

A STUDY OF THE NOVELS
OF
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

by
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It remains to say that my debts to published criticism are acknowledged wherever possible in footnotes, and that the opinions and faults of this study are all my own. This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other University.

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PREFACE

Henry Dan Piper has exploded the legend that all of Fitzgerald's books were out of print when he died.¹ There may be similar romantic exaggeration which does not bear examination in the popular view that Fitzgerald's reputation as an artist was eclipsed in his later years and magically revived after his death by the editing and publication by Edmund Wilson in 1941 of the unfinished novel The Last Tycoon,² and of The Crack-Up.³ Investigation by Matthew J. Bruccoli⁴ has shown the essential oversimplification inherent in the widely-held belief that Fitzgerald's last complete novel to be published, Tender is the Night, was dismissed or ignored by reviewers demanding novels of social conscience. Fitzgerald attracted legends, and since his death has become something of a folk-hero, the type of the golden boy who achieves early and instantaneous fame, lives riotously and is then engulfed by the backwash of his own youthful folly, somehow leaving an unpublished masterpiece to confound his critics at his early death.

We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness,

¹Henry Dan Piper, F.Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait (London: The Bodley Head, 1966), p. 289. Hereafter referred to as Piper.

²F.Scott Fitzgerald, Three Novels of F.Scott Fitzgerald: The Great Gatsby, With an Introduction by Malcolm Cowley: Tender is the Night (With the Author's Final Revisions) Edited by Malcolm Cowley: The Last Tycoon: An Unfinished Novel: Edited by Edmund Wilson ("Modern Standard Authors"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953). Hereafter referred to by individual titles.

³F.Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, ed. Edmund Wilson, (New York: New Directions, 1945). Hereafter referred to as The Crack-Up.

⁴Matthew J. Bruccoli, "Tender is the Night and the Reviewers," Modern Fiction Studies, VII (1961), 49-54.

wrote Wordsworth, and if Fitzgerald did not fulfil the romantic pattern completely himself, he knew madness intimately after the breakdown of his wife, Zelda.

A novel, a play and a film based on Fitzgerald's life have been popular successes, and (although he has escaped the morbid cult that was built around another American folk-hero, the youthful film actor and "rebel-without-a-cause," James Dean) Fitzgerald is probably better known and more widely read now than at any time during his life.

The vicissitudes of Fitzgerald's reputation in literary circles make a story in themselves, and if much of the later criticism shows signs of being a response to the ferocious demands on academics to "publish or perish," there remains a solid core of critical writing that has on it the marks of work done for love and justice, and the Fitzgerald Industry has at least helped to clear away some of the inaccuracies that have accreted to Fitzgerald's name.

From the beginning of the new interest in Fitzgerald, two questions have been raised persistently: "Why is this interest being manifested?" and "is it justified?" To the first of these questions there is no easy answer. Twentieth Century literature is notorious for its secondary texts. The critical volumes that pile up on T.S. Eliot and James Joyce are in part a measure of their difficulty, Yeats's arcane iconography still engrosses explicators, the encyclopaedic interests of Pound lead to his continual devaluation and revaluation by scholars and critics, the works devoted to D.H. Lawrence testify to the impact of his many-faceted and messianic art, while the books on the later Henry James usually aim to disentangle his meaning from his sometimes almost impenetrable prose. The interest in Fitzgerald is different. Fitzgerald's popularity is in some part due, as suggested above, to the glamour of his hectic and perhaps even tragic life. As Lionel Trilling has written, in a masterly essay: "We are drawn to see Fitzgerald himself as he stands in his exemplary

role."¹ The second reason is that put in almost naïvely frank terms by Albert J. Lubell: "F. Scott Fitzgerald, if for no other reason than that his fame was for a number of years under an almost total eclipse, deserved a revival."² It is thus not surprising that some writers have come to feel that the critical balance has been "more than restored," or - to change the metaphor - that the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction. Lubell, for instance, concludes his 1955 study of Fitzgerald by saying: "The plain truth of the matter seems to be that no amount of reviving can make him a significant figure in postwar American letters."³ Leo and Miriam Gurko, writing in 1944, decided that Fitzgerald was an "authentic minor talent,"⁴ and that "nothing seems deader or more dated"⁵ than Fitzgerald's material. Here they echo The Saturday Review of Literature's obituary notice for Fitzgerald, in which Amy Loveman wrote:

The Jazz Age had no more complete expression than in the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald. That they are already to a great extent unread is perhaps the best testimony to the fact that the kind of society they portrayed is even now retreating into history.⁶

Martin Staples Shockley ended his 1954 reappraisal of Fitzgerald:

It is, I suggest, time to shush the Princeton locomotive, to sweep the wildly-thrown bouquets into the wastebasket, and to say, "Sit down in front." When that is done, responsible literary scholars may, with dignity, place upon Fitzgerald's brow the small and wilted laurel that is his.⁷

¹Lionel Trilling, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society (London: Mercury Books, 1961), p. 254. Hereafter referred to as Trilling.

²Albert J. Lubell, "The Fitzgerald Revival," The South Atlantic Quarterly, LIV (1955), 95.

³Ibid., 106.

⁴Leo and Miriam Gurko, "The Essence of F. Scott Fitzgerald," College English, V (1944), 376.

⁵Ibid., 372.

⁶Amy Loveman, "Fitzgerald and the Jazz Age," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXIII (January 4, 1941), 8.

⁷Martin Staples Shockley, "Harsh Will be the Morning," Arizona Quarterly, X (1954), 135.

But despite such clamorous nay-saying the reputation of Fitzgerald, once revived, has proved remarkably resilient; nourished by a steady flow of books and periodical articles, it shows healthy growth. Interest in Fitzgerald's works is by no means confined to literary circles; he reaches "the Common Reader." Even in England, all Fitzgerald's novels and his most important short stories are available in both paper-back and hard-back editions. There are now in print three introductory surveys of Fitzgerald's work, two biographies, a study of Fitzgerald in relation to the contemporaries who influenced him, two anthologies of essays on his life and work, a study of the manuscripts of Tender is the Night, and four examinations of various facets of his art. Books on Fitzgerald have been printed in Italian and Japanese.

In contrast to the opinion that Fitzgerald's work is dated, some writers have suggested that there are affinities between the age when Fitzgerald first flourished, and the post-Hiroshima era in which we live: Katherine Brégy wrote, in 1951: "We today, sickened by the Second World War and threatened by a Third, seem to face the same old epidemic of the Terrific Twenties - extravagance, drunken driving, promiscuity, nerves, political scandals."¹ Or, as a South African student put it, in 1951: "The 'twenties' have gone, and with them into history has disappeared the fevered beat of their particular rhythm. Another youth throbs its way to a premature burial, living with a different kind of madness and dying from a different kind of disillusionment."²

The interest in Fitzgerald perhaps begins in an interest in an age - the unfortunately named "Jazz Age" - or a man; where it goes

¹Katherine Brégy, "F.Scott Fitzgerald - Tragic Comedian," The Catholic World, CLXXIII (1951), 86.

²R.Segal, "Twilight Universe - a Short Essay on the Tragic Theme of Scott Fitzgerald's Novel, The Great Gatsby," Groote Schuur, (1951), 11.

deepest it becomes an interest in an artist and finally in an art that has at its best the impersonality of great art.

That Fitzgerald was capable of writing badly should be conceded at once; indeed, he could confess to Edmund Wilson, his "intellectual conscience"¹ as he called him, that he "really worked hard as hell last winter - but it was all trash and it nearly broke my heart."²

Shortly before he died, Fitzgerald is reported as having told Budd Schulberg that "nothing I ever write can be completely bad."³ But, although, in much of his poorer work, scattered sentences do suddenly come alive and glow, this claim of Fitzgerald's is not literally true.

Much of This Side of Paradise is frankly bad by rigorous standards. The Beautiful and Damned is probably the worst novel by any distinguished Twentieth Century writer to use the English language. Of the nearly 160 short stories Fitzgerald had published, he felt rightly ashamed of many. His best work is decidedly in the novel form and probably fewer than a dozen stories are comparable with those of Conrad, Forster and Lawrence, against whose work he judged his own.

The very best of Fitzgerald, however, is as good as any prose in this century in English. There is general critical agreement that The Great Gatsby is the major work in the Fitzgerald canon; critics such as Arthur Mizener who contest this opinion usually do so in Mizener's terms:

The scope of Tender is the Night is such that, for all the book's faults, its "philosophical" impact is unforgettable. It makes The Great Gatsby . . . seem neat and simple.⁴

Champions of Tender is the Night often quote Ernest Hemingway's remark:

¹The Crack-Up, p. 79.

²Andrew Turnbull (ed.), The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 341. Hereafter referred to as The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

³Andrew Turnbull, Scott Fitzgerald (London: Mayflower Books, 1964), p. 267. Hereafter referred to as Turnbull.

⁴Arthur Mizener, The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951), p. 251. Hereafter referred to as The Far Side of Paradise.

"A strange thing is that in retrospect [it] gets better and better";¹ the same is true of The Great Gatsby, however. It is best to note that the difference between the two books is one of kind. As Fitzgerald himself once remarked: "The intention in the two books was entirely different."²

Of all Fitzgerald's works, The Great Gatsby has been paid by far the greatest critical attention, but, like a many-faceted lyric poem or a multi-layered Shakespeare sonnet, it offers almost inexhaustible scope to the critic. (That it has inspired interpretation most kindly described as eccentric is a fate common to great writing; it is true of some of Shakespeare's greatest work, Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure, for example.) The attention given to The Great Gatsby in this thesis is an attempt to supplement as much as possible and overlap as little as possible with the best that has already been written on the book. Much more space has been devoted to discussing Tender is the Night, which has too often been treated vaguely, and remains a work with many complexities unilluminated. The treatment in this thesis makes no attempt to be definitive: this novel may well be Fitzgerald's "Mona Lisa," and this adaptation of Eliot's remark on Hamlet carries with it Eliot's suggestion of a limitation.³ (The problem has been complicated by the publication in 1951 of the version edited by Malcolm Cowley incorporating changes planned by Fitzgerald. Cowley's version is used for this consideration, for reasons which are made clear in Chapter Three.)

The Last Tycoon is the work that really divides Fitzgerald's critics: Arthur Mizener, who has written: "It seems to me difficult

¹The Far Side of Paradise, p. 239.

²The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 363.

³T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet," Selected Essays: 1917-1932 (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1932), p. 144.

to deny that The Last Tycoon is an extended exercise of a perception of great distinction in marvelously close contact with actual life,"¹ has also noted that "it is not easy to be just to an unfinished novel; everyone tends to read it according to his established bias about the author."² Otto Friedrich's comment exemplifies the hostility expressed towards The Last Tycoon:

The Fitzgerald legend requires that his last unfinished work be his greatest. Edmund Wilson, in publishing the first six chapters and the notes for the rest in 1941, called The Last Tycoon "Fitzgerald's most mature piece of work." From Stephen Vincent Benét and John Dos Passos and Alfred Kazin and a chorus of other admirers came a Gloria of agreement. The legend ignores the fact that most once-great writers, like ex-champions of the prize-ring "never come back," but it satisfies the poetic image of a Beethoven sketching his Tenth Symphony, a Mozart dying while trying to complete his Requiem Mass.³

Witnesses for the prosecution include The Times Literary Supplement reviewer, who wrote that "there is nothing in this final book to compare with The Great Gatsby,"⁴ Andrews Wanning, who wrote that The Last Tycoon "has been extravagantly over-estimated,"⁵ and Kenneth E. Eble, who posits that "the most that can be said is that Fitzgerald would probably have improved upon the completed chapters of the novel and enhanced the rather barren outline in finishing it."⁶ Among

¹Arthur Mizener (ed.), F.Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 168. Hereafter referred to as Mizener.

²The Far Side of Paradise, p. 292.

³Otto Friedrich, "F. Scott Fitzgerald: Money, Money, Money," The American Scholar, XXIX (1960), 403.

⁴"Power without Glory," The Times Literary Supplement, reprinted in Alfred Kazin (ed.), F.Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 211. Hereafter referred to as The Man and His Work.

⁵Andrews Wanning, "Fitzgerald and His Brethren," The Man and His Work, p. 167.

⁶Kenneth E.Eble, F.Scott Fitzgerald ("Twayne's United States Authors Series"; New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), p. 148. Hereafter referred to as Eble.

those lined up for the defence are James E. Miller, Jr.,¹ K.G.W. Cross,² Henry Dan Piper,³ William Goldhurst⁴ and Charles E. Shain,⁵ all of whom have written studies of Fitzgerald; this fact suggests that Mizener is correct in implying that those most sympathetic to Fitzgerald are likely to rank The Last Tycoon highly. In an attempt to throw new light on the novel, this thesis supplements a study of that work with an appendix which analyses Fitzgerald's picture of Hollywood in relation to its examination by other novelists, dramatists, sociologists, etc. (It should be stressed that this appendix makes no attempt to provide an exhaustive study of works on Hollywood, which would be a thesis on its own.) The appendix may help in an evaluation of Fitzgerald's achievement as a novelist of society.

My answer to the second question persistently raised, whether Fitzgerald justifies the attention he is currently given, is partly implied in the fact that I have undertaken this study. But my assent is qualified, and I believe Fitzgerald's reputation can be sustained best by separating the good from the bad, and concentrating attention on the later novels; he is not a major writer in absolute terms, but his best writing attains a richness and resonance which entitle him to more than "the small and wilted laurel" of Professor Martin Staples Shockley.

¹James E. Miller, Jr., F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and His Technique (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 148-58. Hereafter referred to as Miller.

²K.G.W. Cross, Scott Fitzgerald ("Writers and Critics"; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), pp. 99-108. Hereafter referred to as Cross.

³Piper, pp. 258-86.

⁴William Goldhurst, F. Scott Fitzgerald and His Contemporaries (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 223-28. Hereafter referred to as Goldhurst.

⁵Charles E. Shain, F. Scott Fitzgerald ("University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers"; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961), pp. 44-45. Hereafter referred to as Shain.

Finally, a word on the methodology of this thesis: no attempt has been made to fit into a strait jacket of theme the responses evinced by the various novels, although a special interest has been shown in Fitzgerald's handling of themes of morality where these are evident. Each novel dictates its own treatment, and this is further circumscribed by the handling of the novels by published critics; there would be little purpose in repeating conclusions reached before. What underlies the approach of this thesis is the belief, widespread if not commonplace, that criticism should always keep close to the text and avoid generalisations where possible. This does not apply to the appendix, which is an attempt by one with no training as sociologist or anthropologist to draw conclusions inevitably trespassing on the grounds of the specialists. Here literary judgements are often secondary and cursory.

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY NOVELS

By the time Fitzgerald was twenty-five he had published his first two novels, This Side of Paradise¹ and The Beautiful and Damned,² and become famous. Looking back on those works the reader, judging strictly on literary grounds, can find little to account for the enthusiasm they aroused. Had they been all Fitzgerald wrote he would have been almost forgotten now, except perhaps as a footnote in American literary history. Their popularity on publication was linked with the mood of the times, and This Side of Paradise helped to introduce new figures in what was becoming a cult of youth in revolt against the older generation. But the writing of both is flashy and uneven, often pretentious and unintentionally amusing. They show little evidence of artistic skill and discipline, and the sudden maturation of Fitzgerald with the writing of The Great Gatsby is not at all adumbrated. It took the critical insight of Edmund Wilson to predict that "his restless imagination may yet produce something durable."³ When it is remembered that Wilson was writing in 1922, just after the publication of The Beautiful and Damned, this seems to be a remark born of the most reckless generosity. It appears, however, in an article on Fitzgerald which shows great insight into the weaknesses of Fitzgerald's early writing, but points out that "he has

¹F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963). Hereafter referred to as This Side of Paradise.

²F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966). Hereafter referred to as The Beautiful and Damned.

³Edmund Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," A Literary Chronicle: 1920-1950 (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 35. Hereafter referred to as Wilson.

an instinct for graceful and vivid prose that some of his more pretentious fellows might envy."¹ Indeed, so good is Wilson's article that it remains the best general survey of Fitzgerald's early work. If it is complemented by Miller's analysis of Fitzgerald's first two novels,² little is left to be said of these works.

This Side of Paradise is focused on the growing up of its central character, Amory Blaine, in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century, and this gives the book what unity it has.

From the opening of the book Fitzgerald shows in flashes what Wilson called his "Irish gift for turning language into something iridescent and surprising"³:

Amory Blaine inherited from his mother every trait, except the stray inexpressible few, that made him worth while. His father, an ineffectual, inarticulate man with a taste for Byron and a habit of drowsing over the Encyclopaedia Britannica, grew wealthy at thirty through the death of two older brothers, successful Chicago brokers, and in the first flush of feeling that the world was his, went to Bar Harbor and met Beatrice O'Hara. In consequence, Stephen Blaine handed down to posterity his height of just under six feet and his tendency to waver at crucial moments, these two abstractions appearing in his son Amory. For many years he hovered in the background of his family's life, an unassertive figure with a face half-obliterated by lifeless, silky hair, continually occupied in 'taking care' of his wife, continually harassed by the idea that he didn't and couldn't understand her.⁴

Stephen Blaine comes to puzzled and enervated life immediately in this paragraph; his aspirations - suggested by his reading habits - and his ineffectuality comically contradict each other. One does not feel contempt for the man but rather sympathy. Fitzgerald's pace is brisk and the reader is plunged into the book.

In the second paragraph Fitzgerald's touch is less sure and he displays an ambivalent attitude towards wealth which is to recur in

¹Wilson, p. 32.

²Miller, pp. 2-78.

³Wilson, p. 33.

⁴This Side of Paradise, p.11.

much of his early writing. His two opening ejaculations - "But Beatrice Blaine! There was a woman!"¹ - suggest an absurd awe and reverence, and he similarly shows a relish for the "educational extravagance that in her youth was only for the daughters of the exceptionally wealthy . . . the exquisite delicacy of her features, the consummate art and simplicity of her clothes."² Malcolm Cowley has said of Fitzgerald that "he cultivated a sort of double vision. . . . He surrounded his characters with a mist of admiration and simultaneously he drove the mist away."³ Although Fitzgerald's attitude to Beatrice tends to be adulatory, he can criticize her culture sharply as "barren of all ideas."⁴ Here he blows some of the mist away.

In his criticism of Beatrice, Fitzgerald sketches the type to which she belongs, the deracinated American rich with more money than sense:

The Blaines were attached to no city. They were the Blaines of Lake Geneva; they had quite enough relatives to serve in place of friends, and an enviable standing from Pasadena to Cape Cod. But Beatrice grew more and more prone to like only new acquaintances, as there were certain stories, such as the history of her constitution and its many amendments, memories of her years abroad, that it was necessary for her to repeat at regular intervals.⁵

Fitzgerald's criticism in this passage is sharp and his wit tart (for example, his reference to Beatrice's constitution and its amendments), but often Beatrice is too ridiculous to merit attention, and the reader is relieved when she fades into the background and Fitzgerald focuses on Amory, who is at least not set in his pattern of life yet. What is interesting about Fitzgerald's treatment of Beatrice is that it shows his first skirmish with the class that was to become an absorbing

¹This Side of Paradise, p. 11.

²Ibid.

³Malcolm Cowley, "Third Act and Epilogue," Mizener, p.66.

⁴This Side of Paradise, p. 11.

⁵Ibid., p. 13.

subject in his writing, the irresponsible rich. Fitzgerald's fascination with this class has often been simplified, as in the famous anecdote about his remark: "The very rich are different from you and me," to which Hemingway is supposed to have replied: "Yes, they have more money."¹ A few months before he died Fitzgerald wrote, in a letter to Edmund Wilson:

[John Peale Bishop] reproached me with being a suck around the the rich. I've had this before but nobody seems able to name these rich. I always thought my progress was in the other direction - Tommy Hitchcock and the two Murphys are not a long list of rich friends for one who, unlike John, grew up among nothing else but. I don't even know any of the people in "café society."²

A careful examination of Fitzgerald's novels shows that in his best writings this charge is completely inaccurate. Indeed, in both The Great Gatsby and Tender is the Night the criticism of the representatives of the idle rich, the Buchanans and the Warrens, is biting. But Fitzgerald was also always conscious in his writing of what Gatsby feels, "the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, . . . safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor."³ With its explicit egalitarianism and the great rise of the entrepreneur class, America in Fitzgerald's time offered many nuances that were fascinating to the novelist of social manners. What Henry James missed in American society, and one of the things that made him take up residence in Europe, was new and fluid in Fitzgerald's time. Apropos of the exchange between Fitzgerald and Hemingway, Trilling has written:

The truth is that after a certain point quantity of money does indeed change into quality of personality: in an important sense the very rich are different from us. So are the very powerful, the very gifted, the very poor. Fitzgerald was right, and almost for that remark alone he must surely have been received in Balzac's bosom in the heaven of the novelists.⁴

¹See footnote in Mizener, p. 14.

²The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 349.

³The Great Gatsby, p. 114.

⁴Trilling, p. 214.

After the death of Stephen Blaine, who "had been rather badly singed"¹ by gambles in oil, and Beatrice's squandering of a great deal of money, "the entire residue of the Blaine and O'Hara fortunes consisted of the place at Lake Geneva and approximately a half million dollars."² This is quite a residue; but by the end of the book bad investments reduce Amory to genteel poverty and the inconclusive contemplation of socialism, the attractions of which are complicated by his deep distaste for the poor. In conversation with a rich man, who is portrayed by Fitzgerald with the crudity of a comic strip, Amory refers distastefully to "your class; the class I belonged to until recently; those who by inheritance or industry or brains or dishonesty have become the moneyed class."³ However, Amory feels that "the lower classes are narrower, less pleasant, and personally more selfish - certainly more stupid."⁴ Here Amory, and Fitzgerald, seem similar in attitude to Shaw, referred to on a number of occasions in the book, who believed that the sooner the "working class" was abolished the better.⁵ This Side of Paradise is partly concerned with what Fitzgerald aimed at portraying in Tender is the Night, "a man like myself brought up in a family sunk from haute bourgeoisie to petit bourgeoisie,"⁶ and this is the class situation he understood best from personal experience; he was also interested in the man who had risen "from rags to riches" like his characters Gatsby and Stahr, and those who had inherited wealth, like the Buchanans and Warrens.

¹This Side of Paradise, p. 97.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 243.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Arland Ussher, Three Great Irishmen: Shaw, Yeats, Joyce (New York: New American Library, 1957), p. 19. "G.B.S. certainly hated poverty more than he loved the poor - of whom he was wont to say, with gruff geniality, that he wanted simply to exterminate them."

⁶The Far Side of Paradise, p. 308.

But, although he once claimed he was "essentially Marxian,"¹ Fitzgerald was not interested in the class war as such, nor did he have much understanding of politics; Amory's remark about the Russian Revolution ("I've no doubt that it's really a great experiment and well worth while"²) prefigures no sustained interest for Fitzgerald in Russian Communism. In a letter to Edmund Wilson in 1933, he wrote: "I left politics to you and your gang in 1920,"³ but in a letter to Maxwell Perkins in 1940 he showed that he still kept an observer's interest in world events and their interpreters: "[Spengler] and Marx are the only modern philosophers that still manage to make sense in this horrible mess."⁴ Where Fitzgerald in his early work goes further than an interest in individuals and institutions is in his concern with the battle of the generations, and the war all men wage against Time.

This Side of Paradise was not a coherent manifesto calling on flaming youth to rebel; it was rather, as Wilson wrote, "a gesture of indefinite revolt";⁵ the response to the gesture was probably greater than it would have been had the book been better or less indefinite:

To Scribner's amazement the first printing sold out within twenty-four hours . . . it . . . appeared on the Bookman's monthly list of national best sellers, and by the year's end it had sold close to fifty thousand copies - more than any other Scribner novel that season.⁶

Fitzgerald's sketch of Amory's childhood shows him as a precocious boy generating hostility from his peers and forced to adapt himself to a world that is less indulgent than his mother. Amory is little better than his shallow and pretentious mother, and Fitzgerald

¹The Crack-Up, p. 176.

²This Side of Paradise, p. 247.

³The Letters of S. Scott Fitzgerald p. 345.

⁴Ibid., p. 290.

⁵Wilson, p. 31.

⁶Piper, pp. 41-42.

does relate his criticism of Amory to his ridiculous upbringing. But the older Amory becomes, the more Fitzgerald seems to identify with him, and the broad comic strokes of the opening section of the book change to a narcissism that probably led to easy identification of the immature reader with the hero, and had something to do with the book's popular success.

Beatrice's role as mentor is taken over by the Roman Catholic priest, Monsignor Darcy, who is "quite the cardinal's right-hand man"¹ and treats Amory "as a contemporary,"² when he is not trying to relive his youth through him. Fitzgerald takes for granted but never establishes a disinterested patronage and real wisdom in the Monsignor.

Amory, we are told but not shown, impresses the Monsignor's friend, the historian and diplomat, Thornton Hancock. Amory

was quite radiant and gave off a peculiar brightness and charm. Monsignor called out the best that he had thought by question and suggestion, and Amory talked with an ingenious brilliance of a thousand impulses and desires and repulsions and faiths and fears. He and Monsignor held the floor, and the older man, with his less receptive, less accepting, yet certainly not colder mentality, seemed content to listen and bask in the mellow sunshine that played between these two.

.....
'He's a radiant boy,' thought Thornton Hancock, who had seen the splendour of two continents and talked with Parnell and Gladstone and Bismarck.³

The claims that are made for Amory are nowhere backed up with evidence of more than a certain precocity, and Fitzgerald's attempt to dazzle the reader with this report is quite lost in the bathos of the next paragraph:

For the next four years the best of Amory's intellect was concentrated on matters of popularity, the intricacies of a university social system and American Society as represented by Biltmore Teas and Hot Springs golf-links.⁴

¹This Side of Paradise, p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 31.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., pp. 31-32.

That the prodigy should so squander his genius is unbelievable, but the confidence and brio of Fitzgerald's prose help to offset the absurdity. Fitzgerald's lack of artistic control is such that the reader is left uncertain whether his bathos is perhaps deliberate and ironic. However, this is not just one case, but characteristic, and it shows a vast gap between the seriousness with which the author takes his hero and the scepticism of the reader's response. Furthermore, and this is a factor that decreases the book's impact considerably, Amory is too weak and unrepresentative to bear the weight of his generation's revolt.

Fitzgerald is not, of course, completely uncritical of Amory. At school Amory suffers for his laziness and showing off, but when he reaches sixth-form status and success on the sports field, these weaknesses are treated more indulgently; they are factors that lead him to select Princeton as his university, with its "alluring reputation as the pleasantest country club in America."¹

Far from developing his individuality, Princeton, with its rigid hierarchy and entrenched customs, encourages Amory's conformity. About these Amory develops a critical spirit, but he accepts them all the same. He decides "to be one of the gods of the class"² and takes up football, but a wrenched knee frustrates this ambition. Fitzgerald deals with his social ambitions without irony, which would have prevented some of the solemn ridiculousness of many passages dealing with Princeton, where Fitzgerald and Amory treat with reverence trivial issues and local figures. Time and again Fitzgerald fails to provide the detachment and perspective necessary to avoid over-solemnity.

Part of Fitzgerald's problem in writing This Side of Paradise was the question of tone; he transcribed the experiences of his contemporaries and himself and provided a window on the post-war

¹This Side of Paradise, p. 40.

²Ibid., p. 46.

generation. In as much as Fitzgerald was describing a phenomenon that was new and exciting, the reader can sympathise with the mixture of daring and shock in the tone; Mizener has said: "Fitzgerald was the first to describe [casual drinking and petting] as new, daring and admirable,"¹ but Fitzgerald's attitude is ambiguous. What Cowley called Fitzgerald's "double vision" is evident in his passages dealing with "the cities between New York and Chicago as one vast juvenile intrigue."² There is even explicit moralising in this (somewhat absurd) passage:

Amory saw girls doing things that even in his memory would have been impossible: eating three o'clock, after-dance suppers in impossible cafés, 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 let-down.³

But Cross is correct in asserting that

as spokesman for his generation Fitzgerald dared to question the moral assumptions of the established order, and loudly proclaimed the emancipation of twentieth-century American youth from the inhibiting restrictions of the past.⁴

In common with most books that engage in special pleading, This Side of Paradise does not give much opportunity for the opposition to speak, and the adult most carefully delineated is that turncoat, the Peter Pannish Monsignor Darcy. Mr Margotson, the senior master at St Regis, is called a "damn old fool"⁵ for his troubles when he tactlessly tries to help the unpopular Amory; Amory describes the authorities at Princeton as "silly old men"⁶ because his inability to "profit by conic sections"⁷ disqualifies him from football; Mr Barlow, the head of the

¹The Far Side of Paradise, p. 98.

²This Side of Paradise, p.60.

³Ibid.

⁴Cross, p. 22.

⁵This Side of Paradise, p. 34.

⁶Ibid., p. 249.

⁷Ibid.

advertising agency that Amory works for briefly, is unsympathetically handled and stereotyped; the businessman and his chauffeur who argue with Amory are clearly a villainous couple, and middle-aged to boot.

The champion of the killjoy older generation does not appear in This Side of Paradise but in Fitzgerald's second novel, The Beautiful and Damned. He is the grandfather of the novel's central character, and on him Fitzgerald unleashes all his scorn and fury:

Adam J. Patch . . . came home from the war a major, charged into Wall Street, and amid much fuss, fume, applause, and ill will he gathered to himself some seventy-five million dollars.

This occupied his energies until he was fifty-seven years old. It was then that he determined, after a severe attack of sclerosis, to consecrate the remainder of his life to the moral regeneration of the world. He became a reformer among reformers. Emulating the magnificent efforts of Anthony Comstock, after whom his grandson was named, he levelled a varied assortment of uppercuts and body-blows at liquor, literature, vice, art, patent medicines, and Sunday theatres. His mind, under the influence of that insidious mildew which eventually forms on all but the few, gave itself up furiously to every indignation of the age. From an armchair in the office of his Tarrytown estate he directed against the enormous hypothetical enemy, unrighteousness, a campaign which went on through fifteen years, during which he displayed himself a rabid monomaniac, an unqualified nuisance, and an intolerable bore.¹

This description is a fine piece of demolition, but it relies too much on a formula: Adam Patch is literally an armchair moralist, and his ~~conversion~~ ^{conversion} is linked with an attack of sclerosis which makes him a man involved very much in an attempt to bribe God. A more complex figure would have made less of an Aunt Sally.

In his most mature early work, The Diamond as Big as the Ritz² (an adroit mixture of fantasy and allegory marred only by the contrived and whimsical ending), the father of Braddock Washington is involved "in a long epic in gold."³ With savage irony Fitzgerald

¹The Beautiful and Damned, p. 10.

²F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965). Hereafter referred to as The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories.

³"The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories, p. 108.

writes that after Washington has murdered his brother, "very few other murders stained these happy years of progress and expansion."¹

Braddock Washington, too, attempts to bribe God, but in a more spectacular way than Adam Patch:

There was no one else with whom he had ever needed to treat or bargain.

He doubted only whether he had made his bribe big enough. God had His price, of course. God was made in man's image, so it had been said: He must have His price.²

Compared to these revolting old men, Amory Blaine comes off very well. But Fitzgerald has loaded the dice: though Amory is no knight in shining armour, the enemies of his world are shown as dragons. However, the dragons on close inspection prove to be made of papier-mâché. The battle between the generations is one-sided and lacks interest. Fortunately Fitzgerald's mature work shows little sign of this early preoccupation.

One more aspect of This Side of Paradise needs to be considered: Amory's relationship with girls. In an age when "the 'belle' had become the 'flirt', the 'flirt' had become the 'baby vamp,'"³ an interest in the typology of the female of the species seems obsessive with Fitzgerald; one would expect Amory's romantic adventures to make rewarding reading. Alas, little distinguishes the girls in This Side of Paradise; they are all day-dream figures from the mythology of the time, Georgian, Gothic and American, based on examples Fitzgerald knew. In the closing pages of the book Amory looks back on them with charming absurdity:

Alec had a coarse taste in women. Own taste the best; Isabelle, Clara, Rosalind, Eleanor, were all-American. Eleanor would pitch, probably southpaw. Rosalind was outfield, wonderful hitter, Clara first base, maybe.⁴

¹"The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories, p. 108.

²Ibid., p. 133.

³This Side of Paradise, p. 61.

⁴Ibid., p. 233.

Mizener has praised the dialogue of the lovers in This Side of Paradise in the following terms:

[Fitzgerald] had a fine ear, and the speech of the characters in This Side of Paradise is completely convincing. The immaturity of the conversations on supposedly intellectual subjects between Burne Holiday and Amory or the touchingly egocentric lovemaking of Amory and Rosalind is as evident as it because Fitzgerald's dialogue is very good.¹

But Fitzgerald shows nowhere in This Side of Paradise that he knows the difference between mature and immature conversation, or that he realises the falsity of the characters' love-making. Here is an example of the conversation between Rosalind and Amory at their first meeting, which, for no apparent reason, Fitzgerald has cast in dramatic form:

HE (after due consideration): Listen. This is a frightful thing to ask.
 SHE (knowing what's coming): After five minutes.
 HE: But will you - kiss me? Or are you afraid?
 SHE: I'm never afraid - but your reasons are so poor.
 HE: Rosalind, I really want to kiss you.
 SHE: So do I.
 (They kiss - definitely and thoroughly.)
 HE (after a breathless second): Well, is your curiosity satisfied?
 SHE: Is yours?
 HE: No, it's only aroused.
 (He looks it.)
 SHE (dreamily): I've kissed dozens of men. I suppose I'll kiss dozens more.
 HE (abstractedly): Yes, I suppose you could - like that.
 SHE: Most people like the way I kiss.
 HE (remembering himself): Good Lord, yes. Kiss me once more, Rosalind.²

This may have been daring and even shocking in 1920. Today it is only silly and banal; Fitzgerald may have served a sociological function, recording the trivia of an era, but he has not made it artistically meaningful.

The Beautiful and Damned is a tedious novel; it lacks the documentary interest of This Side of Paradise (which had, withal, glimmerings of a real poetic talent and occasional sparkle), and it has

¹The Far Side of Paradise, p. 101.

²This Side of Paradise, p. 160.

none of the intelligence and artistry of The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night and The Last Tycoon. The Beautiful and Damned is confused in intention and its characters lack the interest necessary to sustain a novel. Wilson said of This Side of Paradise that it "commits almost every sin that a novel can possibly commit: but it does not commit the unpardonable sin: it does not fail to live."¹ Although The Beautiful and Damned is less gauche than This Side of Paradise and is better organised, it does commit Wilson's unpardonable sin: the book is lifeless.

The central characters, Anthony Patch and his beautiful wife, Gloria, are of very limited interest to the reader, and their marriage has no frame of reference to place it; emptiness and vapidness can be made the subject-matter of art, but they need a sureness of touch and an insight and perspective that Fitzgerald lacked when he wrote this novel. The reader cares about the disintegration of the Diver marriage in Tender is the Night because he has been made to feel the quality and potential of Dick; but the reader cannot concern himself with the problems of the Patches who are idle and dull and only sit about waiting for the death of Anthony's grandfather and their inheritance. Anthony Patch is introduced, after a badly managed image, "irony, the Holy Ghost of this later day,"² as wondering

frequently whether he is not without honour and slightly mad, a shameful and obscene thinness glistening on the surface of the world like oil on a clean pond, these occasions being varied, of course, with those in which he thinks himself rather an exceptional young man, thoroughly sophisticated, well adjusted to his environment, and somewhat more significant than any one else he knows.³

This is clumsy and unconvincing, and Fitzgerald's lack of verbal facility is surprisingly evident in even the first paragraph of the

¹Wilson, p. 31.

²The Beautiful and Damned, p. 9.

³Ibid.

novel. But worse is still to come:

He considered that he would one day accomplish some quiet subtle thing that the elect would deem worthy and, passing on, would join the dimmer stars in a nebulous, indeterminate heaven half-way between death and immortality. Until the time came for this effort he would be Anthony Patch - not a portrait of a man but a distinct and dynamic personality, opinionated, contemptuous, functioning from within outward - a man who was aware that there could be no honour and yet had honour, who knew the sophistry of courage and yet was brave.¹

Miller² has shown that Fitzgerald weeded out some paragraphs like this from the magazine version of the story when he prepared the novel for book form, and Piper³ gives examples of the revision and polishing of The Great Gatsby that show Fitzgerald's capacity for recognising his tendency to overblown passages and awkward locutions. Unfortunately, this had not developed far enough when he published The Beautiful and Damned. These are among the book's most common weaknesses. One continually feels a straining after poetic effect and impressive resonance which results only in the worst kind of portentousness. The intimation of Gloria at the end of Chapter One, entitled "A Flash-back in Paradise" (rich in unintentional comedy), is probably the nadir of this sort of thing:

Beauty, who was born anew every hundred years, sat in a sort of outdoor waiting-room through which blew gusts of white wind and occasionally a breathless hurried star. The stars winked at her intimately as they went by and the winds made a soft incessant flurry in her hair. She was incomprehensible, for, in her, soul and spirit were one - the beauty of her body was the essence of her soul. She was that unity sought for by philosophers through many centuries. In this outdoor waiting-room of winds and stars she had been sitting for a hundred years, at peace in the contemplation of herself.

