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# F. Scott Fitzgerald : his materials and his methods

Clifton Lanier Warren

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F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: HIS MATERIALS AND HIS METHODS

BY

CLIFTON LANIER WARREN

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

IN CANDIDACY

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

*Edward C. Peper*  
*Rodney M. Bowie*

JUNE, 1954

## PREFACE

From the time I was first introduced to Fitzgerald's writing through a reading of This Side of Paradise, when I was a freshman in college, his subject matter and technique as a novelist have interested me intensely. After reading the first novel, I was not satisfied until I had voraciously read his other novels. With each reading of another of his books, my interest increased. Later, when Mizener's valuable biography appeared, I was introduced to Fitzgerald the man and have found his life equally as fascinating as his writings. However, I felt that none of the books about Fitzgerald completely presented the carry-over of "living" material from his own experiences to his novels; nor were his techniques employed in novel writing fully examined. Even during the Fitzgerald revival from 1949 to 1951, during which time his position as "chronicler of the twenties" was substantiated, no one fully treated his novels. That seems ironic because his real talent is best exemplified in his novels. I hope I have done them justice.

This thesis could obviously not have been written without a great deal of assistance from several people. I am deeply indebted to Miss Frances McRee of the University of Richmond staff and Mrs. Anita Heffner of Thalheimer's

(Richmond, Virginia) Book Department for assisting me in gathering many out-of-print Fitzgerald books. I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Conrad Little for graciously receiving me and allowing me to read her Scrapbook on Fitzgerald, and for providing me with the names, addresses, and pictures of the Fitzgerald family. And I am indebted to Mary Eugenia Parke, book editor of the Norfolk-Virgian-Pilot, for assisting me in contacting relatives of the Fitzgeralds residing in Virginia. Dr. Rodney Baine's reading of my manuscript from beginning to end saved me from a host of blunders. The kindness and generosity of such people has made the writing of this thesis enjoyable as well as instructive and rewarding.

Clifton Warren

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## Part I

### The Background of a Writer

#### 1. The Man of His Times

Today Scott Fitzgerald is generally regarded as the "chronicler of the twenties." Fitzgerald kept in step with his times; "he made lists by the hundred, including lists of popular songs, the football players, the top debutantes, the hobbies and the slang expressions of a given year; he felt that all these names and phrases belonged to the year and helped to reveal its momentary color." His method of writing based on a keen insight into the everyday lives of his contemporaries, always neon-lighted the American competitive spirit that brings out the desire in one to be the prettiest girl at the grandest

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1. Malcolm Cowley, "Fitzgerald: 'The Double Man,'" Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. XXXIV (Feb. 24, 1951), p. 9.

2.

ball, or the most valuable football hero in the most crucial test of the games: this desire to be the best in everything he undertook pervades every aspect of Fitzgerald's personality and writing, from the time he began grammar school until the time he declared himself an "emotional bankrupt." When he could not experience such thrills directly, he enjoyed them vicariously through experiences of others, as did the central character in The Romantic Egotist, his first attempt at novel-writing:

. . . one night . . . with Nancy Callum . . . I sat in a swaying motor boat by the club-house pier (at White Bear Lake), and while the moon beat out golden scales on the water, heard young Byron Kirby propose to Mary Cooper in the motor-boat ahead. It was entirely accidental, but after it had commenced, wild horses could not have dragged Nancy and me from the scene. We sat there fascinated. Kirby was an ex-Princeton athlete and Mary Cooper was the popular debutante of the year. Kirby had a fine sense of form and when at the end of his manly pleading she threw her arms about his neck and hid her face in his coat, Nancy and I unconsciously clung together in delight . . . when finally, unable to keep the secret, I told Kirby about it, he bought me three packages of cigarettes, and slapped me on the back telling me to be a sport and keep it very dark. My enthusiasm knew no bounds, and I was all for becoming engaged to almost anyone immediately.

Anyone who had such enthusiasm for his fellow man was likely to become a great writer!

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2. Arthur Mizener, The Far Side of Paradise, p. 5, quoting Fitzgerald's The Romantic Egotist, p. 30. The parentheses and italics are Mizener's.

## 2. Early Life

Born in 1896 of a "potato-famine" Irish mother, Mary McQuillan, and a chivalrous Southern father, Edward Fitzgerald, in St. Paul, Minnesota, young Scott had already acquired a portion of the mixed background which was to have a marked effect on his writings.<sup>3</sup> "His mother's treatment was bad for a precocious and imaginative boy, and as Fitzgerald confessed to his daughter after she had grown up, 'I didn't know till 15 that there was any one in the world except me....'"<sup>4</sup> In fact, his austere aunts, Annabel and Elsie, were the only persons who punished him. His mother, an omnivorous reader of the wrong types of books, kept spoiling her only son, until she imbued him with a sense of arrogance which was to pervade his entire educational career.<sup>5</sup>

It was young Fitzgerald's arrogance which caused him one of his bitterest childhood memories, on the occasion of his sixth birthday party in Buffalo, New York. In his mind was the vision of playing the perfect, suave young host, dressed in his long-trousered sailor suit; he had dreamed of nothing but his birthday party for days. With clean hands, meticulously combed hair, and a freshly pressed suit, the young boy sauntered out to greet his guests. But all afternoon he waited, and nobody

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3. Mizener, op. cit., p. 1.  
 4. Ibid., p. 3.  
 5. Ibid., p. 4.

came. His feelings were hurt, but his heart was not broken; for such cases he usually carried a trump card: this time he walked back into the house and thoughtfully consumed a complete birthday cake.<sup>6</sup>

Since his family was fairly prosperous, young Fitzgerald was educated at St. Paul Academy and later at the Newman School in New Jersey. He was sent away to school at an early age in his parents' hope that he would be made to attend his studies and not continue wasting his time scribbling. But the scribbling continued at both St. Paul and Newman, and it took on a more frenzied approach at Princeton, where he went for later study.<sup>7</sup>

For the first ten years of his life Scott Fitzgerald was the victim of much moving about. He hardly had made friends in one neighborhood before he was shifted to another, because of the nature of his father's job with Proctor and Gamble. However, when his father, who possessed little vitality or mental energy, was fired from his job with Proctor and Gamble in 1908, young Fitzgerald was finally planted in St. Paul to stay. Although the father was being overshadowed by his mother and failed as a provider for the family, he tried hard to inculcate in his son the virtues of a Southern gentlemen. And to a great extent, the father was successful.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Ibid., p. 4, quoting The Romantic Egotist, p. 5.

7. Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, editors, Twentieth Century Authors, pp. 460-461.

8. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

In Fitzgerald's emulation of his chivalrous father's Southern manners he was quite a degree better than in his emulation of athletic heroes. Although he tried playing football on intramural teams at the academy and made a third-string basketball team and a second-string baseball team, the young man had to admit to a blemished record in that phase of life. His failure to attain any position of note, despite his fervor, was due largely to his physical features, a five-foot-seven stature with a body weight of approximately one hundred and thirty-five pounds, which he maintained throughout high school and through his first year of college. In his case, ardent desire could not compensate for physical ineptness. Naturally, while he was at Princeton, his desire to be proficient in sports had little chance of being realized, because he was pitted against physically well-endowed young men who had entered college solely for the purpose of participating in sports. Young Fitzgerald, like many other young men who desired to get ahead in life, strove toward a physical ideal, an impossible ideal, because it did not allow for his frailty. In The Great Gatsby we read evidences of a youth, who like Fitzgerald, perhaps Fitzgerald himself, strove toward perfect manhood:

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9. Ibid., p. 16.

. . . On the last fly-leaf was printed the word SCHEDULE, and the date September 12, 1906. And underneath:

Rise from bed . . . . .	6:00	A. M.
Dumbell exercise and wall scaling . . . . .	6:15-6:30	"
Study electricity, etc. . . . .	7:15-8:15	"
Work . . . . .	8:30-4:30	P. M.
Baseball and sports . . . . .	4:30-5:00	"
Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it . . . . .	5:00-6:00	"
Study needed inventions . . . . .	7:00-9:00	"

GENERAL RESOLVES

- No wasting time at Shafters or (a name, indecipherable)
- No more smoking or chewing
- Bath every other day
- Read one improving book or magazine per week
- Save \$5.00 (crossed out) \$3.00 per week
- Be better to parents<sup>10</sup>

In later years Fitzgerald described in "Sleeping and Waking" how he often dreamed of being the right man at the right moment in a football game at Princeton.

"Once upon a time" (I tell myself) "they needed a quarterback at Princeton, and they had nobody and were in despair. The head coach noticed me kicking and passing on the side of the field, and he cried: 'Who is that man--why haven't we noticed him before?' The under coach answered, 'He hasn't been out,' and the response was: 'Bring him to me.'

" . . . we go to the day of the Yale game. I weigh only one hundred and thirty-five, so they save me until the third quarter, with the score----"

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10. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, p. 183.



----But it's no use--I have used that dream of a defeated dream to induce sleep for almost twenty years, but it has worn thin at last. I can no longer count on it--though even now on easier nights it has a certain lull . . . "11

Fitzgerald's slipping into a dream world showed a definite change in attitude from the time he had given a detailed judgment of himself, only a few years previous, at Newman:

. . . Physically--I marked myself handsome; of great athletic possibilities, and an extremely good dancer. . . . Socially . . . I was convinced that I had personality, charm, magnetism, poise, and the ability to dominate others. Also, I was sure that I exercised a subtle fascination over women. Mentally . . . I was vain of having so much of being talented, ingenious and quick to learn. To balance this, I had several things on the other side: Morally--I thought I was rather worse than most boys, due to a latent unscrupulousness and the desire to influence people in some way, even for evil . . . lacked a sense of honor, and was mordantly selfish. Psychologically . . . I was by no means the "captain of my fate" . . . I was liable to be swept off my poise into a timid stupidity. I knew I was "fresh" and not popular with older boys. . . . Generally--I knew that at bottom I lacked the essentials. At the last crisis, I knew I had no real courage, perseverance or self-respect.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. College and Young Manhood

On September 24, 1913 Fitzgerald entered Princeton and settled at 15 University Place. Princeton, at that time, was known mostly for its undergraduate work. The undergraduate student body numbered only 1500, with a total of six students

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11. Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, edited by Edmund Wilson, p. 66.  
12. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 20-21, quoting The Romantic Egotist, p. 33.

possessing automobiles. But even in 1913 with a sparsity of automobiles the school was very much a social institution. The Princeton clubs, with their system of grading people according to social distinctions, carried most of the burden of the recreational activities. An undergraduate had to work for two years to establish himself and maintain the reputation of his club and, as a reward, for his last two years, he had a club patterned on a country-estate place, which served as a relaxation place where he could eat and enjoy the leisure hour with congenial companions.<sup>13</sup>

The yellow-haired, green-eyed, "almost girlishly handsome" Fitzgerald, discouraged in his attempts at sports, soon found writing to be his forte at Princeton, and he plunged heartily into work on The Tiger and the Nassau Lit, the Princeton literary magazines, and a new phase of literary endeavor for him, the annual Triangle Club show. While at college he contributed noteworthy pieces to two Triangle Club shows, "The Evil Eye" and "Fie! Fie! Fi-Fi!" Such extracurricular work distracted him from his studies, and he was constantly in trouble with the administration over his scholastic difficulties.<sup>14</sup> In later life he remarked: "'I got nothing out of my first two years in college --in the last I got my passionate love for

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13. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 29-33.

14. Ibid., pp. 33-42.

poetry and historical perspective and ideas in general [how-  
ever superficially], that carried me full swing into my  
career.'"<sup>15</sup>

A great influence on Fitzgerald during his formative years in college was a converted Roman Catholic, Father Fay, who visited him occasionally, taking him out to dine and discussing his school problems with him. Fay, to Fitzgerald, was the personification of the beauty and wealth of the Roman Catholic Church; he was rich, debonair, and sure in his faith. He brought to Fitzgerald inner peace and a fatherly, yet intellectual, companionship. Fitzgerald spent several holidays at Fay's mother's elaborate Deal home, and Fitzgerald later dedicated This Side of Paradise to him; it was a friendship which had blossomed through the years, from the time the two had met at the Roman Catholic school—Newman.<sup>16</sup> Fay appears as Monsignor Darcy in This Side of Paradise.

The second person who greatly influenced Fitzgerald during his college career was Genevra King, a beautiful and wealthy Chicago girl, whom he met at St. Paul during a Christmas season. Miss King was noted for her independent spirit, and, at an early age, she had a reputation for daring and adventurousness. The young Princeton man fell deeply in love with her,

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15. Ibid., p. 34. The brackets are Mizener's.

