrote this from the depths of spiritual despair. That he regained his faith in art is shown by The Last Tycoon.

For all its manifest faults and errors, Fitzgerald's was a rather heroic life. Many of his contemporaries preceded or followed him into the "public brothels of Hollywood" but he was one of the very few ever to return artistically. He was always fascinated by the line from a Shakespeare sonnet: "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds"; and we find him writing near the end of his life:

> What little I've accomplished has been by the most laborious and uphill work, and I wish now I'd never relaxed or looked back---but said at the end of The Great Gatsby: "I've found my line---from now on this comes first. This is my immediate duty---without this I am nothing." [6]

4: The Crack-up, p.78
5: Dos Passos, op.cit., p.341
6: The Crack-up, p.294

But the decade of the thirties had sapped his reserves and when he again found his "line" it was too late. The Great Gatsby and The Last Tycoon assure Fitzgerald of a permanent place in American literature but it is regrettable that--in spite of his magnificent gifts--his personal weaknesses in league with the exterior forces of a stifling civilization denied him complete fulfillment. Frustration rather failure is the keynote of Fitzgerald's career.

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