It became known to her, at length, that she was to be born again. Sighing, she began a long conversation with a voice that was in the white wind, a conversation that took many hours and of which I can give only a fragment here.

¹The Beautiful and Damned, p. 9.

²Miller, p. 64.

³Piper, pp. 141-42.

BEAUTY (her lips scarcely stirring, her eyes turned, as always, inward upon herself): Whither shall I journey now?

THE VOICE: To a new country - a land you have never seen before.

BEAUTY (petulantly): I loathe breaking into these new civilizations. How long a stay this time?

THE VOICE: Fifteen years.

BEAUTY: And what's the name of the place?

THE VOICE: It is the most opulent, most gorgeous land on earth - a land whose wisest are but little wiser than its dullest; a land where the rulers have minds like little children and the law-givers believe in Santa Claus; where ugly women control strong men -

BEAUTY (in astonishment): What?

THE VOICE (very much depressed): Yes, it is truly a melancholy spectacle. Women with receding chins and shapeless noses go about in broad daylight saying 'Do this!' and 'Do that!' and all the men, even those of great wealth, obey implicitly their women to whom they refer sonorously either as 'Mrs So-and-so' or as 'the wife'.

BEAUTY: But this can't be true! I can understand, of course, their obedience to women of charm - but to fat women? to bony women? to women with scrawny cheeks?

THE VOICE: Even so.

BEAUTY: What of me? What chance shall I have?

THE VOICE: It will be 'harder going', if I may borrow a phrase.

BEAUTY (after a dissatisfied pause): Why not the old lands, the land of grapes and soft-tongued men or the land of ships and seas?

THE VOICE: It's expected that they'll be very busy shortly.

BEAUTY: Oh!

THE VOICE: Your life on earth will be, as always, the interval between two significant glances in a mundane mirror.

BEAUTY: What will I be? Tell me?

THE VOICE: At first it was thought that you would go this time as an actress in the motion-pictures but, after all, it's not advisable. You will be disguised during your fifteen years as what is called a 'susciety gurl'.

BEAUTY: What's that?

(There is a new sound in the wind which must for our purposes be interpreted as THE VOICE scratching its head.)

THE VOICE (at length). It's a sort of bogus aristocrat.

BEAUTY: Bogus? What is bogus?

THE VOICE: That, too, you will discover in this land. You will find much that is bogus. Also, you will do much that is bogus.

BEAUTY (placidly): It all sounds so vulgar.

THE VOICE: Not half as vulgar as it is. You will be known during your fifteen years as a ragtime kid, a flapper, a jazz-baby, and a baby vamp. You will dance new dances neither more nor less gracefully than you danced the old ones.

BEAUTY (in a whisper): Will I be paid?

THE VOICE: Yes, as usual - in love.

BEAUTY (With a faint laugh which disturbs only momentarily the immobility of her lips): And will I like being called a jazz-baby?

THE VOICE (soberly): You will love it. . . .

(The dialogue ends here, with BEAUTY still sitting quietly, the stars pausing in an ecstacy of appreciation, the wind, white and gusty, blowing through her hair.

All this took place seven years before ANTHONY sat by the front windows of his apartment and listened to the chimes of

St Anne's.)¹

The satire directed against America, though wild and undergraduate in quality, is not completely off target, but the ridiculous situation and the absurd dialogue show Fitzgerald at his very worst.

Anthony's rebelliousness, which should stake his claim to the reader's attention, is more coherent but less interesting than that of Amory Blaine in This Side of Paradise, Gloria, who shares with Rosalind in This Side of Paradise a deep concern with the tanning of her legs, is even less demanding of life. Anthony wants to be

gracefully idle. . . . I don't understand why people think that every young man ought to go down-town and work ten hours a day for the best twenty years of his life at dull, unimaginative work.²

Gloria says:

I want to just be lazy and I want some of the people around me to be doing things, because that makes me feel comfortable and safe - and I want some of them to be doing nothing at all, because they can be graceful and companionable for me.³

Gloria and Anthony live on the surface of the prosperity of an expanding economy, oblivious to the momentary choppiness of labour disturbances (although Fitzgerald was aware of them and used one in his short story, "May Day"⁴). Their cultivated languor is an obvious and exaggerated rebellion against the Victorian emphasis on the holiness of labour and the Protestant work-ethic⁵ that had long bolstered up capitalism. As for the demands of a social conscience, the irrelevance of this is shown by the disillusionment of Anthony's friend, Richard Caramel, who ventures "into the slums of New York to muck about with bewildered Italians as secretary to an 'Alien Young Men's Rescue Association.'"⁶

¹The Beautiful and Damned, pp. 28-30.

²Ibid., p.58.

³Ibid.

⁴The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories, p. 31.

⁵Robert W.Green (ed.), Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and Its Critics ("Problems in European Civilization"; Boston: D.C.Heath and Company, 1959), pp. 6-20.

⁶The Beautiful and Damned, p. 65.

As for politics, Anthony

tried to imagine himself in Congress rooting around in the litter of that incredible pigsty with the narrow and porcine brows he saw pictured sometimes in the rotogravure sections of the Sunday newspapers, those glorified proletarians babbling blandly to the nation the ideas of high-school seniors! 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.¹

Anthony has his grandfather's millions to look forward to, and meanwhile, "in justification of his manner of living there was first, of course, *The Meaninglessness of Life*."²

Despite the promise of the novel's title, one feels that the Devil doesn't find much work for the idle hands of Anthony and Gloria. Gloria's sins run to carelessness about sending out the laundry and recklessness at the steering-wheel of a car; Anthony gets involved in squalid adultery while at an officer's training camp; together they drink and live a life of parties and casual unfaithfulness, but their sins are so half-hearted and mindless that they hardly qualify for damnation. Instead they live in a sort of limbo of unconsciousness.

Similarly Anthony's friends, Richard Caramel, who prostitutes what little talent he has to become a best-selling novelist, and Maury Noble, who is responsible for a long dull passage of "philosophizing," are never developed enough to become meaningful and interest the reader in their fate.

Anthony's grandfather discovers that Anthony and Gloria are living dissolute lives and disinherits them; on his death Anthony embarks on a protracted law suit to contest the will. When the case is eventually settled in his favour, Anthony and Gloria set out for a cruise on the *Borengeria*. To onlookers Anthony is seen as "a little

¹The Beautiful and Damned, p. 50.

²Ibid., p. 49.

crazy"¹ and Gloria as "sort of dyed and unclean."² But Fitzgerald ends the novel on what can be ambiguously read as an ironic or an unintentionally absurd note of triumph, with Anthony glorying in his victory: "'I showed them,' he was saying. 'It was a hard fight, but I didn't give up and I came through!'"³

The Beautiful and Damned has been justly ignored by writers on Fitzgerald other than those attempting comprehensive studies; among these there is general agreement that the book is a failure. Piper has probably been the most charitable about it, but he praises it in strictly limited terms and gives more space to discussing the book's influences than its merits. Piper admires particularly "the last third of the book . . . not only the most dramatic but contains the best writing,"⁴ and talks of "the power of The Beautiful and Damned";⁵ Cross calls it "an artistic failure. . . . An over-ambitious attempt";⁶ Eble says "The Beautiful and Damned is a failure";⁷ Shain writes: "It was the first and least convincing of what were going to be three studies of American failures";⁸ Mizener talks of "a confusion of the novel's purpose, . . . increased by Fitzgerald's disregard for form";⁹ but, with Eble, believes that it is a technical improvement on This Side of Paradise. Wilson said this when the book first came out:

¹The Beautiful and Damned, p. 363.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 364.

⁴Piper, p. 94.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Cross, p. 35.

⁷Eble, p. 73.

⁸Shain, p. 28.

⁹The Far Side of Paradise, p. 139.

"The Beautiful and Damned, imperfect though it is, marks an advance over This Side of Paradise: the style is more nearly mature and the subject more solidly unified.

It was Wilson who put his finger on the main problem of

The Beautiful and Damned:

Since writing This Side of Paradise - on the inspiration of Wells and Mackenzie - Fitzgerald has become acquainted with a different school of fiction: the ironical-pessimistic. In college, he had supposed that the thing to do was to write biographical novels with a burst of ideas toward the close; since his advent in the literary world, he has discovered that another genre has recently come into favor: the kind which makes much of the tragedy and what Mencken has called "the meaninglessness of life." Fitzgerald had imagined, hitherto, that the thing to do in a novel was to bring out a meaning in life; but he now set bravely about it to contrive a shattering tragedy that should be, also, a hundred-percent meaningless.²

At this stage there is no point in adding another lengthy post mortem to a book best forgotten.

¹Wilson, p.36.

²Ibid., pp. 34-35. This quotation is taken out of context, but applies to the final as well as the earlier version of The Beautiful and Damned.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GREAT GATSBY

Two brief extracts from Fitzgerald's letters illuminate The Great Gatsby more than most of the critical approaches to this much-analysed book. When he was contemplating the work he wrote to his editor, Maxwell Perkins of Scribner's: "I want to write something new - something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately patterned."¹ And at the end of his life Fitzgerald wrote to his daughter: "Sometimes I wish I had gone along with [Cole Porter and Rogers and Hart] , but I guess I am too much a moralist at heart and really want to preach at people in some acceptable form rather than to entertain them."² (Of course, the moralist and the entertainer are not mutually exclusive - Dickens at his best and Shakespeare prove this - but it is clear from Fitzgerald's context that he is thinking of mere entertainers.) This retrospective comment on his choice of the novelist's vocation will probably surprise those who know only his first two novels, but an examination of The Great Gatsby shows Fitzgerald combining the roles of artist and moralist with perfect harmony. And the enthusiastic response of fellow artists such as Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein and T.S.Eliot suggests what has been established subsequently by the best criticism of The Great Gatsby: that Fitzgerald succeeded in his aim of writing "something new - something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately

¹The Far Side of Paradise, p. 170.

²The Letters of F.Scott Fitzgerald, p. 63.

patterned." Eliot's remarks are worth quoting here:

It has interested and excited me more than any new novel I have seen, either English or American, for a number of years.

It seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James.¹

The sudden burgeoning of Fitzgerald's art has been the subject of much speculation by critics, and the diverse influences of Thackeray, Henry James, Dostoevsky, Willa Cather, Ring Lardner, Joseph Conrad and Eliot himself have been adduced; Miller speaks with a certain authority² when he says: "Probably the greatest influence on Fitzgerald during the gestation period of The Great Gatsby was Joseph Conrad."³ But the mysteries of the artistic process will always remain to some extent secret, and the critic can best respond to the maturity of The Great Gatsby with gratitude and not too much concern about influences.

The central issue of the novel is the validity of the moral judgement made overtly by the narrator, Nick Carraway, when he tells Gatsby: "They're a rotten crowd. . . . You're worth the whole damn bunch put together."⁴ The condemnation is specifically of the rich Buchanans, but extends to most of the other characters in the book. The authority with which Nick says this is justified only if the novel is seen, in part, as the story of the moral education of Nick, who moves - in the course of living through the events he relates - from flippancy to wisdom, from detachment to commitment. The central character of the novel may be the doomed Gatsby, but Fitzgerald makes the reader identify with Nick Carraway and undertake a spiritual journey akin to his voyage of discovery.

¹Frederick J. Hoffman (ed.), The Great Gatsby: A Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 178-79.

²See Piper, pp. 129-33.

³Miller, p. 92.

⁴The Great Gatsby, p. 117.

Nick reveals himself to the reader as a likeable young man, quizzically ironic about himself and sympathetic to others. He explains that he is always mindful of certain advice given to him by his father, about reserving judgement, and remembering that others might not have had his advantages. But although the reader is impressed with the need to reserve judgements on the characters of the novel, it is also made clear to him that this reservation must not be indefinite; there is also a need for judgements to be made. Even Nick Carraway's tolerance has a limit: "Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on."¹ His tone suggests the reaching of the end of a tether and the snapping of patience. (The biblical echo [St Matthew, Chapter 7, Verses 24-27] reminds one of Christ's infinite patience with the weak and his steely anger with the wicked.) "When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever."² The smouldering of Nick's anger is evident, although it gives rise to a faintly ridiculous hyperbole. It is the sort of image to be expected from one normally given to the whimsical, and not to be ignored for that reason. "Only Gatsby . . . was exempt from my reaction - Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn."³ The reader is intrigued by the paradox of a man of professed tolerance expressing profound moral revulsion, which has a greater weight because of his normal restraint. From this revulsion one exception is made, yet this man represents that which the narrator despises. A hint of the reason for this paradox is given in the mention of Gatsby's dreams, and his "extraordinary gift for hope"⁴ which links him with Nick, who says

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 3.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid, p. 4.

that "reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope."¹

The reader, however, cannot automatically take the narrator's word for it; he has to be convinced that his word is worth taking. Fitzgerald has to win the reader's confidence in Nick's veracity. What sort of narrator is Nick? He is both an observer of and a participant in the events of the summer of 1922 that make up the story, but it is usually as an onlooker, contact and interpreter that he is important. He is distantly related to Daisy Buchanan, knew her husband, Tom, at Yale,² and rents the house next door to Gatsby's mansion. He is new to the East, so it is natural that he should see something of even a distant relation like Daisy. It is also natural that he should pay special attention to what he sees, because his move to the East is an important event in his life.

In the opening pages of the book Fitzgerald introduces the reader to Nick, and allows him to examine his credentials and judge his reliability. Nick is neither solemn nor portentous, and the reader begins to like him almost immediately. He is possessed of a certain charm, he is direct and colloquial and has that minimal requirement for veracity - sincerity. Carraway's tone in the opening pages suggests an interesting personality, a good listener and therefore probably one who is in a good position to tell a story. As a student he has been "privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men,"³ on which he passes here more tart comments than he had done while in audience. He describes these "intimate revelations [as] usually

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 3.

²Malcolm Cowley, The Literary Situation (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), p. 212. "Yale graduates . . . don't mention the name of their university among strangers; if they do talk about their college days, they say, 'When I was at New Haven.'" Although Fitzgerald was a Princeton man, he clearly knew of this custom, referring often to New Haven, but clarifying for outsiders by mentioning the Yale News.

³The Great Gatsby, p. 3.

plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions."¹ Such a narrator indicates his ability to separate truth from falsehood or invention, and to exercise discernment. He is a connoisseur of confidences, and the reader feels at the beginning of Nick's story that he is being taken into his confidence. Having been irritated by "veteran bores"² himself, he is unlikely to bore the reader. Furthermore he arouses the interest of the reader in whatever it is that has caused the revulsion of a tolerant man.

The reader is prepared to be sympathetic towards Gatsby from the beginning of the novel, so speedily has Fitzgerald won from him his trust in Nick and Nick's judgement.

Nick's function as narrator is facilitated by his having sources of information, secondary narrators like Jordan Baker, the attractive woman golfer with whom he becomes involved, and Gatsby's father. Jordan Baker is a friend of the Buchanans and has known Daisy as a girl. It is through her that Fitzgerald tells the story of Daisy's girlhood romance with Gatsby.³

His close relationships with the other main characters enable Nick to give us eye-witness reports of most of the events in the novel. Sometimes he is a reluctant onlooker, for example at the encounter between Gatsby and Tom Buchanan. Although he and Jordan attempt to leave during the altercation, they are prevailed on to remain at the wish of the antagonists. Nick is not always on the spot and Fitzgerald uses reports from secondary narrators and Nick's reconstruction of events from newspaper events and accounts by witnesses. However, Nick Carraway remains the organising consciousness, and his

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 3.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 57-59. Even if the reader suspends disbelief and accepts Jordan's total recall of events long past, the details and style of Jordan's account do not suit entirely the Jordan of other parts of the book.

personal and very individual style is imposed on these accounts, so that unity is usually maintained. Fitzgerald allows the sources of the reports to remain evident; for example, the newspaper account of Wilson's hunt for Gatsby retains a trace of the stilted formal style to be expected from such a source.

At the beginning of The Great Gatsby we are given an assurance that "Gatsby turned out all right at the end";¹ here Fitzgerald allows his narrator to give a summing-up that might be more appropriate at the end of the book. It is not only natural, however, for a story-teller to make a ruminative remark like this (one can imagine Conrad's Marlow speaking in this vein) but it is necessary to suggest the terms in which Gatsby must be considered: in Twentieth Century colloquial language it suggests a heroic role, despite Gatsby's shortcomings which are never glossed over ("Gatsby . . . represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn"²). The rhythm of the comment and the stress which Nick gives it suggest that this conclusion is by no means arbitrary. It has involved a careful summing-up and balancing of his material; an act of soul-searching has been undertaken by the cautious and tolerant Nick. Approval of Gatsby, despite his manifold weaknesses, involves a complete dissociation from and condemnation of the "foul dust [that] floated in the wake of his dreams."³ When Gatsby is destroyed by the representative Buchanans, the "careless people, . . . [who] 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,"⁴ it is Nick who clears up the mess as well as he is able:

I found myself on Gatsby's side, and alone. From the moment I telephoned news of the catastrophe to West Egg village,

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 136.

every surmise about him, and every practical question, was referred to me. At first I was surprised and confused; then, as he lay in his house and didn't move or breathe or speak, hour upon hour, it grew upon me that I was responsible, because no one else was interested - interested, I mean, with that intense personal interest to which every one has some vague right at the end.¹

It is because Nick realises this that he rises above Gatsby's other "friends" and associates, with whom he has identified himself when he says good-bye to Gatsby on the last occasion that he sees him alive ("I thanked him for his hospitality. We were always thanking him for that - I and the others"²). Wolfsheim, the gangster with cuff buttons made of "human molars,"³ speaks for most of Gatsby's acquaintances when he says: "When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in any way. I keep out."⁴ Daisy Buchanan sends neither a message nor flowers.

And when West Egg haunts Nick in nightmares after his return to the Middle West, he describes it as like

a night scene by El Greco: a hundred houses, at once conventional and grotesque, crouching under a sullen, overhanging sky and a lustreless moon. In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand, which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house - the wrong house. But no one knows the woman's name, and no one cares.⁵

"No one cares." That sums up the East for Nick. But Nick has learned to care, he has learned to discriminate and he has involved himself in life. That is why The Great Gatsby is, seen from one angle, the story of Nick's moral education. This is a gradual process, without the dramatic revelations of a Pauline conversion. It begins with Nick's descriptions of three contrasting parties at the

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 124.

²Ibid., p. 117.

³Ibid., p. 55.

⁴Ibid., p. 130.

⁵Ibid., p. 134.

beginning of the book.

When Nick takes up residence in West Egg, near New York, he at first feels lonely, his dog runs away and the woman who chafers for him is foreign and mutters to herself. But soon somebody asks him the way to West Egg village and he feels like "a guide, a pathfinder an original settler."¹ This reminds us, as does his description of the tonic mood and buoyant atmosphere ("I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer"²), of Western Man's second chance in the New World of America.

Across the bay from West Egg is fashionable East Egg, where the Buchanans live; Nick says that "the history of the summer really begins on the evening"³ he visits these distant relatives. Nick's description of the Buchanans and their other guest, Jordan Baker, is disinterested enough, and yet certain details strike the reader as false and even sinister. Their house, like Gatsby's is an imitation, but while Gatsby's is an "imitation of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy"⁴ and vulgarly and obviously an ostentatious transplantation, the Buchanan house is more discreet: "A cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion"⁵ with French windows and a sunken Italian garden. Tom Buchanan is presented in terms of energy, strength and power - "various physical accomplishments,"⁶ "sturdy,"⁷ "the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward,"⁸ "enormous power of [his] body,"⁹

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 5.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 6.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 7.

⁶Ibid., p. 6.

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

"great pack of muscle,"¹ "a body capable of enormous leverage - a cruel body."² Tom is friendly to Nick, but generally menacing, and it comes as no surprise to the reader when he breaks his mistress' nose later in the book. Although Tom has brawn and money, he is unfulfilled and unhappy. He had been a football star at Yale and everything subsequently has been an anti-climax. He and his wife have "drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together."³

Daisy Buchanan is introduced to the reader in the company of another young woman, Jordan Baker. Fitzgerald, using vivid visual and aural imagery, suggests the picture of languid glamour that they present:

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall. Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room, and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.⁴

This is a wonderful picture of the two lovely young women and their gracefulness and magic; characteristically Tom breaks the spell when he shuts the window.

At dinner Tom snorts away about the imminent submerging of the "white race," for which he is an inadequate apologist. Ironically juxtaposed with this concern are a story Daisy tells about a butler whose nose is affected by the amount of silver he had to polish, and a telephone call which is apparently from Tom's mistress.

Nick has a feeling of revulsion about Tom's mistress; we learn

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 7.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 8.

later from Jordan Baker that Myrtle is not Tom's first. It seems clear to Nick that Daisy knows about it but has no intention of taking action; her complaisance appears to him to signify corruption. "It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy to do was to rush out of the house, child in arms - but apparently there were no such intentions in her head."¹

Nick says of Daisy that she acts as though she belongs to "a rather distinguished secret society";² this links up with his comment on Tom and Daisy, that they had drifted "wherever people played polo and were rich together,"³ as though being rich were in itself an activity. They belong to the secret society of the very rich, which Gatsby cannot join because he has worked for his money; it is this as much as that Gatsby's money is dishonestly gained that later enables Tom to destroy Gatsby's hold on Daisy. Tom says: "I'll be damned if I see how you got within a mile of her unless you brought the groceries to the back door";⁴ and refers to Gatsby's love for Daisy as a "presumptuous little flirtation."⁵ The moment that Gatsby comes closest to winning Daisy is when, after she has brushed her hair with Gatsby's gold brush, Gatsby shows her his shirts (which Marius Bewley describes as "sacramentals"⁶), which he has sent to him every season from England. This puts Gatsby onto the scale of opulent extravagance with which Daisy measures everything.

Nick leaves this small and in many ways pleasant party feeling "confused and a little disgusted."⁷ This is his first encounter with

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 15.

³Ibid., p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 100.

⁵Ibid., p. 103.

⁶Marius Bewley, The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 271.

⁷The Great Gatsby, p. 17.

the very rich; Fitzgerald imposes no simple moral judgement on the Buchanans, but in everything they say they give themselves away as idle, insincere and trivial. Not even Daisy's cynicism and sophistication are real, but an attempt to impress and keep up with what "the most advanced people"¹ think. And Tom's concern for the future of civilisation is aptly described by Nick as "nibbl[ing] at the edge of stale ideas."² (Later in the book it is judged with great force as "impassioned gibberish."³)

The second party takes place in a New York flat used by Tom Buchanan and his mistress, Myrtle Wilson, when they are able to meet. Having accompanied Tom on a trip to New York, Nick attempts to leave when Tom and Mrs Wilson, who has been "collected" on the way, go to their flat. Tom insists that he accompany them, and Mrs Wilson says she will get her sister to join them. Throughout the book Nick is used by other characters as a companion or even an accomplice in their often sordid activities. It is as though with his restraint and decency they feel he gives them moral support. This, of course, enables Nick to observe more than he would if he were less passive and good-natured.

The sordidness of the party is deftly suggested by implicit comparison in a reference to a set of tapestried furniture with "scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles,"⁴ but the furniture is much too large for the room and the airy gracefulness of the Versailles scenes is replaced by a decadence cramped and unstylish. Myrtle Wilson's behaviour is a sort of parody of that of haut monde society: she has bought "a copy of Tom Tattle and a moving-picture magazine, . . . some cold cream and a small flask of perfume"⁵ and gets Tom

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 17.

³Ibid., p. 99.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Ibid., p. 21.

to buy her a puppy (" 'Is it a boy or a girl?' she asked delicately"¹). When she arrives at the apartment she throw[s] a regal homecoming glance around the neighbourhood."² When she uses the telephone she sits on Tom's lap; when Nick returns from buying some cigarettes she and Tom have disappeared and Nick discreetly reads a book.

When Myrtle Wilson's sister arrives she turns out to be "a slender, worldly girl of about thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair, and a complexion powdered milky white";³ the other revellers are a Mr and Mrs McKee. Mr McKee is a photographer - "in the 'artistic game.'"⁴ Mrs McKee is described by Nick in a terse aside as "shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible."⁵ The banal conversation and sordid gaiety of the party are well captured. For example, Mrs McKee boasts that her husband has photographed her 127 times since their marriage. (In giving an exact number that is also somewhat ludicrous Fitzgerald suggests veracity and an amazing inanity in Mr McKee's choice of subject matter in his "art.")

Myrtle's sister, Catherine, who speaks with the rhythms and argot of a racy schoolgirl, questions Nick about Gatsby, having attended one of his parties the previous month. Nick has only caught a glimpse of his neighbour on one occasion, on his return from the Buchanans', where Gatsby's name was also mentioned. Catherine thinks Gatsby is sinister, and says she has heard that he is a cousin or nephew of the Kaiser. This is only the first of a number of bizarre and ridiculous theories Nick is to hear about Gatsby. As he says later: "It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 23.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

was necessary to whisper about in this world."¹ The discussion of Gatsby is interrupted after the reader has been given a titillating hint of his mysteriousness.

Catherine whispers to Nick about the marital problems of Tom and Myrtle, and Nick is shocked by Tom's lie that Daisy is a Roman Catholic and cannot be divorced. Myrtle is now playing the role of Lady of the Manor, and tells Mrs McKee:

"I'm going to give you this dress as soon as I'm through with it. I've got to get another one tomorrow. I'm going to make a list of all the things I've got to get. A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk bow for mother's grave that'll last all summer. I got to write down a list so I won't forget all the things I got to do."²

The sentimentality and vulgarity of Myrtle's mind are revealed by the items on her list. (Incidentally, can one imagine Nicole Diver in Tender is the Night making out a list of purchases?)

The party degenerates, and Nick keeps trying to leave but becomes involved in noisy arguments. Mr McKee goes to sleep and Nick gets drunk for the second time in his life; this suggests that he is neither prig nor debauchee. As usual Nick retains a certain detachment necessary to his role as narrator: "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life."³

In the course of a drunken argument over whether she has the right to use Daisy's name, Tom breaks Myrtle Wilson's nose. Tom becomes actively brutal in an absurd attempt to be chivalrous about his wife. Soon after this Nick and McKee leave the party and Nick ends up in McKee's house looking at photographs. Nick is associated with the general messiness of the evening, and in recounting the story

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Ibid., p. 28.

neither excuses nor deprecates the part he has played. It is part of Fitzgerald's subtle use of Nick as narrator that he is not a man of moral gestures or judgements in the ordinary way; nor is he separate from that which he judges. When Nick condemns the East and returns to the Middle West, he condemns too his own behaviour.

The focus of interest in the novel begins to narrow down to Gatsby; Nick starts with a graphic account of Gatsby's lavish social life as seen by an outsider. It has on the surface a brilliance and gaiety, and seems to be one long party, full of continuous activity:

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars.¹

The moth image suggests triviality and frivolousness, but also a certain beauty; the guests seem attracted by the bright lights like moths to an electric bulb. A carnival atmosphere is built up as Gatsby entertains his guests on the grandest possible scale. They dive from his raft, sunbathe and aquaplane, and a brigade of servants is dedicated to their entertainment. "On Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before."² At Gatsby's orders Nature is restored! As usual Fitzgerald conveys his effect by subtle use of small but important details:

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York - every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.³

The mechanical efficiency with which the parties are run, the extravagant waste ("a pyramid of pulpless halves"), the curious

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 31.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

memorials of Gatsby's parties, the suggested comparison with Egyptian Pharoahs, the reference to the butler's thumb which links up with Daisy's story of the butler whose silver-polishing duties affected his nose: all these are suggested in a few lines.

As Cross has written: "Nothing more exactly conveys [these parties'] flavour than the catalogue of Gatsby's guests"¹:

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

Clarence Endive was from East Egg, as I remember. He came only once, in white knickerbockers, and had a fight with a bum named Etty in the garden. From farther out on the Island came the Cheadles and the O.R.P.Schraeders, and the Stonewall Jackson Abrams of Georgia, and the Fishguards and the Ripley Snells. Snell was there three days before he went to the penitentiary, so drunk out on the gravel drive that Mrs. Ulysses Swett's automobile ran over his right hand. The Dancies came, too, and S.B.Whitebait, who was well over sixty, and Maurice A. Flink, and the Hammerheads, and Beluga the tobacco importer, and Beluga's girls.

From West Egg came the Poles and the Mulready's and Cecil Roebuck and Cecil Schoen and Gulick the State senator and Newton Orchid, who controlled Films Par Excellence, and Eckhaust and Clyde Cohen and Don S.Schwartz (the son) and Arthur McCarty, all connected with the movies in one way or another. And the Catlips and the Bembergs and G.Earl Muldoon, brother to that Muldoon who afterward strangled his wife. Da Fontano the promoter came there, and Ed Legros and James B. ("Rot-Gut") Ferret and the De Jongs and Ernest Lilly - they came to gamble, and when Ferret wandered into the garden it meant he was cleaned out and Associated Traction would have to fluctuate profitably next day.

A man named Klipspringer was there so often and so long that he became known as "the boarder" - I doubt if he had any other home. Of theatrical people there were Gus Waize and Horace O'Donovan and Lester Myer and George Duckweed and Francis Bull. Also from New York were the Chromes and the Backhyssons and the Dennickers and Russell Betty and the Corrigan's and the Kellehers and the Dewers and the Scullys and S.W.Bolcher and the Smirkos and the young Quinns, divorced now, and Henry L.Palmetto, who killed himself by jumping in front of a subway train in Times Square.

Benny McClenahan arrived always with four girls. They were never quite the same ones in physical person, but they were so identical one with another that it inevitably seemed they had been there before. I have forgotten their names - Jaqueline, I

¹Cross, p. 61.

think, or else Consuela, or Gloria or Judy or June, and their last names were either the melodious names of flowers and months or the sterner ones of the great American capitalists whose cousins, if pressed, they would confess themselves to be.

In addition to all these I can remember that Faustina O'Brien came there at least once and the Baedeker girls and young Brewer, who had his nose shot off in the war, and Mr. Albrucksburger and Miss Haag, his fiancée, and Ardita Fitz-Peters and Mr. P. Jewett, once head of the American Legion, and Miss Claudia Hip, with a man reputed to be her chauffeur, and a prince of something, whom we called Duke, and whose name, if I ever knew it, I have forgotten.

All these people came to Gatsby's house in the summer.¹

This grotesquely comic list includes twelve that are or suggest the names of animals, birds or fish, often small and unpleasant ones (c.g. Ferrett and Civet), but, in a list of nearly seventy, this does not appear an impossible number. Some of the names are odd and amusing, such as Endive, Leech, Smirke and Belcher, while others juxtapose the grand and the commonplace, like Stonewall Jackson Abrams, the Willie Voltaires and Mrs Ulysses Swett. The list suggests the wide range of Gatsby's guests: businessmen, gamblers, politicians, a former leader of the American Legion (we learn later from Wolfsheim that Gatsby had belonged to this bizarre ex-serviceman's organisation), film people and exiled royalty. But the most important themes running through the list and Nick's descriptions are those of instability and violence: people involved in divorce, fights, wars, drunkenness, suicide and uxoricide. As Cross says: "It is clear that the sketchy identification of these long-departed guests merely indicates that many of them have no real identity at all. It is of such as these that Gatsby says pathetically: "I keep [the house] always full of interesting people, night and day. People who do interesting things. Celebrated people."³

At the first party at Gatsby's that he attends, Nick thinks he

¹The Great Gatsby, pp. 47-49.

²Cross, p. 61.

³The Great Gatsby, p. 69.

is one of the few guests actually invited. Fitzgerald has been in no hurry to bring Nick into direct contact with Gatsby, and even when he attends a party at Gatsby's, he does not recognise Gatsby; his host has to introduce himself, and their relationship begins on a comic note. But Gatsby's appearance makes a deep impression on Nick:

He smiled understandingly - much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced - or seemed to face - the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished - and I was looking at an elegant young roughneck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.¹

Nick's first meeting with Gatsby is undramatic - even an anti-climax - but later in the evening Gatsby sends a message that he wants to see Jordan Baker, who is with Nick. The discussion that ensues sets in action a series of events that is to bring Gatsby and Nick into close contiguity: Gatsby wants Nick to act as a go-between for him and Daisy Buchanan, Gatsby's childhood sweetheart, whom he has worshipped from afar ever since.

It transpires that Gatsby, like some ghost from the age of chivalry, has dedicated himself completely to winning back Daisy from Tom Buchanan, whom she married while Gatsby was sent to Oxford by "some complication or misunderstanding"² after the war. His luxurious mansion, his fabulous parties and extravagant way of life (in themselves representative of the prosperity of the times spilling over in grotesque ways), all these are offerings to Daisy:

¹The Great Gatsby, pp. 37-38.

²Ibid., p. 114.

"It was a strange coincidence," I said.

"But it wasn't a coincidence at all."

"Why not?"

"Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay."

Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on that June night. He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor.

"He wants to know," continued Jordan, "if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over."

The modesty of the demand shook me. He had waited five years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths - so that he could "come over" some afternoon to a stranger's garden.¹

An ironic counterpoint to Gatsby's consecration of Daisy is Nick's comparatively casual affair with Jordan Baker:

Suddenly I wasn't thinking of Daisy and Gatsby any more, but of this clean, hard, limited person, who dealt in universal scepticism, and who leaned back jauntily just within the circle of my arm.

Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, I had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs, and so I drew up the girl beside me, tightening my arms.²

Although Nick has discovered that Jordan Baker is "incurably dishonest,"³ he rationalises, saying: "It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply."⁴ Yet, at the end of the novel, when he has learned from Daisy's example what dishonesty in a woman can mean, he breaks with Jordan, regretfully but completely, and her dishonesty is suggested when he does not believe her statement that she is engaged to another man. Ironically, it is Jordan Baker who accuses Nick of dishonesty, saying: "I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person."⁵

In Fitzgerald's early writing there is often an equivocation about women, particularly beautiful women. In This Side of Paradise, for example, the beautiful Rosalind claims rights which are unrelated to anything except that she is beautiful, and she is not judged for

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 60.

²Ibid., p. 61.

³Ibid., p. 45.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 135.

for this; she says: "I can't be shut away from the trees and flowers, cooped up in a little flat, waiting for you. You'd hate me in a narrow atmosphere,"¹ and "I like sunshine and pretty things and cheerfulness - and I dread responsibility. I don't want to think about pots and kitchens and brooms. I want to worry whether my legs will get slick and brown when I swim in the summer."² When Fitzgerald is prepared to judge Daisy and Jordan in The Great Gatsby this shows a distinct advance over his earlier propensity to regard beautiful women as ornaments, somehow not fully human and therefore not susceptible to judgement.

Nick forms an ironic contrast with Gatsby not only in his relationship with Jordan, but also with the two other women with whom he is at various stages "involved." As he leaves after his first visit to the Buchanans they tell him they have heard he is "engaged to a girl out West."³ Nick comments:

Of course I knew what they were referring to, but I wasn't even vaguely engaged. The fact that gossip had published the banns was one of the reasons I had come East. You can't stop going with an old friend on account of rumors, and on the other hand I had no intention of being rumored into marriage.⁴

Before he allows himself to become "involved" with Jordan, he says:

I knew that first I had to get myself definitely out of that tangle back home. I'd been writing letters once a week and signing them: "Love, Nick," and all I could think of was how, when that certain girl played tennis, a faint mustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip. Nevertheless there was a vague understanding that had to be tactfully broken off before I was free.⁵

He goes on to say:

"Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known."⁶

¹This Side of Paradise, p. 177.

²Ibid., p. 178.

³The Great Gatsby, p. 17.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 46.

⁶Ibid.

This is faintly ironic when he has confessed two pages earlier:

I . . . had a short affair with a girl who lived in Jersey City and worked in the accounting department, but her brother began throwing mean looks in my direction, so when she went on her vacation in July I let it blow quietly away.¹

(At this stage he has not broken with the tennis-player.)

And it is with a weary and more self-critical tone that, when he breaks with Jordan, he says: "I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor."² We take this statement without irony.

In contrast with Gatsby's devotion to Daisy, the fires in Nick's heart burn with a low flame. When Nick returns home from the Buchanans' after his first visit he sees Gatsby for the first time, "regarding the silver pepper of the stars."³ Nick guesses that he has "come out to determine what share was his of our local heaven."⁴ But it transpires that Gatsby's vigil has no such grotesque materialistic motive; instead he is performing what amounts to an act of worship:

I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone - he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, 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. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.⁵

The green light has assumed the stature of a symbol for Gatsby. It is partly a sort of non-Christian sanctuary lamp, for it is situated on what is to Gatsby the holy ground of Daisy's dock, but it is also the light on a robot eternally signalling: "Go."

Throughout the novel Gatsby maintains a solitariness that emphasises his heroic nature and helps to make him the Great Gatsby. Soon after Nick's first meeting with him we read:

¹The Great Gatsby, p.44.

²Ibid., p. 135.

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 18.