16. Ibid., pp. 42-43.

and she placed him at the top of a long list of beaux, but she "'still wasn't serious enough not to want plenty of other attention!'" To Fitzgerald Genevra King was the personification of the hard-boiled, innocent, golden-haired virgin; she became the prototype of his heroines; she was Isabelle in This Side of Paradise and Judy Jones in his story "Winter Dreams," and perhaps Daisy in The Great Gatsby. Until the day Fitzgerald died, the mention of Genevra King would bring a teary, far-away look into his eyes; her letters were typed and bound in a 227 page book, which he kept with him until his death.

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Under the pace which Fitzgerald had established for himself his body could not possibly hold up; consequently, on November 4, during his third year at Princeton, laden with bad grades and a high fever, he was forced by his doctor to withdraw. He wrote poignantly of the effect in "Handle With Care" in 1936:

The first time [personality disintegration] was felt was twenty years ago, when I left Princeton in junior year with a complaint diagnosed as malaria. It transpired, through an X-ray taken a dozen years later, that it had been tuberculosis--a mild case, and after a few months of rest I went back to college. But I had lost certain offices, the chief one was the presidency of the Triangle Club, a musical comedy idea, and also I dropped back a class. To me college would

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17. Ibid., pp. 47-49.

never be the same. There were to be no badges of pride, no medals, after all. It seemed on one March afternoon that I had lost every single thing I wanted --and I hunted down the spectre of womanhood that, for a while makes everything else seem unimportant.<sup>18</sup>

When he returned to Princeton the following September, college life seemed weighty. Although he was closely associated with two of the most prominent and intellectual young men on the campus, Henry Strater and John Biggs, his interest never again reached the mountain-peak enthusiasm he had possessed the former year. With the aid of his friend Biggs, whole issues of The Tiger were produced in one night.<sup>19</sup> Another close friend was Edmund Wilson, who twenty-seven years later remembered him in a typical college scene:

I climbed, a quarter-century and more  
Played out, the college steps, unlatched my door,  
And, creature strange to college, found you there:  
The pale skin, hard green eyes, and yellow hair--  
Intently pinching out before a glass  
Some pimples left by parties at the Nass;  
Nor did you stop abashed, thus pocked and blotched,  
But kept on peering while I stood and watched.<sup>20</sup>

In the meanwhile war drums sounded, separating families, creating emergencies, changing topics of conversation, interrupting educations, and dissolving friendships.

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18. Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, p. 76.  
19. Mizener, op. cit., p. 66.  
20. Edmund Wilson, Dedication, in Fitzgerald's The Crack-Up, p. 8.

## 4. The War Years

Fitzgerald departed for Fort Leavenworth on November 20, 1917, after two plans were discarded, one by which he would have accompanied Father Fay to Russia as a Red Cross officer, and a second by which he could have gone with Father Fay to Rome to consult with the Pope about the Roman Catholic approach to the world situation.<sup>21</sup> On leaving for the army he wrote his mother the following letter, in which he feigned a hard-boiled, grown-up attitude:

About the army please lets not have either tragedy or Heroics because they are equeally distastful to me. I went into this perfectly cold bloodedly and dont sympathize with the  
 "Give my son to country" ect  
 or ect  
 "Hero stuff" ect  
 because I just went and purely for social reasons. If you want to pray, pray for my soul and not that I wont get killed--the last doesn't seem to matter particularly and if you are a good Catholic the first ought to.

To a profound pessimist about life, being in danger is not depressing. I have never been more cheerful.<sup>22</sup>

While in Officers' Training school at Leavenworth, Fitzgerald spent every available moment of his off-duty time working on a novel which Dean Gauss at Princeton had refused to recommend to Scribner's before Fitzgerald had left. He would

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21. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

22. Ibid., p. 67, quoting a letter to Mrs. Edward Fitzgerald dated November 14, 1917. The misspellings are Fitzgerald's.

work on the book every Saturday from one o'clock in the afternoon until midnight. And he would work from six Sunday morning until six Sunday night; writing in that fashion during the week-ends covering a three-month period he composed a book of one hundred and twenty thousand words, which was divided into <sup>23</sup> twenty-three chapters.

In February, 1918, the young second lieutenant was transferred to Camp Taylor, Kentucky. While stationed there he sent the book on which he had been arduously working to John Peale Bishop, an old friend, who in turn sent the book to a friend named Leslie, who corrected the book and recommended it to Scribner's. The manuscript was returned by Scribner's in August suggesting corrections with which Fitzgerald tried to comply; however, the book was returned again in October. <sup>24</sup>

By April Fitzgerald was on the move again, the first time to Camp Gordon, Georgia, and later that year to Camp Sheridan near Montgomery, Alabama. At Camp Sheridan, he was dealt a great blow when he received the news that Genevra King, his first real love, was to be married in June. However, Fitzgerald's army life was not a picture painted entirely in black, for a sparkling young girl danced into his heart at an Officers' Club affair, bringing dazzling color and gaiety into his life;

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23. Ibid., pp. 69-71.

24. Ibid., pp. 72-73.

the young girl with the wind-blown hair and frilly dress who caused Fitzgerald's heart figuratively to melt. was Zelda Sayre.

The "world's worst second lieutenant," who never went overseas during his army career, nevertheless, found his army experience of invaluable aid to his writing career. "May Day," perhaps his most notable short story, draws somewhat on those experiences. "The Last of the Belles," another of the short stories based on Fitzgerald's army life, has a scene which quite poignantly recalls his feelings concerning some of the elusive time of youth spent at Camp Gordon, Georgia.

"Like to drive over yonder where you see the smoke?" asked the driver. "That's the new state prison."

"No. Just drive along this road. I want to find where I used to live."

An old race course, inconspicuous in the camp's day of glory, had reared its dilapidated grandstand in the desolation. I tried in vain to orient myself.

"Go along this road past that clump of trees, and then turn right--no, turn left."

He obeyed, with professional disgust. "You won't find a single thing darling," said Ailie. "The contractors took it all down."

We rode slowly along the margin of the fields. It might have been here--

"All right. I want to get out," I said suddenly.

I left Ailie sitting in the car, looking very beautiful with the warm breeze stirring her long, curly bob.

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It might have been here. That would make the company streets down there and the mess shack, where we dined that night just over the way.

The taxi driver regarded me indulgently while I stumbled here and there in the knee-deep underbrush, looking for my youth in a clapboard or a strip of roofing or a rusty tomato can. I tried to sight on a vaguely familiar clump of trees, but it was growing darker now and I couldn't be quite sure they were the right trees.

"They're going to fix up the old race course," Ailie called from the car. "Tarleton's getting quite doggy in its old age."

No, upon consideration they didn't look like the right trees. All I could be sure of was this place that had once been so full of life and effort was gone, as if it had never existed, and that in another month Ailie would be gone, and the South would be empty for me forever.<sup>25</sup>

## 5. The Post War Years

Fitzgerald was discharged from the army on February 14, 1919. He immediately began a round of parties in New York with college friends, one of which--the interfraternity party at Delmonico's in 1919--led him to write his famous "May Day." He settled in a room at 200 Claremont Avenue in New York City. The only job available for him was one with the Barron Collier Advertising Agency, where his most notable achievement turned out to be a slogan for a Muscatine, Iowa laundry: "We Keep You Clean in Muscatine."<sup>26</sup>

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25. Fitzgerald, The Short Stories, edited by Malcolm Cowley, p. 253.

26. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 80-82.

In the meanwhile not all was going well in his love affair with Zelda Sayre. The Alabama judge's daughter waited nervously in Montgomery, while her lover worked for ninety dollars a month and at the same time tried to save enough money for them to get married. Whenever the waiting became discouraging to Zelda and Fitzgerald became aware of it, he would send her telegrams or make a hurried visit to see her. By June the strain of the long engagement became too much for Zelda, even though she had been given an engagement ring; Zelda saw Scott off from a final visit, after he had been told that it would be best for him to leave.  
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On July 4, Fitzgerald quit his job with a sigh of relief and returned to St. Paul to revise his novel. He spent two hot summer months in his third floor room in his mother's home feverishly revising The Romantic Egotist. On September 3 the revision was completely finished, and he persuaded a friend, Mr. Thomas Daniels, to carry it personally to Scribner's. While working on the book and later waiting for an acceptance or refusal from Scribner's, Fitzgerald lived a quiet life, spending his free evenings conversing with his friends John Briggs, Donald Ogden Stewart, and Father Joe Barron on such varied subjects as modern literature, or the ascetic ideals of the thirteenth

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27. Ibid., pp. 80-83.

century. Often the conversations were held over a "coke" at the corner drugstore, the coke bought with money loaned by Biggs, because Fitzgerald's family refused to give him pocket money on the grounds that he had not entered a proper business. 28 Finally, on September 16, a letter was received from Scribner's which read:

I am very glad, personally to be able to write you that we are all for publishing your book, "This Side of Paradise." Viewing it as the same book that was here before, which in a sense it is, though . . . extended further, I think that you have improved it enormously. As the first manuscript did, it abounds in energy and life and it seems to me to be in much better proportion. . . . The book is so different that it is hard to prophesy how it will sell, but we are all for taking a chance and supporting it with vigor. 29

## 6. Success and Zelda

This Side of Paradise was an immediate success; it sold approximately 300,000 copies the first year of its publication. As soon as the novel began to be discussed over the country, Fitzgerald was in a position to demand a higher price for his short stories. He sold "Head and Shoulders" to Saturday Evening Post for \$400, and soon afterwards set out for New Orleans in order to soak up atmosphere for his writing. But New Orleans had nothing to offer Fitzgerald. He was soon back in New York buying Zelda

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28. Ibid.,

29. Ibid., p. 87.

an expensive feather fan with his first earnings and taking friends to "his bootlegger." Money and success had gone to his head; he was now even wealthy enough to get married. Consequently, the engagement was announced by the Sayres on March 20, and Zelda received from Fitzgerald her first white orchid.

They were married on April 3 in the rectory of St. Patrick's Cathedral; afterwards Fitzgerald sent an old friend, Marie Hersey, with Zelda to pick out some suitable clothes for a New Yorker to wear; Zelda recalled the incident in "Auction--Model 1934:"

Lot 11. A real Patou suit. It was the first garment bought after the marriage ceremony and again the moths have unsymmetrically eaten the nap off the seat of the skirt. This makes fifteen years it has been stored in trunks because of our principle of not throwing away things that have never been used. We are glad--oh, so relieved, to find it devastated at last. There was a rippling sun along Fifth Avenue the day it was bought and it seemed very odd to be charging things to Scott Fitzgerald.<sup>30</sup>

Their honeymoon was spent at drinking parties and attending shows such as "Enter Madame." Later they went to Princeton where they found Dean Gauss on his front lawn and crowned him with a laurel wreath to the accompaniment of impromptu verses. The crowning blow of the occasion came when Fitzgerald was

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30. Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 60.

asked to resign from his Princeton club by its president because of his intemperate conduct. Then the Fitzgeralds moved to the Commodore Hotel for another round of parties.<sup>31</sup> It was at this time that Fitzgerald first began to acquire his nationwide reputation for unsavory conduct.

In May he and Zelda settled, in an effort to achieve peace, in Westport, Connecticut, in an old gray-shingled house known locally as the Burritt Wakeman place; but the roads to their home were always filled with such week-end guests as Fitzgerald's old friends John Biggs, Townsend Martin, and George Jean Nathan. It was about this time that Fitzgerald began his second novel, The Beautiful and Damned, and it was also the time during which Fitzgerald plunged himself heavily in debt to maintain his extravagant party-giving. On December 31, 1920, he wrote Maxwell Perkins:

The bank this afternoon refused to lend me anything on the security of stock I hold--and I have been pacing the floor for an hour trying to decide what to do. Here, with the novel The Beautiful and Damned within two weeks of completion am I with six hundred dollars worth of bills and owing Reynolds \$650 for an advance on a story that I'm utterly unable to write. I've made half a dozen starts yesterday and today and I'll go mad if I have to do another debutante, which is what they want.

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31. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 108-110.

I hoped that at last being square with Scribner's I could remain so. But I'm at my wit's end. Isn't there some way you could regard this as an advance on the new novel rather than on the Xmas sale of This Side of Paradise which won't be due me till July? And at the same interest that it costs Scribner's to borrow? Or could you make it a month's loan from Scribner and Co. with my next ten books as security? I need \$1600.00.