When the Jazz History of the World was over, girls were putting their heads on men's shoulders in a puppyish, convivial way, girls were swooning backward playfully into men's arms, even into groups, knowing that some one would arrest their falls - but no one swooned backward on Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link.¹

Amid the relaxed and almost magical gaiety Gatsby remains alone, and when the party ends in comic chaos, foreshadowing the later car accident, Gatsby remains apart:

A sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell.²

What is more remarkable is the way that Gatsby seems able to touch pitch and remain undefiled. Early in his acquaintanceship with Gatsby, Nick goes with him to New York and arranges to meet him in a cellar in Forty-second Street for lunch; when Nick arrives Gatsby is talking to a sinister-looking man whom he introduces to Nick, with the sort of formality that one might expect from the Oxford man he claims to be: "Mr. Carraway, this is my friend Mr. Wolfshein."³ Although he is in the middle of a story about an apparently insalubrious colleague called, significantly, Katspaugh, Mr Wolfshein lapses into "a somnambulatory abstraction"⁴ when Gatsby makes the intimate gesture of taking his two friends into the restaurant, an arm linked with each. Despite his association with Wolfshein, a man of monstrous vulgarity ("I see you're looking at my cuff buttons. . . . Finest specimens of human molars"⁵), Gatsby retains his air of innocence, above the sordid world of deals, connections and fixes inhabited by his associates. Even when Gatsby's servants are replaced, towards the end of the book, by the

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 39.

²Ibid., p. 43.

³Ibid., p. 53.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p.55.

unsavoury "Wolfsheim's people" who will not gossip about Gatsby's clandestine romance, and when Tom's researchers suggest that Gatsby is involved in very shady business, Gatsby remains apart, this is largely because wealth is for him not an end in itself but simply a means to the end of winning Daisy. As Mizener has written: "Though Gatsby is, according to the law and *Emily Post*, a criminal and a fake, beneath his conventionally deplorable surface there is a purity of heart that gives every act of his life remarkable integrity."¹

Gatsby's heroic stature is emphasised in a more conventional way by the story he tells, quite calmly and without the hesitation that casts doubt on his claims to an Oxford education:

"Then came the war, old sport. It was a great relief, and I tried very hard to die, but I seemed to bear an enchanted life. I accepted a commission as first lieutenant when it began. In the Argonne Forest I took two machine-gun detachments so far forward that there was a half mile gap on either side of us where the infantry couldn't advance. We stayed there two days and two nights, a hundred and thirty men with sixteen Lewis guns, and when the infantry came up at last they found the insignia of three German divisions among the piles of dead. I was promoted to be a major, and every Allied government gave me a decoration - even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea!"²

This is perhaps the longest speech of Gatsby's given to us, but he tells his story without self-glorification, and is able to produce the medal from Montenegro to prove it, when Nick is inclined to disbelieve all his stories. His physical heroism is established.

Comparison of Tom's behaviour in his New York "love nest" with Myrtle, and Gatsby's attitude to Daisy in the chapter dealing with their reunion, throws Gatsby's stature into very clear relief. In each case Fitzgerald shows the lover with another man's wife, but compared with Tom's sordid philandering (Tom is, of course, formally a great upholder of the standards of Western Civilisation), Gatsby's

¹Arthur Mizener, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*," *The Voice of America Forum Lectures: The American Novel* (U.S. Information Agency, n.d.), 135.

²*The Great Gatsby*, pp. 50-51.

adulterous wooing of Daisy is much closer to the love of Shakespeare's Antony for Cleopatra, where Antony's marriage is irrelevant to the great lovers. Gatsby's consecration to Daisy is not presented naïvely; he offers Nick a delicate reward for what the gangster in him sees as a pander's services. But, in his "white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie,"¹ even while he pages through a book called Economics as he waits nervously for Daisy's arrival, Gatsby is in his own way "a verray parfit gentil knight." And when at last she arrives the initial anti-climax is succeeded by a growing radiance that works up to Gatsby's quasi-mystical transcendence in the chapter's last paragraph:

They had forgotten me, but Daisy glanced up and held out her hand; Gatsby didn't know me now at all. I looked once more at them and they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by intense life. Then I went out of the room and down the marble steps into the rain, leaving them there together.²

Fitzgerald's use of the sardonic outsider, Nick, allows irony, comedy and the grotesque to balance the early parts of the reunion, but this in no way vitiates the climax. The phone-call from one of Gatsby's sinister associates reminds us that he is no conventional hero; Ewing Klipspringer, "the 'boarder,"³ plays "The Love Nest" and a song with the chorus "Ain't we got fun"; at one point Gatsby "nearly topple[s] down a flight of stairs."⁴ These devices enable Fitzgerald to preserve perspective: Gatsby is "about His [sic] Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty,"⁵ but his actions have a sacred dimension. And the phrase "the feudal silhouette,"⁶ reminds us of his descent from Chaucer's Knight.

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 64.

²Ibid., p. 73.

³Ibid., p. 69.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 75.

⁶Ibid., p. 69.



It is for a quality of his imagination finally that Gatsby is honoured with the label of "Great." To understand this it is necessary to understand Gatsby's origins and the roots of his dream. The reader is given these by Nick, who breaks the continuity of his narrative ("He told me all this very much later"¹) "with the idea of exploding those first wild rumors about his antecedents, which weren't even faintly true."²

James Gatz - that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career - when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the Tuolomee, and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour.

I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people - his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about His [sic] Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.

His heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing.³

Trilling has written:

Gatsby, divided between power and dream, comes inevitably to stand for America itself. Ours is the only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one, "the American dream." We are told that "the truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that-

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 77.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 74-75.

and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." Clearly it is Fitzgerald's intention that our mind should turn to the thought of the nation that has sprung from its "Platonic conception" of itself. To the world it is anomalous in America, just as in the novel it is anomalous in Gatsby, that so much raw power should be haunted by envisioned romance. Yet in that anomaly lies, for good or bad, much of the truth of our national life, as, at the present moment, we think about it.¹

Nick's revelations about Gatsby's childhood throw into relief Nick's somewhat cryptic remarks about Gatsby at the beginning of the book:

If the 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. This responsiveness . . . was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again.²

Nick Carraway, too, in reserving judgements, shows what he calls "infinite hope."³ Although he is different in almost every other way from Gatsby this makes it peculiarly appropriate that he should chronicle Gatsby's story. The only other person in the book with a similar faculty is "the man with owl-eyed glasses"⁴ who is described as showing an "unusual quality of wonder"⁵ and as "marvelling over Gatsby's books."⁶ It is appropriate that, apart from Nick, he should be the only one of Gatsby's guests to attend his funeral. No one else in the book has any sort of ideal or shows any capacity for understanding; in this company Gatsby, with his gaudy Technicolor vision, stands out and earns the adjective "Great." Although Gatsby is true to his Platonic conception of himself "to the end,"⁷ Nick

¹Trilling, pp. 251-52.

²The Great Gatsby, p. 4.

³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴Ibid., p. 132.

⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁶Ibid., p. 132.

⁷Ibid., p. 75.

speculates that he may have lost his dream when its incarnation, Daisy failed him:

Perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about.¹

Gatsby fulfils the classical American success pattern in a way that gives new meaning to the cliché "from rags to riches"; like that other American "culture-hero," Ben Loman in Death of a Salesman, he has known that "there is a new continent at [his] doorstep. . . . [He] could walk out rich."² Floyd C. Watkins has related the schedule drawn up by Gatsby to the success precepts of Benjamin Franklin,

that early American whom Carlyle called "the Father of all Yankees" and who was to Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt [sic] "this solid American citizen." Most of the resolutions of Fitzgerald's hero can be traced either to Franklin's own schedule or to his list of thirteen virtues to which he gives "a week's strict attention" in order to attain moral perfection.

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Such close parallels as these surely indicate that Fitzgerald had Franklin's Autobiography either in front of him or in his mind when he wrote the schedule of Jay [sic] Gatz. It is my opinion that he closely followed Franklin in order to give concreteness to the historical tradition of Gatsby and to make Gatsby something beyond a mere member of the lost generation: an American who was a personification of the national dream as it had been corrupted.³

Marius Bewley has linked Gatsby with a young hunter described in Col. David Crockett's Exploits and Adventures in Texas: "This young dandy of the frontier, dreaming in the dawn and singing to the morning, is a progenitor of Gatsby. It is because of such a traditional American ancestry that Gatsby's romanticism transcends the limiting glamour of the Jazz Age."⁴ Gatsby's father, Mr Henry Gatz, who is described by

¹The Great Gatsby, pp. 122-23.

²Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 68.

³Floyd C. Watkins, "Fitzgerald's Jay Gatz and Young Ben Franklin," New England Quarterly, XXVII (1954), 251-52.

⁴Marius Bewley, The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p.272.

Marius Bewley as "only the kindly shepherd who once found a baby on the cold hillside"¹ ("his parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people - his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all"²), speaks of his dead son in proverbial American terms: "If he'd of lived, he'd of been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He'd of helped build up the country."³ "Jimmy was bound to get ahead."⁴ "He had a big future in front of him."⁵

Gatsby's spiritual godfather and mentor, Dan Cody, was also like Arthur Miller's Ben Loman; Cody was

a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five. The transactions in Montana copper . . . made him many times a millionaire.⁶

.
The pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon.⁷ (*Italics mine.*)

Fitzgerald is acutely aware of the setting of the book in relation to the American past, and this, as Bewley says, helps him to transcend the limitations of the "Jazz Age"; but the book is related not only to the American past, but also to the history and present of Western Man: he has had what amounts to a second chance, and America is the new Eden, but the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is as bitter as it was in Paradise. It is not for nothing that the imagery of death pervades The Great Gatsby.

In flippancy conversation, Nick tells Daisy how badly she is missed in Chicago: "The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a

¹ Marius Bewley, *The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 273.

² The Great Gatsby, p. 74.

³ Ibid., p. 128.

⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

⁶ Ibid., p. 75.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 75-76.

persistent wail all night along the north shore."¹ Myrtle Wilson prepares a shopping list and includes "a wreath with a black silk bow for mother's grave that'll last all summer."² Describing his trip to New York with Gatsby, Nick says:

A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of southeastern Europe and I was glad that the sight of Gatsby's splendid car was included in their somber holiday.³

Meyer Wolfsheim describes the killing of his friend Rosy Rosenthal:

"He turned around in the door and says: 'Don't let the waiter take away my coffee!' Then he went out on the sidewalk, and they shot him three times in his full belly and drove away."⁴
 "Four of them were electrocuted," I said, remembering.⁴

Nick describes what happened when the first owner of Gatsby's house died: "His children sold his house with the black wreath still on the door."⁵

In the simmering heat of summer, Nick, visiting the Buchanans, experiences a hallucination:

Through the hall of the Buchanans' house blew a faint wind, carrying the sound of the telephone bell out to Gatsby and me as we waited at the door.

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

What he really said was: "Yes . . . Yes . . . I'll see."⁶

And then the most horrifying death in the book, Myrtle Wilson's end, just before which Nick says - as he absorbs the shock of turning thirty: "So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight."⁷

When Myrtle is killed:

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁴Ibid., p. 54.

⁵Ibid., p. 67.

⁶Ibid., p. 87.

⁷Ibid., p. 103.

When they had torn open her shirtwaist, still damp with perspiration, they saw that her left breast was swinging loose like a flap, and there was no need to listen for the heart beneath. The mouth was wide open and ripped at the corners, as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored so long.¹

Piper has drawn attention to the importance of Fitzgerald's death imagery, Nick's "ever-present awareness of man's mortality."²

For Nick the fact of death stands inexorably between man's dreams and the chances of realizing them during his brief lifetime. . . . Nick [is] continually aware of death, and his narrative [is] strewn with death images.

.
The most persistent death image in the novel is that of the waste land of dust and ashes over which Gatsby and his neighbors must pass every time they go to New York. From this limbo blows that "foul dust" that "floated in the wake of Gatsby's dreams."³

Piper writes later:

Nick is saved from Gatsby's fate - in the very nick of time, as it were - by his own sense of time. Because Nick lives in the temporal as well as the ideal world, and knows how old he is, he is able to grow up. But Gatsby lives outside time, in that dream world where past, present, and future are all one. He has no sense of the past and so is never able to come to terms with it.⁴

This is borne out particularly by Gatsby's claim: "Can't repeat the past? . . . Why of course you can!"⁵ (Lionel Trilling has written that apart from: "Her voice is full of money" and: "In any case it was just personal" Gatsby says nothing memorable. But his simple assumption that the past can be repeated helps Gatsby to achieve what Trilling calls "an insane greatness, convincing us that he really is a Platonic conception of himself, really some sort of Son of God."⁶)

After the death of Gatsby, indirectly perpetrated by the Buchanans, Nick Carraway cleans up the mess. He has a last encounter with Tom Buchanan, who says when Nick hesitates to shake hands with him: "'You're crazy, Nick. . . . Crazy as hell. I don't know what's

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 105.

²Piper, p. 107.

³Ibid., pp. 107-109.

⁴Ibid., pp. 147-48.

⁵The Great Gatsby, p. 84.

⁶Trilling, p. 252.

the matter with you."¹ This reminds the reader of the predominant scale of values in the corrupt East; Nick leaves Tom, "rid of [Nick's] provincial squeamishness for ever."² On the night before he returns to the Middle West, Nick takes a last look at Gatsby's mansion, erases an obscene word scrawled on the steps,³ and has a vision of "the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes - a fresh, green breast of the new world."⁴

And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic⁵ future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter - tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning -

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.⁶

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 135.

²Ibid., p. 136.

³Cf. J.D.Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959), pp. 207-11. "But while I was sitting down, I saw something that drove me crazy. Somebody'd written ' - you' on the wall. . . . I hardly even had the guts to rub it off the wall with my hand, if you want to know the truth.

. . . . I went down by a different staircase, and I saw another ' - you' on the wall. . . . If you had a million years to do it in you couldn't rub out even half the ' - you' signs in the world.

. . . . I think, even, if I ever die, and they stick me in a cemetery, and I have a tombstone and all, it'll say 'Holden Caulfield' on it, and then what year I was born and what year I died, and then right under that it'll say ' - you'. I'm positive, in fact."

The admiration of J.D.Salinger's characters for The Great Gatsby is made evident on a number of occasions. Holden Caulfield says: "I told him I liked . . . The Great Gatsby and all. I did, too. I was crazy about The Great Gatsby. Old Gatsby. Old sport. That killed me." (p.147)

⁴The Great Gatsby, p. 137.

⁵This Scribner's text reads "orgiastic." Fitzgerald made clear in a letter to his editor, Maxwell Perkins, that he intended "orgastic." "'Orgastic' is the adjective for 'orgasm' and it expresses exactly the intended ecstasy. It's not a bit dirty." The Letters of F.Scott Fitzgerald, p. 175. (The Penguin text uses "orgastic.")

⁶The Great Gatsby, p. 137.

Nick is left, like the "early internal-observer-reflector" of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," a sadder and a wiser man. His new insight into life and his understanding of at least some of the perplexities of morality are of no value in the East, where they are seen as madness and "provincial squeamishness." The Middle West is no Utopia, with its "interminable inquisitions which spare only the children and the very old,"¹ but although a sense of fundamental human solidarity is expressed with comic undertones ("all my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me, and finally said, 'Why - ye-es,' with very grave, hesitant faces"²) there exists there the possibility of a better life.

John Farrelly, engaging in a critical exchange with D.W.Harding in Scrutiny, said of Fitzgerald:

There is an emptiness in his work that makes 'convincing analysis' honestly difficult, but leaves a hollow space where critics can create their own substitute Fitzgerald. And I should probe for that hollow space in what we call the centre of a writer's work - that around which and with reference to which he organizes his experiences; in short, his values.³

In view of the central judgement of the book, the subtly moral nature of Nick's narrative and the disgust evoked by those wholly without ideals, selfishly grasping or "careless," this is surely an inaccurate comment. Farrelly cites a letter that Fitzgerald wrote to Ludlow Fowler: "That's the whole burden of the novel - the loss of those illusions that give such colour to the world so that you don't care whether things are true or false as long as they partake of the magical glory."⁴ Although this appears to support Farrelly's case, it only does so if one forgets to "trust the tale and not the teller." If that was how Fitzgerald summed it up, he must have missed the nature and balanced judgement and the moral insight of the book!

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 134.

²Ibid., p. 4.

³John Farrelly, "Scott Fitzgerald: Another View," Scrutiny, XVIII (1952), 267.

⁴Ibid., p. 269.

The Eyes of Doctor T.J.Eckleburg: A Note.

Above the gray land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T.J.Eckleburg. The eyes of Doctor T.J.Eckleburg are blue and gigantic - their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens, and then sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes, dimmed a little by many paintless days under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground.¹

This passage, from the opening of Chapter Two of The Great Gatsby which forms such a striking contrast to the somewhat tinselly glamour of the Buchanan home of Chapter One, has given rise to almost endless comment by critics; Robert F.McDonnell² has gone so far as to trace the cognates of Ecker in German, Old Norse, Danish and Swedish and compared them with the cognates of Egg, thus attempting to link the eyes of Doctor Eckleburg with the pair of egg-shaped rocks mentioned by Fitzgerald in Chapter One. This is to read The Great Gatsby as though it were written by the Joyce of Finnegans Wake. Perhaps more happily, McDonnell, drawing on an article by Milton J. Hindus,³ links Doctor Eckleburg with the "stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles"⁴ who is encountered by Nick in Gatsby's "Merton College Library"⁵ and who appears at Gatsby's funeral, to pronounce the sombre epitaph: "The poor son-of-a-bitch."⁶ Among the most useful comments on Doctor Eckleburg, the genius of the "waste

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 19.

²Robert F.McDonnell, "Eggs and Eyes in The Great Gatsby," Modern Fiction Studies, VII (1961), 32-36.

³Milton J.Hindus, "The Mysterious Eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg," Boston University Studies in English, III (1957), 32-44.

⁴The Great Gatsby, p. 35.

⁵Ibid., p. 69.

⁶Ibid., p. 133.

land,"¹ is that of William York Tindall:

As a symbol they suggest, to use Webster's word, more thoughts and feelings than we could state; for if we stated as many as we could - the wasteland, the suburb, the modern world, futility, or moral censure - some would be left over and some would remain unstateable.²

But perhaps the most helpful remarks, if slightly misleading, are those of A.E. Dyson:

As a simple but haunting symbol of the deus absconditus who might once have set the waste land in motion Dr. Eckleburg recurs at certain crucial moments in the novel. He is the only religious reference, but his sightless gaze precludes the possibility of judging the "ash grey men" against traditional religious norms, and confers upon them the right to pity as well as to scorn.³

Here Dyson appears to have translated the phrase deus absconditus as "renegade god" or "absconded god." But it is correctly translated as "hidden god," and appears in context in the Vulgate: "Vere tu es Deus absconditus, Deus Israël salvator" and in the Authorised Version of the Bible (Isaiah, Chapter 45, Verse 15) as "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." However, although temporarily misleading, Dyson is surely on the right track, and his invocation of Fitzgerald's words: "Sank down into eternal blindness,

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 20. Fitzgerald inscribed a copy of the novel that he sent to Eliot (when it appeared in 1925, three years after the publication of Eliot's poem, "The Waste Land"): "To T.S. Eliot, the master of us all." For an interesting if sometimes stretched article on the relation of Fitzgerald to Eliot, see Philip Young, "Scott Fitzgerald's Waste Land," Kansas Magazine, 1956, pp. 73-77. Although Young's article is guarded, his claim that Nick is a Tiresias figure, for example, is ultimately misleading. Other discussions, at times absurdly far-fetched, of the relation of Fitzgerald's writing to Eliot's early poetry have appeared. See John W. Bicknell, "The Waste Land of F. Scott Fitzgerald," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXX (1954), 556-72, and Wilfred Louis Guerin, "Christian Myth and Naturalistic Deity: The Great Gatsby," Renaissance, XIV (1962), 80-89.

²William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 6.

³A.E. Dyson, "The Great Gatsby: Thirty-Six Years After," Modern Fiction Studies, VII (1961), 39.

or forgot . . . and moved away"¹ suggests a strictly deistic interpretation of the world, seen with profound irony.

Tom Burnam asks rhetorically:

Do not the eyes in spite of everything they survey, perhaps even because of it, serve both as a focus and an undeviating base, a single point of reference in the midst of monstrous disorder?²

One can only agree if one sees this as the final irony, which is perhaps established in this crucial passage:

Wilson's glazed eyes turned out to the ashheaps, where small gray clouds took on fantastic shapes and scurried here and there in the faint dawn wind.

"I spoke to her," he muttered, after a long silence. "I told her she might fool me but she couldn't fool God. I took her to the window" - with an effort he got up and walked to the rear window and leaned with his face pressed against it - "and I said 'God knows what you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me, but you can't fool God!'"

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

"God sees everything," repeated Wilson.

"That's an advertisement," Michaelis assured him.³

Bernard Tanner has described The Great Gatsby as "a novel which may have as its subliminal message the quite simple question, 'Have you tried Christ?'"⁴ but this scene surely that it is much closer to the prayer of the waiter in Hemingway's short story, "A Clean, Well-lighted Place":

Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee.⁵

At these two points Fitzgerald and Hemingway illustrate that the American Dream has turned into nightmare.

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 19.

²Tom Burnam, "The Eyes of Dr. Eckleburg: A Re-examination of The Great Gatsby," College English, XIV (1952), 12.

³The Great Gatsby, p. 121.

⁴Bernard Tanner, "The Gospel of Gatsby," English Journal, LIV (1965), 467.

⁵Ernest Hemingway, "A Clean Well-lighted Place," The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber and Other Stories (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 72.

CHAPTER THREE

TENDER IS THE NIGHT

Before commenting on Tender is the Night the writer must establish his text, and justify his preference on literary grounds as well as historical ones.

The original 1934 text is still sometimes published, and used by critics. The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald reverted to this text, dismissing the edition edited by Malcolm Cowley in a publisher's note: "The so-called revised version scarcely represents more than a momentary reaction by Fitzgerald to a critical review."¹ Examination of Cowley's introduction to the revised edition, although it perpetuates the myth that the response to the novel was relatively unfavourable because "it dealt with fashionable life in the 1920s at a time when most readers wanted to forget they had ever been concerned with frivolities"² and that most reviewers dismissed it, shows The Bodley Head publisher's note to be absurd. Fitzgerald brooded about the book over a period of years, and came to the conclusion that "its great fault is that the true beginning - the young psychiatrist in Switzerland - is tucked away in the middle of the book."³ On the inside front cover of the personal copy of his novel that he had been re-arranging, Fitzgerald wrote: "This is the final version of the book as I would like it." (Cowley has taken one or two liberties with this version and made certain corrections of errors that fall

¹The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald, II (London: The Bodley Head, 1959), p. 7.

²Tender is the Night, p. iv.

³Ibid., p. v.

within the scope of an editor.) On historical grounds, therefore, the original text is not the definitive one, if an author is allowed the right to re-work his material with a view to re-publication.

On literary grounds the case for the later version is even stronger. Here again Cowley's introductory comments are useful; he stresses the loss in the revised version of the element of mystery surrounding Nicole, and believes that Fitzgerald "sacrificed a brilliant beginning."¹ (Close attention to the old beginning suggests this is a "dubious" brilliance.) There are, however, important literary reasons for using the revised text. The use of the flashback technique and the re-arranging of chronological sequence of narration is eminently suitable to a work like The Great Gatsby in which there is an internal narrator. Tender is the Night, however, has no internal narrator and the story is told from an omniscient position, with the author intruding at times. The original text too often uses the immature Rosemary as a narrative focus, and when this is done without Dick having been established as a potentially heroic figure in his own right, the reader's scepticism is encouraged by the inadequate point of view. In the revised version attention is taken off Rosemary, and Dick is established authoritatively from the beginning. This enables the fall of Dick to take on a tragic dimension.

The advantages of the revised version are summed up best by Wayne C. Booth:

The achievement of the revision is, in short, to correct a fault of over-distancing, a fault that springs from a method appropriate to other works at other times but not to the tragedy Fitzgerald wanted to write. His true effect could be obtained only by repudiating much of what was being said by important critics of fiction about point of view and developing a clean, direct, old-fashioned presentation of his hero's initial pre-eminence and gradual decline.²

¹Tender is the Night, p. ix.

²Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 195. Booth's discussion of the textual problems of Tender is the Night is worth reading in full.

The ethos of Tender is the Night is a moral vacuum in which the characters drift purposelessly; the emptiness of their lives is disguised by their material affluence, which weakens the resilience of the best of them, Dick Diver, whose defeat the book chronicles. However, the moral climate of the book does not make this defeat inevitable. Fitzgerald is able to show how Dick is responsible for making choices which bring about his defeat, which comes not in a dramatic flash of lightning, but is brought about gradually by the wearing away of his integrity by the invisible waters of his environment. Although he cannot tell when it took place, or how, "he had been swallowed up like a gigolo and had somehow permitted his arsenal to be locked up in the Warren safety-deposit vaults."¹ Dick is not blameless and this gives meaning to his story.

At the beginning of the novel Dick Diver is presented to the reader as one above the ordinary run of men. He is an exception, seen, ironically, in democratic terms as a "capital investment";² he cannot be wasted as cannon fodder in the 1914-18 war, "shot off in a gun."³ He stands in striking contrast to those whose lives have been blighted by the war, "the long trains of blinded or one-legged men, or dying trunks, that crossed each other between the bright lakes of Constance and Neuchâtel."⁴ He has been a Rhodes Scholar, which means he succeeded in combining academic prowess with athletic achievement, according to Rhodes's ideal of the well-rounded

¹Tender is the Night, pp. 218-19.

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

personality.¹

Although Dick Diver is an individual he is also an American, and his destiny is linked with that of his country, also young and strong, gifted but awkward. The link between Dick and his country is suggested by Dick's mocking at his own reasoning, "calling it specious and 'American' - his criterion of uncerebral phrase-making was that it was American,"² and the youthful gawkiness of "the United States bung[ling] its way into the war."³ Like his own country, Dick is unable to use his talents and gifts without clumsiness. Like the United States, Dick suffers from "the illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people - they were the illusions of a nation, the lies of generations of frontier mothers who had to croon falsely that there were no wolves outside the cabin door."⁴ One of Dick's main errors in evaluating himself is in overrating his capacity to resist corruption, and judging others by his own high standards. He believes, too, that he has inexhaustible resources of love, that he will be able to give of himself indefinitely without sapping his strength. Dick is ambitious: "He wanted to be good, he wanted to be kind, he wanted to be brave and wise, but it was all pretty difficult. He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in."⁵ There is something magnificent about his ambitiousness.

¹This concept fascinated Fitzgerald; in The Great Gatsby Nick says: "I was going to . . . become again that most limited of all specialists, the 'well-rounded man.' This isn't just an epigram - life is much more successfully looked at from a single window, after all." (p. 5) In "The Crack-Up" series, published eleven years later, Fitzgerald himself says: "The old dream of being an entire man in the Goethe-Byron-Shaw tradition, with an opulent American touch, a sort of combination of J. P. Morgan, Topham Beauclerk and St. Francis of Assisi, has been relegated to the junk heap of the shoulder pads worn for one day on the Princeton football freshman field and the overseas cap never worn overseas." (The Crack-Up, p. 84.) Fitzgerald claimed to have decided to become "at last . . . a writer only." (The Crack-Up, p. 83.) But the dream still haunted him, and Monroe Stahr, the last tycoon, is another attempt to portray "the well-rounded man."

²Tender is the Night, pp. 4-5.

³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴Ibid., p. 5.

⁵Ibid., p. 23.

He can even go so far as to tell his fellow-psychologist, Franz Gregorovius, that he plans to "be a good psychologist - maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived."¹ This is the spring-board from which Dick dives to the obscurity in which he disappears at the end of the novel.²

The differences between Dick Diver and Franz Gregorovius are instructive, and Fitzgerald makes clear that these are in part due to their different backgrounds. Once again Dick is seen to represent a certain type of American. But he is not a simple stereotype, and his symbolic significance is never made intrusive. As Fitzgerald wrote in his short story, The Rich Boy: "Begin with an individual, and before you know it you find that you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find that you have created - nothing."³ Franz is a psychologist with many limitations, but he recognises his limitations, and realises himself more fully than Dick. He defers to Dick as a brilliant theorist until he deliberately picks a quarrel with him to end their partnership, but he works within his limitations. He is the solid, even stolid, professional, whereas Dick is closer to the dazzling amateur who lacks resilience and wears himself out early. Franz's reconciliation with the "contracting of horizons"⁴ is forced by the ever-pressing past of Europe; he is "continually confronted with a pantheon of heroes."⁵

¹Tender is the Night, p. 22.

²See description of McKisco: Tender is the Night, p. 223. "Fine dives have been made from flimsier spring-boards." See also Tender is the Night, Notes, p. 351. "There are puns or suggestions in the names of other characters beside Albert McKisco, and we learn from Fitzgerald's notes that some of the puns were deliberate. Diver was the man who dived from a high place into obscurity."

³"The Rich Boy," The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories, p. 139.

⁴Tender is the Night, p. 22.

⁵Ibid.

He considers Dick's ambition as a psychologist as reckless and grandiose, and "very American."¹ Dick is not without a capacity for self-criticism, he is aware of a vein of triviality in himself, and knows also that too much admiration is not good for him. But he is not aware to what extent his own charm can be dangerous to him.

Dick Diver's professional course seems to be set at the beginning of the novel, but he has become involved with one of the patients at the hospital at which Franz works, the clinic of Doctor Dohmler. She is an American girl, Nicole Warren, and from a casual pen-friendship with the girl has developed an infatuation which threatens Dick's independence. Franz recounts to Dick the story of Nicole and her father. Nicole's family's position in the American democratic hierarchy is disclosed: it is of the capitalistic nobility in which her father has ducal status. He is "of the Warren family of Chicago,"² "a strikingly handsome man looking less than forty. . . . A fine American type in every way, tall, broad, well-made. . . . His large gray eyes were sun-veined from rowing on Lake Geneva, and he had that special air about him of having known the best of this world."³ Tender is the Night can be seen in part as being an anatomy of the international set of the Twenties: Devereux Warren is the first to be offered for dissection. He is poisoned at the core. It transpires that he had seduced his daughter when she was a little girl. Fitzgerald does not take the opportunity to gloat at this horrifying traumatic event; he handles it with such delicacy that one feels some sympathy for Devereux Warren.

¹Tender is the Night, p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 15.

³Ibid.

The first glimpse that the reader gets of Nicole Warren brings her sharply into focus:

From the figures that shuffled between the rooms Miss Warren emerged first in glimpses and then sharply when she saw him; as she crossed the threshold her face caught the room's last light and brought it outside with her.¹

We are reminded of her illness by the use of the word "shuffle" to describe the pathetic drugged patients' somnambulistic steps, and also by the ominously euphoric note struck in:

All that week there had been singing in her ears, summer songs of ardent skies and wild shade, and with his arrival the singing had become so loud she could have joined in with it.²

There is something unnatural and even dangerous about her rhapsody, although it might be taken for natural girlish excitement in another context. But here we cannot forget that Nicole is in a mental hospital: even a lonely woman patient, who joins them uninvited and has to be shaken off, reminds the reader of Nicole's illness. The background in which they seek privacy is one of emotional extremes, misery and hope, despair and joy. In this no-man's-land Dick's mood responds to hers: "The impression of her youth and beauty grew on Dick until it welled up inside him in a compact paroxysm of emotion."³

Nicole's charming but superficial and child-like nature (she has, after all, suffered something in the way of a fixation⁴) is shown by her anxiousness to play for Dick the fashionable popular tunes of the day, convinced that he has heard and danced to them.

¹Tender is the Night, p. 24.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴fixation: of interest or emotional attitude, . . . to designate the attachment, generally interpreted psychosexually, to an early stage of development, or object at such stage, with difficulty in forming new attachments, developing new interests, or establishing new adaptations." James Drever, A Dictionary of Psychology (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1952), p. 95.

This is an important pointer to the level on which their relationship is being fixed. On his next visit she sings to him:

"Lay a silver dollar
 On the ground
 And watch it roll
 Because it's round -

 A woman never knows
 What a good man she's got
 Till after she turns him down - "1

This song is in two ways ironical: because money is a key theme in the book and because Nicole is ultimately to turn Dick down and then sense how much he has meant to her.

Nicole belongs to one of "the great feudal families"² of Chicago, but, when Dick first meets her, she is humble and even confused about the family wealth. She is unconscious that all round her is woven a delicate but strong golden web in which Dick is to ensnare himself and which is to suffocate Nicole herself. The terms in which Fitzgerald describes her subtly make clear the extent to which wealth is woven into her very being: "Her face, ivory gold against the blurred sunset that strove through the rain."³

As his relationship with Nicole becomes closer, and he realises that not only is she in love with him but that he is responding to her, it becomes clear to Dick that he must make up his mind to extricate himself from the relationship or accept its possible implications. He puts these to Franz: "Devote my life to her?"⁴ and Franz replies: "Du lieber Gott!"⁵ Franz's earlier words: "A

¹Tender is the Night, p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 17.

³Ibid., p. 33.

⁴Ibid., p. 29.

⁵Ibid.

transference of the most fortuitous kind"¹ are to echo ironically through the book until finally "the case [is] finished."²

Dick realizes that although he can discuss the matter with Doctor Dohmler and Franz, "he himself [is] the incalculable element involved. By no conscious volition of his own, the thing had drifted into his hands."³ The danger is that he might, as Franz says: "Devote half [his] life to being doctor and nurse."⁴ Dick must make an existential choice. He does so; this is made plain when, after the break-up of his marriage, he reflects that "he had made his choice, chosen Ophelia, chosen the sweet poison and drunk it."⁵ It is not a simple choice, but a profoundly complicated one, as important choices generally are in real life.⁶

It is decided that Dick "must be most kind and yet eliminate

¹Tender is the Night, p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 320.

³Ibid., p. 30.

⁴Ibid., p. 31.

⁵Ibid., p. 321.

⁶In the short story by Lionel Trilling, "Of This Time, Of That Place," A.J. Smith and W.H. Mason (eds.), Short Story Study: A Critical Anthology (London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1961), p. 154, a brilliant example is given of the complex processes whereby conscious and unconscious mind combine and compete to make a choice:

Some sure instinct told him that he must not surrender the question to a clean official desk in a clear official light to be dealt with, settled and closed.

He heard himself saying: "Is the Dean busy at the moment? I'd like to see him."

His request came thus unbidden, even forbidden, and it was one of the surprising and startling incidents of his life. Later, when he reviewed the events, so disconnected in themselves or so merely odd, of the story that unfolded for him that year, it was over this moment, on its face the least notable, that he paused longest. It was frequently to be with fear and never with a certainty of its meaning in his own knowledge of himself that he would recall this simple, routine request and the feeling of shame and freedom it gave him as he sent everything down the official chute. In the end, of course, no matter what he did to "protect" Tertan, he would have had to make the same request and lay the matter on the Dean's clean desk. But it would always be a landmark of his life that, at the very moment when he was rejecting the official way, he had been, without will or intention, so gladly drawn to it.

himself."¹ But Dick is unable to act decisively; his will is paralysed by his own decency, and he cannot here be cruel to be kind. Nicole is temporarily defeated, but Dick cannot administer the final blows to the relationship.

In an attempt to provide antidotes for his emotions he intensifies work on his book and plans a new one. He takes a cycling holiday and again meets Nicole, discharged from the clinic and travelling with her sister, Baby, and a young Italian nobleman. On the last occasion he had seen Nicole her opulence had been underlined by "a magnificent Rolls. . . . Small within its gigantic proportions, and buoyed up by the power of a hundred superfluous horses, sat Nicole."² Dick attempts to evade Nicole's party, by staying at another hotel, but, flattered by Nicole's persistent attention, agrees to join her group after supper. Nicole appeals to one of Dick's weaknesses, his wanting to be loved.³

Baby Warren, Nicole's elder sister, is seen by some critics as the catalytic agent that brings about the marriage of Nicole and Dick; indeed, she is often seen as buying a doctor for Nicole. Fitzgerald presents her with almost the minimal possible sympathy:

She was a compendium of all the discontented women who had loved Byron a hundred years before, yet, in spite of the tragic affair with the Guards officer, there was something wooden and onanistic about her.⁴

Wayne C. Booth has anatomised her and the world she represents as

valueless, drifting, incapable of understanding the achievement that Dick cares for, willing, in fact, to buy Dick as a husband for Nicole in the hope of using him to cure her.⁵

Miller has described her as representing

the brittle sterility of a life dedicated to the bitch goddess

¹Tender is the Night, p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³Ibid., p. 23. "He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in."

⁴Ibid., p. 44.

⁵Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 194.