32  
Anxiously

For a man who had made \$18,000 in 1920 that request seems a shocking one.

Finding himself deeply in debt, Fitzgerald set to work trying to write himself into the clear. He thus began to prostitute his writing talent by turning out many short stories and articles quickly and mechanically and selling the rights to serialize his next novel. However, even though he was working at a rapid pace, Westport became unendurably dull in November, so Zelda and he took an apartment in New York City, number 28 West 59th Street. The Beautiful and Damned was finished there just before they sailed for Europe in early May.

The European trip was not at all what they had planned it to be. Europe seemed very dull for them at the time, largely because they knew no one there; but the trip had a few highlights, such as Fitzgerald's meeting Galsworthy in London and

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32. Ibid., p. 127, quoting a letter from Edmund Wilson to Mizener, November 11, 1949.

33. Ibid., pp. 131-132.

later, Joyce in Paris. But Zelda was miserable the whole trip. She was pregnant with their first and only child and wanted to hurry back to the United States for the baby to be born. So they rushed back to the United States, settling first at Montgomery, but finally deciding to await the birth of the baby in St. Paul.<sup>34</sup>

Settling in St. Paul Fitzgerald readied The Beautiful and Damned for publication, spoke for the local Woman's Club, and produced two short stories, "The Popular Girl" and "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," while Zelda waited. On October 26, the baby was born, a girl. Mencken, the literary critic, advised in a telegram: "NAME HER CHARLOTTE AFTER CHARLES EVANS HUGHES"; but the Fitzgerald's decided on Frances Scott.<sup>35</sup>

They soon moved to Great Neck, Long Island, where more riotous parties were given, and there they managed to spend \$36,000. But such intemperate living became too much of a strain for them, so they decided to go to France, where they could live in a less costly manner. Fitzgerald, like many other young writers, believed that France provided the ideal circumstances for a writer. Then, too, on the success ladder, he was head and shoulders above his contemporaries John Dos Passos, Thornton Wilder, Glenway Westcott, Louis Bromfield, and Thomas Wolfe, and it was much easier for him in such a

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34. Ibid., pp. 127-134.

35. Ibid., pp. 134-137.

position to make literary contacts. Only Ernest Hemingway had surpassed him at that time.<sup>36</sup> However, all was not harmonious when the Fitzgeralds reached Europe. Zelda had an affair at St. Raphael with a handsome black-haired, classic-featured French aviator, René Silvé, doing irreparable damage to her marriage. The incident caused her and her husband too-numerous spats and drinking bouts.<sup>37</sup>

In Paris in 1925 after the publication of The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald was invited to meet Mrs. Edith Wharton on the merit of that work. The book had brought forth the best notices Fitzgerald had ever received from the critics; the notices were far better than the ones he had received the previous year for his play "The Vegetable," which was a dismal flop.<sup>38</sup> Mrs. Wharton, before their meeting, had written Fitzgerald the following letter commending The Great Gatsby:

Pavillon Colombe  
St. Brice--Sous--Foret (520)  
Gare: Sarcelles

June 8, 1925

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald,

I have been wandering for the last weeks and found your novel--with its friendly dedication--awaiting me here on my arrival, a few days ago.

I am touched at your sending me a copy, for I feel that to your generation, which has taken such a flying leap into the future, I must represent the literary equivalent of tufted furniture & gas chandeliers. So you will understand that it is in

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36. R. E. Spiller, W. Thorp, T. H. Johnson, and H. S. Canby, editors, Literary History of the United States, Vol. II, pp. 1263-1264.

37. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 163-164.

38. Ibid., p. 178.



a spirit of sincere deprecation that I shall venture, in a few days, to offer you in return the last product of my manufactory.

Meanwhile, let me say at once how much I like Gatsby, rather His Book & how great a leap I think you have taken this time--in advance upon your previous work. My present quarrel with you is only this: that to make Gatsby really Great, you ought to have given us his early career (not from the cradle--but from his visit to the yacht, if not before) instead of a short resume of it. That would have situated him, & made his final tragedy a tragedy instead of a "fait divers" for the morning papers.

But you'll tell me that's the old way, & consequently not your way; & meanwhile, it's enough to make this reader happy to have met your perfect Jew, & the Limp Wilson, & assisted at that seedy orgy in the Buchanan flat, with the dazed puppy looking on. Every bit of that is masterly--but the lunch with Hildeshiem, [Wolsheim] and his every appearance afterward, make me augur still greater things!-- Thank you again.

Yrs. Sincerely

Edith Wharton

39

But in spite of such a friendly attitude in this letter, Mrs. Wharton was forced to maintain mental reservation on Fitzgerald's fame when he sauntered into her party with an air of braggadocio, which completely threw her on the offensive. Other outbursts of bad taste were when Fitzgerald at a formal dinner suddenly rose and threw a ripe fig at the bare back of one of the guests, and another time when he was in a drunken stupor, and he kicked a basket of flowers from an old flower peddler's hand.

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39. Fitzgerald, Crack-Up, p. 309.

40. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 184-188.

## 7. Zelda's Sickness

The intellectual girl with the dark, red-gold hair who argued with her husband over the merits of their respective I. Q.'s was as unpredictable as her husband. Once during a going-away party in honor of Grace Moore's fiancé<sup>41</sup>, "Chato" Elizaga, after a number of toasts, she suddenly stepped out of her black lace panties and handed them to the honored guest as a parting present.

By 1928 Zelda's impulses were becoming less and less normal. All her energy was expended in an abnormal preoccupation with ballet dancing. She practiced for long stretches at a time and would spend equally long periods in unbreakable silence. Her craving for success had taken a hold on her powers of reasoning. Finally her health broke in 1930. The doctors diagnosed her sickness as schizophrenia. Fitzgerald blamed himself largely for Zelda's sickness, because he felt responsible for the irregular type of life they lived. Her sickness, however, waxed and waned. In 1931 she was able to spend whole days skiing, but she later had a relapse, and Fitzgerald had to take her to Johns Hopkins for treatment. In the meantime he secured a place at Rodgers Forge, Maryland, called La Paix, where he and their daughter Scottie whiled away many happy hours. Zelda was able

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41. Ibid., p. 200.

to visit them frequently, and once Fitzgerald carried her to Virginia Beach. But Zelda was to suffer second and third breakdowns, the last one leaving her in a catatonic state. 42

A letter which Zelda wrote Scott from an insane asylum in 1938 or 1939 tells their tragedy poignantly:-

Dearest and always Dearest Scott:

I am sorry too that there should be nothing to greet you but an empty shell. The thought of the effort you have made over me, the suffering this nothing has caused would be unendurable to any save a completely vacuous mechanism. Had I any feelings they would all be bent in gratitude to you and in sorrow that of all my life there should not even be the smallest relic of the love and beauty that we started with to offer you at the end. . . .

Now that there isn't any more happiness and home is gone and there isn't even any past and no emotions but those that were yours where there could be my comfort--it is a shame that we should have met in harshness and coldness where there was so much tenderness and so many dreams. Your song.

I wish you had a little house with hollyhocks and a sycamore tree and the afternoon sun imbedding itself in a silver tea-pot. Scottie would be running about somewhere in white, in Renoir, and you will be writing books in dozens of volumes. And there will be honey still for tea, though the house should not be in Granchester.

I want you to be happy--if there were any justice you would be happy--maybe you will be anyway.

Oh, Do-Do Do Do--

I love you anyway--even if there isn't any me or any love or even any life--

I love you. <sup>43</sup>

42. Ibid., pp. 225-235.

43. Ibid., p. 236.

Yet the crowning climax to the tragedy did not come until  
 1948, when Zelda died in a sanitarium fire.<sup>44</sup>

## 8. The Last Years

Fitzgerald's last finished novel, Tender Is The Night, was published on April 12, 1934, in spite of the tragic circumstances that he was gradually undergoing. Disappointed at the poor sale, 13,000 copies, he began to drink more heavily and more frequently. After the publication of Tender Is The Night, he spent his time writing short stories for the "slicks," especially for Esquire. Although the Pat Hobby series he wrote for Esquire had a rather large following, the quality of his stories at this time was, generally, very poor. In the meantime Scottie was placed in boarding schools, or sent to visit her Cousin Cecil in Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>45</sup> At this low ebb in Fitzgerald's career, his old friend Ernest Hemingway wrote him a letter in a joking manner in an effort to dispell his gloom:

If you really feel blue enough get yourself heavily insured and I'll see you get killed . . . and I'll write you a fine obituary . . . and we can take your liver out and give it to the Princeton Museum, your heart to the Plaza Hotel, one lung to Max Perkins and the other to George Horace Lorimer . . . and we will get Mac Leish to write a Mystic Poem to be read at that Catholic School (Newman?) you went to. Would you like me to write the mystic poem now. Let's see.<sup>46</sup>

44. "The Big Binge," Time Magazine, Vol. LVII (Jan. 29, 1951), p. 106.

45. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

46. Ibid., pp. 239-240.

Despite the efforts of friends who tried to cheer him, the effects of fast-living amid a fast-paced generation were beginning to show in the personality of Fitzgerald. His ebullient, carefree demeanor which he maintained during the roaring twenties disappeared during the stock market crash. With the appearance of the soup lines during the early thirties, Fitzgerald's carefree world of the twenties had made an abrupt "about-face." "Character" lines soon began to show in his countenance, lines resulting from the many drinking bouts, entertainments, travels, and escapades.

Feeling low in spirit and many thousands of dollars in debt in February, 1936, Fitzgerald went south to Hendersonville, North Carolina, where he lived for a while on potted meat, oranges, Unedas, and beer, in an effort to get a hold on himself. But it was in 1937, when he was living in Asheville, that he really began to get control of himself. It was during that summer that the late Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who was working on The Yearling in the North Carolina mountains, visited him for a chat; it is evident from her description that a character-change had taken place:

He was exhilarated. He talked of his own work. He was modest, but he was sure. He said that he had made an ass of himself, that his broken home was the result of his having tried to "show off" in front of his "debutantes" when he dived proudly into a

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swimming pool, that he had gone astray with his writing, but was ready to go back to it in full force. . . . I remember being impressed by the affection with which he spoke of Hemingway. . . . He also spoke of Hemingway with a quality that puzzled me. It was not envy of the work or the man, it was not malice. I identified it as irony. . . . He was not interested in me as a writer or as a woman, but he turned on his charm as deliberately as a water-tap, taking obvious pleasure in it. The irony was here, too, as though he said, "This is my little trick. It is my defiance, my challenge to criticism, to being shut out."<sup>47</sup>

The character-change was first exhibited by Fitzgerald in an article entitled "Pasting It Together," written in April, 1936; then he was taking a new, hard-boiled approach to living:

. . . There was to be no more giving of myself--all giving of myself--all giving was to be outlawed henceforth under a new name, and that name was Waste.

The decision made me rather exuberant, like anything that is both real and new. As a sort of beginning there was a whole shaft of letters to be tipped into the waste basket when I went home, letters that wanted something for nothing--to read this man's manuscript, market this man's poem, speak free on the radio, indite notes of introduction, give this interview, help with the plot of this play, with this domestic situation, perform this act of thoughtfulness or charity.

The conjuror's hat was empty. To draw things out of it had long been a sort of sleight of hand, and now, to change the metaphor, I was off the dispensing end of the relief roll forever.

The heady villainous feeling continued.

I felt like the beady-eyed men I used to see on the commuting train from Great Neck fifteen years back--men who didn't care whether the world tumbled into chaos tomorrow if it spared their houses. I was one with them, now, one with the smooth articles who said:

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47. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267, quoting a letter from Marjorie Rawlings to Arthur Mizener dated March 10, 1948.

"I'm sorry but business is business." Or:

"You ought to have thought of that before you got into this trouble." Or:

"I'm not the person to see about that."

And a smile--oh, I would get me a smile. I'm still working on that smile. It is to combine the best qualities of a hotel manager, an experienced old social weasel, a head-master on visitor's day, a colored elevator man, a pansy pulling a profile, a producer getting stuff at half its market value, a trained nurse coming on a new job, a body-vender in her first rotogravure, a hopeful extra swept near the camera, a ballet dancer with an infected toe, and of course the great beam of loving kindness common to all those from Washington to Beverly Hills who must exist by virtue of the contorted pan.<sup>48</sup>

In 1937 Fitzgerald pulled himself together and headed for a job in Hollywood, where he met such people as Norma Shearer, Errol Flynn, Joan Crawford, and Walter Winchell. Also at this time he was preoccupied with sending Scottie off to Vassar:

September 19, 1938

Dearest Pie:

Here are a few ideas I didn't discuss with you and I'm sending this to reach you on your first day.