Money. . . . The only pleasure money can bring her is incestuously itself, not what it can buy. . . . She is already and permanently wedded to her father's fortune. For Dick she plays the role of evil genius, mysteriously materializing at all the crucial moments of his life and subtly dictating his every important decision. Her disclosure to Dick, at their first meeting, that 'the Warrens were going to buy Nicole a doctor' (45), for her father controls certain chairs at the University of Chicago, whetted his appetite for an affair from which he had been trying to escape; and her scheme throws Dick and Nicole together at just the moment to make marriage inevitable.¹

Miller is wrong on two points. Fitzgerald makes quite clear that Nicole is not interested in buying Dick: she has nothing against it on principle, but "she had looked Dick over with worldly eyes, she had measured him with the warped rule of an Anglophile and found him wanting."² Nor is the match inevitable, for Dick, aware that Baby may have her eyes on him as an appropriate medical sacrifice, had twice "come close to flinging the marriage in [Baby's] face."³ This adds an ironic touch to the surrender of Dick to Nicole, for Dick is able to do precisely what Baby Warren wants to be done.

On one of her last appearances in the novel Fitzgerald comments directly on Baby:

The American Woman, arcused, . . . the clean-sweeping irrational temper that had broken the moral back of a race and made a nursery out of a continent.⁴

She, too, is a representative figure, and Fitzgerald makes this quite clear. But she is an individual as well, a formidable and even loathsome one, as much lost as any of the characters. She wins a certain grudging sympathy from the reader as she grows older and more isolated, pursuing her fruitless and monotonous affairs until she gets only the satisfaction of a new topic of conversation out of them. She is rather like Anson Hunter, in Fitzgerald's short story, "The

¹Miller, p. 143.

²Tender is the Night, p. 49.

³Ibid., p. 54.

⁴Ibid., pp. 250-51.

Rich Boy," who was never happy

unless some-one was in love with him, responding to him like filings to a magnet, helping him to explain himself, promising him something.¹

She has the same sterile selfishness and inability to love, and uses other people to bolster up her self-esteem. She does not show any real affection for Nicole. When the wedding of Nicole and Dick is being discussed she cross-examines Dick impertinently, comparing their lineages: all that Dick can offer is that his father is a retired clergyman, that he (Dick) went to Yale and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, that his great-grandfather was Governor of North Carolina.

Face to face [Baby's] father would have it on almost any clergyman. They were an American ducal family without a title - the very name written in a hotel register, signed to an introduction, used in a difficult situation, caused a psychological metamorphosis in people, and in return this change had crystallized her own sense of position.²

Baby is able to say to Dick, when demanding his credentials: "It isn't that we think you're an adventurer. We don't know who you are."³

It is ironical that by the end of the book the young man with the glittering future is reduced to a man who does not know who he is any more, who has lost his sense of identity. Dick is compared to his father, who - although he lived a narrow, confined life - always knew who he was. In a different way Baby Warren always knows who she is - heir to and guardian of the Warren fortunes. She cannot think of herself in other terms, cannot separate herself from the Warren money.

After the marriage of Dick and Nicole, Fitzgerald uses a segment of Nicole's stream-of-consciousness to forward the narrative

¹"The Rich Boy," The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories, p. 182.

²Tender is the Night, pp. 53-54. The effect of the use of names and titles is parodied by Dick at the end of the book when rescuing Mary North and Lady Caroline Sibley-Biers. p. 324.

³Ibid., p. 53.

until the Divers are on the French Riviera a few years later. Through the stream-of-consciousness a number of the relationships are furthered and a clear sense of Nicole's state of mind is given. It very successfully conveys the charm, innocence and girlishness of Nicole's mind, and the slight confusion, which sometimes breaks into hysteria, reminds us of the chaos of her mind when it was sick, and shows she is not yet completely healed. Through the record of Nicole's mind we see how much more difficult it is for Dick to preserve his financial independence than he had thought it would be. Even before the marriage, when he met the Warren sisters with the Italian nobleman, Marmora, Dick has little idea of the Warren fortune. When Marmora's parents join the Warrens:

Dick gathered that their fortunes had something to do with a bank in Milan that had something to do with the Warren fortunes.¹

Dick is typically vague about the interlocking network of financial interests in which the Warren family is involved. Throughout the novel he attempts to maintain his integrity by remaining ignorant about the details of the Warren money. Although he tries to pay his way, he is gradually swamped by Warren money as it is filtered to Nicole. Nicole's stream-of-consciousness, is a modified version of the technique used in Ulysses by James Joyce for Holly Bloom's monologue; switches of subject matter and tone and the mingling of memory with formal dialogue that might be and sometimes is part of a conversation make this more than a mere tour de force:

We're going to live very quietly in Zurich for two years and Dick has enough to take care of us. . . . It's only for clothes and things I'll need it. . . . Why, that's more than . . . I know I'll never manage to spend it. . . . All right, let my share pile up then. . . . No, Dick refuses to have anything to do with it. I'll have to feel bloated for both of us.

.
That seems unreasonable, Dick - we have every reason for taking the bigger apartment. Why should we penalize ourselves

¹Tender is the Night, p. 43.

because there's more Warren money than Diver money? Oh, thank you, comeriere, but we've changed our minds. . . . We love wine.

.
This ship is nice.

.
We travelled a lot that year - from Wooloomooloo Bay to Biskra.

.
We went to Africa merely to see Tinged, since my principal interest in life is archaeology.

.
We must spend money and have a house - I'm tired of apartments.

.
Baby had to twitch wires at the Affaires Étrangères in Paris.

.
You've taught me that work is everything and I believe you. You used to say that a man knows things and when he stops knowing things he's like anybody else, and the thing is to get power before he stops knowing things. If you want to turn things topsy-turvy, all right, but must your Nicole follow you walking on her hands, darling?¹

Other fragments show Nicole's varying moods, from profound happiness and gaiety to despair and hysteria:

I think it's wonderful to be just like everybody else, to reach out and find you all warm beside me in the bed.

.
I was to do the French translation but I'm tired these days.

.
Life is fun with Dick.

.
I am Pallas Athene carved reverently on the front of a galley.

.
But I was gone again by that time - trains and beaches they were all one. That was why he took me travelling, but after my second child, my little girl Topsy, was born everything got dark again.

If I could get word to my husband who has seen fit to desert me, to leave me in the hands of incompetents. You tell me my baby is black - that's farcical, that's very cheap.

.
When I talk I say to myself that I'm probably Dick. Already I have even been my own son, remembering how wise and slow he is. Sometimes I am Doctor Dohmler and one time I may even be an aspect of you, Tommy Barban.²

In the final fragments Fitzgerald shows us the registering on Nicole's consciousness for the first time of Rosemary Hoyt, the starlet who is

¹Tender is the Night, pp. 54-56.

²Ibid., pp. 54-57. The beautiful and delicate precision of Fitzgerald's rendering of Nicole's confusion can be seen if her monologue is compared with the examples drawn from case-histories by a professional psychiatrist, R.D. Laing in his book The Divided Self (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965). Note also The Far Side of Paradise, p. 313. "Must avoid Faulkner attitude and not end with a novelized Kraft-Ebing - better Ophelia and her flowers."

to "fall in love" with Dick and demonstrate that Nicole does not manage to satisfy Dick completely, ~~revealing~~^{revealing} the weaknesses and cracks in the Divers' marriage.

In his notes, Fitzgerald wrote that in Tender is the Night he intended to show the "leisure [sic] class . . . at their truly most brilliant & glamorous";¹ it is at this juncture that he begins this task, and it is in handling this leisure class that his moral touch must be most delicate, for there is clearly an opportunity for routine dismissal of the class as parasitic and ridiculous. This is an invitation to savage satire. But, as Trilling has pointed out, "he really had but little impulse to blame, which is the more remarkable because our culture peculiarly honors the act of blaming, which it takes as the sign of virtue and intellect."² Think of Ernest Hemingway's bitter denunciations of "the rich" at the conclusions of A Moveable Feast³ and To Have and Have Not.⁴ Hemingway does not build up a case and pronounce after the weighing of evidence, as Nick Carraway does in The Great Gatsby. On the other hand there is a temptation for Fitzgerald to glamourise the wealthy, and it cannot be denied that he does this at times. His grasp is not as sure as it should be, and his problem is underlined by his choice of narrative focus in Book Two on Rosemary Hoyt. "Rosemary's Angle" presents us with the glitter and romance of the Riviera unfiltered through a discriminating consciousness; Rosemary Hoyt is in her teens, not particularly intelligent, and reliant still on her mother. She is naïve and uncritical although charming enough. But she acts as a barrier to Fitzgerald, who is unable to distance himself from the life

¹The Far Side of Paradise, p. 308.

²Trilling, p. 245.

³Ernest Hemingway, A Moveable Feast (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966).

⁴Ernest Hemingway, To Have and Have Not (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961).

he is describing and place it in perspective.

Fitzgerald's tone and diction emphasize the almost religious awe with which he describes his setting for the rich: "a large, proud, rose-colored hotel. . . . The pink and cream of old fortifications, the purple Alp."¹ The obviously romantic colours of a glossy travel brochure are used; the beach is seen quite unironically as a "bright tan prayer rug!"² (If this is compared with Pope's attitude to Belinda in "The Rape of the Lock" we see that Pope, unlike Fitzgerald, is able to balance his adoration with irony.)

Into this scene he introduces Rosemary

who had magic in her pink palms and her cheeks lit to a lovely flame, like the thrilling flush of children after their cold baths in the evening. Her fine high forehead sloped up gently to where her hair, bordering it like an armorial shield, burst into lovelocks and waves and curls of ash blonde and gold. Her eyes were bright, big, clear, wet, and shining, the color of her cheeks was real, breaking close to the surface from the strong young pump of her heart. Her body hovered delicately on the last edge of childhood - she was almost eighteen, nearly complete, but the dew was still on her.³

Although the same lushed awe pervades his description of Rosemary, Fitzgerald stresses her youth and implies certain reservations about her by doing this. Here the rhapsodic tone is just sustained by its object, the freshness and beauty of Rosemary is strongly and clearly stated, and she is prevented from appearing just a beautiful doll ("the color of her cheeks was real"). Furthermore, her limitations are suggested - "nearly complete, but the dew was still on her" - in a way suggesting her naturalness and charm. But she and her mother share an ominous quality:

They wanted high excitement, not from the necessity of stimulating jaded nerves, but with the avidity of prize-winning school-children who deserved their vacations.⁴

Rosemary and her mother have a certain almost innocent ruthlessness that verges on predacity: they will not let anything come between them

¹Tender is the Night, p. 58.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 58-59.

⁴Ibid., p. 59.

and their pleasures.

An important and impressive quality of Rosemary is stressed immediately, her discipline:

When she walked she carried herself like a ballet-dancer, not ¹ slumped down on her hips but held up in the small of her back.

This is one of the ways in which Rosemary wins the respect of Dick Diver, and of the reader.

When Rosemary goes down to the beach she finds the bathers in two separate groups, one of which is centred on a man in a jockey cap

giving a quiet little performance for this group; he moved gravely about with a rake, ostensibly removing gravel and meanwhile developing some esoteric burlesque held in suspension by his grave face. Its faintest ramifications had become hilarious, until whatever he said released a burst of laughter. Even those who, like herself, were too far away to hear, sent out an antennae of attention until the only person on the beach not caught up in it was the young woman with the string of pearls. ²

It transpires that the man with the jockey cap is Dick Diver and the woman not paying him attention is his wife, Nicole. This in itself, an apparently trivial detail, suggests the rift between Dick and Nicole that is to grow through the book and is to be one of the main themes. Dick's performance is used to symbolise the light-hearted charm and social genius of his presence, but it suggests as well the gap between Dick's youthful ambition ("to be a good psychologist - maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived,"³) and his achievement. One feels that already an invisible deterioration has taken place.

The Divers' group is compared with the other one, which consists of outsiders: Albert and Violet McKisco, Luis Campion, Royal Dumphry and Mrs Abrams; they are characterised neatly by Fitzgerald, who wishes to emphasise the social grace of the others. Fitzgerald captures with great skill the brittle, envious quality of the outsiders' conversation, Mrs McKisco's references to "the plot"⁴ from which they are excluded

¹Tender is the Night, p. 59.

²Ibid., p. 61. Cf. the string of pearls in The Great Gatsby, p. 58 and p. 136.

³Ibid., p. 22.

⁴Ibid., p. 63.

and the young homosexuals' mannered and effeminate speech: "Now, Royal, don't be too ghastly for words."¹

Fitzgerald uses Rosemary as a compass by which the reader can take his bearings on the two groups and this is deftly and surreptitiously done. Rosemary, the newcomer with whom the reader is prepared to identify as she finds her way around,

looked at them all uncomfortably, wishing her mother had come down here with her. She did not like these people, especially in her immediate comparison of them with those who had interested her at the other end of the beach.²

The McKiscos and their companions are clumsy and graceless, even slightly comic. Albert McKisco is grumpy and aggressive: in an attempt to get tanned "he was burning visibly - a grayish flush had spread over his face, dissolving all his expressions into a vast ineffectuality."³ In trying to swim his "stiff-armed batting of the Mediterranean, obviously intended to suggest a crawl"⁴ is equally ineffectual and he has to take tips on breathing from Rosemary.

The two groups are compared physically: McKisco is "a scrawny, freckle-and-red man of thirty,"⁵ whereas Abe North, one of the Divers' companions, is

the man with the leonine head.

His voice was slow and shy; he had one of the saddest faces Rosemary had ever seen, the high cheek-bones of an Indian, a long upper lip and enormous deep-set dark golden eyes.⁶

It transpires that Abe North is a musician, and Mrs McKisco gives voice with apparent relish to the opinion that he is a rotten one. The McKiscos have "met all the best French artists and writers in Paris,"⁷

¹Tender is the Night, p. 63.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 64.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 63.

⁶Ibid., p. 64.

⁷Ibid., p. 65.

having had letters of introduction, and Albert is finishing his first novel, which his wife describes as being "on the idea of Ulysses, . . . only instead of taking twenty-four hours my husband takes a hundred years!"¹ Albert McKisco is not abashed by this far-fetched comparison but does not want his wife to give the idea away before the book is published.

It is part affectation, but significant affectation, that McKisco should say of having written the first review of Ulysses in America: "I wish I had a cigarette, . . . that's more important to me just now."² The dilettantism of McKisco is exposed immediately, but only much later does one realise that Dick is also afflicted.

Despite the fact that Dick Diver is the centre of a group of handsome and lively people his companions do not appear to be people of intellectual distinction and seriousness. The deterioration of Dick is only hinted at here, but it becomes clear later. His spiritual state is signalled by the overtones of despair in his answer to Rosemary's asking the time; "It's about half past one. . . . It's not a bad time. . . . It's not one of the worst time of the day."³

Rosemary is to be a successful siren wooing Dick from his original ambitions and demonstrating his weaknesses; but she is not the cause of his downfall, no more than it can be blamed on Nicole.

When Rosemary reports to her mother that she has fallen in love with Dick, Mrs Speers takes it casually enough; she and her daughter share an amorality that does not concern itself with the fact that the object of Rosemary's affection is a married man.

In his relationship with Rosemary Dick shows the essence of his charm: "He seemed kind and charming - his voice promised that he would

¹Tender is the Night, p. 66.

²Ibid., p. 65.

³Ibid., p. 67.

take care of her, and that a little later he would open up whole new worlds for her, unroll an endless procession of magnificent possibilities."¹ Later in the novel Fitzgerald reveals that this charm has a meretricious base, that it is founded on "a trick of the heart."² However, not only does Rosemary not realize this at this stage but Fitzgerald seems similarly unaware of it, so caught up is he with the need to make Dick's trivial life significant. Hand in hand with Dick's charm goes his exquisite tact, revealed here by the way he managed the introduction so that her name wasn't mentioned and then let her know easily that everyone knew who she was but was respecting the completeness of her private life - a courtesy that Rosemary had not met with save from professional people since her success.³

Fitzgerald has to keep the reader interested in Dick. His fall is not sudden and dramatic but gradual, and the reader has to feel that he is worthy of attention. In keeping the balance Fitzgerald is sometimes inclined to give more credit to Dick for his social virtues than they warrant, and tends to build up a mystique about him and his companions that does not sustain analysis. The problem is complicated by Fitzgerald's use of "Rosemary's Angle" as his point of view. Rosemary makes allowances for the Divers and their friends which are understandable if one remembers that Rosemary is a teenage girl without particular intellectual distinction. But when Rosemary is said to feel that such people are not drones, the reader has only her word for it and is inclined to comment: "So what!" And Fitzgerald's prose becomes vague and unconvincing: "Even in their absolute immobility, complete as that of the morning, she felt a purpose, a working over something, a direction, an act of creation different from any she had known."⁴ But what this something is, is not told us, and the only

¹ Tender is the Night, p. 72.

² Ibid., p. 176. Cf. p. 234, "It's a trick, I he said gently."

³ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

product of this "act of creation different from any she had known" is a beach raked clean by Dick.

Fitzgerald adds his full authority to Rosemary's response to the group of men she is enthralled by:

All three were personable in different ways: all were of a special gentleness that she felt was part of their lives, past and future, not circumstanced by events, not at all like the company manners of actors, and she detected also a far-reaching delicacy that was different from the rough and ready good fellowship of directors, who represented the intellectuals in her life.¹

Here the words "she detected" indicate clearly that Fitzgerald is as sure as she is that the quality she detects exists. The case can be argued for Dick Diver and Abe North, but there is no "special gentleness" and "far-reaching delicacy" in Tommy Barban, the anarchistic adventurer. Even Fitzgerald seems called upon to qualify Tommy Barban's membership of this quasi-mystical club: "Barban was less civilised, more skeptical and scoffing; his manners were formal, even perfunctory."² In view of Tommy Barban's behaviour at the end of the novel and the crass opportunism of his conquest of Nicole, this is understatement.

Fitzgerald shows Rosemary's response to Abe North as complex: "Abe North had, under his shyness, a desperate humour that amused but puzzled her. Her serious nature distrusted its ability to make a supreme impression on him."³ Abe North is a genuine asset in the novel and he gives us a moving foretaste of Dick's disintegration and defeat, but his success as a character depends more on vivid remarks of his that make him flare into life than on careful character construction. Fitzgerald makes him convincing by comments like: "Tired of friends. The thing is to have sycophants"⁴ and "My business is to

¹Tender is the Night, p. 75.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 144.

tear [things] apart."¹ The destructiveness which is revealed in the latter comment seems to be at the core of his being and to vitiate what creative talents he has. In fact, Fitzgerald gives little evidence of Abe North's musical talents, nor are we convinced of the seriousness of his approach to music. In Mrs McKisco's opinion he is inferior to Antheil, but it would appear from the talk of a score for Broadway that his interest is in light music. The one example we are given of his passion for music is his "making love"² to a muted piano by the hour when he first joins the Diver ménage.

Although Fitzgerald shows Rosemary assessing the others in the group, it is in Dick Diver that she is really interested, and here her viewpoint is most helpful to Fitzgerald. He can use her to focus on Dick without appearing himself preoccupied with his central character. It is as though Dick is exiled royalty and the others his courtiers. Again Fitzgerald supports Rosemary's impressions:

But Dick Diver - he was all complete there. Silently she admired him. . . . There was never any doubt at whom he was looking or talking - and this is a flattering attention, for who looks at us? - glances fall upon us, curious or uninterested, nothing more. His voice, with some faint Irish melody running through it, wooed the world, yet she felt the layer of hardness in₃ him, of self-control and of self-discipline, her own virtues.

In the total context of the novel this is ironic, but there is no indication that Fitzgerald means it to be so. Just as Rosemary idealises Dick, so we feel a blurring of Fitzgerald's focus, as though he is identifying with Dick in a form of self-indulgence. It is precisely in self-discipline that Dick is lacking, self-discipline equal to his gifts; this is what causes his deterioration, his lack of fulfilment and his loss of identity. Rosemary's point of view is not enough. It should be placed in context, but it is allowed to stand for that of Fitzgerald.

Rosemary embalms her first afternoon with the Divers and their

¹Tender is the Night, p. 144.

²Ibid., p. 160.

³Ibid., p. 75.

companions into a Platonic Ideal:

Rosemary felt that this swim would become the typical one of her life, the one that would always pop up in her memory at the mention of swimming.¹

Unhappily, Fitzgerald's prose clogs and becomes turgid where he tries to justify Rosemary's awe:

Her naïveté responded wholeheartedly to the expensive simplicity of the Divers, unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence, unaware that it was all a selection of quality rather than quantity from the run of the world's bazaar; and that the simplicity of behaviour also, the nursery-like peace and good will, the emphasis on the simpler virtues, was part of a desperate bargain with the gods and had been attained through struggles she could not have guessed at. At that moment the Divers represented externally the exact furthestmost evolution of a class, so that most people seemed awkward beside them - in reality a qualitative change had already set in that was not at all apparent to Rosemary.²

This passage leaves one as unenlightened as Rosemary. The Divers' social grace offers no moral or aesthetic creativity to justify Fitzgerald's exaltation. Phrases like "its complexity and its lack of innocence," "a selection of quality rather than quantity from the world's bazaar," "struggles she could not have guessed at" and "the exact furthestmost evolution of a class" are vague and completely without reference. Nor is one shown what the "qualitative change" referred to is. The word "exact" does not give precision but only adds to the bewilderment the reader feels; one feels that Fitzgerald has played a sort of literary confidence trick, and has taken himself in.

Fitzgerald handles Rosemary herself better: he places her in a professional setting to show her standing on her home ground, to establish her as a success in her own right and to place her in relation to other men. Rosemary visits an American producer, Earl Brady, working in Europe:

As he took her hand she saw him look her over from head to foot, a gesture she recognized and one that made her feel at home, but gave her always a faint feeling of superiority to whoever made it. If her person was property she could exercise whatever advantage was inherent in its ownership.³

¹Tender is the Night, p. 76.

²Ibid., p. 77.

³Ibid., p. 80.

The last sentence reinforces the impression of Rosemary's amorality already suggested. The visit to Brady is contrived by Fitzgerald, and the reader feels that it is obviously fulfilling a function. But it does fulfil this function, and the approval and professional admiration expressed by Brady help Fitzgerald to make Rosemary "real," although throughout the novel he is inclined to take Rosemary as more the actress than the starlet she still is. He does not require of her any special seriousness about her art or insight into it apart from a dedicated professionalism that enables her to deliver the goods, illustrated by her swimming at ice-cold temperatures while filming, and consequently catching pneumonia.¹

It is in *Dick Diver*, of course, that the reader is mainly interested, and this interest is reinforced by Fitzgerald's description of a party he gives, which is an opportunity for Fitzgerald to demonstrate the social magic that Dick has come to deal in. In Dick's absorption in this party and the reason that he gives for holding it, Fitzgerald shows the distance that Dick has come since his early ambition. Dick wants to give "a really bad party. . . . where there's a brawl and seductions and people going home with their feelings hurt and women pass out in the cabinet de toilette."² This is the playing with emotion of a dilettante in human relations, even a decadent. It is a long way from wanting to be even a mediocre psychologist with self-respect, this dabbling in human emotions.

He went back into his house and Nicole saw that one of his most characteristic moods was upon him, the excitement that swept everyone up into it and was inevitably followed by his own form of melancholy, which he never displayed but at which she guessed. This excitement about things reached an intensity out of proportion to their importance, generating a really extraordinary virtuosity with people. Save among a few of the tough-minded and perennially suspicious, he had the power of arousing a fascinating 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

¹Tender is the Night, p. 73.

²Ibid., p. 84.

upon a massacre he had ordered to satisfy an impersonal blood lust.

But to be included in Dick Diver's world for a while was a remarkable experience: people believed he made special reservations about them, recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies. He won everyone quickly with an exquisite consideration and a politeness that moved so fast and intuitively that it could be examined only in its effect. Then, without caution, lest the first bloom of the relation wither, he opened the gate to his amusing world. So long as they subscribed to it completely, their happiness was his preoccupation, but at the first flicker of doubt as to its all-inclusiveness he evaporated before their eyes, leaving little communicable memory of what he had said or done.¹

Here Fitzgerald is able to suggest the less healthy elements in Dick's social behaviour, without simply "blaming" Dick. The word "uncritical" suggests that without this the love Dick engenders would evaporate, that some sort of trick is being exercised. The words "carnivals of affection" and "waste and extravagance" suggest that Dick is indulging in a sort of emotional orgy. There is an element of blasphemy about Dick's "making special reservations about [people], recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies." Dick is taking upon himself the mantle of God, assuming a role he is not fit to sustain. It demands a suspension of disbelief in its audience that is akin to that given magicians by children, what amounts to an eagerness to be deceived. For Dick is practising a deception. Where he could be helping people, as a psychologist, to sort out their emotional problems, he is exploiting their vulnerability to indulge his own pride. Those who doubt him see him "evaporate before their eyes, leaving little communicable memory of what he had said or done."

When the first guests arrive at the party Dick takes charge of them: they are Rosemary and her mother, Mrs Speers, and they experience "the intensely calculated perfection of Villa Diana."² Dick says to Rosemary,

with a lightness seeming to conceal a paternal interest, "I'm going to save your reason - I'm going to give you a hat to wear on the beach."³

¹Tender is the Night, p. 84.

²Ibid., p. 85.

³Ibid.

This is doubly significant, adumbrating the quasi-incestuous relationship¹ between Dick and Rosemary (the star of Daddy's Girl) and ironically referring to Dick's 'vocation.'

When the McKiscos' party arrives, Dick greets it "with a proud bearing and an obvious deference to their infinite and unknown possibilities."² Once again Dick employs his "trick of the heart."

Part of the challenge that Dick faces is the welding together of the disparate elements of which the party is composed, suggested by Rosemary's disappointed response to the McKisco group, and her bewilderment at the bitter anarchy of Tommy Barban's gnomish utterances:

"Home? I have no home, I am going to a war.

 What war? Any war. I haven't seen a paper lately but I suppose there's a war - there always is.

 When I'm in a rut I come to see the Divers, because then I know that in a few weeks I'll want to go to war."³

Under the spell of Dick's magic the party reaches a state of perfection:

A perceptible change had set in - person by person had given up something, a preoccupation, an anxiety, a suspicion, and now they were only their best selves and the Divers' guests. Not to have been friendly and interested would have seemed to reflect on the Divers.⁴

The guests are transfigured by the Divers; even Violet McKisco's

prettiness had been piped to the surface of her, so that she ceased her struggle to make tangible to herself her shadowy position as the wife of an arriviste who had not arrived.⁵

Abe North holds forth, with characteristic flippancy that begs the question, about his moral code: "Of course I've got one, . . . a man

¹This relationship and its implications and links with other themes is handled superbly by Robert Stanton, "'Daddy's Girl': Symbol and Theme in Tender is the Night," Modern Fiction Studies, IV (1958), 136-42.

²Tender is the Night, p. 86.

³Ibid., p. 87.

⁴Ibid., p. 89.

⁵Ibid., p. 90.

can't live without a moral code. Mine is that I'm against the burning of witches. Whenever they burn a witch I get all hot under the collar."¹ (Italics mine.) This reminder of moral codes by Abe North, whose subsequent disintegration is related to his lack of one, is enough to make one question the social perfection achieved by the Divers:

There were fireflies riding on the dark air and a dog baying on some low and far-away ledge of the cliff. The table seemed to have risen a little toward the sky like a mechanical dancing platform, giving the people around it a sense of being alone with each other in the dark universe, nourished by its only food, warmed by its only lights. And, as if a curious hushed laugh from Mrs. McKisco were a signal that such a detachment from the world had been attained, the two Divers began suddenly to warm and glow and expand, as if to make up to their guests, already so subtly assured of their importance, so flattered with politeness, for anything they might still miss from that country well left behind. Just for a moment they seemed to speak to everyone at the table, singly and together, assuring them of their friendliness, their affection. And for a moment the faces turned up toward them were like the faces of poor children at a Christmas tree.²

Fitzgerald maintains a tension between asserting the almost mystical moment of peace and harmony wrought by the Divers from most unpromising material, and suggesting the element of corruption in the cosy snugness of the atmosphere that the Divers have conjured up with their all-pervading flattery and ease.

Immediately after the dinner Fitzgerald reminds us of some of the discordant elements that have been transcended; Nicole retires, Mrs McKisco announces that she is going to the bathroom and a quarrel breaks out between Tommy Barban and Albert McKisco, prefiguring the next morning's duel. Mrs McKisco returns and is about to make a sensational announcement when she is prevented by Barban, who acts as watchdog to the Divers. (We learn later that she has witnessed an outburst of hysteria from Nicole).

Rosemary declares her love (for the second time) to Dick, but he humours her: "She was stricken. She touched him, feeling the

¹Tender is the Night, p. 90.

²Ibid., p. 91.

smooth cloth of his dark coat like a chasuble. She seemed about to fall to her knees."¹ The imagery is religious, but with a slight irony. Dick has become for Rosemary a priest of his particular way of life. There are other instances in Tender is the Night of religious imagery:

She bathed and anointed herself.

.
[Nicole] put on the first ankle-length day dress that she had owned for many years, and crossed herself reverently with Chanel Sixteen.²

and in the last picture we have of Dick in Europe,

he raised his right hand and with a papal cross he blessed the beach from the terrace.³

The religious references suggest that Dick and Nicole have in a sense blasphemed; it is well to remember at this point that Fitzgerald was a "lapsed" Catholic.

No drunken side-shows follow immediately after the party, as in The Great Gatsby, but there is to follow an absurd duel between McKisco and Tommy Barban not much later. It is an indirect fulfilment of Dick's expressed wish for "a really bad party . . . where there's a brawl and seductions and people going home with their feelings hurt,"⁴ and it is ironic that there is an attempt to keep news of the duel away from the Divers, over whom it started when Tommy Barban tried to stop Violet McKisco from telling what she had seen in the bathroom. (The woman who comes nearest to passing out in the cabinet de toilette is Nicole, who has an attack of hysteria.)

The responsibility for the duel, then, can be traced back to Dick Diver and his dabbling with other people's emotions: the danger of a clash of temperaments has not only not been avoided by Dick, but

¹Tender is the Night, p. 95.

²Ibid., p. 309.

³Ibid., p. 333.

⁴Ibid., p. 84.

has been nourished by his irresponsibility. The comic fizzling out of the duel prevents anyone being hurt, but it is a foretaste of the meaningless violence that is later to result in the murder of Abe North's "friendly Indian,"¹ Peterson, the shooting of an Englishman by Maria Wallis ("the shots, the concussions that had finished God knew what dark matter"²), and the killing of Abe North. In contrast is the telegram Dick gets - "You father died peacefully."³ Dick's father had lived and died quietly, always knowing who he was.

Dick's social gift is very much in evidence when Fitzgerald shows us the Divers, the Norths and Rosemary in Paris. He also demonstrates the way in which Dick uses it in order to manipulate people:

Dick would bring the scene within range by greeting a few people, a sort of selection - the Divers seemed to have a large acquaintance, but it was always as if the person had not seen them for a long, long time and was utterly bowled over, "Why, where do you keep yourselves?" - and then re-create the unity of his own party by destroying the outsiders softly but permanently with an ironic coup de grâce.⁴

Here a nasty element in Dick is suggested, a hypocrisy about people with whom he pretends to be friendly. He uses them for his own purposes and to impress his clique. But, although his means are questionable, he does have the power of absorbing and unifying a group:

[Dick] made the group into so bright a unit that Rosemary felt an impatient disregard for all who were not at their table.⁵

In concluding Book Two Fitzgerald shows the two rivals for Dick out shopping together; he shows how different they are, and what a change has come in Nicole, who - on leaving hospital - was confused about her wealth. It is now Rosemary who spends "money she had

¹Tender is the Night, p. 169.

²Ibid., p. 147.

³Ibid., p. 220.

⁴Ibid., p. 111.

⁵Ibid.

earned,"¹ and is confused about it all. Nicole buys with a casual extravagance that is awe-inspiring. In a passage that owes something to Keats,² Fitzgerald shows why Nicole buys as she does and why she can afford to:

Nicole was the product of much ingenuity and toil. 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; men mixed toothpaste in vats and drew mouthwash out of copper hogsheads; girls canned tomatoes quickly in August or worked rudely at the Five-and-Tens on Christmas Eve; 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 and, as the whole system swayed and thundered onward, it leant a feverish bloom to such processes of hers as wholesale buying, like the flush of a fireman's face holding his post before a spreading blaze. She illustrated very simple principles, containing in herself her own doom, but illustrated them so accurately that there was grace in the procedure.³

Although this lacks the denunciatory venom of Keats's passage, and suggests a certain grandeur about Nicole, there is no doubt that Fitzgerald shows his disapproval of the rampant capitalism that buoys up Nicole. The ruthlessness of the system is shown in: "Dreamers were muscled out of patent rights in new tractors," its almost insane speed, like that of a runaway express train that "swayed and thundered onward," the unhealthy "feverish bloom" it imparts, the tedium and monotony it inflicts on the men who "mixed toothpaste in vats and drew mouthwash out of copper hogsheads" and the girls who have to work even on Christmas Eve - which suggests blasphemous materialism. The workers give a tithe to Nicole who is a goddess of this blasphemous system.

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By the beginning of Book Three, called "Casualties : 1925," it is clear that the moral disintegration of Dick and his circle is to continue at an accelerating pace. When the Divers, the Norths and

¹Tender is the Night, p. 113.

²"Isabella; or The Pot of Basil," by John Keats, stanzas XIV-XV.

³Tender is the Night, pp. 113-14.

Rosemary inspect the battle-field of Beaumont-Hamel, Dick shows a sympathy for the dead, but Abe North appears unmoved and Rosemary is so callow that she needs Dick to explain to her the sadness of the battle-field. The relation of this battle-field scene to the novel's sub-themes of the passing of time and the tender night of death is given by Abe North: "There are lots of people dead since and we'll all be dead soon,"¹ and Dick, who says: "All my beautiful lovely safe world blew itself up here."² Dick and his friends belong to a new generation living in a different kind of world, and Fitzgerald makes this explicit. To expatiate on "the Lost Generation," an over-worked phrase, would be to perpetuate the sort of simplification that Tender is the Night avoids, but it is worth noting at this point what the death of Dick's father means to Dick:

His father had been sure of what he was, with a deep pride of the two proud widows who had raised him to believe that nothing could be superior to "good instincts," honor, courtesy, and courage.³

Dick's father's code of honour ("again and again Dick [referred] judgments to what his father would probably have thought and done"⁴) is inadequate to the complexities of Dick's situation and world, a world without bearings and security. Inevitably one later compares the peaceful death of Dick's father to that of the likeable nihilist, Abe North, who is beaten to death in a squalid brawl in a New York speak-easy.

Gradually the strains of their sweet life show on all the main characters: we are reminded that Nicole is still partially an invalid, and the repercussions of a drunken spree Abe engages in precipitate her collapse: partly through Abe's irresponsibility, a man is murdered and his body left in Rosemary's hotel room. Dick's tact and social sense -

¹Tender is the Night, p. 117.

²Ibid., p. 118.

³Ibid., p. 221.

⁴Ibid., pp. 220-21.

those ambiguous gifts - enable him to avoid involving Rosemary in a scandal disastrous to her career. But Dick's adroitness in handling this situation reflects ironically on his neglect of Nicole, both as patient and wife, in his "affair" with Rosemary, which must be analysed in some detail.

From the beginning of their relationship, Rosemary has taken the initiative. The limitations of Dick's insight as a psychologist and his weakness as man (if he has a "tragic flaw" it is his vulnerability to "love"¹) and as husband render him unable to cope with Rosemary's advances. Fitzgerald is only partially successful in handling the "affair" and its implications. At best he makes it both amusing and touching: for example, when Rosemary says to Dick: "Take me,"² he has no idea that she is offering herself physically and responds: "Take you where?"³ When Rosemary clings to Dick in a taxi, ironically "fragrant with the perfume [she] had bought with Nicole," he kisses her and is unsatisfied, because "she did not know yet that splendor is something in the heart; at the moment when she realized that and melted into the passion of the universe he could take her without question or regret."⁴ Here the question of adultery is ignored, and the language becomes inflated. The reader can only guess what Fitzgerald means by "splendor is something in the heart." One recalls, however, that in the very different type of adultery in The Great Gatsby, Gatsby attains a mystical union when he kisses Daisy and "at his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the

¹See Tender is the Night p. 23. "He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in," and p. 321. "Wanting above all to be brave and kind, he had wanted, even more than that, to be loved." See Corley's Notes, p. 350: "There are indications that Fitzgerald regarded the need to be loved, or at least to be admired, as the tragic flaw in Dick's character and the cause of his ruin."

²Ibid., p. 125.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 126.

incarnation was complete."¹ Had Rosemary been able to provide a similar experience for Dick, he would have taken her "without question or regret." But, as it is, she offers herself so naively that he is able to rationalise his refusal, blame the champagne and refer to Nicole and the fact that Rosemary might regret it later. That Dick is rationalising is shown by the words: "His thoughts added, ' - there'd be so much to teach you.'"²

At this juncture Dick is "not [confused] about the ethics of the matter, for the impossibility of it was sheerly indicated from all angles."³ But later Dick tells Rosemary he is in love with her. The reader has not been prepared for this, the transition is too abrupt and Fitzgerald's handling of a crucial passage is extremely muddled:

They were still in the happier stage of love. They were full of brave illusions about each other, tremendous illusions, so that the communion of self with self seemed to be on a plane where no other human relations mattered. They both seemed to have arrived there with an extraordinary innocence, as though a series of pure accidents had driven them together, so many accidents that at last they were forced to conclude that they were for each other. They had arrived with clean hands, or so it seemed, after no traffic with the merely curious and clandestine.⁴

This is like a reversion to the adolescent infatuation of This Side of Paradise; the picture of love implied is of something dependent on a grotesque confidence trick, as though love without illusions were impossible. The reader cannot think of any "pure accidents that had driven them together," particularly since Rosemary has pursued Dick since first meeting him. And to describe Dick as full of "tremendous illusions" is to vitiate the picture of Dick as a psychologist, essential to the novel. Dick cannot possibly be so deluded as to think he has "arrived with clean hands," being a married man with special responsibilities to Nicole as a former mental patient. If

¹The Great Gatsby, p. 84.

²Tender is the Night, p. 126.

³Ibid., p. 127.

⁴Ibid., p. 136.

Rosemary were a mature and intelligent woman able to make up for some of Nicole's deficiencies, one might be able to understand Dick's infatuation, but not only is Rosemary vapid intellectually and basically uninteresting, she is also in many ways ironically a younger and stronger edition of Nicole. Although Fitzgerald clearly means to show Dick's subsequent capitulation to Rosemary, when she is no longer under his spell, as part of his pattern of deterioration, he does not relate Dick's initial infatuation to that pattern.

One problem that makes the handling of Dick's relationship with Rosemary difficult to place is Fitzgerald's habit of slipping without transition from the comment and reporting of the omniscient author to a sort of mental dialogue in which Dick appears to be deliberating retrospectively on his actions. It is at times difficult to know how far Fitzgerald is indulging in a sort of identification that becomes self-pity. This is an allegation made by Piper,¹ who uses a biographical approach to Fitzgerald's work. Certainly Fitzgerald drew on his own experiences for much of the material of Tender is the Night; this in itself has no bearing on its artistic success. But one of the weaknesses of Tender is the Night is that Fitzgerald too often blurs the perspective and seems too closely involved in his own material. The immaturity of Dick in his capitulation to Rosemary is "placed" best in the recreation of a phrase from the story Collis Clay tells him about a youthful sexual adventure of Rosemary's - "Do you mind if I pull down the curtain?"² - and this haunts Dick, echoing and re-echoing in his mind. However, a key passage fails:

He knew that what he was now doing marked a turning point in his life - it was out of line with everything that had preceded it, even out of line with what effect he might hope to produce upon Rosemary. Rosemary saw him always as a model of correctness - his presence walking around this block was an intrusion. But Dick's

¹Piper, p. 209.

²Tender is the Night, p. 151.

necessity of behaving as he did was a projection of some submerged reality: he was compelled to walk there, or stand there, his shirt-sleeve fitting his wrist and his coat sleeve encasing his shirt-sleeve like a sleeve valve, his collar moulded plastically to his neck, his red hair cut exactly, his hand holding his small briefcase like a dandy - just as another man once found it necessary to stand in front of a church in Ferrara, in sackcloth and ashes. Dick was paying tribute to things unforgotten, unshriven, unexpurgated.¹

Fitzgerald pitches the drama too high, and builds up a climax that is obscure (Piper suggests that Fitzgerald is referring to Henry IV, whose penance was not in Ferrara²). But the main objection is to the inflated language and the introduction of the concept of religious penance which is different to what Dick seems to be doing here. Phrases like "the projection of some submerged reality" and "things unforgotten, unshriven, unexpurgated" are not clear, and leave the reader feeling that they are mere rhetorical flourishes. Nor is it apparent why Fitzgerald invests Dick's clothing with such significance, paying careful attention to minute detail as though it is the equivalent of the sackcloth and ashes mentioned. The parallel is absurd. By giving a religious frame of reference that does not fit, Fitzgerald makes Dick and his problems seem small.

This happens before the collapse of Nicole, after which perhaps Dick might be conscious of his need for expiation. But the twin pulls of his wife and Rosemary do not affect Dick, we feel, in the way that Fitzgerald implies, certainly not at this stage.

The collapse of Nicole and Rosemary's subsequent leaving bring to an end the movement entitled "Casualties:1925," the title now having taken on a new dimension of meaning. Dick and Nicole are now thrown together - the affair with Rosemary has been ostensibly kept a secret from Nicole - and Dick has to return to his marriage and his research. At the Villa Diana, in the solitude of his workroom, he

¹Tender is the Night, p. 153.

²Piper, p. 317.

faces "the ordered confusion . . . [of] the materials of his book,"¹ plans to "publish it in an undocumented volume of a hundred thousand words as an introduction to more scholarly volumes to follow."² By this stage we are sceptical about Dick's plans, particularly when we read two paragraphs later that Dick is drinking in his workroom.

Dick's marriage is in a crucial phase; his relationship with Nicole, wife and former mental patient, has bifurcated:

Having gone through unprofessional agonies during her long relapse following the birth of Topsy, their second child, he had hardened himself about her, making a cleavage between Nicole sick and Nicole well. This made it difficult now to distinguish between his self-protective professional detachment and some new coldness in his heart.³

Eighteen months later, when a plan put forward by Franz Gregorovius that he and Dick should jointly own and run a psychiatric clinic has been implemented, the problem remains: "[Nicole] led a lonely life owning Dick, who did not want to be owned. Many times he had tried unsuccessfully to let go his hold on her."⁴ Nicole has not been able to develop her own separate and distinct personality; she leans on Dick and inevitably saps his strength. Although the reader, seeing Dick in action as a psychiatrist, learns to respect him more as he handles his patients with gentleness and without sentimentality, there are disturbing signs that the process of deterioration continues. One recalls an important but apparently casual conversation at the time when Baby Warren is, for her own transparent reasons, arguing the case for Dick to accept Franz's plan: "'How, human respect,'" Dick says, "'you don't call a man a coward or a liar lightly, but if you spend your life sparing people's feelings and feeding their vanity,

¹Tender is the Night, p. 177.

²Ibid., p. 178.

³Ibid., p. 180.

⁴Ibid., p. 196.

you get so you can't distinguish what should be respected in them!"¹
 This applies very much to Dick himself, and it is ironic that he should say it. Fitzgerald gives no suggestion that Dick realises this irony, but that Fitzgerald puts the words into his mouth implies that they have a special meaning for him. Fitzgerald reminds the reader of the continued deterioration of Dick, in his behaviour towards a woman patient, a painter who suffers terribly from "nervous eczema"²:

In the awful majesty of her pain he went out to her unreservedly, almost sexually. He wanted to gather her up in his arms, as he so often had Nicole, and cherish even her mistakes, so deeply were they part of her.³

By itself this would not be significant, but Fitzgerald tells us of a letter from a former patient accusing Dick of having seduced her daughter, "a flirtatious little brunette. . . . In an idle, almost indulgent way, he [had] kissed her."⁴ This weakness of Dick, relating to his desire to be loved, has been stressed when he is distracted from discussions about the clinic project on a number of occasions by a girl. Later we are told that "he was in love with every pretty woman he saw now."⁵

Despite his lapses with his patients, Dick has his successes and behaves with authority and understanding; but, in the most important and private aspect of his life - his relationship with Nicole - he cannot cope; as Nicole hovers on the edge of another collapse,

Dick tried to think what to do. The dualism in his views of her - that of the husband, that of the psychiatrist - was increasingly paralyzing his faculties.

¹Tender is the Night, p. 193.

²Ibid., p. 199.

³Ibid., p. 201.

⁴Ibid., p. 203.

⁵Ibid., p. 219.

⁶Ibid., p. 204.

He fails again, and Nicole causes a car accident nearly fatal to the entire family. By this stage Dick realises that the phrase that ends Book One, "he knew her problem was one they had together for good now,"¹ has come true in the most terrible way:

Dick and Nicole had become one and equal, not opposite and complementary; she was Dick too, the drought in the marrow of his bones. He could not watch her disintegrations without participating in them.²

Dick now has to fight for his own salvation; with Nicole in the care of a nurse, he takes what Franz, in a Freudian slip, calls a "leave of abstinence."³ Dick has been using liquor increasingly as a crutch, and this is to lead to the break-up of the partnership.

Dick had come away for his soul's sake, and he began thinking about that. He had lost himself - he could not tell the hour when, or the day or the week, the month or the year. Once he had cut through things, solving the most complicated equations as the simplest problems of his simplest patients. Between the time he found Nicole flowering under a stone on the Zürichsee and the moment of his meeting with Rosemary 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, more thoroughly his own man, than at the time of his marriage to Nicole. Yet he had been swallowed up like a gigolo and had somehow permitted his arsenal to be locked up in the Warren safety-deposit vaults.⁴

Analysis of this passage, impressive though it is in indicating the metaphorical emasculation of Dick, suggests an important weakness in the novel. "Between the time he found Nicole . . . and the moment of his meeting with Rosemary." Fitzgerald has neither told nor shown us enough of this period, essential to the marriage and the story of Dick's disintegration; indeed, this criticism leads us to a further weakness. The marriage of Dick and Nicole is never illuminated from within: thus its collapse is less meaningful to us than it should be. The nearest we get is in fuzzy passages like: "They had many fine times

¹Tender is the Night., p. 50.

²Ibid., p. 207.

³Ibid., p. 210.

⁴Ibid., pp. 218-19.

together, fine talks between the loves of the white nights."¹

The title of Book Three, "Escape: 1925-1929," begins to take on ironic connotations as Dick, in search of salvation, plunges deeper into horror. After meeting the sinister Tommy Barban again, fresh from his adventurer's triumphs, Dick hears of the deaths - masterly counterpointed - of his father and Abe North. Returning from his father's funeral in America, he is irrevocably drawn to Rome and Rosemary. Four years have passed since he last saw her; he is now thirty-eight and she is twenty-two. When they meet, Dick is exhausted and looks his age.

Eighteen might look at thirty-four through a rising mist of adolescence; but twenty-two would see thirty-eight with discerning clarity. Moreover, Dick had been at an emotional peak at the time of the previous encounter; since then there had been a lesion of enthusiasm.²

The last phrase articulates what is already evident, a characteristic fault of Fitzgerald's, perhaps related to his aiming at both an intelligent, discerning audience and at a mass readership. (This is particularly evident in many of his short stories.) In Dick's final meeting with Rosemary, the lesion is memorably communicated by Dick himself, in terse self-diagnosis: "The manner remains intact for some time after the morale cracks."³ No self-pity; clinical detachment! One feels like Nick Carraway, when Gatsby produces the medal from Montenegro and the photograph of himself in an Oxford cricket group: "Then it was all true."⁴ Within Dick Diver the potential of a great psychiatrist existed, ruined.

When Dick and Rosemary meet for the second time, their earlier roles are ironically reversed: Dick is the pursuer, but no longer is

¹Tender is the Night, pp. 196-97.

²Ibid., p. 225.

³Ibid., p. 304.

⁴The Great Gatsby, p. 51.

he the social magician.¹ He is not in love with Rosemary at all, nor she with him; in her eyes his stature diminishes when she is confronted by the reality. And Dick has the self-knowledge to say: "I guess I'm the Black Death, . . . I don't seem to bring people happiness any more."² Here Fitzgerald achieves more than the pathetic. This is anagnorisis, one of the things that makes Tender is the Night closer to the tragic than the sentimentality of most Twentieth Century attempts at Tragedy.

At this point Dick's deterioration begins to show dramatically: he gives vent to chauvinistic spleen about Italians that is sometimes comic ("I like France, where everybody thinks he's Napoleon - down here everybody thinks he's Christ"³) but reminds us of the vicious muddled racialism of Tom Buchanan in The Great Gatsby. It appears at least in part engendered by his jealousy of Rosemary's Roman lover, the film actor, Nicotero, deftly characterised as "one of many hopeful Valentinos."⁴ Dick tries to pick up an English girl, who - probably because of his drunkenness - disappears, and he gets into a brawl with some Italian taxi-drivers. From his resulting imprisonment he is rescued by Baby Warren; Fitzgerald provides brilliantly comic vignettes of her bullying of the Embassy officials and the behaviour of the carabinieri. But it is a distressing, messy situation that shows Dick at his worst, and the concluding note is ominous, showing the final encirclement of Dick by the Warren family:

It had been a hard night but [Baby] had the satisfaction of feeling that, whatever Dick's previous record was, they now possessed a⁵ moral superiority over him for as long as he proved of any use.⁵

¹Cf. The Crack-Up, p. 82. "The conjurer's hat was empty. To draw things out of it had long been a sort of sleight of hand."

²Tender is the Night., p. 237.

³Ibid., p. 239.

⁴Ibid., p. 230.

⁵Ibid., p. 253.

The last book of Tender is the Night is called "The Way Home: 1929-1930." The dates are relevant, for this was the end of an era, signalled by the Great Crash of American capitalism, the collapse of Wall Street. And the title is again ironic, for Dick, at the end of the book, is like a man with a hang-over after a nightmarish party, as lost as any drunken reveller who needs to be shown the way "home."

Book Five begins with another collapse, the end of Dick's partnership in the clinic; "not without desperation [Dick] had long felt the ethics of his profession dissolving in a lifeless mass."¹

The Divers plan to return to the Riviera:

The Villa Diana had been rented again for the summer, so they divided the intervening time between Gorman spas and French cathedral towns, where they were always happy for a few days. Dick wrote a little with no particular method; it was one of those parts of life that are an awaiting; not upon Nicole's health, which seemed to thrive on travel, nor upon work, but simply an awaiting.²

The emptiness and unsatisfactoriness of their lives is conveyed by the anticlimactic "for a few days," Dick's inability to work is given in casual understatement - "Dick wrote a little with no particular method" - and the reference to "one of those parts of life that are an awaiting" is an echo of the words at the end of Chapter One: "The hero, like Grant, lolling in his general store at Galena, is ready to be called to an intricate destiny"³ and adumbrates words from the novel's last paragraph: "Perhaps, so [Nicole] liked to think, his career was biding its time, again like Grant's in Galena."⁴

Ironically, sale of their interests in the clinic and developments in America swell the Divers' rising tide of wealth, their financial fortune contrasting so strongly with Dick's spiritual state, and they are threatened with engulfment in a tidal wave of materialism.

¹Tender is the Night, p. 274.

²Ibid., p. 275.

³Ibid., p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 334.

Dick's attempts at financial independence have been swept away.

There was now so much that the mere spending of it, the care of goods, was an absorption in itself. The style in which they travelled seemed fabulous.

Regard them, for example, as the train slows up at Boyen, where they are to spend a fortnight visiting. The shifting from the wagon-lit has begun at the Italian frontier. The governess's maid and Madame Diver's maid have come up from second class to help with the baggage and the dogs. Mlle. Bellois will superintend the hand-luggage, leaving the Scullyhams to one maid and the pair of Pekinese to the other. It is not necessarily poverty of spirit that makes a woman surround herself with life - it can be a superabundance of interest and, except during her flashes of illness, Nicole was capable of being curator of it all. Presently from the van would be unloaded four wardrobe trunks, a shoe trunk, three hat trunks and two hat boxes, a chest of servants' trunks, a portable filing-cabinet, a medicine case, a spirit-lamp container, a picnic set, four tennis rackets in presses and cases, a phonograph, a typewriter. Distributed among the spaces reserved for family and entourage were two dozen supplementary grips, satchels, and packages, each one numbered, down to the tag on the cane case. Thus, all of it could be checked up in two minutes on any station platform, some for storage, some for accompaniment from the "light trip list" or the "heavy trip list," constantly revised and carried on metal-edged plaques in Nicole's purse. She had devised the system as a child when travelling with her failing mother. It was equivalent to the system of a regimental supply officer who must think of the bellies and equipment of three thousand men.¹

This passage is a companion piece to the passage describing Nicole's shopping: the details are picked out neatly by Fitzgerald to show the Divers' "conspicuous consumption." The dogs are described in passing as though they are fussy ornaments - "a pair of Pekinese" - and the hats take up five containers, the tennis rackets have not only presses but cases, too, and there is a special "picnic set." Fitzgerald's detachment is admirable here, showing neither contempt nor awe, but allowing the facts to speak for themselves. By the way she copes with the luggage, Nicole is seen to be thoroughly competent as an organiser and growing stronger all the time.

But all the splendour of their opulence does not hide the failure of their marriage and small incidents occur premonitory of impending trouble. Nicole has to tell Dick to watch his tongue on

¹Tender is the Night, p. 276.

two occasions while they are visiting Abe North's widow, Mary, and her new husband; Dick seems to be drinking too much and a failure in tact and understanding - Dick's specialities - results in Mary's husband and his sisters being insulted. Later, "the Divers were unified again - Dick wondered how many more times it could be done."¹

Meanwhile, one infers,² Dick is mustering his scattered forces to prepare for a break with Nicole; partly he is accepting the possibilities inherent in his marriage with her, that its success might depend on her "transference," that Nicole "cured" might be a different person, as Fitzgerald makes clear she does become, reverting to the family tradition ("if my eyes have changed it's because I'm well again. And being well perhaps I've gone back to my true self - I suppose my grandfather was a crook and I'm a crook by heritage"³). Secondly, Dick is fighting for his selfhood, his identity. So precipitating a break with Nicole is not an altruistic act, although his love for Nicole has been "a wild submergence of soul, a dipping of all colors into an obscuring dye,"⁴ as Fitzgerald had Dick ponder as he contemplates the end of his illusions about Rebekah. And the disintegration of Dick ("you used to want to create things - now you seem to want to smash them up,"⁵ Nicole tells him, echoing Abe's words to Nicole: "My business is to tear [things] apart"⁶) makes his control of the profoundly complex situation precarious, as he contrives "at some desperate solution."⁷

¹Tender is the Night, p. 203.

²The handling of Tender is the Night in this chapter, particularly from this point, owes something to a new "reading" of the book by Eugene White, "The 'Intricate Destiny' of Dick Diver," Modern Fiction Studies, VII (1961), pp. 55-62.

³Tender is the Night, p. 311.

⁴Ibid., p. 235.

⁵Ibid., p. 286.

⁶Ibid., p. 144.

⁷Ibid., p. 298.

It is during this period that Tommy Barban fortuitously re-appears: uninvited, the Divers board the motor yacht of one of Baby Warren's former escorts, T.F. Golding, and find Tommy among the international riff-raff aboard. Now that Nicole is reverting to her former self (Dick tells Tommy: "Nicole is now made of - of Georgia pine, which is the hardest wood known, except ligum vitae from New Zealand"¹), Tommy, whose hardness is accentuated by his exploits, shows himself the new Nicole's natural mate: "In the moment of meeting she lay on his bosom, spiritually, going out and out."²

Fitzgerald renders the events on Golding's yacht with detailed and meaningful subtlety, the orchestra playing "'I'm yours for the asking,'"³ the confusion and decadence of the Golding party's behaviour, the muddled, drunken despair of Dick.

Next day, Nicole toys with the idea of an affair with Tommy, and, in Malcolm Cowley's words, "flings herself at Tommy with a jar of, presumably, Vick's Vaporub."⁴ Tommy leaves, but some time later writes to them from Nice; the mail in which his letter arrives also contains a telegram from Rosemary, announcing her imminent arrival. The end of one affair is ironically counterpointed with the beginning of another. Nicole fears the break with Dick, but knows it is inevitable, and part of the treatment planned by her psychiatrist, Doctor Diver: "It was the wrench she feared, and the dark manner of its coming."⁵

¹Tender is the Night, p. 294.

²Ibid., p. 288.

³Ibid., p. 287.

⁴Ibid., Notes p. 355.

⁵Ibid., p. 298.

The Divers find Rosemary at the beach: she is swimming with a group of admirers who follow her like a "school of little fish . . . taking their dazzle from her, the shining spoon of a trout hook."¹ With Rosemary, Dick brings out "all his old expertness with people."² Rosemary's presence inspires Dick to show off and attempt an old trick of his, lifting a man while riding a surf-board pulled by a speed-boat. The reader has been prepared for Dick's painful failure, and for what success would mean, by Fitzgerald's mentioning an "exhibitionistic valet who punctuated the morning with spectacular dives from a fifty-foot rock"³ and a reference to Dick's avoiding high-diving this summer for the first time. When Dick fails, he is like Abe North at the Paris station, a

gigantic presence: he lay athwart them like the wreck of a galleon, dominating with his own presence his own weakness and self-indulgence, his narrowness and bitterness. All of them were conscious of the solemn dignity that flowed from him, of his achievement, fragmentary, suggestive, and surpassed. But they were frightened at his survivant will, once a will to live, now become a will to die.⁴

Not only does Nicole not try to help Dick, ("everything he did annoyed her now"⁵), but in her movement away from him she discovers new areas of strength and prepares herself for the break with Dick:

Nicole relaxed and felt new and happy; her thoughts were clear as good bells - she had a sense of being cured and in a new way. Her ego began blooming like a great rich rose as she scrambled back along the labyrinths in which she had wandered for years. She hated the beach, resented the places where she had played planet to Dick's sun.

"Why, I'm almost complete," she thought. "I'm practically standing alone, without him." And like a happy child, wanting the completion as soon as possible, and knowing vaguely that Dick had planned for her to have it, she lay on her bed as soon as she got home and wrote Tony Barban in Nice a short provocative letter.⁶

¹Tender is the Night, p. 300.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 299.

⁴Ibid., pp. 144-45.

⁵Ibid., p. 303.

⁶Ibid., p. 307.

As Nicole moves into Tommy Barban's orbit, Dick is absent, seeing Rosemary off; ostensibly, and perhaps partly, he is exploring the possibility of "a new start," but mainly he is giving Nicole the opportunity to complete the transference to Tommy. His marriage comes to an all but formal end in a confrontation which takes place, ironically and rightly, in Dick's workroom:

"I can't do anything for you any more. I'm trying to save myself."

"From my contamination?"

"My profession throws me in contact with questionable company sometimes."

She wept with anger at the abuse.

"You're a coward! You've made a failure of your life, and you want to blame it on me."

While he did not answer she began to feel the old hypnotism of his intelligence, sometimes exercised without power but always with substrate of truth under truth which she could not break or even crack. Again she struggled with it, fighting him with her small, fine eyes, with the plush arrogance of a top dog, with her nascent transference to another man, with the accumulated resentment of years; she fought him with her money and her faith that her sister disliked him and was behind her now; with the thought of the new enemies he was making with his bitterness, with her quick guile against his wining and dining slowness, her health and beauty against his physical deterioration, her unscrupulousness against his moralities - for this inner battle she used even her weaknesses, fighting bravely and courageously with the old cans and crockery and bottles, the empty receptacles of her expiated sins, outrages, mistakes. 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. Then she walked, weak in the legs and sobbing coolly, toward the household that was hers at last.

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.¹

This crucial passage, beginning with Dick now being cruel to be kind, then with the carefully planted reference to hypnotism establishing the clinical note, builds up to a beautifully muted and moving climax. Unfortunately it is marred by distinctly weak patches. It has been said that the novelist may withhold information from the reader, but only information the novelist knows. Here Fitzgerald seems to cover up his ignorance of what would be said in this encounter with vague

¹Tender is the Night, pp. 319-20.

and portentous phrases¹:

Her unscrupulousness against his moralities . . . she used even her weaknesses, fighting bravely and courageously [sic], with the old cans and crockery and bottles, the empty receptacles of her expiated sins, outrages, mistakes.

However, Fitzgerald does convey the exhaustion and strength of Dick, the heroic qualities that are drained from him as he wins and loses his most important case. For, as Mizener points out, "by a terrible irony it has turned out that what he has refused to treat as a merely professional situation is just that."² The Warrens' investment in a doctor, unintentional as it was in detail, has been vindicated.

Poignantly, the qualities that distinguished Dick as a young man but helped to betray him are still called into use, mocking reminders of his early promise and the ways in which his talents have been perverted. The Contessa di Minghetti (formerly Mary North, of whom Dick has observed that "if Europe ever goes Bolshevik she'll turn up as the bride of Stalin"³) and one of T.F. Golding's international set pace-makers, Lady Caroline Sibley-Biers, are arrested in a squalid lesbian adventure. Dick is telephoned in the middle of the night to rescue them; what is more, he does so, acting as a kind of majordomo to the rich, whom he once claimed to have spent so much time teaching "the ABCs of human decency."⁴

He got up and, as he absorbed the situation, his self-knowledge assured him that he would undertake to deal with it - the old fatal pleasingness, the old forceful charm, swept back with its cry of

¹The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 341. "The worst fault in [The Great Gatsby], I think is a BIG FAULT: I gave no account (and had no feelings about or knowledge of) the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe."

²The Far Side of Paradise, p. 251.

³Tender is the Night, p. 277.

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

"Use me!" He would have to go fix this thing that he didn't care a damn about, because it had early become a habit to be loved.¹

The freeing of the two women, which Dick accomplishes by bribes and monstrous, comic lies, is part of a deliberate muting of the ending of the novel after the climax: "The case was finished." In terms of the novel's structure, this is part of the "falling action"; if the phrase was not so often abused, one might call the episode with the lesbians and the police "comic relief," highlighted by the slapstick of Gausse's well-aimed kick in Lady Caroline's behind. The approach to Tender is the Night in this chapter has not been to claim that the novel is a pure tragedy, if such a thing exists. But the broad contours of Tender is the Night have a tragic movement, and Dick can usefully be seen as a modern hero² who experiences a fall. Unhappily, structure is not all, and even if the disintegration of Dick Diver fitted into a perfect pattern, the uneven texture of Tender is the Night is such as to flaw the work; this has been suggested in various parts of this chapter.

The final chapters of the novel are very fine: the show-down that the "cured" Nicole now looks forward to becomes an anti-climax when Tommy arrives at the hairdresser where Dick and Nicole are being attended to in adjoining rooms. Tommy wants a row, but he and Nicole are cheated of their drama when Dick accepts the situation and leaves them. Nicole's "eyes followed his figure until it became a dot and mingled with the other dots in the summer crowd."³

Extracts from two of Fitzgerald's letters clarify the "falling action" of the last chapters of Tender is the Night: he told John Peale

¹Tender is the Night, p. 321.

²The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 567. " [Dick] is after all a sort of superman, an approximation of the hero seen in overcivilized terms."

³Tender is the Night, p. 329.

Bishop that "there's a deliberate choice in my avoidance of a dramatic ending - I deliberately did not want it,"¹ and to H.L. Mencken he wrote: "What most of the critics fail to understand . . . [is] that the motif of the 'dying fall' was absolutely deliberate and did not come from any diminution of vitality but from a definite plan."²

Thus, after being patronized by Mary, a reversal or peripety, Dick blesses the beach with a papal cross, accepts his damnation, as Piper suggests,³ and leaves; Nicole wants to go to him, but Tommy restrains her.

The last chapter of the novel is the shortest; it reports on Dick's dwindling away into obscurity in America, where he goes, leaving Tommy and Nicole to whatever happiness they can bring each other. He becomes "entangled with a girl who work[s] in a grocery store, and he [is] . . . involved in a lawsuit about some medical question."⁴ His psychiatric treatise is neither forgotten nor completed. Nicole thinks about Dick a lot and tells Tommy that she loved Dick; she likes to think that his career is again biding its time, but in the last sentence of the novel he disappears completely, and we can only hope that the dark night of obscurity has some tenderness to offer him.

¹The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 362.

²Ibid., p. 510.

³Piper, p. 218.

⁴Tender is the Night, p. 334.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LAST TYCOON

Charles Dickens died seventy years before the death of Fitzgerald, leaving half-finished a novel called Edwin Drood. Dickens and Fitzgerald had little in common, as men or writers. It is, however, an interesting coincidence that The Last Tycoon, the novel that Fitzgerald was working on when he died, has more in common with "old-fashioned Dickensian melodrama" (an oversimplifying term) than any of Fitzgerald's other work. Dickens was never an important influence on Fitzgerald, (Thackeray was¹), but Fitzgerald thought very highly of some of his work. Although there are only three passing references to Dickens in The Letters of F.Scott Fitzgerald,² the twenty-one English novels on the curriculum for Fitzgerald's "College of One" (the student being Sheilah Graham) include three by Dickens: Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities and Great Expectations.³ In a letter to his daughter Fitzgerald claimed that Bleak House was "Dickens' best book."⁴ (T.S.Eliot and G.K.Chesterton, two very different writers, are more or less in agreement with Fitzgerald here.⁵) While working on The Last Tycoon Fitzgerald was in contact with Edmund Wilson, his old friend,

¹The Letters of F.Scott Fitzgerald, p. 509. "I was interested also in your analysis of the influences upon my own books. . . . Thackeray I had read over and over by the time I was sixteen, so as far as I am concerned you guessed right."

²Ibid., p. 54, p. 367, p. 578.

³Sheilah Graham, "The Education of Lily Sheil: What 'College of One' taught me," The Sunday Times (London), February 6, 1966, p. 43.

⁴The Letters of F.Scott Fitzgerald, p. 54.

⁵T.S.Eliot, "Wilkie Collins and Dickens," Selected Essays: 1917-1932 (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1932), p. 409. "Dickens's 'best novel' is probably Bleak House; that is Mr. Chesterton's opinion, and there is no better critic of Dickens living than Mr. Chesterton."

critic and fellow-Princetonian; they had been estranged but a rapprochement had been effected.¹ Wilson, who was to edit The Last Tycoon and The Crack-Up and "was to a great extent responsible for the resurgence of interest in Fitzgerald as an important American novelist,"² published in early 1940 essays on Dickens (collected and republished in The Wound and the Bow³ in 1941) that were a major contribution to the Dickens "revival." So Wilson effected important influences on the critical reputations of Dickens and Fitzgerald, and edited The Last Tycoon at about the same time that he was compounding his Dickens essays, one of which was on Edwin Drood. Curiously enough, he makes no mention of Edwin Drood in his introduction to The Last Tycoon. Whether or not Wilson communicated any of his interest in Dickens to Fitzgerald is a matter of speculation. And speculation about both books can be a waste of time for the critic. K.J.Fielding says: "A whole library of books has been written about the Drood problem."⁴ (The Fitzgerald legend has not yet reached the status of a cult; Trilling describes "the genial madmen who belong to Dickens Fellowships and make Dickens Tours, and, on a higher stage of development, write learned notes for The Dickensian";⁵ the time may come when places like "The Garden of Allah"⁶ are shrines like "The Old Curiosity Shop" in London.)

It is useless speculating on the novel that might have been

¹Goldhurst, pp. 63-64.

²Ibid., p. 66.

³Edmund Wilson, "Dickens: The Two Scrooges," The Wound and the Bow : Seven Studies in Literature (London: W.H.Allen, 1941).

⁴K.J.Fielding, Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction (2nd ed. rev.; London: Longmans, 1965), p. 242.

⁵Lionel Trilling, "The Dickens of Our Day," A Gathering of Fugitives (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), p. 45.

⁶The Crack-Up, p. 312. A letter from Thomas Wolfe opens: "I don't know where you are living and I'll be damned if I'll believe anyone lives in a place called 'The Garden of Allah' which was what the address on your envelope said." A footnote explains: "This was Fitzgerald's real address, an apartment hotel, in Hollywood."

written. What we have is a rich, fascinating but patchy fragment, with notes and letters and outlines which suggest the way it might have been "fleshed out," and what Fitzgerald's intentions were. Whether or not he could have resolved the problems of plot and how much he could have improved his work by re-writing are irrelevant here.

A poem by Wilson, "On Editing Scott Fitzgerald's Papers,"¹ a poignant lament for a friend and a judicious piece of literary criticism that survives, and is in a sense enhanced by its clumsy technique, concludes:

And I, your scraps and sketches sifting yet,
Can never thus revive one sapphire jet
However close I look, however late,
But only spell and point and punctuate.²

Although Wilson has written earlier of "Two emeralds, green and lucid, one half-cut,"³ and it is clear that the one is The Great Gatsby and the "half-cut one" The Last Tycoon, the last lines suggest the gap between not only artist and critic and artist and friend, but also between artist and editor. James Joyce considered the possibility of James Stephens completing Finnegans Wake,⁴ but there is no record of any work being finished successfully by another writer in a case where the dead artist has a distinctive style. The Last Tycoon remains a "half-cut" gem, and must be considered as such. If it is flawed, the critic must say so.

In Hollywood Fitzgerald found a valid microcosm for at least an important part of the world, and dealt with experiences common and significant enough to make his book important.

It becomes evident in the first page of The Last Tycoon that

¹W.H.Auden (ed.), The Faber Book of Modern American Verse (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1956), pp. 166-68.

²Ibid., p. 168.

³Ibid.

⁴Richard Ellman, James Joyce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 604. "'As regards that book and its future completion I have asked Miss Beach to get into closer relations with James Stephens.'"

the book is no outright attack on Hollywood, no "penetrating indictment," as Tender is the Night has been called.¹ As Trilling has pointed out, Fitzgerald was an artist with "but little impulse to blame."² Cecilia Brady, the narrator of The Last Tycoon, gives the reader Fitzgerald's attitude to Hollywood when she says:

At the worst I accepted Hollywood with the resignation of a ghost assigned to a haunted house. I knew what you were supposed to think about it but I was obstinately unhorrorified.

 You can take Hollywood for granted like I did, or you can dismiss it with the contempt we reserve for what we don't understand.³

Fitzgerald has Cecilia present her credentials immediately to the reader, who might otherwise be unwilling to pay attention to a young girl:

Though I haven't ever been on the screen I was brought up in pictures. Rudolph Valentino came to my fifth birthday party - or so I was told. I put this down only to indicate that even before the age of reason I was in a position to watch the wheels go round.⁴

The industrial image is particularly appropriate because, as the title suggests, the novel sees film-making as a business rather than an art. Cecilia says of her father - the producer, Pat Brady - he "was in the picture business as another man might be in cotton or steel."⁵ Cecilia is in Hollywood, but not of it.⁶ She has grown up there, and can see it as an insider, but impersonally because she is not involved in the industry herself. She knows that "not half a dozen men have ever been able to keep the whole equation of pictures in their heads. And perhaps the closest a woman can come to the set-up is to try and

¹Jacket advertisement on The Last Tycoon. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960).

²Trilling, p. 245.

³The Last Tycoon, p. 3.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., Notes, p. 138. "She is of the movies but not in them."

understand one of those men."¹ For Cecilia, this man is to be Monroe Stahr, although at this juncture it could be inferred that Cecilia is referring to her father.

Fitzgerald's economy in his presentation of Cecilia is noteworthy: "I was going to write my memoirs once, The Producer's Daughter, but at eighteen you never quite get around to anything like that. It's just as well - it would have been as flat as an old column of Lolly Parsons'."² In two sentences he has communicated that his narrator is a woman, probably young, that she has literary ambitions but is self-critical about her writing, is the daughter of a man in a key Hollywood position, and is on familiar terms with important members of the Hollywood community. (She refers familiarly to Louella Parsons, whose gossip column circulated all over the world.)

The action of the novel begins during an aeroplane flight.

Cross points out that

Fitzgerald links [Stahr's] life symbolically with the aeroplane carrying him back to his Californian kingdom (he was to have died at the end in an air-crash):

"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. Beating his wings tenaciously - finally frantically - and keeping on beating them, he had stayed up there longer than most of us, and then, remembering all he had seen from his great height of how things were, he had settled gradually to earth."³

If the language of the passage Cross quotes is slightly inflated ("the kind of eyes that can stare straight into the sun," "remembering all he had seen from his great height of how things were") it may be that Fitzgerald is suggesting the strain and portentousness of such a symbolic flight. There is also the hint of a reference to Christ's

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 3.

²Ibid. This can be seen as a private joke against Sheilah Graham, Fitzgerald's mistress, who was, and still is, a film columnist.

³Cross, pp. 101-102.

temptation by the devil, which reminds us that Stahr's kingdom is of this world and transient. This transience, hinted at in the book's title (Stahr is the last tycoon), is quietly underlined by the early introduction of the theme of social change, with suggestions of insecurity and two references to the depression. The stewardess tells Cecilia about a young actress who, "in the very lowest time of the depression. . . . was not afraid of poverty, but only of revolution."¹ Cecilia is able to treat the subject cheerfully, even facetiously, protected as she is by her youth, wealth, intelligence and education. The torment of the young actress, who says she intends to go to the Yellowstone Park until "it all blows over,"² amuses Cecilia, who says:

It conjured up a pretty picture of the actress and her mother being fed by kind Tory bears who brought them honey, and by gentle fawns who fetched extra milk from the does and then lingered near to make pillows for their heads at night.³

A director with similar fears is recalled by Cecilia, and one is impressed by the narrowness of the strip between reality and fantasy in Hollywood:

He had an old suit, shirt and shoes in waiting - he never did say whether they were his own or whether he got them from the prop department - and he was going to Disappear into the Crowd.⁴

Although Fitzgerald shows Cecilia's attitude towards this theme of social change to be a light-hearted one, that is not his own attitude. The theme is returned to in Stahr's interview with Brimmer and in notes and outlines that Fitzgerald left when he died. Fitzgerald's attitude to Cecilia here is a tolerant one. There is no censure of her light-heartedness; her high spirits and gift for irony enable her to see the comedy inherent in even the most serious things.