For heaven's sake don't make yourself conspicuous by rushing around and inquiring which are the Farmington Girls, which are the Dobbs Girls, etc. You'll make an enemy of everyone who isn't. . . . I'd hate to see you branded among them the first week as a snob. . . .

. . . If I hear of you taking a drink before you're twenty, I shall feel entitled to begin my last and greatest non-stop binge, and the world also will have an interest in the matter of your behavior. It would like to be able to say and would say, and would say on the slightest provocation: "There she goes--just like her papa and mama". . . .

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48. Fitzgerald, Crack-Up, pp. 82-83.

I think it would be wise to put on somewhat of an act in reference to your attitude to the upper classmen. In every college the class just ahead of you is of great importance . . . It would pay dividends many times to treat them with an outward respect which you might not feel. . . .

Everything you are and do from fifteen to eighteen is what you are and will do through life. Two years are gone and half the indicators already point down--two years are left and you've got to pursue desperately the ones that point up!

I wish I were going to be with you the first day, and I hope the work has already started.

With dearest love--

49

Daddy

The screen writing Fitzgerald did in 1937 included work on pictures such as "Infidelity," "Three Comrades," "The Women," and "Madame Curie." At the same time he was busily at work on his last novel, The Last Tycoon. But disaster struck in the form of another drinking spree when he began work with Budd Schulberg on a picture for Walter Wanger. Schulberg did all he could to sober Fitzgerald up and keep him on the job, but Wanger found him out and fired him. Later Schulberg was able to use his association with Fitzgerald to advantage by writing a fictionalized account of his life, The Disenchanted. In spite of the bad comments delivered on the book, such as the following one from The New Yorker, it had a wide sale; too many literary editors compared The Disenchanted with Mizener's biography without taking into account

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49. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 277-278.



the fact that fictionalized biography and actual biography are as different as the two categories under which they are listed--fiction and truth;

Mr. Schulberg's Jere Halliday could never have written Zelda's heartbreaking letter of farewell quoted by Mr. Mizener on page 236, nor could Manley Halliday ever have said, as Fitzgerald did in the worst days of the marriage, "Our united front is less a romance than a categorical imperative." Mr. Mizener writes not only as a scholar but also as a critic, and he is therefore able to deal adequately with the most important fact of all, the nature and quality of Fitzgerald's long self-destruction is deeply tragic, where "The Disenchanted" is only sad and depressing, for Mr. Schulberg can attribute to his doomed novelist nothing more than a happy prose style and a knack of observing the manners of the upper middle class.<sup>50</sup>

The Fitzgerald his Hollywood friends saw during the winter of 1939-40 was ghastly-pale, and thin, and stayed in his room, but he was a man who was gradually recapturing his spark of talent as a writer. During his last year, 1940, a heavy schedule was being carried out point by literary point, bringing forth a harvest of twenty stories for Esquire and six brilliant chapters on The Last Tycoon. Also, during the spring he finished his best scenario, based on "Babylon Revisited," but Shirley Temple was not available for the part of Honoria, so the picture was shelved indefinitely. Then he suffered his first heart attack in November, 1940.<sup>51</sup>

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50. "Fitzgerald Plain," The New Yorker (February 3, 1951), p. 90.  
51. Malcolm Cowley, "The Scott Fitzgerald Story," New Republic Magazine, Vol. CXIV (February 12, 1951), pp. 19-20.

It seems ironic that death should tap Fitzgerald on the shoulder during a period in which he least feared sickness; his second heart attack was fatal in December, 1940. A small group of people attended the funeral on December 27; however, they were the people who deeply loved him, Scottie, his cousins from Norfolk, the Abeles and Taylors, Newman Smith from Atlanta, Zelda's brother-in-law, Maxwell Perkins, Harold Ober, the Murphys, and Judge Biggs. When Fitzgerald was buried in Rockville Union Cemetery in Maryland, in unconsecrated ground across from the Roman Catholic Cemetery because the Bishop refused him burial in consecrated ground, only his friend Dorothy Parker could summon the right words for the occasion, words he had written for Gatsby's funeral which seemed equally appropriate for his own; as the casket was lowered she muttered:  
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"The poor son of a bitch."

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52. Mizener, op. cit., pp. 298-299.

## Part II

### The Novels

#### This Side of Paradise

##### 1. The Technique

That Fitzgerald's first novel is somewhat autobiographical is obvious from the very first pages; the central character, Amory Blaine, is presented in a series of predicaments which closely resemble situations in the author's life, and with a set of characteristics based on the author's own temperament. The story traces the growth of a spoiled, little rich boy, who later survives St. Regis prep school, manages his way through Princeton, dawdles through World War I on this side of the ocean, is confronted with four love affairs, eventually loses his beloved to a wealthier man, and emerges eventually at twenty-two disillusioned and penniless.

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The book is poorly organized, as are most first novels; Fitzgerald is not alone in that fault: even Ellen Glasgow, an acclaimed mistress of good writing style, in her first novel, The Descendant, produced the same faulty style which Fitzgerald exhibits. Miss Glasgow's first novel, written twenty-three years previously, presents a parallel to Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise in that both books are defectively divided into sections labeled "Books." Fitzgerald divides his novels into two books: "The Romantic Egotist" and "The Education of a Personage"; and Miss Glasgow divides her novels into four Books: "Variation From Type," "The Individual," "Domestication," and "Reversion."<sup>1</sup> Even the titles of the divisions of both authors' books present a similar approach to the subject matter. In nothing other than their common subject matter and poor organization are the two first novels alike, however; Fitzgerald is not cursed with the Glasgow Victorianisms, or she with his many techniques of writing. But their defective organization shows them up as novices because of the jumpy effect given to the overall writing pattern and the abrupt transitions from active to historical tenses.

There is very little evidence to point favorably toward the plot and mechanical aspects of This Side of Paradise.

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1. Compare the Tables of Contents of Ellen Glasgow's The Descendant and Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise.

The plot of the lover spurned for a wealthier catch has been used numberless times; therefore the conflict presented is nothing new to the average reader. The instances appropriate for the dénouement are seemingly so numerous that the reader is puzzled as to when the dénouement actually occurs; clearer untying of the plot could have been presented if Fitzgerald had not dealt in so much introspection in regard to the central character, Amory Blaine. Other than Amory Blaine, Mrs. Blaine, Monsignor Darcy, and Rosalind Connage, the characters are not well-defined. The characters suffered largely because of the many episodes revealed, episodes which did not build adequately on the story to bring about a sufficient climax.

In Fitzgerald's work the jumpy effect of the writing is heightened by his inability to connect his thoughts, causing him to use many area subtitles throughout his novel to introduce sections which are of only two or three pages in length. The first chapter of the book contains nine subtitled parts, such as "A Kiss For Amory," "Snapshots of The Young Egotist," "Code of the Young Egotist," and "Preparatory to the Great Adventure." The organization would seem adequate for some other types of literary endeavor, but does not seem appropriate

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for the novel. Perhaps Fitzgerald's style was influenced somewhat by his studying James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man. He mentions Joyce's book on page 224. The uninhibited style, at any rate, is, to an extent, reminiscent of Joyce; Fitzgerald's technique, although not strictly "stream of consciousness" in effect, seems to derive its casual introspective attitude from Joyce. But Fitzgerald is original in that in his novel he fathoms all types of literary endeavor; that is, he makes use of descriptive prose, narrative, subjective introspection, poems, songs, play-technique; and some of his chapters, because of the disunity of the overall plan, seem to resemble short stories in themselves. It is no wonder that one critic called the book "the collected works of F. Scott Fitzgerald."<sup>2</sup>

The quick and complete transitions from one sub-section or from one short paragraph to another are a glaring defect; two such examples are the following passages:

After the operation Beatrice had a nervous breakdown that bore a suspicious resemblance to delirium tremens, and Amory was left in Minneapolis, destined to spend the ensuing two years with his aunt and uncle. There the crude, vulgar air of Western Civilization first catches him--in his underwear, so to speak.

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2. Arthur Mizener, "The Poet of Borrowed Time," F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, edited by Alfred Kazin, p. 29.

## A Kiss For Amory

His lip curled when he read it

"I am going to have a bobbing party," it said, "on Thursday, December the seventeenth, at five o'clock, and I would like it very much if you could come.

Yours truly,

Myra St. Claire."

B. S. V. P.

He had been two months in Minneapolis, and his chief struggle had been the concealing from "the other guys at school" how particularly superior he felt himself to be, yet his conviction was built upon shifting sands.<sup>3</sup>

Among other things he read: "For the Honor of the School," "Little Women" (twice), "The Common Law," "Saples," "Dangerous Dan McGrew," "The Broad Highway" (three times), "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Three Weeks," "Mary Ware, the Little Colonel's Chum," "Gunga Dhin," The Police Gazette, and Jim-Jam-Jems.

He had all the Henty biases in history, and was particularly fond of the cheerful murder stories of Mary Roberts Elineheart.

School ruined his French and gave him a distaste for standard authors. His masters considered him idle, unreliable and superficially clever.

He collected locks of hair from many girls. He wore the rings of several. Finally he could borrow no more rings, owing to his nervous habit of chewing them out of shape. This, it seemed, usually aroused the jealous suspicions of the next borrower.<sup>4</sup>

3. Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, pp. 8-9.

4. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Fitzgerald seems original not only in the many forms of his technique but also in the extent to which he carries his evidentially conscious list-making, previously mentioned, and name-dropping: Shaw, Tarkington, Rupert Brooks, Oscar Wilde, Chesterton, Barrie, Yeats, Synge, Ernest Dawson, Arthur Symons, Keats, Sudermann, and Robert Hugh Benson. The names were not only those of authors; great artists like Turner are mentioned; the names of famous hotels appear in conversations and descriptions; well-established boys' private schools are discussed, such as Andover, Exeter, St. Mark's, Groton, St. Regis, Pomfret, Taft, Hotchkiss, Pawling, Westminster, Choate and Kent. Famous books are listed, current plays compared, and popular songs quoted. Such instances of name-dropping remind the reader of the catalogues in old epics. Yet the name-dropping works effectively for Fitzgerald: there are few readers of novels who are not familiar with Shaw or Barrie or who have not heard of an Arrow-collar or a Brooks' Brothers' suit. Thus, such a practice adds immensely to the novel through the many minor touchstones provided, which when considered, form a type of environmental scaffolding which aids the writer in composing a seemingly realistically constructed atmosphere for his readers.

The overall style of Fitzgerald's first novel suffers largely from lack of continuity of thought, from a lack of

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well-connected passages and well-defined incidents; and it suffers, too, from too many minor situations (presented) which sidetrack one from the main concern. For instance, instead of presenting one love affair involving the central character and carrying that affair to the fullest extent, the author has his hero fall in love with four women: Isabelle, Clara, Rosalind, and Eleanor. By the time the reader has survived with the hero four rather puerile romances, he begins to wonder if the hero is actually in love with the women or in love with the idea of love. The affair with Rosalind, if slightly enlarged, would have been sufficient love interest to carry the plot. In two radio adaptations of This Side of Paradise, presented in the last five years, one a production of the United States Steel Hour presented during the winter of 1951, a concentration on the affair with Rosalind helped the story to the extent that the love affair emerged far better coordinated in the radio drama than in the novel.

## 2. Reasons For Success

In spite of its many technical defects, This Side of Paradise gained enormous popular acclaim; the acclaim seems to have been based on three factors: (1) the author's personality

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and sophisticated point of view, (2) the author's relationship to the times and the vivid imagery in which he was able to clothe his thoughts, regarding the period, and (3) the universality of the theme presented.

Fitzgerald's buoyant personality and sophisticated point of view permeate all of This Side of Paradise; in fact, the satirical approach of the author toward his subject in the first few chapters of the book causes the final tragedy to have less effect on the reader than it should. But the appeal generated by the sophistication completely captivated, and still captivates, the reading public. Even today the reader finds the rich little boy who calls his mother by her first name a trifle brazen. Yet the sophistication seems very feigned to the "reader-between-the-lines;" it might appear to such a reader that the author is a mid-western youth trying to define his writing talent in eastern terms, and the fraud is not quite successful. Fitzgerald was laughing in prose at circumstances his heart told him were true. Writing in such a manner, he manages a few sparkling passages such as the following:

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When Amory was five he was already a delightful companion for her. He was an auburn-haired boy, with great, handsome eyes which he would grow up to

in time, a facile imaginative mind and a taste for fancy dress. From his fourth to his tenth year he did the country with his mother in her father's private car, from Coronado, where his mother became so bored that she had a nervous breakdown in a fashionable hotel, down to Mexico City, where she took a mild, almost epidemic consumption. This trouble pleased her, and later she made use of it as an intrinsic part of her atmosphere--especially after several astounding bracers.<sup>5</sup>

Then:

. . . When left alone in the hotel at Hot Springs, he sampled his mother's apricot cordial, and as the taste pleased him, he became quite tipsy. This was fun for a while, but he essayed a cigarette in his exaltation, and succumbed to a vulgar, plebeian reaction. Though this incident horrified Beatrice, it also secretly amused her and became part of what in a later generation would have been termed her "line."<sup>6</sup>

The telling of such incidents revealed Amory's character through action rather than through just dry, general statement; this was a good point in the budding author's writing; but, in the end, his incidents did not add up to a clear-cut pattern. Also, through telling such amusing instances concerning Amory in the first pages of the novel, reader-interest is quickly garnered and the reader, in such an atmosphere, is made to feel that he is surrounded by actuality.

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5. Ibid., p. 4.

6. Ibid., p. 5.

The realistic dialect Fitzgerald was able to produce in the character-revealing incidents is also important in gaining the readers' attention quickly:

. . . But another time Amory showed off in history class, with quite disastrous results, for the boys there were his own age, and they shrilled innuendoes at each other all the following week:

"Aw--I b'lieve, doncherknow, the umarican revolution was lawgely an affair of the middul clawses," or

"Washington came of very good blood--aw, quite good--I b'lieve."<sup>7</sup>

The author's relationship with his own generation is revealed through such means as the books Amory read, the comparisons he made, such as the following:

"The Slicker"

1. Clever Sense of social values.
2. Dresses well. Pretends that dress is superficial--but knows that it isn't.
3. Goes into such activities he can shine in.
4. Gets to college and is, in a worldly way, successful.

"The Big Man"

1. Inclined to stupidity and unconscious social values.
2. Thinks dress is superficial, and is inclined to be careless about it.
3. Goes out for everything from a sense of duty.
4. Gets to college and has a problematical future. Feels lost

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7. Ibid., p. 9.

without his circle,  
and always says that  
school days were  
happiest, after all.  
Goes back to school  
and makes speeches  
about what St. Regis's  
boys are doing.

5. Hair slicked.

5. Hair not slicked.<sup>8</sup>

And the college songs, light or sentimental, caught the reading fancy of thousands of American youths and reminiscent oldsters.

"Oh-h-h-h  
She works in a Jam Factoree  
And-that-may-be-all-right  
But you can't-fool-me  
For I know--DAMN--WELL  
That she DON'T-make-jam-all-night  
Oh-h-h-h!"<sup>9</sup>

"Going back--going back,  
Going--back-to-Nas-sau-Hall,  
Going back-going back--  
To the-Best-Old-Place-of all.  
Going back--going back,  
From all-this-earthly-ball,  
We'll-clear-the-track-as-we-go-back-  
Going-back-to-Nas-sau-Hall!"<sup>10</sup>

But critics who believe that his This Side of Paradise is just a horn book for one generation have placed Fitzgerald in the wrong category, for the novel has a universal,

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8. Ibid., p. 39.

9. Ibid., p. 45.

10. Ibid., p. 46.

timeless appeal. What college undergraduate had not walked back to his dormitory on a warm, spring evening singing his own school songs? What lesser-known college undergraduate has not compared himself with the "big man on campus" and become disgusted when a group of people with less ability but more social appeal "walked off" with the school elections? Fitzgerald was telling about a universal experience when he had Amory Blaine evaluate himself at Princeton: the experience does not happen just to people like Amory Blaine, nor just at Princeton:

From the first he loved Princeton--its lazy beauty, its half-grasped significance, the wild moonlight revel of the rushes, the handsome prosperous big-game crowds, and under it all the air of struggle that pervaded his class. From the day, when, wild-eyed and exhausted, the jerseyed freshmen sat in the gymnasium and elected some one from Hill School class president, a Lawrenceville celebrity vice-president, a hockey star from St. Paul secretary, up until the end of sophomore year it never ceased, that breathless social system, that worship seldom named, never really admitted, of the bogey "Big Man."<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, people often have heard college students, like Kerry Holiday in the following excerpt, declaim about their respective reputations and seek advice from classmates:

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11. Ibid., p. 47.

"You're the 'nice boy' type," suggested Amory.  
 "That's just it. Mother always feels the girl is safe if she's with me. Honestly, it's annoying. If I start to hold somebody's hand, they laugh at me, and let me, just as if it wasn't part of them. As soon as I get hold of a hand they sort of disconnect it from the rest of them."

"Sulk," suggested Amory. "Tell'em you're wild and have'em reform you--go home furious--come back in half an hour--startle'em."

Kerry shook his head.

"No chance. I wrote a St. Timothy girl a really loving letter last year. In one place I got rattled and said: 'My God, how I love you!' She took a nail scissors, clipped out the 'My God' and showed the rest of the letter all over school. Doesn't work at all. I'm just 'good old Kerry' and all that rot."<sup>12</sup>

In other instances in This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald presents passages concerning politics and world government which, except for the political figures mentioned, are just as timely in 1954 as they were in 1929:

"Every child," said Amory, "should have an equal start. If his father can endow him with a good physique and his mother with some common sense in his early education, that should be his heritage. If the father can't give him a good physique, if the mother has spent in chasing men the years in which she should have been preparing herself to educate her children, so much the worse for the child. He shouldn't be artificially bolstered up with money, sent to those horrible tutoring schools, dragged through college. . . Every boy ought to have an equal start."

"All right," said the big man, his goggles indicating neither approval nor objection.

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12. Ibid., pp. 53-54.

"Next I'd have a fair trial of government ownership of all industries."

"That's been proven a failure."

"No--it merely failed. If we had government ownership we'd have the best analytical business minds in the government working for something besides themselves. We'd have Mackays instead of Burlesons; we'd have Morgans in the Treasury Department; we'd have Hills running interstate commerce. We'd have the best lawyers in the Senate."

"They wouldn't give their best efforts for nothing. McAdoo--"

"No," said Amory, shaking his head. "Money isn't the only stimulous that brings out the best that's in a man, even in America."<sup>13</sup>

And:

"When you talk of 'taking things away,' you're on dangerous ground."

"How can they get it without taking it? For years people have been stalled off with promises. Socialism may not be progress, but the threat of the red flag is certainly the inspiring force of all reform. You've got to be sensational to get attention."

"Russia is your example of a beneficent violence, I suppose?"

"Quite possible," admitted Amory. "Of course, it's overflowing just as the French Revolution did, but I've no doubt that it's really a great experiment and well worth while."

"Don't you believe in moderates, and it's almost too late. The truth is that the public has done one of those startling and amazing things that they do about once in a hundred years. They've seized an idea."

"What is it?"

"That however the brains and abilities of men may differ, their stomachs are essentially the same."<sup>14</sup>

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13. Ibid., p. 294.

14. Ibid., p. 296.



When we take all aspects of This Side of Paradise into consideration we find (1) that the novel is roughly constructed but has passages of thought-provoking power, and (2) that the author exhibits a vigorous literary style which, with work, could achieve a degree of greatness. Perhaps, however, the New York Times reviewer over-praised the novel in 1920 when he wrote his opinion:

"The glorious spirit of abounding youth glows throughout this fascinating tale. As a picture of the daily existence of what we call loosely 'college men' this book is as nearly perfect as such a work could be. It could have been written only by an artist who knows how to balance his values plus a delightful literary style."<sup>15</sup>

The Boston Transcript, which called the novel "a striking manifestation in American fiction and a boisterous exhibition of youthful though somewhat unregulated genius,"<sup>16</sup> was probably closest to the truth.

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15. Ibid., the dustjacket, citing the New York Times.

16. Ibid., citing the Boston Transcript.

## The Beautiful and Damned

### 1. The Plot

The story, essentially, is that of Anthony Patch, a well-educated young Harvard man from the Mid-west who is trying to write books but has neither the talent nor persistence and is living in New York on a stipend willed him by his mother. Gloria Gilbert, a beautiful, fragile socialite, marries Anthony Patch for the money he is expected to receive upon the death of his grandfather, Adam "Cross" Patch. But the old man, a religious fanatic, visits Anthony unannounced one evening, and finding the young couple in the midst of a riotous drinking party, returns to his home and later disinherits Anthony. In the meantime World War I breaks out, the elder Patch dies, leaving his fortune of 30 to 40 million dollars to a friend in religion, and Anthony is sent off to the war. The young couple, gradually drifting apart after the death of Adam Patch, enter suit to break the will, in hopes of recouping their loss. However, during their separation, both are tempted by other lovers; Gloria resists temptation, but Anthony has an affair with a low-charactered Southern girl named Dot. The dénouement comes when Anthony returns to New York.

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at the end of the war and he and Gloria are forced to cash in all of their remaining bonds for living expenses; he tries selling; Gloria tries acting; both fail. Anthony then reaches his lowest ebb when, drunken, he becomes involved in a skirmish with one of Gloria's old admirers and is thrown into the gutter. Dazed and broken, Anthony returns to the apartment but is unable to go to court with his wife and their lawyer to hear the verdict on the will case. While his wife is gone, Dot appears. At this point Fitzgerald exhibits a masterful writing style: he amazes his readers by the amount of thought and action he can compress into a few paragraphs. This section is a preview of the style that is to come in his next novel The Great Gatsby.

"You'll have to get out," he said at length, speaking with tortuous intensity. "Haven't I enough to worry me now without you coming here? My God! You'll have to get out!"

Sobbing, she sat down in a chair.

"I love you," she cried; "I don't care what you say to me! I love you."

"I don't care!" he almost shrieked; "get out--oh, get out! Haven't you done me harm enough? Haven't--you--done--enough?"

"Hit me!" she implored him--wildly, stupidly.

"Oh, hit me, and I'll kiss the hand you hit me with!"

His voice rose until it was pitched almost at a scream. "I'll kill you!" he cried. "If you don't get out I'll kill you, I'll kill you!"

There was madness in his eyes now, but unintimidated, Dot rose and took a step toward him.

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"Anthony! Anthony!-----"

He made a little clicking sound with his teeth and drew back as though to spring at her--then, changing his purpose, he looked wildly about him on the floor and wall.

"I'll kill you!" he was muttering in short broken gasps. "I'll kill you!" He seemed to bite at the word as though to force it into materialization. Alarmed at last she made no further movement forward, but meeting his frantic eyes took a step back toward the door. Anthony began to race here and there on his side of the room, still giving out his single cursing cry. Then he found what he had been seeking-- a stiff oaken chair that stood beside the table. Uttering a harsh, broken shout, he seized it, swung it above his head and let it go with all his raging strength straight at the white, frightened face across the room . . . .<sup>1</sup>

When Gloria returned, glowing with the report that they now possessed 30 to 40 million dollars, she found Anthony insane, his mind having reverted to a childish stage.

Fitzgerald has a searing, tragic story to tell, one punctuated with heartbreaks and passions. Yet he fails to carry off the plot effectively. If one reads the novel from beginning to end, it is rewarding; but one must be an indulgent reader to do so. How easy it is for the reader to become bogged down in the muddy, meaningless passages of the first chapters. Fitzgerald's second novel suffers, at the first, by being organized into the old-fashioned method of Books containing various minor sections which do not mold well into a united whole. Two books, then, This Side of

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1. Ibid., pp. 395-396.

Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned, have missed permanent literary success, largely because of their organizations.

Beautiful and Damned suffers also because of Fitzgerald's obtrusive omniscient author technique. He breaks the mood he has created by rather bluntly sandwiching his way between dialogues in the following manner:

They are glad to see each other now--their eyes are full of kindness as each feels the effect of novelty after a short separation. They are drawing a relaxation from each other's presence a new serenity. Maury Noble behind that fine and absurdly catlike face is all but purring and Anthony, nervous as a will--o--the--wisp, restless--he is at rest now.