Just as Gatsby is introduced to the reader after the reader

¹The Last Tycoon, p.5.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

has had his imagination titillated by the mystery and speculation surrounding the man, so is Monroe Stahr introduced after the reader's interest has been aroused by Stahr's assumption of the false name "Smith." John E.Hart writes:

It is through the confusion of naming - is it not a search for identity? - that Fitzgerald introduces Monroe Stahr as the hero of the novel and reveals through action and symbol the pattern of behaviour which has made Stahr's life one of disintegration and self-delusion. Stahr is actually made known through his friend Schwartz as they return to Hollywood on a transcontinental plane from New York. Although he has known Stahr for a long time, Schwartz cannot recall the name of the man who has taken the bridal suite on the plane. In conversation, he misnames him "Smith" and warns him to look out for enemies in Hollywood. Once a practical man of decision in the movies, but now a down-and-out producer, Schwartz clearly belongs to a past that Hollywood no longer represents. His face, as the narrator observes, has fallen into its "more disintegrated alignments" (p. 12). When the plane lands at Nashville, Tennessee, Schwartz leaves the airport alone and wanders, to the statue of Andrew Jackson, and there commits suicide.¹

This passage shows that Mr Hart has a lively imagination. It is the stewardess who first mentions "Mr Smith"; Schwartz is clearly unpuzzled by "Mr Smith's" true identity and refers ironically to the ridiculously obvious assumed name;² when he writes a warning note to Stahr he addresses him by his first name, Monroe, and not "Smith"; he does not leave the airport alone, but goes by taxi with Cecilia and Wylie White, and there is no mention of a statue of Andrew Jackson. Mr Hart's farrago is worth unravelling. It obscures Fitzgerald's use of the old-fashioned melodramatic device, the last part of Wilkie Collins' formula, "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait." The modified use of the device of assumed identity is also part of Fitzgerald's method. And Mr Hart's misapplied ingenuity (if that is

¹John E.Hart, "Fitzgerald's The Last Tycoon: A Search for Identity," Modern Fiction Studies, VII (1961), 65-66.

²The Smith joke is given another variation when Robinson sends a message to Stahr that the girl he is searching for is named Smith. The Last Tycoon, p. 49. Finally, Kathleen marries W.Bronson Smith. Notes, p. 130.

what it is) makes him lose sight of the important point made by Cross: "A frown from Stahr has sent a man to his death."¹ Cross also points out that "his farewell note to Stahr recalls Nick Carraway's final tribute to Gatsby:

Dear Monroe, You are the best of them all I have always admired your mentality so when you turn against me I know it's no use!"²

The warning note is also a device borrowed from "Victorian melodrama"; for example, Mr Wemmick's warning note to Pip in Great Expectations.

When Stahr emerges from the ironical privacy of the "bridal suite"³ Cecilia meets him in the corridor of the aeroplane. Cecilia says, in her slangy schoolgirlish way:

I ran into Monroe Stahr and fell all over him, or wanted to. There was a man any girl would go for, with or without encouragement. I was emphatically without it, but he liked me and sat down opposite till the plane took off.⁴

And so it is immediately clear that the focus on Stahr as the hero will be given by a young girl in love with or at least infatuated by him. This, the reader may understandably expect, could lead to the uncritical hero-worship of Dick Diver seen in Tender is the Night from Rosemary's "angle." But Cecilia has a sophistication and a critical sense completely denied to Rosemary. This emerges from her narrative at the beginning (when her measured and temperate attitude to Hollywood is compared to that of those who condemn without understanding), and in her conversation. Take for example this exchange with the writer Wylie White:

He put his arm around me: "Cecilia, will you marry me so I can share the Brady fortune?"

¹Cross, p. 102.

²Ibid.

³The Last Tycoon, p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

He was disarming enough, so I let my head lie on his shoulder.

"What do you do, Celia. Go to school?"

"I go to Bennington. I'm a junior."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I should have known, but I never had the advantage of college training. But a junior - why I read in Esquire that juniors have nothing to learn, Cecilia."

"Why do people think that college girls - "

"Don't apologize - knowledge is power."

"You'd know from the way you talk that we were on our way to Hollywood," I said. "It's always years and years behind the times."

He pretended to be shocked.

"You mean girls in the East have no private lives?"

"That's the point. They have got private lives. You're bothering me, let go."¹

Cecilia's banter and smart repartee leave her one up on a professional dialogue writer. David C. Reece has written of another verbal clash between Cecilia and White:

Fitzgerald's gift for dialogue, which he had from the beginning, is at its best in this passage. [pp. 69-70.]

Fitzgerald's expert handling of idiom and colloquialisms and his gift for ironic humour are all here.²

Cecilia is in some ways similar (for example, in her relation to the main characters) to Nick in The Great Gatsby. Both are involved in the events of the stories without being central characters, both are intelligent and capable of a sardonic humour which gives detachment. Cecilia, however, is less convincing as narrator than Nick and less interesting as a person. Fitzgerald wrote:

By making Cecilia, at the moment of her telling the story, an intelligent and observant woman, I shall grant myself the privilege, as Conrad did, of letting her imagine the actions of the characters. Thus, I hope to get the verisimilitude of a first person narrative, combined with a God-like knowledge of all events that happen to my characters.³

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 10.

²David C. Reece, "The Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald," Cambridge Journal, V (1952), 624-25.

³Miller, p. 151.

Miller has implied that Fitzgerald's narrative technique in The Last Tycoon is vindicated: "In letting her 'imagine the actions of the characters,' he freed himself from the absurdity of inventing excuses for her being present at or learning about everything that had to be represented in the action."¹ Miller admits that "there are some awkward touches; for example, at one point we read: 'this is Cecilia taking up the narrative in person.' (77)"² But Miller claims that "in general the difficult technical feat is carried off with unobtrusive skill, not calling attention to itself."³ That is one reader's response. But it is also possible to see Fitzgerald's method as clumsy and ill-advised. After all, in The Great Gatsby, where the narrator is superbly adequate to his task, the reader does not feel that Fitzgerald is labouring under an absurdity in giving or implying all his sources of information. It might have been better for Fitzgerald to accept the implications of his dual narration and do what Dickens did in Bleak House and have two narratives, one "subjective" and the other "objective."

Cecilia Brady is also less interesting as a character than Nick. We feel about her that she is telling a story that could have been told by half a dozen people and remained basically the same story. But Nick is telling his story, and The Great Gatsby is largely the story of Nick's development into full humanity. As we have her, Cecilia alters little in The Last Tycoon. In 1939 Fitzgerald wrote to Kenneth Littauer, the editor of Colliers:

An overwhelming number of editors continue to associate me with an absorbing interest in young girls - an interest that at my age would probably land me behind the bars.

I have a daughter. She is very smart; she is very pretty; she is very popular. Her problems seem to me to be utterly

¹Miller, pp. 152-53.

²Ibid., p. 154.

³Ibid.

dull and her point of view completely uninteresting. In other words, she is exactly what I was once accused of being - callow. Moreover she belongs to a very overstimulated and not really adventurous generation - a generation that has been told the price of everything as well as its value.¹

Cecilia is not callow, but nor is she mature or sensitive enough to give to The Last Tycoon that extra dimension that Nick gives to The Great Gatsby. And her love for Stahr is not deep enough to be more than an infatuation; one feels too often that it is merely an excuse for her interest in Stahr. The story as told by Kathleen Moore would be more interesting than that told by Cecilia, but of course by the very nature of her appeal to Stahr, Kathleen is a newcomer to Hollywood and would not be able to give the insights into the industry that Cecilia, that child of Hollywood, has. But when these points have been made it remains to be noted that Cecilia is no mere female impersonation by Fitzgerald. One catches often the distinctly feminine timbre of an individual voice, although one does feel at times that it is the conveyor-belt individuality of a certain type of American girls' college.² But this point is made by Fitzgerald himself when Wylie White talks of "the advantage of college training,"³ and says: "I read in Esquire that juniors have nothing to learn."⁴

The first impressions that the reader gets of Stahr show the diversity of the man's personality: his whimsical generosity ("I'll give you this ring, Cecilia"⁵), his abruptness (with Schwartz) that suggests a potential ruthlessness, his impressive physical presence

¹The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 588.

²Malcolm Bradbury, Stepping Westward (London: Secker and Warburg, 1965), p. 84. "'Salt of the earth, American girls,' said Millingham. 'The only trouble is, it's like shopping in a supermarket. There are so many good brands with only marginal differences that you never know which to pick.'" See also Mary McCarthy, The Group (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963).

³The Last Tycoon, p. 10.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 15.

("From where he stood [and though he was not a tall man, it always seemed high up] he watched the multitudinous practicalities of his world"¹) and the qualities summed up by Cecilia when she says: "He looked spiritual at times, but he was a fighter."²

Like Gatsby, Stahr is a man who has risen from poverty and in some ways embodies "the American Dream." He has been a tough boy from the Bronx, leader of a gang.³

"Though Stahr's education was founded on nothing more than a night-school course in stenography, he had a long time ago run ahead through trackless wastes of perception into fields where very few men were able to follow him."⁴ He is a self-made man, and we are given a hint that he has the interest in technology and gadgetry that puts him completely into the Franklin pattern. One of the pilots tells the stewardess that "he could teach Mr. Stahr solo flying in ten minutes."⁵ He is the all-rounder that Fitzgerald always longed to be.

In discussion with Wylie White he reveals his attitude to his own job and to White's talents as a writer: "I'm a merchant. I want to buy what's in your mind."⁶ White disputes this, quoting Charles Francis Adams on merchants:

"He know them all - Gould, Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Astor - and he said there wasn't one he'd care to meet again in the hereafter. Well - they haven't improved since then, and that's why I say you're no merchant."⁷

Stahr counters with the suggestion that Adams was simply jealous.

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 15.

²Ibid.

³See Peter Shaw, "The Tough Guy Intellectual," Critical Quarterly, VII (1966), 13-28. Shaw does not discuss Fitzgerald, but - although Stahr is not an "intellectual" in the narrow sense of the word - Shaw's article helps us to see Stahr and his creator in a clearer perspective.

⁴The Last Tycoon, pp. 17-18.

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

⁶Ibid., p. 16.

⁷Ibid.

We soon get intimations of Stahr's contribution to his "industry"; Fitzgerald is determined to get objectivity: he puts the first professional comments on Stahr into the mouth of the cynical writer, Wylie White, who says:

"Heaven help me, I am writing about a Boy Scout - The Boy Scout.

.
He may have ten writers working ahead of me or behind me, a system which he so thoughtfully invented."¹

Writers suffer under this system (this subject is referred to on a number of occasions) but Fitzgerald puts Stahr's case, too, which reinforces the sardonic comment of Schwartz ("There's a writer for you," he said. 'Knows everything and at the same time he knows nothing.'"²). Stahr tells White:

"It takes more than brains. You writers and artists poop out and get all mixed up, and somebody has to come in and straighten you out."³

Stahr sees himself as "the only sound nut in a hatful of cracked ones."⁴ He is the unifying element who uses the writers and actors and technicians, integrating their products into a whole. But how valuable is this whole? Here we touch on something fundamental to the success of the book. For if Stahr is merely a talented philistine with a genius for co-ordination supplying people with another opiate then there can be no glory in his work. And is he heroic then?

-----ooOoo-----

John Dos Passos wrote in The Crack-Up:

It is tragic that Scott Fitzgerald did not live to finish The Last Tycoon. Even as it stands I have an idea that it will turn out to be one of those literary fragments that from time to time appear in the stream of a culture and profoundly

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Ibid., p. 19.

influence the course of future events. His unique achievement, in these beginnings of a great novel, 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.¹

Miller has pointed out that "what struck Dos Passos so forcibly - the book's 'unshakable moral attitude' - has not (as yet, anyway) been widely remarked or unusually influential."² This may be partly because Dos Passos does not expand or explain his remark much, except towards the end of his article where he writes:

Stahr, the prime mover of a Hollywood picture studio who is the central figure, is described with a combination of intimacy and detachment that constitutes a real advance over the treatment of such characters in all the stories that have followed Dreiser and Frank Norris. There is no trace of envy or adulation in the picture. 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 the warm reasonable light of all-around comprehension the Hollywood magnate and the workers on the lot and the people in the dusty sunscorched bungalows of Los Angeles. 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.³

But this does not tell us much more about Fitzgerald's "unshakable moral attitude towards the world" or his "firmly anchored ethical standard." In view of the unfinished state of the novel Dos Passos' praise seems generous but "premature." What the book lacks is the firm moral grasp of The Great Gatsby, which is provided in that novel largely through the use of the narrator. As we have the book our vision of Stahr is clouded by the narrator's infatuation with him, and the awe with which she treats him. But enough is given the reader to take Stahr's moral bearings with some degree of accuracy.

¹The Crack-Up, p. 339.

²Miller, p. 149.

³The Crack-Up, pp. 342-43.

Although Stahr is directly responsible for Schwartz's suicide after scrubbing him callously, Schwartz does not blame him, but tries to warn him of impending trouble and even signs his suicide note: "Your friend, Manny."¹ Stahr vindicates Schwartz's belief in him by taking a personal interest in the attempted suicide of Pete Zavras, the camera man. Although Stahr shows no guilt at the death of Schwartz his care for Zavras can be seen as an act of reparation. With amusing facetiousness Zavras pays him tribute: "You are the Aeschylus and the Euripides of the moving picture. . . . Also the Aristophanes and the Menander. . . . You have saved me one hundred percent."²

In an illuminating account of Stahr's childhood (which the narrator would have absolutely no way of knowing) the reader is told:

Like many brilliant men, he had grown up dead cold. Beginning at about twelve, probably, with the total rejection common to those of extraordinary mental powers, the "See here: this is all wrong - a mess - all a lie - and a sham -," he swept it all away, everything, as men of his type do; and then instead of being a son-of-a-bitch as most of them are, he looked around at the barrenness that was left and said to himself, "This will never do." And so he had learned tolerance, kindness, forbearance, and even affection like lessons.³

And Cecilia speculates, in the Conradian echo that also rings through some of the phraseology of The Great Gatsby:⁴ "I would rather think that in a 'long shot' he saw a new way of measuring our jerky hopes and graceful rogueries and awkward sorrows, and that he came here from choice to be with us to the end."⁵

Fitzgerald is not at his best with this vague portentousness and forced antithesis; when Stahr is most alive and impressive as a

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 61.

³Ibid., p. 97.

⁴E.g. The Great Gatsby, p. 4. "The abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men."

⁵The Last Tycoon, p. 20.

meaningful symbol of a specific fusion of business and art is in the day-to-day detail of his working life, presented in Chapters Three and Four. Here Cecilia attains verisimilitude by admitting she draws "partly from a paper I wrote in college on A Producer's Day and partly from my imagination."¹

Miller has justly written:

In the whirlwind that is Stahr's day, a multitude of characters emerge briefly, are vividly there, and then fade from view. Fitzgerald's genius for handling an immense cast of characters in confined space is here again put to the test, as it was in the accounts of Gatsby's parties or in the description of life on the Riviera beaches in Tender is the Night - and again his achievement is brilliant. In a few fine strokes, a telling phrase, Fitzgerald brings a minor functionary or an important personage springing to life.²

And although Fitzgerald is not usually seen as the writer of the vast social novel of panoramic scope like Bleak House or Vanity Fair, his achievement with a large cast must be acknowledged. (Indeed, it has been argued that one of the weaknesses of Tender is the Night is that it is too rich in characters, that in aiming at what he called a "philosophical"³ novel, Fitzgerald produced a canvas overflowing with what Dr Leavis, in condemning most of Dickens' novels, called "irrelevant 'life.'"⁴)

Fundamental to the picture of Stahr that Fitzgerald wishes to give the reader is Cecilia's comparison of him with her father, who is a money-grubbing businessman. (It might be argued that, in comparing Stahr to Pat Brady, Fitzgerald is loading the dice in favour of Stahr, for Brady has the morals of a cut-throat.) "Stahr was something else again. He was a marker in industry like Edison and Lumière and Griffith and Chaplin. He led pictures way up past the

¹The Last Tycoon, pp. 28-29.

²Miller, p. 156.

³The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 363.

⁴F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955), p. 227.

range and power of the theatre, reaching a sort of golden age."¹
 (The "sort of" suggests that Fitzgerald falters; can Stahr be compared with a leading painter of the Italian Renaissance or a leading dramatist of Elizabethan England? The phrase "golden age" begs the question, if it is not to be taken as a journalistic cliché.)

Although Miller is right about Fitzgerald's superb handling of his "cast of thousands," the emphasis is on Stahr's handling of them. The clue to Stahr's technique is given when Cecilia likens his approach to that of a general: he has to co-ordinate activity; he has to delegate authority: "These three affairs were Father's job."²

Stahr's day begins with news about the attempted suicide of Pete Zavras. Here Fitzgerald shows in Stahr's response the personal and paternal interest that Stahr takes in even lowly technicians. The problems Stahr faces range from this to the opposite extreme, the problem of expunging from a film the footage on which an actor's fly is open. Meanwhile Stahr has his own very personal problem: tracing the woman whom he saw during a flood in the studios who reminds him of his late wife, Minna Davis. But he has to throw himself into his many tasks. One of these tasks, a discussion with an English writer of the demands of the cinema, is used by Fitzgerald to illuminate the relationship of the writer to the cinema, a problem with which he had had intimate personal experience.

The theme of the writer's relation to Hollywood is taken up again when Stahr is talking to Prince Agge. By this time we have seen enough of Stahr to be able to take him seriously when he says: "I'm the unity."³ In his dealings with Roderiguez, the matinée idol, with

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Ibid., p. 58.

the writers, Wylie White and Jane Meloney, the director, Broaca, and the supervisor, Reinmund, Stahr demonstrates his all-round competence and understanding. We realise that Stahr is indeed one of the "half a dozen men . . . able to keep the whole equation of pictures in their heads."¹ Or, as Fitzgerald puts it elsewhere: "Here was Stahr to care for all of them."² And, just before the end of the manuscript, Brimmer, the communist organiser, wonders: "Is this all? This frail half-sick person holding up the whole thing."³ For there is the other side of Stahr, described by John W. Aldridge as "the debilitating effects on Stahr himself of the struggle which made him a king - his fanatical disregard of his failing health, his morbid preoccupation with his dead wife, his almost deliberate 'perversion of the life force,' as if he were consciously intent on death."⁴

Millgate has suggested that "many of Fitzgerald's difficulties derived from the fact that he was, in effect, writing two novels in one: a 'psychological' novel about Monroe Stahr, and a 'social' novel about Hollywood."⁵ Of course, similar problems have often been faced, and solved, by great novelists. But this is a useful way of looking at the novel: its concern with the "public" Stahr, the organiser and inhabitant of the world of "telegrams and anger," and the "private" Stahr, the man and the lover. In a letter Fitzgerald said that Stahr's love affair was to be "the meat of the book."⁶ This love affair is worth examining in some detail, and has been almost completely ignored by critics.

The first thing that must be said about it is that much of

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 42.

³Ibid., p. 127.

⁴John W. Aldridge, After the Lost Generation: A Critical Study of the Writers of Two Wars (New York: The Noonday Press, 1958), p. 56.

⁵Michael Millgate, American Social Fiction: James to Cozzens (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), p. 120.

⁶The Last Tycoon, Notes, p. 139.

it is described banally; whether or not Fitzgerald could have saved this part of the book by re-writing is an irrelevant question. As it is written it is almost a disaster.¹ The first entry of Kathleen is brilliantly done: after a flood at his studio, Stahr and an assistant are inspecting the damage when

on top of a huge head of the Goddess [sic] Siva, two women were floating down the current of an impromptu river. The idol had come unloosed from a set of Burma, and it meandered earnestly on its way, stopping sometimes to waddle and bump in the shallows with the other debris of the tide. The two refugees had found sanctuary along a scroll of curls on its bald forehead and seemed at first glance to be sightseers² on an interesting bus-ride through the scene of the flood.

Fitzgerald takes full advantage of all the comic possibilities of the scene: the unexpected juxtaposition of the head and its riders, the way it "meandered earnestly on its way," and the apparent calm of "the refugees" which makes them look like tourists in this "fairyland"³ where anything can happen. "Put that head back! . . . You think it's a souvenir?"⁴ is the facetious comment of Stahr's assistant.

One of the women is the double of Stahr's dead wife; this is a dramatic idea, but it is used without enough skill to make of it more than melodrama. "Pictures are my girl,"⁵ Stahr tells Cecilia, but he is lured from his work by the haunting resemblance of Kathleen to his dead wife; presumably his grief for Minna is such as to make his work partly an escape from it. This is his vulnerable point, and only the coincidence of Kathleen's appearance makes him open to

¹External evidence suggests that he was unable to find an "objective correlative" for his own relationship with Sheilah Graham. See Piper, 281-83.

²The Last Tycoon, p. 25.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁵Ibid., p. 71.

further wounds. However, this is not made clear by the novel and must be deduced by the reader. Furthermore, Stahr's marriage to Minna Davis is not presented with any depth, so that the reader is left without any terms of reference for Stahr's romance with Kathleen. Minna Davis remains a shadowy figure in the background, much more important to Stahr than to the reader. The search for the woman who reminds Stahr of Minna is given in conventional, even old-fashioned terms. There are suggestions that Fitzgerald was deliberately writing a fairy-tale love story outline to the relationship- within which are ironic lapses from the pattern: for example, Wylie White gibes: "There . . . goes Cinderella. Simply bring the slipper to the Regal Shoe Company, 812 South Broadway."¹ And Kathleen's first lover was a king, but "he was married. And he wasn't a romantic."² However, even fairy-tales have to be well written. Stahr's response to his first glimpse of Kathleen, for example, just will not do: "An awful fear went over him, and he wanted to cry aloud."³ This is women's magazine journalism. And when he finally finds her: "With a leap his heart went out of him as it had the night before, only this time it stayed out there with a vast beneficence."⁴ Apart from the last phrase, which is false in a more ambitious way (bad Conradese), this is on the level of Stephen Leacock's Nonsense Novels. Only Leacock, of course, intends to be funny.

But worse is still to come: "Stahr's eyes and Kathleen's met and tangled. For an instant they made love as no one ever dares to do after. Their glance was slower than an embrace, more urgent than a call."⁵ It would be tiresome and unnecessary to adduce evidence that

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 74.

²Ibid., p. 114.

³Ibid., p. 26.

⁴Ibid., p. 64.

⁵Ibid.

this is lifeless and unimagined writing, that Fitzgerald is using the shoddy small change of romantic fiction. But what must be remarked is that this is particularly disappointing because Fitzgerald (one thinks naturally of his achievements in The Great Gatsby and elsewhere) can and does, even here at times, bring his lovers to life. The awkwardness of the second meeting of Stahr and Kathleen is well brought out:

"I feel as if I had my foot in the door - like a collector."
 She laughed, too.
 "I'm sorry I can't ask you in. Shall I get my reefer and sit outside?"
 "No." He scarcely knew why he felt it was time to go. He might see her again - he might not. It was just as well this way.¹

Here the platitudes are a deliberate anti-climax, and the limitations placed on the pair by convention and inconvenience (Kathleen has been cleaning her house and it smells of ammonia) are touching and slightly comic.

As Stahr leaves Kathleen, he feels "glad that there [is] beauty in the world that would not be weighed in the scales of the casting department."² This draws attention to the fact that Kathleen is an outsider to Hollywood. Here she forms a useful contrast to Stahr's first wife, who has been an actress. Unfortunately, this contrast is not exploited enough.

The conclusion to Chapter Four ends the section which begins at the beginning of Chapter Three, chronicling a day in the life of Monroe Stahr. But here again Fitzgerald gets into technical trouble; the narration has been given from the point of view of the omniscient spectator, but Fitzgerald tries to justify it in relation to his chosen narrator, Cecilia Brady:

¹The Lost Tycoon, p. 66.

²Ibid.

That was substantially a day of Stahr's. I don't know about the illness, when it started, etc., because he was secretive, but I know he fainted a couple of times that month because Father told me. Prince Agge is my authority for the luncheon in the commissary where he told them he was going to make a picture that would lose money - which was something, considering the men he had to deal with and that he held a big block of stock and had a profit-sharing contract.

And Wylie White told me a lot, which I believed because he felt Stahr intensely with a mixture of jealousy and admiration. As for me, I was head over heels in love with him then, and you can take what I say for what it's worth.¹

Not only does Fitzgerald not take advantage of the possibility "of letting her imagine the actions of the characters" as he proposed to do, but he makes Cecilia give obviously inadequate sources for her knowledge. Apart from the question of whether or not she was likely to be in Prince Agge's confidence (we are not told of them even meeting), none of her sources, Pat Brady, Prince Agge and Wylie White, are intimate with either Stahr or Kathleen and would not be in a position to tell of their meeting. And by making Kathleen and Cecilia "rivals" for Stahr, Fitzgerald cuts the ground from under Cecilia's feet; real authority for the story could best come from having it told by Kathleen to a sympathetic Cecilia. Fitzgerald has Cecilia say: "Later, . . . I heard the whole thing from Kathleen,"² but this is obviously just a narrative device, and totally unconvincing as it stands. The reader does not even know that Cecilia has met Kathleen (she has seen her with Stahr at a Hollywood dance, and has tried to trace her through Wylie White, Jane Meloney and Martha Dodd), let alone that Kathleen would confide in Cecilia; in Fitzgerald's outline the story is to be told by Cecilia in a tuberculosis sanatorium. Perhaps Fitzgerald planned to bring the two rivals together, but there is no evidence in the notes provided by Edmund Wilson. Fitzgerald weakens his case further by pointing out

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 67.

²Ibid., p.120.

that Cecilia is a less than disinterested narrator, "head over heels in love with" Stahr, as she confesses herself to be.

The adolescent expression, "head over heels in love," aptly conveys the girlish quality of Cecilia's feelings for Stahr; she is in part a foil to Kathleen, gushing and confident where Kathleen is mature and unsure. The irony is that Cecilia gets only paternal concern from Stahr, and Kathleen - who wins him - turns him down to marry another man. When Cecilia throws herself at Stahr, saying: "Undertake me"¹ (as Rosemary in Tender is the Night says: "Take me"), Stahr rebuffs her as tactfully as possible. If we look at Cecilia from Stahr's point of view, and oddly enough Fitzgerald doesn't encourage us to do this (perhaps he considered it impossible with Cecilia as narrator, which is another weakness in his narrative technique), we see that Cecilia is just a nuisance to him, with whom he deals with great kindness. He is used to women throwing themselves at him, anyway.

When Cecilia sees Kathleen for the first time they are at a script writer's ball, and she is able to record her direct impressions of Kathleen, and Stahr's response to her: "They were smiling at each other as if this was the beginning of the world."² Here the popular song writer's image is in place, because Fitzgerald has clearly shown that these are the terms in which Cecilia thinks. However, at once the pure narrative method is dropped, unless Cecilia can be presumed to be eavesdropping on the couple's conversation at the dance. The interest of the reader is stimulated by the hesitation with which Kathleen responds to Stahr's questions; she appears to be hiding something: when Stahr asks her if she has been married she

¹The Last Typhoon, p. 71.

²Ibid., p. 73.

replies: "No, nor never have been. But then I may be."¹ Fitzgerald shows the struggle going on in Kathleen, her words saying one thing and her eyes inviting him "to a romantic communion of unbelievable intensity."² Once again, Fitzgerald loses the tautness of the writing and produces a small purple patch.

The tenuousness of the relationship is graphically realised, and their groping towards each other is touching; absurdity haunts their relationship from the beginning when a confusion in Stahr's mind links the double of his dead wife with her companion, "his connecting the silver belt with the wrong girl."³ This absurdity reaches its height when Stahr responds to a telephone call he assumes is from the President of America by altering his manner and being impressed, only to find that he is on the line with a performing orang-outang. But this does not make him lose face with Kathleen: "Kathleen felt sorry and liked him better because it had been an orang-outang."⁴ This sort of detail, utterly convincing and charmingly comic, makes the lapses mentioned above infuriating. The final blow to their romance is given in a telegram from Kathleen: "I was married at noon today. Goodbye; and on a sticker attached, Send your answer by Western Union Telegram."⁵ This is the final absurdity.

The last chapter that Fitzgerald was working on when he died shows the confrontation of Stahr by the Communist Party member, Brimmer, and shows the impact made on Stahr by Kathleen's marriage. It is a subtle blend of sociology and psychology transcending the division in the book seen by Millgate and other critics.

Fitzgerald demonstrates the paradox of Stahr's mind: he is keenly interested in the social forces at work around him, and in the

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 73.

²Ibid., p. 74.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 84.

⁵Ibid., p. 116.

ideas that are moving them, but his mind is "closed on the subject."¹ He directs his request for an introduction to a Party member to Cecilia, who - very handily for Fitzgerald's purpose - "the summer before . . . had been all politics."² Cecilia's jocular remark to Stahr ("Do you want a blonde or a brunette?"³) recalls the unrequited love of which they are both victims.

He was a nice-looking man, this Brimmer - a little on the order of Spencer Tracy, but with a stronger face and a wider range of reactions written up in it. I couldn't help thinking as he and Stahr smiled and shook hands and squared off, that they were two of the most alert men I had ever seen. They were very conscious of each other immediately - both as polite to me as you please, but with a softening of the ends of their sentences when they turned in my direction.⁴

The tension is quietly but subtly built up; the antagonists are described in an image from the boxing ring ("smiled and shook hands and squared off") and we are told enough about them to know that they are both heavyweights ("two of the most alert men I had ever seen"). Although Fitzgerald has geared the pace to high drama, he deliberately builds down to anti-climax and Brimmer wins an easy but empty victory. Brimmer, it should be noted, is no cartoon strip "Red," with wild beard and bomb in pocket, but resembles Spencer Tracy.

Stahr opens with a challenge that is slightly facetious and slightly patronizing: "What are you people trying to do? . . . You've got my young men all upset."⁵ Brimmer responds with a quip which shows he can adapt easily to the world of pat dialogue (seen most clearly in Cecilia's exchanges with Wylie White). Immediately Stahr gets down to business and the clash looks very interesting when Cecilia leaves the scene to make tea; Fitzgerald is able to disguise his political inadequacy by having his narrator resort to a feminine

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 118.

²Ibid., p. 117.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 119.

⁵Ibid.

function. But he must disappoint the careful reader.

When Cecilia returns the discussion is amicable: Stahr is telling Brimmer stories about the Warner Brothers. Fitzgerald's inside knowledge of Hollywood enables him to use details like this that give Stahr the Hollywood stamp. Jokes about Goldwyn were commonplace all over America, just as Dorothy Parker's name was always being associated with the latest wise-crack, but the Warner Brothers were part of the mythology of Hollywood itself only.

The conversation turns to writers, because Brimmer wants to know why the producers do not support the anti-Nazi League, and Stahr replies that the League is being used by the Communists to "get . . . at the writers."¹ Fitzgerald is careful not to overplay the topic of writers, and Cecilia goes into a daydream "about Stahr's girl."²

When my mind came back into the room, they had destroyed the poor writers - Brimmer had gone so far as to admit they were "unstable."

"They are not equipped for authority," said Stahr. "There is no substitute for will. Sometimes you have to fake will when you don't feel it at all."

"I've had that experience."

"You have to say, 'It's got to be like this - no other way' - even if you're not sure. A dozen times a week that happens to me. Situations where there is no real reason for anything. You pretend there is."

"All leaders have felt that," said Brimmer. "Labor leaders, and certainly military leaders."³

Here Stahr returns to one of his preoccupations hinted at in the first chapter, when Stahr's conversation with the pilots is recounted:

"Suppose you were a railroad man," he said. "You have to send a train through there somewhere. Well, you get your surveyors' reports, and you find there's three or four or half a dozen gaps, and not one is better than the other. You've got to decide - on what basis? You can't test the best way - except by doing it. So you just do it."

The pilot thought he had missed something.

"How do you mean?"

"You choose some one way for no reason at all - because that mountain's pink or the blueprint is a better blue. You

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 120.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 121.

see?"¹

Cross sums up neatly the impression made by this concern of Stahr's: "He seems to consider that the secret of his success lies in his ability to make decisions - often arbitrary ones."²

Piper has shown how Fitzgerald studied the lives of Caesar, the Duke of Wellington, Lee, Grant, Sherman, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln, in an effort to discover what makes leaders; Stahr was to be linked with great leaders of the past who have achieved mastership of men. The parallel with Lincoln was to be stressed particularly:

Further on in the novel, Fitzgerald planned to bring out Stahr's affinities with . . . Lincoln. Stahr was also to be an expert political strategist, an artist in human relationships. Instead of removing his enemies, for instance, Stahr follows Lincoln's practice and keeps them where he can watch what they are doing. Like Lincoln, he knows how to use the element of play as a means of getting things done. At one stage in Fitzgerald's planning, he intended to have Stahr meet his death in front of the capitol in Washington. When Fitzgerald himself died, he was still not certain how he was going to work out the full implications of the Lincoln-Jackson association that he had so far indicated only in crude terms.³

Piper does not mention the strange, surrealist and very successful introduction of the Lincoln motif:

Coming out of the private dining room, they passed through a corner of the commissary proper. Prince Agge drank it in - eagerly. It was gay with gypsies and with citizens and soldiers, with the sideburns and braided coats of the First Empire. From a little distance they were men who lived and walked a hundred years ago, and Agge wondered how he and the men of his time would look as extras in some future costume picture.

Then he saw Abraham Lincoln, and his whole feeling suddenly changed. He had been brought up in the dawn of Scandinavian socialism when Nicolay's biography was much read. He had been told Lincoln was a great man whom he should admire, and he hated him instead, because he was forced upon him. But now seeing him sitting here, his legs crossed, his kindly face fixed on a forty-cent dinner, including dessert, his shawl wrapped around him as if to protect himself from the erratic air-cooling - now Prince Agge, who was in America at last, stared as a tourist at

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 19.

²Cross, p. 105.

³Piper, pp. 268-69.

the mummy of Lenin in the Krenlin. This, then, was Lincoln. Stahr had walked on far ahead of him, turned waiting for him - but still Agge stared.

This, then, he thought, was what they all meant to be.

Lincoln suddenly raised a triangle of pie and jammed it in his mouth, and, a little frightened, Prince Agge hurried to join Stahr.¹

Here, as though in a clockwork waxworks, the "early Fascist"² witnesses the myth of the great American democrat come to life, as it were. Juxtaposed with the mention of the "forty-cent dinner, including dessert" and the air-cooling system, Lincoln seems absurd as he jams "a triangle of pie . . . in his mouth." But this sub-scene is invaluable in giving the reader perspective of both time and status. ("Agge wondered how he and the men of his time would look as extras in some future costume picture." Agge does not know it, Fitzgerald implies, but he is an extra in the drama playing itself out around Stahr.)

However, although he is ambitious, even over-ambitious in his comparisons of Stahr with great men, Fitzgerald is able and prepared to show Stahr's feet of clay. Chapter Six, although unfinished is masterly in its presentation of the two sides of Stahr: the alert organisational intelligence, strong, charming and composed, and the disintegrating personality, "carrying on a losing battle with his instinct toward schizophrenia."³ In the last picture that we get of Stahr he is like the Dick Diver of the last stages of Tender is the Night, and there is no doubt that Fitzgerald drew on his own experiences and feelings. As Piper says, "Fitzgerald found it impossible not to identify his feelings with those of his sick and exhausted hero."⁴ But there is more reason for Stahr behaving as he does than there is for Dick. Stahr's life has been rendered

¹The Last Tycoon, pp. 48-49.

²Ibid., p. 43.

³Ibid., p. 126.

⁴Piper, p.285.

meaningless by the marriage of Kathleen to "that American."¹

Befuddled by an overdose of cocktails, he attempts to beat up Brimmer, who finds what it means to "hit ten million dollars"² and knocks Stahr out. When Stahr regains consciousness

the ping-pong balls lay around in the grass like a constellation of stars. I turned on a sprinkler and came back with a wet handkerchief, but there was no mark on Stahr - he must have been hit in the side of the head. He went off behind some trees and was sick, and I heard him kicking up some earth over it. After that he seemed all right, but he wouldn't go into the house till I got him some mouthwash, so I took back the whisky bottle and got a mouthwash bottle. His wretched essay at getting drunk was over. I've been out with college freshmen, but for sheer ineptitude and absence of the Bacchic spirit it unquestionably took the cake.³

On the rebound from Kathleen, Stahr begins an affair with Cecilia: "That's how the two weeks started that he and I went around together. It only took one of them for Louella to have us married."⁴

This is where the manuscript ends, with the mention of Louella Parsons providing a link with the first page of the book and giving a mocking appearance of unity to what just might have been a masterpiece.

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 127.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 127-28.

⁴Ibid., p. 128.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Time that is intolerant
Of the brave and innocent,
And indifferent in a week
To a beautiful physique,

Worships language and forgives
Everyone by whom it lives;
Pardons cowardice, conceit,
Lays its honours at their feet.