They are engaged in one of those easy short-speech conversations that only men under thirty or men under great stress indulge in.<sup>2</sup>

Then, too, in attempting to exhibit his virtuosity, he again engages in writing a part of the novel in play form, which completely disrupts the tone of the novel which he had established. Furthermore, descriptions of the characters, written objectively in play form in a novel seem an insult to the reader's intelligence. After such descriptions the reader impatiently looks for some section well-written to assuage his displeasure.

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2. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

In person RICHARD CAMEL is short and fair-- he is to be bald at thirty-five. He has yellowish eyes--one of them startlingly clear, the other opaque as a muddy pool--and a bulging brow like a funny--paper baby. He bulges in other places--his paunch bulges, prophetically, his words have an air of bulging from his mouth, even his dinner-coat pockets bulge, as though from contamination, with a dog-eared collection of time tables, programmes, and miscellaneous scraps--on these he takes his notes with great screwings up of his unmatched yellow eyes and motions of silence with his disengaged left hand. When he reaches the table he shakes hands with ANTHONY and MAURY. He is one of those men who invariably shake hands, even with people whom they have seen an hour before.

Other instances of bad writing which mar the work in The Beautiful and Damned are the conversation between Beauty and The Voice, a passage complete with archaic words, a passage which one would expect of a college freshman; and the "slick" treatment of Muriel Kane, a flapper, adds nothing to the story. In fact, Muriel is the character in the book who wears least well. Without Muriel the novel would not seem too dated. But Fitzgerald, evidently, wanted to please the audience who read his stories in the "slicks" and might buy copies of his novel; however, the addition of a "slick" character, who does not aid the movement of the plot in the least, to a story seemingly begun by an author with serious intentions provides about the effect of one's adding icing to cheesecake: the two ingredients just do not go together.

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3. Ibid., pp. 19-20.

And people who have read Fitzgerald's stories in the popular magazines and his Flappers and Philosophers the previous year would, if they liked those offerings, it seems to this reader, find Beautiful and Damned a little too "arty" for their tastes. The passages describing Muriel Kane written to please the jazz group seem, in 1924, rather too fatuous:

Muriel Kane had originated in a rising family of East Orange. She was short rather than small, and hovered audaciously between plumpness and width. Her hair was black and elaborately arranged. This, in conjunction with her handsome, rather bovine eyes, and her over-red lips, combined to make her resemble Theda Bara, the prominent motion-picture actress. People told her constantly that she was a "vampire," and she believed them. She suspected hopefully that they were afraid of her, and she did her utmost under all circumstances to give the impression of danger. An imaginative man could see the red flag that she constantly carried, waving it wildly, beseechingly--and, alas, to little spectacular avail. She was also tremendously timely: she knew the latest songs, all the latest songs--when one of them was played on the phonograph she would rise to her feet and rock her shoulders back and fourth and snap her fingers, and if there was no music she would accompany herself by humming.<sup>4</sup>

Despite its many faults, The Beautiful and Damned was a stride forward in writing style for Fitzgerald: his story has more of a theme. Although his book is not yet well-unified in plot structure, his brand names and name-dropping are less obtrusive in this story. His use of many literary forms are

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4. Ibid., p. 73.

kept under control considerably, and best of all, he has two very impressive and memorable sequences: the one previously mentioned in which the four main characters analyze themselves one night while sitting on a railroad platform, and the one in which Dot comes to Anthony's apartment expressing her love, also previously discussed. Maury Nobel's speech on religion is still rather original and rather shocking; it also seems to foreshadow Ernest Hemingway's famous "nada" sequence in which "nada", meaning "nothing", is placed in a rendering of "The Lord's Prayer" in every instance referring to God or heaven. Fitzgerald's Maury is equally irreverent. At any rate, Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's ideas seem to brash and too similar to have happened accidentally. Fitzgerald's character says:

Once upon a time all the men of mind and genius in the world became of one belief--that is to say, of no belief. But it wearied them to think that within a few years after their death many cults and systems and prognostications would be ascribed to them which they had never meditated nor intended. So they said to one another.

"Let's join together and make a great book that will last forever to mock the credulity of man. Let's persuade our more erotic poets to write about the delights of the flesh, and induce some of our robust journalists to contribute stories of famous amours. We'll include

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all the most preposterous old wives' tales current. We'll choose the keenest satirist alive to compile a deity from all the deities worshipped by mankind, a deity who will be more magnificent than any of them, and yet so weakly human that he'll become a byword for laughter the world over--and we'll ascribe to him all sorts of jokes and vanities and rages in which he'll be supposed to indulge for his own diversion, so that the people will read our book and ponder it, and there'll be no more nonsense in the world.

"Finally, let us take care that the book possesses all the virtues of style, so that it may last forever as a witness to our profound scepticism and our universal irony.

"So the men did, and they died.

"But the book lived always, so beautifully had it been written, and so astounding the quality of imagination with which these men of mind and genius had endowed it. They had neglected to give it a name, but after they were dead it became known as the Bible."<sup>5</sup>

Fitzgerald's irony nearly always reminds one of Hemingway.

Perhaps their similarity in opinions and outlooks had something to do with the similar strains sometimes found in their writings. Since both voiced the problems of the "lost generation," any likeness in their writings would seem natural. No doubt, since they were good friends and often had discussions about their books, they learned something from each other. At any rate, it is evident from Fitzgerald's notebook that he regarded Hemingway as the best writer his own generation produced.

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5. Ibid., pp. 227-228.

## 2. What The Critics Said

Fitzgerald's second novel, The Beautiful and Damned, published in 1921, met with a very mixed reception among literary critics. Arthur Mizener calls it a novel "where the characters drift without understanding into disaster and our conviction of their suffering is undermined by the inadequacy of its causes."<sup>6</sup> On the other hand James Branch Cabell calls the novel "'--moving, human, brilliant,'"<sup>7</sup> and James V. A. Weaver shares Cabell's enthusiasm in saying that the novel is "'better than THIS SIDE OF PARADISE . . . A huge stride forward . . . A novel to read which is a duty and a privilege that you owe yourself.'"<sup>8</sup> Paul Rosenfeld disparaged the work by saying that the central tragedy was overplayed;<sup>9</sup> Edmund Wilson felt the characters had no convincing connection with their background assigned.<sup>10</sup>

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6. Arthur Mizener, "The Poet of Borrowed Time," F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, edited by Alfred Kazin, p. 26.

7. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned (Perma-books, 1951), the dustjacket, citing Cabell.

8. Ibid., citing Weaver.

9. Paul Rosenfeld, "Fitzgerald Before The Great Gatsby," F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, edited by Alfred Kazin, p. 73.

10. Edmund Wilson, "Fitzgerald Before The Great Gatsby," F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, edited by Alfred Kazin, p. 77.

These critics are not necessarily offering just criticisms. Mizener's opinion shows that he misses the entire purport of the book; the novel is clearly one based on the uncertainties of fate. Naturally, characters moved from situation to situation by the machinations of fate are going to "drift without understanding into disaster," and as far as the causes of their suffering being inadequate is concerned, if indebtedness, dipsomania, and finally, insanity are not sufficient motivations for suffering, this reader suggests Mizener try the Little Nell stories. The author clearly and concisely states his point in the scene late at night at the railroad station in which four of the main characters, Gloria and Anthony Patch, Maury Noble, and Richard Caramel, muse about their past lives, and two reach a definite conclusion:

"There's only one lesson to be learned from life, anyway," interrupted Gloria, not in contradiction but in a sort of melancholy agreement.

"What's that?" demanded Maury sharply.

"That there's no lesson to be learned from life."

After a short silence Maury said:

"Young Gloria, the beautiful and merciless lady, first looked at the world with the fundamental sophistication I have struggled to attain, that Dick will never fully understand."

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There was a disgusted groan from the apple-barrel. Anthony, grown accustomed to the dark, could see plainly the flash of Richard Caramel's yellow eye and the look of resentment on his face as he cried:

"You're crazy! By your own statement I should have attained some experience by trying."

"Trying what?" cried Maury fiercely. "Trying to pierce the darkness of political idealism with some wild, despairing urge toward truth? Sitting day after day supine in a rigid chair and infinitely removed from life staring at the tip of a steeple through trees, trying to separate, definitely and for all time, the knowable from the unknowable? Trying to take a piece of actuality and give it glamor from your own soul to make for that inexpressible quality it possessed in life and lost in transit to paper or canvas? Struggling in a lavatory through weary years for one iota of relative truth in a mass of wheels or a test-tube--"

"Have you?"

Maury paused, and in his answer, when it came, there was a measure of weariness, a bitter overnote that lingered for a moment in those three minds before it floated up and off like a bubble bound for the moon.

"Not I," he said softly. "I was born tired--but with the quality of mother wit, the gift of women like Gloria--to that, for all my talking and listening, my waiting in vain for the eternal generality that seems to lie just beyond every speculation, to that I have added not one jot."

... "Not one jot!" Again Maury's voice dropped down to them as from a great height. "What a feeble thing intelligence is, with its short steps, its waverings, its pacings back and forth, its disastrous retreats! Intelligence is a mere instrument of circumstances. There are people who say that intelligence must have built a steam-engine! Circumstances built a steam-engine. Intelligence is little more than a foot-rule by which we measure the infinite achievements of circumstances."<sup>11</sup>

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11. Fitzgerald, Beautiful and Damned, pp. 225-226.

Paul Rosenfeld's criticism was more nearly correct than Nizer's: the central tragedy is made a little too tragic for the circumstances involved. From the first of the novel to the last three chapters the story rambles aimlessly. To a well-read person the mounting of years to a person's life seems no tragedy at all: Gloria Gilbert's approaching thirty is not in the least tragic, and the author's effort to make it seem so are ludicrous. Since thousands of people reach thirty every day and feel no great mental, emotional, or physical change, Fitzgerald's novel, in the first chapters, in dwelling on such a triviality seems mediocre, to say the least. If the beginning chapters were less drawn out, the book would be immensely improved overall.

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The Great Gatsby

1. Style: Technique and Artistry

Fitzgerald's third novel, The Great Gatsby, is a poignant, moving book which is fairly saturated with action, suspense, and irony. In no other writing has Fitzgerald presented the sheer artistry exemplified in Gatsby. The characters are real, the plot well-motivated and concise, the irony superb. Very few novels in the last two decades are the result of such craftsmanship. Each scene is compactly written and contingent on the scenes preceding and following; the well-knit construction carries the effect which the author wished to establish in the reader's mind with vigor and brevity. The tone of the novel is established in the second paragraph with a homily which, at first, seems to have no bearing on the main story; but, after reading the novel, we find that it is a hint of what to expect in regard to the central plot, an aspect of the author's subtle, underplayed style:

"Whenever you feel like criticising anyone," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world have not had the advantages you've had,"<sup>1</sup>

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1. Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, p. 9.

Once the objective approach is established by the author in relation to Gatsby, the form is never changed. After the first glimpse of the Gatsby mansion Fitzgerald proceeds to introduce Carraway's friends, Daisy and Tom Buchanan, by means of whom the author subtly adds to the mystery surrounding Gatsby. Through bits of conversation and descriptions, like the following, the mystery is gradually heightened, but Gatsby's actual appearance is delayed until just the right moment.

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. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of the beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Monday 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.<sup>2</sup>

When Gatsby appears on the scene Fitzgerald handles the meeting between his hero and the readers in a thorough, thought-provoking manner:

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2. Ibid., p. 47.

He Gatsby 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 eternal world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It 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 rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Sometime before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.<sup>3</sup>

The web of mystery surrounding the character of Gatsby is skillfully woven; it is enlarged to just the right proportion, to a point past which the intrigue would seem over-written; and then the background of Gatsby is sparingly, yet glamorously revealed in well-turned, picturesque phrases. Fitzgerald was able to create an atmosphere, a complete picture in few words:

. . . While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher--shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

"They're such beautiful shirts," she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. "It makes me sad because I've never seen such--such beautiful shirts before."<sup>4</sup>

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3. Ibid., p. 56.

4. Ibid., p. 100.



. . . His brown, hardening body lived naturally through the half-fierce, half-lazy work of the bracing days. He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted.<sup>5</sup>

. . . A few days later he took him to Duluth and bought him [Gatsby] a blue coat, six pair of white duck trousers, and a yachting cap.<sup>6</sup>

. . . Sometimes in the course of gay parties women used to rub champagne into his [Gatsby's] hair; for himself he formed the habit of letting liquor alone.<sup>7</sup>

The success of The Great Gatsby was largely dependent on the superb artistry Fitzgerald displayed in presenting Gatsby to his readers. But the central character was not the only living character in Gatsby: aristocratic, worldly-wise, unhappy Daisy is poignantly real; bouncey, athletic Jordan Baker is a person we have met oftentimes; Tom Buchanan is very American and appealing despite his human failings; Wolfsheimer, as "the man who fixed the World Series back in 1919," is exceptionally well-characterized. By keeping to a few characterizations, Fitzgerald was able to treat each one more completely, and because of that factor, his book emerges with much clarity and depth.

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5. Ibid., p. 106.

6. Ibid., p. 108.

7. Ibid.

In Gatsby it is amazing what Fitzgerald does with a very mediocre, simple plot. The story of the unhappy married partners finding solace in the arms of strangers has been used time and time again. Fitzgerald, however, is able to doctor the plot to perfection through the aforementioned organization and characterizations, a double-barrel ending, and his native ability and artistic embellishments. The final tragedy presents a two-fold climax in the fact that both of the unhappily married partners lose their lovers, Myrtle and Gatsby, in violent deaths, and in the fact that Daisy and Tom Buchanan must continue through life discontented with each other, their extra-marital affairs having accomplished nothing. To add to his brilliant climax, Fitzgerald includes an incident expressing irony in the discovery of Gatsby's childhood schedule for self-improvement on the fly-leaf of an old copy of "Hopalong Cassidy," found among his possessions after he met with a rather sordid death while still a bootlegger.

Throughout Gatsby are evidences of Fitzgerald's developed writing style, a style influenced by high-pressured American advertising, American traditions and facts. He manages to quote popular songs of the day, like "The Sheik of Araby" and "Love Nest," allude to familiar names and places, like Gilda Gray, Pennsylvania Station, Coney Island, and Yale, all of

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which adds to the pseudo-authenticity of his story. This time Fitzgerald does not over-use his allusions and name-dropping as he did in Beautiful and Damned; everything fits into a unified whole.

Other evidences of Fitzgerald's mastery of his writing style are found in his use of paradox in conversation and in the symbolism suggested in the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg:

"Anyhow, he gives large parties," said Jordan, changing the subject with an urban distaste for the concrete. "And I like large parties. They're so intimate. At small parties there isn't any privacy."<sup>8</sup>

But above the gray land and the spasms of black dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of 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 fact, 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.<sup>9</sup>

The artistry of Gatsby was never again achieved by Fitzgerald. He lived Gatsby; in a sense, that novel was more a part of him than anything else he wrote. The theme he often expressed in his writing, hatred of the rich, is most thoroughly captured in Gatsby. As Alfred Kazin expressed it:

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8. Ibid., p. 57.

9. Ibid., p. 31.

The Great Gatsby concludes with a murder; and the true murderer of Gatsby is not the crazed garage owner whose wife was Tom Buchanan's mistress, but Buchanan himself, the stupid and vicious stockbroker. It was as if Fitzgerald was describing the subtle death of the will that he felt threatened by, in the form of the ultimate violence and disrespect leveled by the very rich against the very poor. He hated the rich, for they had fascinated him too well--"they are not as we are," as he said to Hemingway.

## 2. Reception

Gertrude Stein was quick to recognize in Gatsby an improvement over Fitzgerald's previous work:

Hotel Pernolet  
Belley  
(Ain)

Belley, le 22 May, 192- [1925]

My dear Fitzgerald:

Here we are and have read your book and it is a good book. I like the melody of your dedication and it shows that you have a background of beauty and tenderness and that is a comfort. You are creating the contemporary world much as Thackeray did his in Pendennis and Vanity Fair and this isn't a bad compliment. You make a modern world and a modern orgy strangely enough it was never done until you did it in This Side of Paradise. My belief in This Side of Paradise was alright. This is a good book and

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10. Alfred Kazin, "An American Confession," F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, p. 177.

and different and older and that is always a pleasure. Best of luck to you always, and thanks so much for the very genuine pleasure you have given me.....

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Gertrude Stein

T. S. Eliot also saw in Gatsby a work of quite a degree of magnitude.

...I am not in the least influenced by your remark about myself when I say that it has interested and excited me more than any new novel I have seen, either English or American, for a number of years.

When I have time I should like to write to you exactly why it seems to me such a remarkable book. In fact it seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James. . . .12

By this time Gatsby has certainly proved a perennial favorite; it is a book which appeals to several age groups, ranging from high school students to college students to the middle-age group and even includes the reminiscent old folks. The novel has been transformed into a successful play, and a motion picture, and the pocket book edition, published in 1945, has remained a constant good-seller. No doubt Gatsby will remain the most lasting monument to Fitzgerald's literary fame.

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11. A letter from Gertrude Stein to Fitzgerald in The Crack-Up, p. 308.

12. A letter from T. S. Eliot to Fitzgerald dated December 31, 1925, in The Crack-Up, p. 310.

13. Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, p. iv.

## Tender is the Night

### 1. Its Shortcomings

Although Fitzgerald considered Tender is the Night his best piece of writing,<sup>1</sup> to most readers, it never seemed to equal the success of Gatsby. There are several reasons why Tender is the Night was not as popular as Gatsby. First of all, it was printed at a time, 1934, when books sales were low; and low was Fitzgerald's spirit. Secondly, the author-reader relationship is bad throughout the book. The book is weighty with too many characters, rambling and incoherent, and, unfortunately, the story of a deterioration, a type of story which interests few readers.

Arthur Mizener believes, in accord with Fitzgerald, that Tender is the Night is the best Fitzgerald book. But this writer feels that Tender is the Night as an example of craftsmanship is inferior to Gatsby. Mizener claims that through its more deeply felt, "philosophical" impact Tender is the Night eclipses Gatsby;<sup>2</sup> that is questionable: it is hard to believe that "philosophical" impact is more to be preferred in a book than craftsmanship. A truly good book needs quite

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1. Information given the present writer in an interview on April 17, 1954 with Fitzgerald's cousin and close friend Mrs. Conrad Little.

2. Mizener, Far Side of Paradise, p. 251.

a degree of both. And Gatsby has its philosophical moments, and, as far as craftsmanship is concerned, is superb.

Mizener in Fitzgerald's biography seems to rationalize Fitzgerald's faults in Tender is the Night by saying that due to the economic circumstances prevalent at the time very few books were selling well, and that the reviewers' opinions on the book were colored by their feelings concerning the intemperate life Fitzgerald was then leading. Granted that book sales were low at that time, is it not being a little too presumptive to say that all reviewers' opinions were colored and to cancel his faults on those bases?

The most glaring defect in Tender is the Night is found in the author-reader relationship. At first the story seems to revolve completely around Rosemary Hoyt, a young actress who is making a picture in Europe and falls in love with a married doctor, Dick Divers. Then the story switches its focus to Rosemary and Dick's relationship, then to Nicole, Divers' wife, and her husband, next, to Nicole's illness, and, finally, back to Divers' deterioration. The reader becomes very confused as to who the central character really is. Fitzgerald's constant changing of focus causes one to flounder about on the first reading of the book. And it is only through a second and third reading that the story assumes definite outlines and significances.

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The reason for writing from Rosemary's view point in the first of the book seems to rest in the fact that Fitzgerald was trying to recapture the subjective-objective approach he handled so well in Gatsby. But the nature of Tender is the Night, since it is deeply philosophical and highly psychological, led Fitzgerald to a confusion in his selection of incidents to tell. For example, by dwelling at length on Rosemary in his book, he leads the reader to desire some resolution in regard to Rosemary at the end of the story; she has become too important and cannot possibly be easily dismissed like narrator Nick Carraway in Gatsby. So, in this case, the author's development of Rosemary is too well-drawn for the minor part she plays. And the failure in regard to Rosemary in the first of Tender is the Night seems to be the falling pin which topples over several others, more especially in the case of Nicole.

Nicole Warren is first introduced to the reader as a wealthy Chicagoan who has married Divers because she is mentally unstable and needs someone to cling to. She seems to have figuratively bought Divers with the Warren fortunes; he is brilliant, charming, and shows promise of success as a psychologist-writer. But the story actively presents Divers as inane and debauched after their marriage. Divers debauches himself to a complete loss of face at the end of the book, while Nicole become secure, and self-sure

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and in the end walks off with Tommy Barban. When one first reads the story, he becomes baffled as to whether it is really the story of Dick Divers' deterioration or Nicole Divers' success in conquering insanity. So much effort is spent in analysing Nicole's schizophrenia, her seduction as a teen-ager by her own father, and her affair with Tommy Barban that one wonders if Fitzgerald was not somewhat confused in his own mind as to whose story he was attempting to relate.

Of course, Fitzgerald's own wife, Zelda, was suffering from schizophrenia at the time Tender is the Night was written. That could have lead him to dwell on Nicole's illness to such an extent. No doubt, his closeness to a schizophrenoid helped him write the awesome details of the disease more acutely and movingly. At any rate, his selection of incidents could have been vastly improved. Surely, no good craftsmanship is evident in a book which must be read three times to be fully comprehended. Acknowledging the circumstances under which he wrote the book, his wife's illness and his pressing indebtedness, it is amazing that he wrote as well as he did.

In regard to the characters in Tender is the Night, the main ones seem well-defined and realistic. However, several of the minor characters such as Mr. and Mrs. Dumphry, Signor Campion, and Collis Clay, who add little or nothing to the plot, could

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well have been dropped, and the compactness and coherency of the story would have been improved. The McKiscos, although modeled on Fitzgerald's European friends the Gerald Murphys, seem rather hazily defined, and Lady Caroline Sibly-Biers seems a rather confused characterization. It is the large number of relatively undefined characters introduced at the beginning along with the confused author-reader relationship, that causes the book to seem incoherent and rambling. Such faults could have been easily corrected. The revised copy of Tender is the Night left by Fitzgerald upon his death is probably immeasurably better than the original.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Its Good Points

Despite its several shortcomings, Tender is the Night is an exceptionally thought-provoking novel. The Saturday Review called it "ONE OF THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVELS OF THE CENTURY,"<sup>4</sup> and the Saturday Review was right; the innermost secrets of Dick and Nicole Divers are most effectively revealed. Very few novels in the annals of American literature are more penetrating, more soul-searching than Tender is the Night. The closeness of Fitzgerald to Zelda's illness provided him with the chance to observe at first hand the moods and frustrations of a schizophrenoid. Only close observation of the illness combined with

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3. Ibid., p. 240.

4. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tender is the Night, Bantam Edition, rear cover.

Fitzgerald's scintilla of literary genius could have produced the realistic Book Two of Tender is the Night dealing with Nicole's illness.

Rambling and incoherent and serious-purposed as it is at times, Tender is the Night manages to sparkle with its very American carefree conversations and outlook:

"The poor man," Nicole exclaimed. "Why did you want to saw him in two?"

"Naturally I wanted to see what was inside a waiter. Wouldn't you like to know what was inside a waiter?"

"Old menus," suggested Nicole with a short laugh. "Pieces of broken china and tips of pencil stubs."

"Exactly--but the thing was to prove it scientifically. And of course doing it with that musical saw would have eliminated any sordidness."

"Did you intend to play the saw while you performed the operation?" Tommy inquired.

"We didn't get quite that far. We were alarmed by the screams. We thought he might rupture something."

"All sounds very peculiar to me," said Nicole. "Any musician that'll use another musician's saw to-----"5

Every American should read Tender is the Night; the reader certainly gains a better understanding of his fellowman, his mannerisms and his functions. Fitzgerald registers in his book with such acute observations of his countrymen as the following:

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5. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

One of those passages, a play on some of the song successes of that day, is especially well-done; it exhibits well the skilful versatility of Fitzgerald:

They were in America now, even Franz with his conception of Dick as an irresistible Lothario would never have guessed that they had gone so far away. They were so sorry, dear; they went down to meet each other in a taxi, honey; they had preference in smiles and had met in Hindustan, and shortly afterward they must have quarreled for, nobody knew and nobody seemed to care--yet finally one of them had gone and left the other crying, only to feel blue, to feel sad.<sup>7</sup>

The most prominent good feature of Tender is the Night is that the story ends with nothing completely resolved in regard to the central character, Dick Divers. Actually, many critics claim that that feature is more of a detriment to the book than an aid. But a happy ending, a solution to Divers' problems, would seem a tramped up ending. A story of a deterioration must end sadly. Many of the tragedies of life are never completely resolved. And how well Fitzgerald knew life; he was then living a life as tragic as Divers!