W. H. Auden.

Alfred Kazin has quoted John O'Hara's remark: "It is granted that Scott Fitzgerald was not a lovable man," and has added: "I am sure he was not."¹ For Trilling, "the root of Fitzgerald's heroism is to be found, as it sometimes is in tragic heroes, in his power of love."² When Fitzgerald wrote that he could not "disassociate a man from his work,"³ he was expressing a problem that would confront his admirers. He pinpointed the source of paradox when he said that "a good novelist . . . is . . . many people, if he is any good."⁴

More than a quarter of a century has passed since Fitzgerald's death; the reputation grows, although different reasons are put forward for acclaiming Fitzgerald.⁵ In the last year of

¹The Man and his Work, p. 16.

²Trilling, p. 244.

³The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 187.

⁴The Crack-Up, p. 177.

⁵See Philip Hobsbaum, "Scott Fitzgerald and his Critics: The Appreciation of Minor Art," British Association for American Studies Bulletin, No. 6 (1963), pp. 33-41.

his life, when he was miserable, almost forgotten, and knew he was near death, he wrote to Maxwell Perkins: "I have not lost faith. People will buy my new book and I hope I shan't again make the many mistakes of Tender."¹ That faith has been vindicated. And his words need not be modified in the guts of the living. They live on the printed page. If this study makes those pages more delightful for any one, it will justify itself. Where there has been adverse criticism, I hope it has been in the spirit of Fitzgerald who was "more drawn to celebrate the good than to denounce the bad."² Where attention has been drawn to the lack of perspective, the lack of a moral framework, portentousness, this has not meant that I think a writer should produce a capsule philosophy, weltanschauung, or even a "myth." Catholicism, Marxism, Freud and Spengler all influenced Fitzgerald's "thinking," and he neither attempted nor produced a synthesis. He lived in a period as benighted as Shakespeare's, and if Shakespeare could not formulate a philosophy from "the mixed and muddled scepticism of the Renaissance,"³ how could we expect one from Fitzgerald with only his "beautiful talent"?⁴ I have judged Fitzgerald against his artistic credo as formulated in "An Introduction to The Great Gatsby," published nine years after the novel: "How anyone could take up the responsibility of being a novelist without a sharp and concise attitude about life is a puzzle to me."⁵ There is too often the wrong sort of ambivalence in Fitzgerald, the "double vision" results in a blurring of focus and he loses his sharpness and conciseness.

¹The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 288.

²Trilling, p. 245.

³T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," Selected Essays: 1917-1932 (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1932), p. 137.

⁴Turnbull, p. 263.

⁵Frederick J. Hoffman (ed.), The Great Gatsby: A Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 166.

If I have appeared to slight the Romantic heritage, it is partly because I am uneasy about how it has been interpreted in our time; partly because, fascinating as the artist often is, I believe that art is the thing. In the first page of this study I quoted two lines from Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence"; the preceding line has its truth, too, in connection with Fitzgerald:

"By our own spirits are we deified."

Fitzgerald should have the last words in the formal part of this study - Fitzgerald at his best, most personal and most impersonal, artist, man and hero of our times:

Imaginative creation is my business . . . I have made two rules in attempting to be both an intellectual and a man of honor simultaneously - that I do not tell myself lies that will be of value to myself, and secondly, I do not lie to myself.¹

I am not a great man, but sometimes I think the impersonal and objective quality of my talent and the sacrifices of it, in pieces, to preserve its essential value has some sort of epic grandeur.²

- You have got to be good.

- Your sense of superiority depends upon the picture of yourself as being good, of being large and generous and all-comprehending, and just and brave and all-forgiving. But if you are not good, if you don't preserve a sense of comparative values, those qualities turn against you - and your love is a mess and your courage is a slaughter.³

¹The Crack-Up, p. 197.

²The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 62.

³Ibid., p. 530.

APPENDIX

IMAGES OF HOLLYWOOD

The publication in 1962 of The Pat Hobby Stories¹ in collected form for the first time made widely available all Fitzgerald's work dealing with Hollywood. This can be complemented by an examination of letters written from and on Hollywood, often to aspirant writers to whom Fitzgerald generously gave advice and suggestions. His own work as a script writer has been dealt with by Piper,² and is peripheral to this study. The series of stories centered on the hack writer Pat Hobby were written concurrently with Fitzgerald's secret work on The Last Tycoon. Although they were written largely because Fitzgerald desperately needed the money (his daughter is said to have a soft spot for Pat Hobby because "he sent me to Vassar"³), Fitzgerald envisaged their ultimate publication in book form, and became increasingly engrossed in the character of Pat Hobby. Arnold Gingrich, editor of Esquire in which twelve of the stories were published before Fitzgerald's death and the other five posthumously, has written in a fascinating introduction to the book, finally published more than twenty years after Fitzgerald's death:

After Scott's death, almost from the moment the papers were first made available in the Princeton Library, the scholars began falling, with singular uniformity, into the

¹F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Pat Hobby Stories with an introduction by Arnold Gingrich (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962). Hereafter referred to as The Pat Hobby Stories.

²Piper, pp. 245-57.

³The Pat Hobby Stories, Introduction, p. xxi.

pathetic fallacy about Pat Hobby: these stories are about a hack, ergo these stories are hack work.¹

This is a cogent remark, and explains succinctly the lack of critical interest in these stories. What Gingrich does not go on to say is that of all the important characters Fitzgerald created, Pat Hobby is the one with no glamour whatsoever. Pat Hobby is an authentic anti-hero, a fascinating study in failure made by a man himself an apparent failure, but one who had always striven to delineate the heroic and who was simultaneously making his last effort to portray a representative American hero, Monroe Stahr.

Piper dismisses the Hobby series as "widely varying in quality."² This is true enough; Gingrich, too, although triumphant in the belated resurrection of Pat Hobby, does not shirk the critical issue:

With this volume, . . . the Fitzgerald cast of major characters is at last complete, and Pat Hobby takes his rightful place, if not alongside Jay Gatsby and Dick Diver, then at least between Monroe Stahr and Amory Blaine.³

However, although a number of the stories are painfully contrived, particularly "'Boil Some Water - Lots of it,'" "The Homes of the Stars," "Pat Hobby's Preview" and "Mightier than the Sword," Fitzgerald succeeds in creating a comic character almost literally always on the run or plotting for the revival of the glory he had when he was a well-paid writer in the days of the silent cinema, or merely scheming for a loan. Amoral, pathetic, an underground man, fated to step on every banana peel on Sunset Boulevard, Hobby wins our respect because, to adapt words from Faulkner's Nobel Prize Award speech, although he will never prevail, he survives. And The Pat Hobby Stories will probably remain the definitive work on a distinct Hollywood type.

¹The Pat Hobby Stories, Introduction, p. xxiii.

²Piper, p. 254.

³The Pat Hobby Stories, Introduction, p. xxiii.

The first visit Fitzgerald made to Hollywood was early in 1927, less than two years after the publication of The Great Gatsby, when his reputation as an artist stood high. The famous Fitzgeralds were honoured and entertained lavishly in Hollywood, but the script Fitzgerald was commissioned to write was rejected and his omnipresent financial problems were not solved. "Fitzgerald ended up with less money for his ten weeks' work than he would have received for a magazine story."¹ Four years later he returned to Hollywood, with a good contract which he broke after his collaborator on the script proved an impossible partner; he left, "disillusioned and disgusted, vowing never to go back."² The only fruit of this visit, apart from a week's pay, was one of his best short stories, "Crazy Sunday,"³ a preliminary sketch of Irving Thalberg, the producer, which Fitzgerald later expanded in The Last Tycoon.

When Fitzgerald made his last trip to Hollywood in July 1937, it was his final major move. He died there on December 21st, 1940.

Fitzgerald's three periods in Hollywood have one thing in common: he went there to make money as quickly as possible. American novelists who have written scripts in Hollywood largely for financial reasons include William Faulkner, Nathanael West, Fitzgerald and Joseph Heller. Playwrights, short story writers and essayists have "done time" in Hollywood. Many reputable writers have attempted to analyse and report on Hollywood in works of art;⁴ Fitzgerald believed that most authors lacked disinterestedness, soured by the

¹Piper, p. 162.

²The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 17.

³The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories, p. 183.

⁴Analyses of "The Hollywood Novel" appear in Leslie A. Fiedler, Waiting for the End: The American Literary Scene from Hemingway to Baldwin (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), pp. 51-64 and Michael Millgate, American Social Fiction: James to Cozzens (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), pp. 150-65. The latter is more penetrating and reliable.

treatment of their scripts and talents by important Hollywood functionaries with no aesthetic taste. Too few realised that script writing differs radically from all other kinds of writing. As he had Pat Hobby say, laconically and ironically: "'They don't want authors. They want writers - like me.'"¹ The purists' response to this form of employment for an artist was registered most harshly by that archetypal teenage puritan, Holden Caulfield, the narrator of J.D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye. Referring to his brother, author of a book called The Secret Goldfish, Holden says: "Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute."² It is in defense against this sort of blanket damnation of Hollywood that Fitzgerald has his narrator, Cecilia Brady, say on the first page of The Last Tycoon that "you can take Hollywood for granted like I did, or you can dismiss it with the contempt that we reserve for what we don't understand."³

It is worth comparing Fitzgerald's approach and appraisal with those of other writers, and with the analyses of social scientists who have attempted academic and scientific surveys of Hollywood. At the same time as Fitzgerald was writing The Last Tycoon and the Pat Hobby series a team of social scientists, led by Dr Leo C. Rosten, was attempting a monumental study of Hollywood; the report was published in 1941 under the title Hollywood: The Movie Colony: The Movie Makers.⁴

The sociological team was

backed by a quarter of a million dollars of Carnegie and Rockefeller foundation money. . . . [It] recorded hundreds of interviews, and prepared, distributed, tabulated and analyzed

¹"Mightier than the Sword," The Pat Hobby Stories, p.149.

²J.D.Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 5.

³The Last Tycoon, p. 3.

⁴Leo C.Rosten, Hollywood: The Movie Colony: The Movie Makers (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941). Hereafter referred to as Rosten.

some forty-two hundred questionnaires.

Where the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundation scholars were treated with every courtesy, Fitzgerald was obliged to pursue his writing secretly, convinced that if news of his novel got about, he would be blackballed by the major studios.¹

Fitzgerald's conclusions and those of the sociologists illuminate one another; Dr Rosten is able to provide a fluently written summary of his team's investigation, and he gives a rationalization of his survey which could have been used as a manifesto for Fitzgerald:

The aberrations of our culture are simply more vivid, more conspicuous, and more dramatic in Hollywood than in New Bedford or Palo Alto. Our values are extended to the strident and the unmistakable in Hollywood's way of life. It is for this reason that a study of Hollywood can cast the profile of American society into sharper relief.

If we look at Hollywood against the larger context of the world in which we live, if we compare the motion picture industry to other businesses at a comparable time, . . . we discover startling and conclusive parallels between the practices of Hollywood and New York, between the mores of Bel-Air and Oyster Bay, between the chalets of Santa Monica and the mansions of Newport. Hollywood can be placed under the microscope of social science like a slide on which we see, in sharper and isolated detail, the organic processes of the larger social body. Pathology illuminates the normal.²

(Perhaps, pace Eliot, the silhouette of Sweeny straddled in the sun would tell us a great deal about history.) Here is the justification for taking Hollywood as a microcosm for the macrocosm of America. And surely Fitzgerald, whose narrator says on the first page of The Last Tycoon: "My father was in the picture business as another man might be in cotton or steel,"³ would have approved Rosten's reference to "the motion picture industry."⁴

¹Piper, pp. 275-76.

²Rosten, p. 5.

³The Last Tycoon, p. 3.

⁴Ezra Goodman, The Fifty-Year Decline and Fall of Hollywood (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. vii. ". . . It's not a business. It's a racket! . . ." is Goodman's epigraph, recorded at one of the rare interviews granted by "studio boss Harry Cohn" (p. 52), "the prototype of the Hollywood monster" (p. 277).

"The Rosten volume," says Piper, "was in every way the most comprehensive and authoritative study that had thus far been made of the movie industry. Yet its 368 pages of text, plus an additional 78 pages of charts and appendices, did little more than confirm the the diagnosis of Hollywood's ills that Fitzgerald had reached in less than one hundred pages of memorable prose."¹ And Piper shows the attention that both Fitzgerald and Rosten focus on the director. But Piper gives no idea of the detailed verisimilitude achieved by the genius of Fitzgerald, which is often much more penetrating than the measuring-rod of the social scientists. For example, Rosten devotes nine pages to what he calls "The Adoration of the Nag."² Fitzgerald in three sentences shows Stahr, off duty but mind always querying and questing, formulating a theory to explain the popularity of the horse in Hollywood:

They were all talking with enthusiasm about a horse that had run very fast, and Mr. Marcus was the most enthusiastic of all. Stahr guessed that the Jews had taken over the worship of horses as a symbol - for years it had been the Cossacks mounted and the Jews on foot. Now the Jews had horses, and it gave them a sense of extraordinary well-being and power.³

Here Stahr's exploratory mind is suggested, and the wry, laconic tone ("a horse that had run very fast") gives an impression of Stahr's wit and weariness. Fitzgerald does not pursue the theory, in itself perhaps far-fetched, but uses it to show Stahr's ability to perform imaginative leaps. Although Rosten can also make an amusing gibe about Hollywood horse-racing ("It is wearying to recall the time and emotion which adults in the movie colony devote to discussing the speed with which four-legged animals can traverse an elliptical course"⁴) his comment is not placed in meaningful context as is Fitzgerald's.

¹Piper, p. 275.

²Rosten, p. 212.

³The Last Tycoon, p. 74.

⁴Rosten, p. 215.

Rosten devotes a chapter of twenty-four pages to Hollywood actors and the star system. Nothing he says is as vivid and penetrating as Fitzgerald's vignette of the ex-star Martha Dodd,

an agricultural girl, who had never quite understood what had happened to her and had nothing to show for it except a washed-out look about the eyes. She still believed that the life she had tasted was reality and this was only a long waiting.

"I had a beautiful place in 1928," she told us, " - thirty acres, with a miniature golf course and a pool and a gorgeous view. All spring I was up to my ass in daisies."¹

The comic incongruity of the words "ass" and "daisies" and the absurd yet distinctly Hollywood vision embodied by the picture of a girl "up to her ass in daisies" tell us a great deal about the system that can send an actor "up with the rocket and down with the stick."²

Fitzgerald shows the sad waste lives of ex-stars,³ now at best extras, like Martha Dodd and Johnny Swanson and other "discarded flowers,"⁴ the misery of the stars like the impotent matinee idol, Roderiguez, still on top:

"Rainy Day grossed twenty-five thousand in Des Moines and broke all records in St. Louis and did twenty-seven thousand in Kansas City. My fan mail's way up and there I am afraid to go home at night, afraid to go to bed."⁵ (Note the irony of the film's title.)

and "the dream made flesh" who

wore a low gown which displayed the bright eczema of her chest and back . . . plastered over with an emollient.

.
Presumably she had modelled herself after one of those queens in the Tarzan comics who rule mysteriously over a nation of blacks. She regarded the rest of the world as black. She

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 101.

²Ruth Miller, "Remember, Remember," Floating Island (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1965), p. 17. Coincidentally, this is an image prefigured by Fitzgerald, whose original title for The Beautiful and Damned was The Flight of the Rocket. See The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 145.

³Beth Day, This was Hollywood (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1960), p. 119. "The average professional life of a movie actor is a short seven years."

⁴The Last Tycoon, p. 102.

⁵Ibid., p. 35.

was a necessary evil, borrowed for a single picture.¹

All these are preserved in the amber of Fitzgerald's prose; figures and types who haunt the imagination as no graph or table can.

Dr Rosten's chapter on "The Writers" is one of his best, and it is rewarding to compare what he writes with the handling of this agonisingly personal problem by Fitzgerald. Dr Rosten says:

The very purpose of Hollywood's producers is opposed to the basic motivation of writers. The producer asks, "Will it make money?" The writer asks, "Will it make sense?" The producer wants to gratify popular taste; the writer wants to improve it. The producer wants to write pictures which make a profit; the writer wants to make pictures which make him feel proud. The producer wants to "entertain" the audience; the writer wants to move, influence, or enlighten the public.²

That this was the general situation in Hollywood is no doubt true; Rosten's team of interviewers have established a norm, a general pattern, and Fitzgerald's own situation fits the pattern well enough. Fitzgerald even illustrates the extreme relationship of philistine producer to writers with a memorable anecdote:

There was the story of the new producer who had gone down the line one day and then reported excitedly to the head office.
 "Who are those men?"
 "They're supposed to be writers."
 "I thought so. Well, I watched them for ten minutes and there were two of them that didn't write a line."³

But in The Last Tycoon Fitzgerald makes matters more complicated and much more interesting by writing about a producer who is concerned with making quality films and is prepared even to lose money on some. Furthermore, Fitzgerald's producer is capable of sympathetic understanding of the writer and his problems, and of imparting a lesson in craftsmanship to the struggling writer. (Stahr is saved from becoming a Father Christmas figure by the ruthlessness he shows on occasion, for example with the director, Ridingwood; but, of

¹The Last Tycoon, pp. 50-51.

²Rosten, p. 307.

³The Last Tycoon, p. 99.

course, even Stahr's ruthlessness has a special gentleness!) The two scenes showing Stahr with the writer, Boxley, demonstrate very well Fitzgerald's presentation of Stahr's special attitude to the screen writer. The scenes are presented perhaps too artificially, like Before and After pictures in an advertisement, but Fitzgerald has spaced them adroitly, seventy pages apart, and they do show great insight into the needs of the screen writer, which Fitzgerald, like Rosten, perceives to be vastly different from those of a "creative writer." Talking to Brimmer, Stahr says: "I never thought . . . that I had more brains than a writer has. But I always thought that his brains belonged to me - because I knew how to use them."¹ (As Rosten puts it: "[Writers'] work is treated like merchandise."²)

Boxley is a British writer new to Hollywood (his original was Aldous Huxley) who has been saddled with two "hack" collaborators and has written Stahr a letter of complaint:

Stahr looked at him courteously.

"Something not going well, Mr. Boxley?"

The novelist looked back at him in thunderous silence.

"I read your letter," said Stahr. The tone of the pleasant young headmaster was gone. He spoke as to an equal, but with a faint two-edged deference.

"I can't get what I write on paper," broke out Boxley.

"You've all been very decent, but it's a sort of conspiracy. Those two hacks you've teamed me with listen to what I say, but they spoil it - they seem to have a vocabulary of about a hundred words."

"Why don't you write it yourself?" asked Stahr.

"I have. I sent you some."

"But it was just talk, back and forth," said Stahr mildly.

"Interesting talk but nothing more."³

In the discussion that ensues it is apparent that Boxley is contemptuous of movies and still has much to learn. But, as Stahr says: "Your dialogue is more graceful than what these hacks can write - that's why we brought you out here."⁴

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 125.

²Rosten, p. 313.

³The Last Tycoon, p. 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 32.

The next time we see Boxley he is still at odds with his new medium ("You see it for your medium, but not for ours,"¹ says Stahr.)

"I keep wishing you could start over," Boxley said.
"It's this mass production."

"That's the condition," said Stahr. "There's always some lousy condition. We're making a life of Rubens - suppose I asked you to do portraits of rich dopes like Bill Brady and me and Gary Cooper and Marcus when you wanted to paint Jesus Christ! Wouldn't you feel you had a condition? Our condition is that we have to take people's own favorite folklore and dress it up and give it back to them."²

Boxley compares Stahr to Lincoln: "Stahr was an artist only, as Mr. Lincoln was a general, perforce and as a layman."³ Gradually Boxley learns from Stahr, until suddenly he is able to provide a professional critique of a script that the assistant producer, La Borwitz, and two writers are struggling with:

"A lot of beautiful speeches," said Boxley boldly, "but no situations. After all, you know, it's not going to be a novel."⁴

Fitzgerald has shown another facet of Monroe Stahr, the artist in human relationships and organisational genius. Like Dick Diver at his best, Stahr has the charm and warmth to bring the best out of people.

"Stahr had recreated the proper atmosphere - never consenting to be a driver of the driven, but feeling like and acting like and even sometimes looking like a small boy getting up a show."⁵

The third writer Fitzgerald brings to life in The Last Tycoon - with George Boxley and Wylie White - is Jane Meloney, "a dried-up little blonde of fifty. . . . Her value lay in such ordinary assets as the bare fact that she was a woman and adaptable, quick and trustworthy, 'knew the game' and was without egotism."⁶ Fitzgerald

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 105.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 106.

⁴Ibid., p. 107.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 36.

Fitzgerald uses her partly for the plot (Cecilia traces Kathleen through her, for example) and to show some of the ways screen writers work:

One day I was there when she and a young man had just lifted a story out of The Saturday Evening Post - changing the characters and all. Then they began to write it, making each line answer the line before it, and of course it sounded just like people do in life when they're straining to be anything - funny or gentle or brave.¹

Here Fitzgerald shows the sort of personal expertise not available to an outsider like Rosten. (There is surely a private joke in the passage since Fitzgerald himself had often had work published in The Saturday Evening Post.) Jane Melony is a living Hollywood relic: "She was reputed to have been on the set the day Griffith invented the close-up!"²

The final thing that must be said about Stair's attitude and relation to writers is that he is responsible (like Irving Thalberg in real life) for the system of having a number of writers working on one script, sometimes without even knowing of their competitors' existence. As Piper³ has pointed out, this was a system Fitzgerald had suffered under, and it says much for his disinterestedness that he writes about it without bitterness.

A recurrent theme in works about Hollywood is the apparent opposition between the claims of box-office and artistic sensibility. To most intelligent people Hollywood is synonymous with vulgarity and debased taste. Fitzgerald tried to get beneath the easy stereotype even then prevailing, and his hero is a man prepared to fight his fellow "money men"⁴ (as Fitzgerald calls the film backers) for the sake of quality films that might lose money. Fitzgerald shows us a

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 100.

²Ibid.

³Piper, p. 285.

⁴The Last Tycoon, p. 45.

meeting at which Stahr comes into conflict with his colleagues over "the South America picture idea"¹:

"Do I understand you to say you expect to gross a quarter million short of your budget?"

"It's a quality picture," said Stahr with assumed innocence.

It had dawned on them all now, but they still felt there was a trick in it. Stahr really thought it would make money. No one in his senses -

"For two years we've played safe," said Stahr. "It's time we made a picture that'll lose some money. Write it off as good will - this'll bring in new customers."

Some of them still thought he meant it was a flyer and a favorable one, but he left them in no doubt.

"It'll lose money," he said as he stood up, his jaw just slightly out and his eyes smiling and shining. "It would be a bigger miracle than Hell's Angels if it broke even. But we have a certain duty to the public, as Pat Brady has said at Academy dinners. It's a good thing for the production schedule to slip in a picture that'll lose money."²

From this dialogue it is clear that Stahr is not precisely an aesthetic St George prepared to do battle with the dragon of Public Opinion, yet - to alter the metaphor - neither is he prepared to respond to it like a puppet; he is not a literary man, though he has heard of Eugene O'Neill ("When I want to do a Eugene O'Neill play, I'll buy one"³) and knows the difference between King Kong and The Hairy Ape.⁴ Fitzgerald's ventriloquist's voice is distinguishable as the omniscient narrator who takes over from Cecilia to say: "He was a rationalist who did his own reasoning without benefit of books."⁵ Although the bookish reader may have less inclination to identify with him for this reason, this is in character for the self-made man that Stahr is, and Fitzgerald is not aiming at a simple identification of the reader with his hero.

From the point of view of the Hollywood product, the most significant part of the book is Stahr's chance encounter on the beach

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 48.

³Ibid., p. 39.

⁴Ibid., p. 84.

⁵Ibid., p. 118.

with the negro man collecting grunion who has "come out to read some Emerson"¹:

"What's your work," the negro asked Stahr.

"I work for the pictures."

"Oh." After a moment he added, "I never go to movies."

"Why not?" asked Stahr sharply.

"There's no profit. I never let my children go."

Stahr watched him, and Kathleen watched Stahr protectively.

"Some of them are good," she said.²

This exchange is significant; the negro has "rocked an industry"³:

He was waiting at home for Stahr, with his pails of silver fish, and he would be waiting at the studio in the morning. He had said that he did not allow his children to listen to Stahr's story. He was prejudiced and wrong, and he must be shown somehow, some way. A picture, many pictures, a decade of pictures, must be made to show him he was wrong. Since he had spoken, Stahr had thrown four pictures out of his plans - one that was going into production this week. They were borderline pictures in point of interest, but at least he submitted the borderline pictures to the negro and found them trash. And he put back on his list a different picture that he had tossed to the wolves, to Brady and Marcus and the rest, to get his way on something else. He rescued it for the negro man.⁴

It is only because Stahr is an individualist with a decisive voice in a capitalist industry that he can mould the future of pictures on what might appear to others as an extraordinary whim. The negro man comes to stand for the still small voice of Stahr's artistic conscience. Unfortunately, the novel breaks off before we are given any idea of the influence of Stahr's new standard.

And so Fitzgerald covers the gamut of Hollywood, touching on almost all the aspects investigated by Rosten's team of social scientists. Even the lowest echelons are mentioned: Stahr's office boy, Ned Sollinger, who after "he dissected out the least publicized section of a lady corpse"⁵ and sent it to a girl who had rejected

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 92.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 93.

⁴Ibid., p. 95.

⁵Ibid., p. 99.

him, "had begun life at the bottom again, and was still there."¹ The secretary of Cecilia Brady's father, one Birdy Peters, "tumbled out [of a cupboard in Pat Brady's office] stark naked - just like a corpse in the movies."² At the top are people like Pat Brady, ("Nowadays all chief executives have huge drawing rooms, but my father's was the first. . . . There was a big painting of Will Rogers, hung conspicuously and intended, I think, to suggest Father's essential kinship with Hollywood's St. Francis"³) and Jacques Le Borwitz, "an assistant producer, which is something like a commissar, . . . [who] had his points, no doubt, but so have the sub-microscopic protozoa, so has a dog prowling for a bitch and a bone."⁴ Broaca, Reinmund, Mr Marcus, Ridingwood - the director, Lee Kapper - the art director, Wylie White worrying about censorship and the Catholic lobby; all come to life illuminating some aspect of Hollywood and its problems. If Mizener is correct in asserting that "back of every . . . character in the book . . . lay Fitzgerald's acute observation of a real person"⁵ the novel is no simple roman à clef; each character has a place in the complicated kaleidoscope that is Hollywood, and is interesting in relation to this and in himself; there is no need for a key to the "real identities" of the characters beyond that provided by the creative imagination.

The last point to be made about The Last Tycoon is the one made by Edmund Wilson in his postscript to "The Boys in the Back Room":

The Last Tycoon [is] what promised to be by all the odds the best novel devoted to Hollywood. Here you are shown the society and the business of the movies, no longer through the eyes of the visitor to whom everything is glamorous or ridiculous,

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 99.

²Ibid., p. 103.

³Ibid., p. 22

⁴Ibid.

⁵The Far Side of Paradise, p. 292.

but from the point of view of people who have grown up or lived with the industry and to whom its values and laws are their natural habit of life. These are criticized by higher standards and in the knowledge of wider horizons, but the criticism is implicit in the story; and in the meantime, Scott Fitzgerald, by putting us inside their group and making us take things for granted, is able to excite an interest in the mixed destiny of his Jewish producer of a kind that lifts the novel quite out of the class of this specialized Hollywood fiction and relates it to the story of man in all times and all places.¹

In discussing novels about Hollywood in relation to Fitzgerald, two stand out: Nathanael West's The Day of the Locust² and Budd Schulberg's What Makes Sammy Run?³ were published while Fitzgerald was working on The Last Tycoon and we have Fitzgerald's responses to them. About The Day of the Locust he wrote:

Though it puts Gogol's The Lower Depth [sic] in the class with The Tale of Benjamin Bunny, [it] certainly has scenes of extraordinary power - if that phrase is still in use. Especially I was impressed by the pathological crowd at the premiere, the character and handling of the aspirant actress, and the uncanny almost medieval feeling of some of his Hollywood background, set off by these vividly drawn grotesques.⁴

What is so illuminating about this comment is what it tells us, by implication, about the limitations of the book and how it differed in its aims from what Fitzgerald wanted to do in The Last Tycoon. The phrase "certainly has scenes of extraordinary power" suggests, quite rightly, that the work is episodic and uneven in quality; "the character and handling of the aspirant actress" stresses that Faye Greener is a type and hardly memorable as an individual; from the praise Fitzgerald gives to West's "grotesques" it may be inferred that the limitations of most of West's figures is the same as that suffered by the grotesques of a much greater artist, Dickens, of whom Robert

¹Wilson, p. 248.

²Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust. The Dream Life of Balso Snell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).

³Budd Schulberg, What Makes Sammy Run? (New York: Bantam Books, 1961). Hereafter referred to as What Makes Sammy Run?

⁴The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, pp. 583-84.

Garis has written:

What is true of Caddy's baby is true of all the symbolic figures in Bleak House, and indeed in all of Dickens's work with the exception of Great Expectations. I am an enthusiastic admirer of Dickens's symbolic methods: he is usually in complete control of them and brilliantly inventive in performing them. But his symbols are part of his theatrical mode, and they function quite differently from symbols in non-theatrical art.¹

Most significant in Fitzgerald's comments is his phrase: "His Hollywood background." In The Day of the Locust Hollywood is the background; what Fitzgerald was aiming at in The Last Tycoon was to make Hollywood itself the main theme, inextricably bound up with the fate of all the characters.

In two letters Fitzgerald referred to What Makes Sammy Run? To his editor, Maxwell Perkins, Fitzgerald wrote: "Budd Schulberg, a very nice, clever kid out here, is publishing a Hollywood novel with Random House in January. It's not bad but it doesn't cut into my material at all."² On the same day, December 13th, 1940, he wrote to Bennett Cerf:

I told Budd I was going to write you a word about his novel with permission to quote if you wanted. I read it through in one night. It is a grand book, utterly fearless and with a great deal of beauty side by side with the most bitter satire. Such things are in Hollywood - and Budd reports them with fine detachment. Except for its freshness and the inevitable challenge of a new and strong personality, it doesn't read like a first novel at all.

It is full of excellent little vignettes - the "extra girl" or whatever she is, and her attitude on love, and the diverse yet identical attitude of the two principal women on Sammy. Especially toward the end it gets the feeling of Hollywood with extraordinary vividness. Altogether I congratulate you on publishing this fine book and I hope it has all the success it deserves.³

The disparity between the two comments is striking. The "almost identical accounts"⁴ of Fitzgerald's reaction to the book given to his

¹Robert Garis, The Dickens Theatre: A Reassessment of the Novels (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 121.

²The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 291.

³Ibid., pp. 604-605.

⁴Turnbull, p. 312.

biographer, Andrew Turnbull, by Sheilah Graham and Frances Kroll, go some way to explain the difference:

Fitzgerald was never one to under-rate competition. When he heard that Schulberg was also writing about Hollywood, he was concerned - though in another way he wished Schulberg well and hoped his book would be good. When he read it, however, he laid it aside with a little half-smile, saying the novel on Hollywood had yet to be written. It wasn't the exaltation he got from a piece of writing he really admired. . . . Ever generous and encouraging to tyros he was only too glad to send Schulberg's publisher a complimentary letter to be used as a blurb. But in his notebook he put, "Bud [sic], the untalented."¹

A further explanation is that in writing to Perkins, with whom he was discussing the latest novels of Hemingway and Wolfe, and the writing of Saroyan and Kafka, he was judging Schulberg's novel against high standards. In his letter to Cerf he was judging What Makes Sammy Run? as a first novel.

How well has What Makes Sammy Run? stood up to the twenty-five years that have passed since it was published? It is still very much alive and readable, and one can well believe that Fitzgerald read it in one night; furthermore, it is much closer to being a unity and generally a better book than Fitzgerald's own first novel, This Side of Paradise. Although the psychology is crude and simple at times, the book has a pace admirably suited to the subject matter and the reader has no time to dwell on its inadequacies. The dialogue is especially good, fresh and crackling, with lots of bite, and it is appropriate to the fact that the narrator is a journalist turned script writer. The central portrait of Sammy Glick and his meteoric rise in the Hollywood world succeeds brilliantly and Sammy is frightening in his almost psychopathic opportunism. The pictures of Hollywood are acute and always vivid ("a gigantic industry involving thousands of people situated in a boom town with a village psychology"²), and, as

¹Turnbull, p. 312.

²What Makes Sammy Run?, p. 94.

Millgate says, the novel is "a twentieth-century parable of much wider relevance."¹ Sammy Glick is the capitalist entrepreneur gone mad, and, as the closing lines of the book make overt, that was "a way of life that was paying dividends in America in the first half of the twentieth century."³ If, among the book's weaknesses, the narrator remains a shadowy and at times blurred figure (despite his bluff journalist manner), What Makes Sammy Run? remains an impressive achievement. As Fitzgerald suggested, it did not impinge on his material for The Last Tycoon; Sammy Glick could not be more different from Monroe Stahr, and where the writers handle similar themes, for example the awakening of political consciousness in the Hollywood community, they handle them very differently; indeed the political material in the two books is complementary rather than overlapping.

In 1950 Budd Schulberg published another book set partly in Hollywood: The Disenchanted.³ This was the unexpected late fruit of a collaboration between Schulberg, son of a Hollywood producer, just down from college and starting what was to be a distinguished career as a screen writer, and Fitzgerald, battling against his own alcoholism and debt and Zelda's schizophrenia. The story of the disastrous drinking spell that Schulberg unwittingly started Fitzgerald off on, is recorded in The Far Side of Paradise⁴ and Turnbull's Scott Fitzgerald.⁵ For an imaginative reconstruction of it and its relation to Fitzgerald's life we must turn to The Disenchanted, which is "fictional biography" of such skill and - the word is unavoidable - art that it justifies this dubious genre. (Schulberg leans on Fitzgerald

¹Michael Millgate, American Social Fiction: James to Cozzens (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), p. 153.

²What Makes Sammy Run?, p. 247.

³Budd Schulberg, The Disenchanted (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960). Hereafter referred to as The Disenchanted.

⁴The Far Side of Paradise, pp. 280-82.

⁵Turnbull, pp. 266-67.

more heavily than Fitzgerald on Irving Thalberg.) Although Schulberg has insisted that the central character of The Disenchanted "was not intended to be a literal portrait of Fitzgerald,"¹ the book gives so vivid an idea of the taste and tang of Fitzgerald's conversation that one at first suspects that Schulberg had a tape-recorder concealed on his person. But in fact the dialogue has the quality of true art, it is more real and more true than most real conversations ever are. ("The truest poetry is the most feigning.")

What are most relevant here are the images of Hollywood that Schulberg gives, and the reservations he makes about the impressions of Fitzgerald/Halliday in The Last Tycoon/Shadow Ball:

Halliday had the typical outsider's view of Hollywood. Though now Shep thought about it, that wasn't too surprising. One of the weaknesses of Shadow Ball - for all its brilliance - had been the inaccuracy of its atmosphere. Not that any single reference had been mistaken - Halliday was too thorough a craftsman for that - it was just that there had been too much atmosphere, too much Hollywood, the way one sees it when he's just come in and makes a point of recording all the special things about it, the palm trees, the flamboyancy of the architecture, the jazzed-up mortuaries, the earthquakes, the floods, the pretties on Hollywood Boulevard in their slacks and furs, the million-dollar estates of immigrants who never completely mastered the language of the country they entertain - all these things could be found in Hollywood, but not all run together like that.²

Shep Stearns, the Schulberg figure in The Disenchanted, has lived in Hollywood all his life, and he tells Halliday: "I never thought of Hollywood as anything special at all until I went away to Webster."³ Schulberg himself had been taken to Hollywood at the age of six and had been at high school in Los Angeles; through Stearns he claims the ability to organise his impressions of Hollywood more truly than Fitzgerald. The matter is made more complicated not only by the artistic license with which Schulberg organised his material but by

¹Piper, p. 250.

²The Disenchanted, pp. 29-30.

³Ibid., p. 30.

the way in which Fitzgerald/Halliday arranged his material. Emphasis and even distortion are quite legitimate artistic methods, and, of course, the onlooker often sees most of the game. At any rate, the player and the onlooker see different games, which is the point made by Schulberg. Ironically some of the inside knowledge used by Fitzgerald came from Schulberg. As William Goldhurst says:

It seems that Schulberg himself was responsible for some of the material Fitzgerald incorporated into his last novel: Fitzgerald used several of the younger writer's anecdotes about Hollywood life, and when Schulberg later read the novel he found that Fitzgerald had occasionally quoted him verbatim.¹

Much of the interest in the novel comes from its study of the two writers, Halliday, the representative of the twenties and Stearns, the child of the thirties. (The novel is set just before the Second World War.) Stearns sees Halliday as more Fitzgerald than Fitzgerald:

For Shep, an enthusiastic collector of symbols, Halliday was a most satisfactory personification of the twenties - his brilliant success in 1920 - his youthful fame, so perfectly in step with the Myth of Success and the Cult of Being Young - his personal crash in 1929 that coincided so neatly with the Wall Street débâcle - then the backwash after the wave has broken: the sorry end of the 'perfect marriage', the 'posthumous' novel in 1930, a failure that seemed to indicate a spiritual dead end, and which the critics attacked with a ferocity that suggested that they were sitting in judgement on an era rather than a book - and then the twilight years; Halliday a wandering wreck, occasionally appearing in mass circulation magazines with stories increasingly ordinary - and then finally, darkness - Hollywood.²

The differences between them and their attitudes is a major theme of the book. Here their disagreement about writers and trade unions is sketched in:

'Of course we have our Guild,' he said. 'We've gained some concessions for screenwriters - a little more dignity.'

Halliday looked at him. Yes, he was perfectly sincere, perfectly sincere and fairly intelligent. So he would not tell this young man how much he disagreed.

'A screenwriter, in fact no kind of writer has any dignity unless he can control his own material,' was all Halliday said.

'Maybe that will come some day,' Shep said.

¹Goldhurst, p. 225.

²The Disenchanted, p. 61.

'In a major industry like this one - with a bigger market every day? I don't see how.'¹

(This theme is resolved solidly in favour of the true artist, Halliday, when Stearns is reading the fragment of a novel Halliday has been working on just before his death:

By the time he had finished the last page, Shep was stunned. There was no cubbyhole in Shep's convictions for this sign of growth over Halliday's previous work. Methodically he went back to the beginning and read carefully, taking sentences apart, tapping passages of description and characterization to make sure they weren't hollow, talking the dialogue out loud to hear if it was true. But once more the whole of it gripped him, these crazy beautiful mythical collapsible people of the moon carrying him on to the end of - only chapter three.

He looked down at the author motionless in sick-sleep. He had to finish this, not just another good novel, the promise of a milestone job. Then it hit him hard: how was it possible for Manley Halliday to write this well in 1939?

After all, Shep knew why Manley Halliday hadn't published in nearly a decade: because he was defeatist, an escapist, cut off from 'vital issues', from 'The People', a disillusioned amanuensis of a dying order - oh, Shep hadn't read his New Masses for nothing! Yet here were these eighty-three pages. My God, this was alive, while the writers who were not defeatist, not escapist, not bourgeois apologists, and not 'cut off from the main stream of humanity' were wooden and lifeless. Was it possible - and here heresy really struck deep - for an irresponsible individualist, hopelessly confused, to write a moving, maybe even profound, revelation of social breakdown? If poor old Halliday, aware of himself and of his own friends in their own neurotic little world, could do what he promised to do in this new work, wouldn't Shep have to re-examine his own standards? Maybe ideology wasn't the literary shibboleth he had believed in so dogmatically.²)

In The Disenchanted Schulberg is much less interested in dissecting the Hollywood system than he was in What Makes Sammy Run?, but when he wields his scapel he shows that he has kept it sharp. Consider these impressions of a "male starlet"³:

Despite the sombre lighting and threatening skies, a crowd of perhaps fifty waited hopefully for a glimpse of a new film idol going East for personal appearances. He was a very young, blond boy with soft blue eyes, pink cheeks and a weak chin. When the crowd caught sight of him, conspicuously wrapped in a great camel's hair coat, they became suddenly animated, jostling each

¹The Disenchanted, p. 54.

²Ibid., p. 375.

³Ibid., p. 105.

other for a better view, waving, laughing, and, full of mob courage, calling out his first name familiarly. The young star waved automatically. He had been on top for a good many months already.¹

The most developed denizen of Hollywood in The Disenchanted is the successful producer, Victor Milgrim. Milgrim tries to use Halliday as a stalking-horse for an honorary degree he is after at the college they visit to film part of the script Halliday and Stearns are engaged to write.

Milgrim's attitude to his writers and his films is one of the best things in the book; illuminating aspects of the Hollywood scene unexplored in What Makes Sammy Run?

Ann Loeb² is another link with Hollywood: her father has been a producer, and when she meets Halliday she is reading his novel, Shadow Ball, and is able to give a complementary insider's opinion of it to that of Shep Stearns:

'Nice job,' she said. 'He's caught something true about Hollywood. The extravagance and the fear.

.
He makes some silly technical mistakes about Hollywood, but it's thoughtful and it's damn literate.'³

Once Ann is established as a Hollywood insider, it is natural that her conversations with Halliday should include discussions of Hollywood:

They had a running argument about movies which they both seemed to enjoy. He insisted that any art which was not dependent on the skill and taste and integrity of a single person was doomed to everlasting mediocrity. But she said, 'That's ridiculous. You're judging from the Hollywood pictures and nearly all of them are mediocre. But they're mediocre for business reasons, not for the ones you give. Building pyramids was a group art. There must have been a producer in the person of the Pharaoh who had the money and the general idea, an architect, a sculptor, and master masons to carry out the design, skilled workmen under them, and so forth. Or the totem poles. Of course there can be a valid group art. We've seen it in the movies with Griffith and Eisenstein and Chaplin. It needs a guiding genius or at

¹The Disenchanted, p. 95.

²Ann Loeb is clearly modelled on Fitzgerald's mistress, Sheilah Graham.

³The Disenchanted, p. 284.

least a knowing hand like Vidor's or Ford's. But when you start with something good enough and everyone does his job, the director, writer, cameraman, cutter, composer and sound mixer - for some reason I always leave out the actors - it's an art all right.¹

Perhaps Schulberg's most memorable comment on Hollywood arises out of a meeting Halliday has with the producer, Milgrim:

A strange business, Halliday was thinking. These men are in business but they're more emotional than business men. And they're involved with art but they're altogether too business-like for artists.²

Here Schulberg states an enduring paradox about Hollywood, a clue to the failure of Hollywood in both art and business.

Some Faces in the Crowd³ is a collection of short stories by Schulberg, in two of which he returns to the Hollywood theme. In both "A Table at Ciro's" and "My Christmas Carol" his underlying theme is the sudden passing away of Hollywood glory, and its implications. One is reminded of Schulberg's male starlet who has "been on top for many months already" and Fitzgerald's toppled screen goddess who recalls the days when she was "up to her ass in daisies." In "A Table at Ciro's" the head waiter plans to depose the producer A.D. Nathan temporarily from his status-seat at a ringside table so that he can assert his influence at an opportune moment and win the producer's gratitude by moving him to a better table. (Schulberg might well be illustrating part of a thesis in Rosten's chapter, "The Fight for Prestige": "The table arrangements at restaurants is an accurate and up-to-the-minute chart on Hollywood prestige."⁴) The head waiter has written a scenario entitled Confessions of a Hollywood Waiter and has Nathan in mind as a producer. An ingénue contemplates sharing Nathan's bed to further her screen career, faded stars hope he will use his

¹The Disenchanted, pp. 285-86.

²Ibid., p. 80.

³Budd Schulberg, Some Faces in the Crowd (London: Mayflower-Dell Books, 1965). Hereafter referred to as Some Faces in the Crowd.

⁴Rosten, p. 172. Rosten's source is a "blasé inhabitant of the film colony."

influence to revive them. "All these people hoping to be tossed a bone never thought of A.D.Nathan as a man with a job to hold."¹ By the end of the story he has lost the job and all the power and perquisites that go with it. The imitations of Ava Gardner and Rosemary Clooney employed by Ciro's will have to look elsewhere for their opportunities.

"My Christmas Carol" shows a crisis in a Hollywood childhood which is brought about when the narrator's father no longer has a tribe of lickspittle employees to deluge his children with Christmas gifts. "From now on I would have to face a world in which there was not only no Santa Claus, but very, very few on-the-level Santa Claus's helpers."²

The title of this collection of stories suggests that Schulberg may have taken a cue from David Riesman's The Lonely Crowd, about which Lionel Trilling wrote in 1952:

Since [twenty years ago] . . . few novelists have added anything genuinely new to our knowledge of American life. But the sociologists have, and Mr. Riesman [sic], writing with a sense of social actuality which Scott Fitzgerald might have envied, does literature a service by suggesting to the novelists that there are new and wonderfully arable social fields for them to till.³

Incidentally, Schulberg's "My Christmas Carol" makes interesting reading in conjunction with Fitzgerald's opening to "Pat Hobby's Christmas Wish"⁴ and Rosten's section on "Gifts", where he says inter

¹"A Table at Ciro's," Some Faces in the Crowd, p. 43.

²"My Christmas Carol." Some Faces in the Crowd, pp. 73-74.

³Lionel Trilling, "Two Notes on David Riesman," A Gathering of Fugitives (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), p. 86.

⁴"Pat Hobby's Christmas Wish," The Pat Hobby Stories, p. 1
"It was Christmas Eve in the studio. By eleven o'clock in the morning, Santa Claus had called on most of the huge population according to each one's deserts.

Sumptuous gifts from producers to stars, and from agents to producers arrived at offices and studio bungalows; on every stage one heard of the roguish gifts of casts to directors or directors to casts; champagne had gone out from publicity office to the press. And tips of fifties, tens and fives from producers, directors and writers fell like manna upon the white collar class."

alia:

The benefactions of the movie colony also serve as symbolic bribery, as they do in most businesses. "Good will" and a congenial rapport with persons with whom it is profitable to curry favor are cemented with material expressions of gratitude. Christmas is the season of personal hauls for movie people.¹

Clifford Odets' The Big Knife,² the only play about Hollywood people by an American playwright of any reputation,³ is a blunt and banal melodrama that only occasionally rises above soap opera standard.

The central character

CHARLIE CASTLE, the famous movie star, is virile and instant, sensitive and aware, although frequently, as now, he is apt to mask his best qualities behind a cynical, guying manner and certain jazzy small-talk. He knows how to use an abruptly disarming charm and he understands the value of candour. He is a very successful man and this sits on him with a certain relaxed gravity. He is a 'going concern' and he knows it and acts it.⁴

The Big Knife centres on the problems faced by this apparently successful man, his disintegrating marriage, the treachery of his best friend who has proposed to his wife, the efforts of his ruthless employer to "bump off" a girl who "knows too much" and his battle to retain his integrity. The play is top-heavy with clichés and headline journalese, and is manipulated to a highly contrived climax in which Castle commits suicide. The curtain scene is a good example of the standard reached by Odets. (Hank is Castle's "best friend" and Marion is his wife.)

HANK (voice full of feeling): There will be no photographers, there will be no lies, no display. This is my friend's hour, not the nation's, not Hoff's. Your work is finished here.

¹Rosten, p. 224.

²Clifford Odets, Golden Boy. Awake and Sing! The Big Knife (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963). Hereafter referred to as The Big Knife.

³Tennessee Williams' Sweet Bird of Youth features an aspirant actor, Chance Wayne, and an actress who has fallen a long way down; the part of the latter, Princess Kosmonopolis, offers great scope for an actress (it has, of course, been filmed) but the play is one of Williams' worst.

⁴The Big Knife, p. 190.

It won't be smooth, but I'll . . . I'll tell the story. He . . . killed himself . . . because that was the only way he could live. You don't recognise a final . . . a final act of faith . . . when you see one. . . .

(Having picked up Charlie's coat, MARION turns sharply; it seems her consciousness has been touched by the last few words.)

MARION: Charlie . . . ?

(She stands, pitiful and distressed, HANK carefully moving toward her. Several convulsions of her body are expressed with faint 'ahs'. Then her grief bursts, expressing itself in one iterated, pleasingly anguished word:)

Help! . . . Help! . . . Help!! . . . Help!!! . . .

(HANK has his arms around her, but the word does not stop and it will never stop in this life.)

Curtain.¹

Whether or not the subject invites meretricious treatment, the fact remains that there is no portrayal of a Hollywood actor in American literature that is successful on a large scale. The nearest is perhaps Rosemary Hoyt, in Fitzgerald's Tender is the Night. But we don't learn enough about Rosemary, and the glimpses we have of her, although often showing Fitzgerald's insight, leave us with a fragmentary picture. Like Ann Loeb in The Disenchanted, American writers, even when writing about Hollywood, "for some reason . . . always leave out the actors."²

A novel that gives its main attention to a star, indeed the process whereby a star is made, is Inside Daisy Clover³ by an expatriate English writer, Gavin Lambert. Daisy Clover is a teenage American girl whose rise, fall and come-back are given in her spasmodic diary jottings in febrile slang idiom that owes something to the narration of The Catcher in the Rye. This novel's main contribution to the genre is its portrayal of the gentle monsters of

¹The Big Knife, pp. 271-72.

²The Disenchanted, p. 286. The former actor is something else again: almost a stock character in American writing. See Jim Kirkwood, There Must be a Pony (London: Jonathan Cape, 1961) and Williams' Sweet Bird of Youth. A novel by Niven Busch, The Actor (London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1955) turns out to be about a former Western star who is now a stunt man.

³Gavin Lambert, Inside Daisy Clover (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966).

Hollywood, the managers, agents and other manipulators of the publicity machine. But it lacks incisiveness and a clear moral framework and is barely redeemed by the second-hand charm of its leading lady. (Both The Big Knife and Inside Daisy Clover have had films based on them. If authors hesitate to centre their work on film actors, this is probably not because of lack of public interest. No writer of the stature of Henry James or even Theodore Dreiser, who wrote about stage actors in The Tragic Muse¹ and Sister Carrie² respectively, has yet attempted a full-length treatment of a film actor.) Lambert has also written The Slide Area: Scenes of Hollywood Life,³ which is a group of deft sketches of life in Los Angeles and Hollywood. Like many works about Hollywood it presents it as a world hovering on the edge of nightmare; Hollywood is a symbol for America, where

illusion and reality are still often the same thing. The dream is the achievement, the achievement is the dream.⁴

Unfortunately, Lambert does not make enough of this theme; the book's successes lie in his delineation of figures like the perennially reborn star, Julie Forbes, and the perennially hopeful teenager who finds jejune success as star in a series of horror pictures.

The most detailed serious investigation into the lives of Hollywood actors to date has been made by an American social anthropologist, Hortense Powdermaker, in her study, Hollywood: the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers.⁵ Dr Powdermaker spent a year in research in 1946 and 1947, so the situation

¹Henry James, The Tragic Muse (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948).

²Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (New York: Bantam Books, 1963).

³Gavin Lambert, The Slide Area: Scenes of Hollywood Life (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1959).

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

⁵Hortense Powdermaker, Hollywood: The Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951). Hereafter referred to as Powdermaker.

she investigated differed from that analysed by Rosten's team and Fitzgerald. Three factors had effected Hollywood since 1941: the war brought greater prosperity than ever before to Hollywood, and this began to fall away after the end of the war although "nineteen forty-six was nearly as good a year at the box office as '45 had been,"¹ and the world-wide dominance of entertainment that Hollywood had attained was threatened by the emergence of competition from foreign film-makers and television. But although Hollywood was in a state of flux when Dr Powdermaker studied it, her analysis of the actor's position and problems penetrates to depths not effected at that time by the building up of new currents and pressures.

Three of the fourteen chapters of Dr Powdermaker's study are devoted to actors: "Acting, in Hollywood," "Stars" and "Actors Are People"; they cover together seventy-six pages. In the first of these chapters, Dr Powdermaker discusses the role of acting in life; the relationship of acting to personality, where she makes the point that actors cannot work alone, like writers and painters; the relationship between acting and talent; the system, structure and hierarchy of actors; the way in which actors get roles; the relationship between acting on the stage and the screen; the relations between actors and directors. In the next chapter she deals with the development of the star system; the star formula; the myths about instant stardom, where she discounts the popular belief that Hollywood stardom is usually reached through a route of important beds; the importance of publicity, persistence and hard work coupled with the right "break"; the dangers of type-casting and the general efficacy of the system. These two chapters cover standard ground in what is an interesting if somewhat predictable way. But in her third chapter Dr Powdermaker uncovers something apparently new and startling about Hollywood; in the

¹Beth Day, This was Hollywood (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1960), p. 271.

relationship of actors with every other group in Hollywood there exists a mutual contempt and hostility:

They are looked down upon as a kind of subhuman species. No one respects them. The cliché that there are three kinds of people - men, women and actors - is heard over and over again. They are often described as children who do not know what is good for them, immature, irresponsible, completely self-centred, egotistical, exhibitionistic, nitwits and utterly stupid. Part of this description is reminiscent of white attitudes in the Deep South towards Negroes. Hollywood attitudes towards actors range from pitying condescension to contempt, hostility and hatred. It is difficult to find anyone who has a good word to say for them. Usually one hears, in belligerent tones, "I can't stand actors."¹

Dr Powdermaker discusses the relationship of actors with executives, agents, writers, publicity men and technicians, and suggests some reasons for the antagonisms she posits. She attributes the hostility towards actors to envy of the actors' enormous salaries, envy of the way they are glamourised, envy of their publicity and then postulates that

some of the envy may be on a deeper level than jealousies of salaries and adulation from the public. Resentment of the exhibitionistic quality of the actor's personality is stressed over and over again. Now, some degree of exhibitionism is part of being human. But our culture frowns upon any excessive display of it and has very strong taboos against sexual exhibitionism. Probably most members of our society have at some time or other in their lives, in infancy or later, been frustrated at not being as exhibitionistic as they desired. In Hollywood, and the whole show business world, there is a higher level of permissiveness for exhibitionism than in most other areas of living. But no one in Hollywood can compete in exhibitionism with the actors. And, groan the envious ones, these actors are being paid huge salaries for that!²

Dr Powdermaker is not being dogmatic. She is trying to explain a phenomenon that struck her forcefully and her sympathy for actors as a group is exemplary; she illustrates Trilling's comment that social scientists have added something new to our knowledge of American life, and shows that "creative writers" do not have a monopoly of empathy and understanding:

¹ Powdermaker, p. 254.

² Ibid., p. 264.

For all, acting is a way of life as well as a means of earning a living. They work in an industry which exploits to the utmost their personal need for exhibitionism, and at the same time views it as one of the darkest iniquities. They earn more money than any other group of people in the world, but work under serf-like conditions and in a system geared to the mediocre rather than to the talented. They are regarded as property, to be bought or sold at a profit. They are pampered, flattered, and glamorized for the public, and at the same time scorned, and hated by those who give the flattery and do the glamorizing. They live in luxury and have considerable power, but are treated as adolescents subject to the many controls of contract, front office, agent, business manager, publicity man.

If proof were needed that the actors are people, it would be their deep resentment to this situation. For all members of our species, not to be regarded as human is a severe threat.¹

A former publicist for Warner Brothers, Hollywood columnist, correspondent and film critic for Time and other publications, Ezra Goodman, is sneeringly sceptical of academic approaches to Hollywood:

It is difficult to pin down the most elementary facts in Hollywood. Sometimes it seems as if everything is apocryphal. Hollywood is the realm of elusive gossip. There isn't a fact in a starlet-load. You can't even necessarily believe what you see and hear. Hortense Powdermaker, a practiced anthropologist, came to Hollywood to conduct a survey of the community which appeared in book form as Hollywood, the Dream Factory in 1950. The Powdermaker study was a bit of a pipe dream itself. She had made the mistake of believing what the glib and persuasive local residents had told her. This might work with natives in Samoa, but not with the tricky and conniving denizens of darkest Southern California.

It is also advisable to take the printed word with a grain or three of salt. In his slickly written book Hollywood, of 1941, Leo Rosten quotes Hollywood trade-paper sources pretty much as gospel, a dangerous form of documentation indeed.²

The simple thesis of Goodman's book is stated in his title: he believes that the giants of Hollywood creativity were D.W.Griffith, Charlie Chaplin and Mack Sennett, that their successors have been diminishing to pigmy size and have now reached vanishing point. His

¹Powdermaker, p. 280.

²Ezra Goodman, The Fifty-Year Decline and Fall of Hollywood (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp. 18-19. Hereafter referred to as Goodman. Although he excoriates Time, as is the wont of many of its former employees, Goodman's style shows the scars of his association with it. And his stricture of Rosten's style does not prevent him from filching one of Rosten's aphoristic chapter titles, "The Night Life of the Gods."

point of view is that of the "inside-dopester."¹ He "tells all," and, if leavened with salt, his book is full of interesting "facts" and impressions and shows a real if disillusioned interest in "the art of the cinema." His analysis of the Hollywood gossip writers and reporters is unique and hard-hitting, his comments on the star process and ballyhoo are pungent and detailed, and his chapter "The Snows of Yesteryear" confirms with chapter and verse the impression given in The Last Tycoon and elsewhere that the Hollywood has-beens, who have been exploited and milked and forgotten, present one of the saddest aspects of life in Hollywood.

Goodman's chapter on Hollywood technicians, "The Little People," breaks new ground, bringing into the spotlight "the unsung screen specialists [who] do not get much publicity, but . . . are the craftsmen who are vital to the making of a movie."² Goodman believes that they often save films that the actors, directors, producers and writers botch.

The Hollywood technicians do better work, as a rule, than those who designate themselves as creative artists. The mechanics of Hollywood moviemaking are almost always more refined and perfected than the writing, acting and direction of a film. The technical side of the screen long ago outstripped the aesthetic elements. This is so partly because there is less front-office interference in the mechanical than in the human aspects of a motion picture, for the simple reason that the studio executives do not know much about the mechanics and do not presume to meddle in them as much.³

Apart from technicians involved in action scenes and special effects, Goodman gives attention to such little-known people as accent experts, studio policemen and barbers; this shows that Hollywood is,

¹David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character (Abridged ed.; New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 210. "Some inside-dopesters . . . aim no higher than to know the inside, for whatever peer-group satisfactions this can bring them."

²Goodman, pp. 297-98.

³Ibid., p. 298.

or was, and can be used by writers like Fitzgerald as a slightly distorted but effective microcosm. Fitzgerald was not ignorant of the technicians' place in the scheme of things. "Robby" Robinson is their representative and organiser in The Last Tycoon. He is the man in charge of the "electricians, grips, truckers."¹ "Robby'll take care of everything when he comes,"² Stahr tells Brady. Fitzgerald is able to suggest, quietly but firmly, the essential and unobtrusive role of the technicians:

There is never a time when a studio is absolutely quiet. There is always a night shift of technicians in the laboratories and dubbing rooms and people on the maintenance staff dropping in at the commissary. But the sounds are all different - the padded hush of tyres, the quiet tick of a motor running idle, the naked cry of a soprano singing into a nightbound microphone.³

And casually, Fitzgerald has Stahr put Mike Van Dyke, the "gag man [who] was out here when [Stahr] was in [his] cradle,"⁴ through his paces, showing Boxley "a double wing, clutch, kick and scam."⁵ As Van Dyke completes the routine, Stahr's secretary tells him a trans-continental trunk call has come through, and ten minutes later Roderiguez is bringing his personal problem to Stahr for advice. With Stahr as the focus a cross-section of Hollywood can be given without the reader feeling he is being shown a freak show or sociological mannequin parade.

On certain aspects of our theme Goodman is neither helpful nor accurate. He thinks that Christopher Isherwood's Prater Violet⁶

¹The Last Tycoon, p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 21.

⁴Ibid., p. 33.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Christopher Isherwood, Prater Violet (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961). Prater Violet is set in England; Isherwood has been a Hollywood script writer and uses Los Angeles as part of his setting for Down There on a Visit. He has re-published recently in Exhumations: Stories: Articles: Verses an article written in 1947, partly concerned with Hollywood tycoons. It is worth reading in this connection, shows plenty of hindsight and little foresight.

"is probably the best novel ever written about the movies,"¹ but he shows only nodding acquaintance with The Last Tycoon. He says that "Thalberg was the model for the movie producer Monroe Stahr in F.Scott Fitzgerald's The Last Tycoon. It was a romanticized portrait,"² and that Sheilah Graham "was the model for the Hollywood girl."³ The Hollywood girl in The Last Tycoon is Cecilia Brady, who has nothing in common with Kathleen Moore except that they are both females interested in Stahr (in very different ways). Cecilia Brady is born and bred in Hollywood and not faintly like the Sheilah Graham of Beloved Infidel,⁴ to which Goodman refers and perhaps read. As for models, if they are important, Sheilah Graham has written: "Kathleen was based a great deal on me. Stahr was a combination of Irving Thalberg and Scott Fitzgerald - mostly Scott."⁵ The only other reference to Fitzgerald in Goodman's book is his comment that Kramer, Schary and Wanger (three producers of whose work Goodman is contemptuous) "could discourse about Kafka and F.Scott Fitzgerald"⁶ as though such high-faluting artists were quite irrelevant to the Hollywood world.

Goodman's style and point of view are as different from Lillian Ross's as Time's from The New Yorker, which first published in 1952 Miss Ross's report on the making of a film from Stephen Crane's novel, The Red Badge of Courage. According to Goodman, Miss Ross's articles (published in book form as Picture⁷) caused a furore and "the screams in the film capital have not yet [1961] subsided."⁸ Miss Ross was a

¹Goodman, p. 415.

²Ibid., p. 170.

³Ibid., p. 33.

⁴Sheilah Graham and Gerold Frank, Beloved Infidel (New York: Henry Holt, 1958).

⁵Sheilah Graham, "The Education of Lily Sheil," The Sunday Times (London), January 30, 1966, p. 42.

⁶Goodman, p. 188.

⁷Lillian Ross, Picture (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962).

⁸Goodman, p. 39.

complete outsider to Hollywood, and figures in her report as only a camera, a note-book or tape-recorder, as self-effacing as Goodman is self-evident. Although ultimately too clinical, Picture is a shrewd, keen revelation of the process of film-making, and the pressures of commercialism exerted on a director with artistic ambitions.

Michael Millgate has written that "The Loved One, in fact, is the one notable Hollywood novel written by an Englishman."¹ But to include it in the genre or sub-genre of "the Hollywood novel" is to stretch the category absurdly and see The Loved One² from the wrong angle altogether. It belongs rather, if it must be placed in a "movie" pigeon-hole, to that group of novels that deal briefly but usefully with the film phenomenon. Others of this sort include novels of very varying quality, and usually very little, that pinpoint the change in type and location of the film product and include Norman Mailer's The Deer Park,³ Mordecai Richler's A Choice of Enemies⁴ (which both have documentary interest in dealing with the relationship between film makers and politics, particularly in the McCarthy era), Irvin Shaw's Two Weeks in Another Town⁵ and Hollis Alpert's For Immediate Release,⁶ which illustrate, in part, the new trend for films to be made in Europe by American and European combines. William Styron's Set This House on Fire⁷ also provides a fascinating glimpse of American film-makers abroad.

The Loved One deals tangentially but memorably with the English

¹Michael Millgate, American Social Fiction: James to Cozzens (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), p. 155.

²Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958). Hereafter referred to as The Loved One.

³Norman Mailer, The Deer Park (New York: Signet Books, 1964).

⁴Mordecai Richler, A Choice of Enemies (London: Mayflower-Dell Books, 1966).

⁵Irvin Shaw, Two Weeks in Another Town (New York: Random House, 1960).

⁶Hollis Alpert, For Immediate Release (London: W.H.Allen, 1965).

⁷William Styron, Set This House on Fire (London: Corgi Books, 1963).

community within the Hollywood community:

Sir Francis, in prime middle-age, was then the only knight in Hollywood, the doyen of English society, chief script-writer in Megalopolitan Pictures and President of the Cricket Club. Then the young, or youngish Ambrose Abercrombie used to bounce about the lots in his famous series of fatiguing roles, acrobatic heroic historic, and come nightly to Sir Francis for refreshment.¹

Waugh sums up the inanity of film censorship in one pungent paragraph, when he has Sir Ambrose say:

"Ah, . . . healthy films. All for 'em. I said to the Knife and Fork Club, 'I've always had two principles throughout all my life in motion-pictures: never do before the camera what you would not do at home and never do at home what you would not do before the camera.'"²

The position of the professional Englishmen in the Hollywood world is adroitly captured by Waugh, when Sir Ambrose says after Barlow has let the side down:

"This is a hard testing ground. Only the best survive. Barlow failed. As soon as I heard of it I went to see him. I advised him as bluntly as I could to clear out. I thought it my duty to you all. We don't want any poor Englishmen hanging around Hollywood."³

(One is reminded, by Waugh's Englishmen in Hollywood, of those seen by Nick Carraway at the first of Gatsby's parties that he attends:

I was immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted about; all well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key.⁴

It is clear what Waugh's English are selling: themselves.)

The Loved One was originally published in 1948; most subsequent novels that deal at all with Hollywood suggest the break-up of the old world and the metamorphosis of film-making into an

¹The Loved One, p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 27.

⁴The Great Gatsby, p. 33.

international industry. Although the phrase "The Last Tycoon" has been used by journalists about Louis B. Mayer (a model for Fitzgerald's Pat Brady) and the last of the Warner Brothers, Jack, who is still active but recording the dying fall of his swan song, it has not had any of the honourable connotations that Fitzgerald gave it in his novel; the pattern predicted by Fitzgerald in his notes for The Last Tycoon, the collapse of all artistic integrity in film-making and the total prostration of its avatars before the golden calf, has come true in large part.

The last novel of note to deal with Hollywood as a microcosm is Alan Marcus' . . . Of Streets and Stars,¹ originally published in 1963. An ambitious and somewhat self-conscious first novel, . . . Of Streets and Stars has been described by Dorothy Parker,² as "a novel of dazzling originality."³ But in its sometimes surrealistic technique, its tone and choice of cast, . . . Of Streets and Stars has much in common with West's The Day of the Locust. What Graham Hough wrote of The Day of the Locust is as true of . . . Of Streets and Stars as it is of much contemporary writing: "The continual nerveless acquiescence of people who are beaten before they start is a hopeless theme for any but a very narrow kind of success."⁴

Piper, after summing up Wilson's "The Boys in the Back Room"⁵ and his postscript dealing with The Last Tycoon, writes that

he claimed that The Last Tycoon was the finest novel that had been written about the movie community. In 1948, in another survey of the fiction written about Hollywood, Franklin Walker

¹Alan Marcus, . . . Of Streets and Stars (London: Corgi Books, 1964). Hereafter referred to as . . . Of Streets and Stars.

²A Hollywood "old lag" who was a friend of Fitzgerald and repeated Gatsby's epitaph at Fitzgerald's lonely funeral.

³. . . Of Streets and Stars, quotation on jacket.

⁴Graham Hough, "New Novels," Encounter, X (Feb., 1958), 86.

⁵Wilson, "The Boys in the Back Room," pp. 216-49.

also reached the same conclusion. Nothing has been published since then to alter these judgments.¹

Piper's summary of Walker's article is inaccurate. Walker set out to "comment briefly on a few of [the treatments of Hollywood by novelists], selected roughly on the basis of popularity."² He aimed to examine "ten impressions [which would] help in estimating the place Hollywood holds in American culture."³ He makes very few literary evaluations, and does not rate the novels; no prize is awarded posthumously to Fitzgerald, as Piper implies. Walker deals with The Last Tycoon, The Day of the Locust and What Makes Sammy Run?, of the novels discussed in this appendix, and seven of which the author of only one (Ludwig Bemelmans) is in currency today. These three seem to have stood the test of time best to date. But any attempt at a definitive evaluation of work on Hollywood must take into account Walker's other seven and many books not dealt with here.

Mizener has done The Last Tycoon a disservice by brushing aside its "sociological understanding [as] at most a minor aspect of The Last Tycoon's perception."⁴

How strictly he held himself accountable for the actuality of his material is evident from the frequency with which people repeat Edmund Wilson's praise of The Last Tycoon as a picture of Hollywood. But this verisimilitude, though vital to the novel's success, is only a part, and the less significant part, of its achievement, just as the brilliant account of Long Island society in The Great Gatsby is a vital though minor part of its achievement.⁵

There is no need to be even faintly apologetic about the way in which The Last Tycoon is rooted in a particular time and place. Of course, at its best and in its cumulative effect, The Last Tycoon transcends these "limitations" and gives us an image of

¹Piper, p. 280.

²Franklin Walker, "Hollywood in Fiction," Pacific Spectator, II (1948), 127.

³Ibid.

⁴Arthur Mizener, "The Maturity of F. Scott Fitzgerald," Mizener, p. 158.

⁵Ibid., p. 164.

the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,- the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all!

Mizener's comments should be seen against the background of fierce disputes, age-old but exacerbated in this century when literary criticism has achieved a new and sometimes unfortunate respectability. What is literature? What does it do? What should it do? What is a novel? Et cetera. "The novel as dramatic poem," "the anti-novel," "the non-fiction novel," "the fold-in novel." Slogans, gimmicks, formulae, some to be taken seriously, others part of the literary advertising jargon of our times. "The novel ended with Flaubert and with James,"¹ pronounced Eliot in 1923. In 1925, he wrote to Fitzgerald: "[The Great Gatsby] seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James."² The novel is dead! Long live fiction!

Lionel Trilling, Mary McCarthy, John Bayley, all of whom have written long works of fiction themselves, have recently written on the novel as novel, in what has come to be thought of as Nineteenth Century terms. "The intense concern with what Willa Cather contemptuously called the 'furniture' of the novel is not peculiar to one school or tradition of novelists: it is endemic in the novel throughout its history, it is essential to the very idea of the novel,"³ Trilling wrote in 1954. In talks given in 1960 and printed in On the Contrary⁴ as "The Fact in Fiction" and "Characters in Fiction," Miss McCarthy said that "Jane Austen, Dickens, Balzac, George Eliot, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, the Melville of Moby Dick, Proust, the Joyce of Ulysses, Dreiser, Faulkner . . . are all novelists and . . . they have one

¹Quoted, The Times Literary Supplement, November, 1959, p. 693.

²Above, p. 30.

³Lionel Trilling, "Two Notes on David Riesman," A Gathering of Fugitives (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), pp. 93-94.

⁴Mary McCarthy, On the Contrary (London: Heinemann, 1962). Hereafter referred to as On the Contrary.

thing in common: a deep love of fact, of the empiric element in experience."¹ She also says: "The more poetic a novel, the more it has the air of being a factual document. I exaggerate when I say this, but . . . there is something in it."² When thinking about representative American figures in fiction, Miss McCarthy offers two short lists: women - three of James's, "Fitzgerald's flappers and Daisy in The Great Gatsby";³ and a few others; men - Ahab, Christopher Newman, Babbitt, Gatsby and eight or nine others ending with Saul Bellow's Henderson. She implies that the deficiency is unfortunate, and suggests some reasons. John Bayley has attempted a survey of Love, Character, Nature and Personality in literature since Chaucer. One of his closing passages is well worth quoting here:

'I've known a lot of Beckys', or 'I once met an Iago', or, 'He's a bit of a Micawber' - such comments give a good indication of the character drawn from Nature. When the dying Balzac asked for Dr Bianchon, one of his own characters, he was putting himself as he slipped out of life in the position of one of his own readers. We might think it shows that Balzac, like Joyce, imagined that only his own world was real, but the difference is that Balzac was dying, his hold on the real world was loosened, and his sense of his creations had ceased to be his own. However much they may reflect their creators' romantic megalomania, we still feel that the great characters of both Balzac and Dickens are a part of Nature, because they embody not so much a personal world as their authors' robust zest for life in the real one. Vautrin and Pickwick are not 'more real than reality itself' for their creators, but they are a way of increasing their capacity to live; Dickens became more and more obsessed with the life of acting and reciting which his characters could, so to speak, most completely share with him. But for all its display of Nature the world of Dickens or of Balzac is ultimately an encapsulated world. As I suggested in Chapter One, the enclave in which most authors are confined by their personal vision does not and cannot admit itself to be such - it must maintain the appearance of being the real world. Only Shakespeare and Tolstoy, perhaps, can make

¹"The Fact in Fiction," On the Contrary, pp. 250-51.

²Ibid., p. 261.

³"Characters in Fiction," On the Contrary, p. 271.

us feel that 'there is a world elsewhere.'¹

Bayley rightly pauses at the point where literature and mysticism seem to touch. The Dickens world, the smaller world of Fitzgerald, the "very world" of Wordsworth: these "suffice" (to use the word as Frost does in "Fire and Ice"), for those interested and involved in "The Human Condition."²

¹John Bayley, The Characters of Love: A Study in the Literature of Personality (London: Constable, 1962), p. 280. Bayley, though he misses the point about Gatsby and thinks he is in pursuit of money, describes The Great Gatsby as a "masterpiece." "It is the artist as neutral, controlling and balancing a romantic ideal of love that makes The Great Gatsby so impressive and memorable an achievement, though Fitzgerald has of course not a tithe of Lawrence's creative genius or even his sureness of style." (p.30.) The latter part of the statement is probably true; it should be noted, however, that Fitzgerald admired Lawrence's work - although the writers are very different - long before it was accepted in the English academic world. In two letters written less than a fortnight apart, in 1940, Fitzgerald wrote: "In the opinion of any real artist the inventor, which is to say Giotto or Leonardo, is infinitely superior to the finished Tintoretto, and the original D.H.Lawrence is infinitely greater than the Steinbecks" and "in a small way I was an original." The Letters of F.Scott Fitzgerald (p. 73 and p. 288). Fitzgerald was reading Lawrence with interest, and a very American feeling that his work was already in the European pantheon (cf. Dick Diver and Franz Gregorovius), in his twenties. See The Letters of F.Scott Fitzgerald, p. 179.

⁵John Bayley, The Characters of Love: A Study in the Literature of Personality (London: Constable, 1962), p. 269.

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