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7. Ibid., p. 148.

### The Last Tycoon

Since there are extant only six chapters and some fragments of The Last Tycoon, one can make only a few deductions concerning it. To say that The Last Tycoon, if it were finished, would be the greatest of Fitzgerald's contributions to lasting literature would be dealing too much in presumptions. Yet many eminent critics of literature have suggested just that. Stephen Vincent Benet wrote of the book: ". . . The Last Tycoon shows what a really first class writer can do with material--how he gets under the skin. . . . Had Fitzgerald been permitted to finish the book I think there is no doubt it would have added a major character and a major novel to American fiction."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps that same opinion was sometimes offered by critics who failed to consider their proximity to the material, or by admirers too eager to eulogize the writer's last production upon the occasion of his untimely death. But The Last Tycoon must not be underpraised, either: although it lacks the spark and vigor of Gatsby, it still has many virtues to commend it.

The Last Tycoon reveals to Fitzgerald admirers a polished, well-contrived scheme, one closely akin to the masterful construction and finesse of Gatsby. Like Gatsby, it, too, is completely devoid of any trite references to the jazz age or of

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1. Stephen Vincent Benet, "The Last Tycoon," pp. 130-131, F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, edited by Alfred Kazin.

jazz age figures, all of which tends to prove that Fitzgerald did not have to allude to one certain period or keep within the bounds of a certain genre of literature to be successful. The paragraphs are mellow, clear, and one never doubts the verity.

In Monroe Stahr, the Jewish producer who ran a motion picture studio single-handed, Fitzgerald offers one of his most stirring character portrayals. With Monroe Stahr in the same category of excellence are the portraits of Cecilia Brady, the young daughter of an incompetent studio head and Kathleen Moore, Stahr's girl friend who reminds him of his first wife.

But the most significant feature of The Last Tycoon is not so much the character portrayal as it is the irony in connection with the character portrayal--the concrete understanding of Hollywood and its lost-it-allis:

We had lunch the next day at the Bev. Brown Derby, a languid restaurant, patronized for its food by clients who always look as if they'd like to lie down. There is some animation at lunch where the women put on a show for the first five minutes after they eat, but we were a tepid threesome. I should have come right out with my curiosity. Martha Dodd was 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."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the irony is so stimulating that time and again it has been copied, not directly, but copied. Throughout The Last Tycoon are sentences and conversations which have a familiar ring and have been duplicated in recent movies. In one instance especially the duplication is obvious: Kathleen in The Last Tycoon enters the room with "Tighten up your belt, baby. Let's get going," and in the motion picture "All About Eve" produced by Joseph Mankiewicz, the lines emerge as "Fasten your seat belt, baby. It's going to be a bumpy ride." When one considers that Fitzgerald had worked for Mankiewicz as a writer just before he died and that he hated Mankiewicz and accused Mankiewicz of ruining his best script, the connection seems somewhat substantiated.<sup>3</sup> No doubt, Mr. Mankiewicz, despite the fact that he revised Fitzgerald's scripts and then never used them, found something to admire in Fitzgerald's dialogue.

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3. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Stories of, edited by Malcolm Cowley, p. xx.

### Part III

#### The Summing Up

##### 1. The Short Stories

It was the practice of Fitzgerald's publishers to collect several of his best stories and publish them in a volume a season or two after the appearance of one of his novels. The practice is one Fitzgerald students should consider in studying the thought content of his novels, for the stories were usually part of a theme he was trying to convey in his novel of the moment.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the first two collections the stories like "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," "Tarquin of Cheapside," and "Jemina" smack of an undergraduate, and in an indirect sense they possess the mood and flavor of This Side of Paradise. One of the more somber, serious stories of the second collection,

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1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Stories of, ed. Malcolm Cowley, p. xix.



"May Day" (1920), seems a preliminary sketch for The Beautiful and Darned, and "Winter Dreams" (1922) and "Absolution" (1924) were written in early attempts at The Great Gatsby. In the seven years after Gatsby, stories such as "Babylon Revisited" were written with European backgrounds in anticipation of Tender is the Night.<sup>2</sup> No doubt, in the same manner, the Pat Hobby stories written for Esquire and the Hollywood scenarios were of much value to Fitzgerald in working on The Last Tycoon.

## 2. The Method

In a more significant way still the short stories contributed to the method of Fitzgerald's novel writing. His stories which were not sold were rendered serviceable through their being stripped of all phrases of interest. In some cases a whole story was sacrificed in order that a sentence or two might be used to strengthen a scene in a novel.<sup>3</sup> When clippings were taken from a short story and not used immediately in a novel, they were placed in his notebooks, which were after the fashion of Samuel Butler's Note-Books. Along with the clippings were placed other accumulations of material; all were organized into a definite coherence and general design by being sorted and grouped under headings in alphabetical order, in the following manner.<sup>4</sup>

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2. Ibid., p. xx.

3. Ibid., p. xx.

4. Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, edited by Edmund Wilson, p. 911.

A

## ANECDOTES

The absent-minded gentleman on the train started to get off at the wrong station. As he walked back to his seat he assumed a mirthless smile and said aloud as though he were talking to himself: "I thought this was Great Neck."<sup>5</sup>

B

## BRIGHT CLIPPINGS

Blossom Time--the greatest musical romance ever written. Cleveland: "One of the best musical sows written in modern times."<sup>6</sup>

C

## CONVERSATIONS AND THINGS OVERHEAD

"When I hear people bragging about their social position and who they are, and all that, I just sit back and laugh. Because I happen to be descended from Charlemagne. What do you think of that?" Josephine blushed for him.<sup>7</sup>

D

## DESCRIPTIONS OF THINGS AND ATMOSPHERE

New York's flashing, dynamic good looks, its tall man's quick-step.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Ibid., p. 93.  
 6. Ibid., p. 95.  
 7. Ibid., p. 96.  
 8. Ibid., p. 105.

E

## EPIGRAMS, WISECRACKS AND JOKES

Debut: the first time a young girl is seen drunk in public.<sup>9</sup>

He repeated to himself an old French proverb that he had made up that morning.<sup>10</sup>

Similar headings and their listings were included for every letter in the alphabet except P, Q, W, X, and Z.<sup>11</sup>

In reading Fitzgerald's notes we can find much to admire. The mixture of levity and serious thought makes interesting reading. And reading the notebooks in conjunction with the novels, especially in conjunction with Tender is the Night and The Last Tycoon, throws much light on the character of Fitzgerald as a man with a single personality, and as a writer with many personalities.

### 3. The Scope of the Stories

To deal exhaustively with Fitzgerald's short stories would be foolish. Only a few of his stories have a lasting appeal; the majority of them today seem trite and trivial. Most of them are tales for which the author was able to use details from his own travels, experiences, and associations for vividness. Mrs.

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9. Ibid., p. 125.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., pp. 128-242.

Conrad Little, a cousin of Fitzgerald, relates that Fitzgerald often used incidents from childhood experiences for the background of his stories. In one instance, when he was twelve years of age, he visited his uncle, Tom Fitzgerald, at Woodstock, a Roman Catholic seminary in Maryland, where Uncle Tom had just completed studies for the priesthood. Young Fitzgerald, it seems, was so very impressed by the somber look of the place and the menial tasks of the brothers that he often referred to his visit in conversation. Later, when he first went to New York to work, he did a story for Smart Set called "Benediction," in which he used the seminary at Woodstock as the setting, though he did not mention the name of the place. In due time, after publication of the story, Fitzgerald received a sharp note from the rector of the Woodstock seminary asking that he please refrain from using that seminary as setting for any future stories, or, at least, make the details less explicit.<sup>12</sup>

The short stories were published in four collections, Flappers and Philosophers (1920), Tales of the Jazz Age (1922), All the Sad Young Men (1926), and Taps at Reveille (1935). In all, at the time of his death, Fitzgerald had written approximately 160 stories; the forty-six stories published in the four collections include most of his best stories.<sup>13</sup> They seem to have

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12. Notes taken by the writer on April 17, 1954 from an interview with Mrs. Conrad Little at Virginia Beach, Virginia.

13. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Stories of, ed. Malcolm Cowley, p. xix.

slowly changed in theme as the years progressed. The early ones, like "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," are for the most part slight, puerile stories, typical of what one would find in any college magazine at any time.

The story which really set Fitzgerald off from the other young writers of his day as inaugurator and purveyor on paper of the mannerisms and exploits of the so-called Jazz Age was "Bernice Bobs Her Hair." That story of the transformation of an innocuous young girl from small-town Eau Claire to a socialite with a line and quite a following of beaux, though not now particularly shocking, is still as delightful today as it was when it appeared in 1920. And in the passing of another thirty-four years Bernice and her line will still have the glowing appeal of youth.

To Bernice the next week was a revelation. With the feeling that people really enjoyed looking at her and listening to her came the foundation of self-confidence. Of course there were numerous mistakes at first. She did not know for instance, that Draycott Deyo was studying for the ministry; she was unaware that he had cut in on her because he thought she was a quiet, reserved girl. Had she known these things she would not have treated him to the line which began "Hello, Shell Shock!" and continued with the bathtub story--"It takes a frightful lot of energy to fix my hair in the summer there's so much of it--so I always fix it first and

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powder my face and put on my hat; then I get into the bathtub, and dress afterward. Don't you think that's the best plan?"<sup>14</sup>

But "Bernice" is a story not out of Fitzgerald's usual category; that story has a spark of originality, a bit of the "stuff of life" in it. The majority of his earlier short story plots deal with old stalwarts: the middle-class boy cast off from the rich debutante, or equally nauseating, the sleepy, chivalrous South enraged against the brawny, defiant North. Fitzgerald was interested also in the contrast between East and West as a background element for the story, a contrast he used in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz."

Although Fitzgerald did not write all happy stories and then, in turn, write all sad stories, his stories grew mellow as he aged. Following his early success as Chronicler of the Jazz Age came a period in which his writings reflected glamor and disillusionment. Then came the retrospective type of stories with his Basil and Josephine series. Toward the last of his writing career, his stories contained more of an autobiographical insight. Sometimes the stories hinged on his life with Zelda and Scottie, as in his famous "Babylon Revisited." At other times, especially after his crack-up, he wrote ironical tales about Hollywood and a character named Pat Hobby; they

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14. Fitzgerald, Flappers and Philosophers, pp. 179-180.

were tales in which he poked fun at his own weaknesses and shortcomings.

In only one of his first stories, "May Day," did Fitzgerald attempt serious writing. That story, long regarded by critics as one of his best, presents graphic failure in the person of Gordon Sterrett during 1920, when men were coming home from the war looking for jobs and drinking themselves sick. There is the ring of "lost youth" in "May Day," a ring echoed later in "The Last of the Belles." The serious tone of "May Day" also reminds one of "Babylon Revisited," the short story for which, undoubtedly, Fitzgerald will be most remembered. A spot check of the Tables of Contents of the myriad college freshman anthologies reveals that there are few which do not include "Babylon Revisited." Polling college people informs us that few know Fitzgerald except for the "Babylon Revisited" in their freshman anthologies.

It seems ironical that Fitzgerald should be remembered for a short story when his heart and soul were spent in his novels. He regarded himself as a novelist, and he expended less time, care, and effort in short story writing. "Stories are best written in either one jump or three according to the length," he wrote his daughter. "The three-jump story should be done on three successive days, then a day or so for revise and off she goes."<sup>15</sup>

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15. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Stories of, p. xix.

Unfortunately, when he was writing his short stories, Fitzgerald was working solely for money. Writing the short stories paid him richly--it entailed less work and brought more money than writing novels; for instance, in 1929 his stories earned him \$27,000, but his revenue from all other sources amounted to \$5,450.<sup>16</sup> That he seldom took his short stories seriously is evident from the attitude he maintained in writing the Prefaces and Tables of Contents to his Collections. For example, he thus prefaced his "Porcelain and Pink":

PORCELAIN AND PINK . . . . . Page 126

"And do you write for any other magazines?" inquired the young lady.

"Oh, yes," I assured her. "I've had some stories and plays in the 'Smart Set' for instance--"

The young lady shivered.

"The 'Smart Set!'" she exclaimed. "How can you? Why, they publish stuff about girls in blue bathtubs, and silly things like that!"<sup>17</sup>

With due apologies for this impossible Table of Contents, I tender these tales of the Jazz Age into the hands of those who read as they run and run as they read.<sup>18</sup>

He enjoyed writing the short stories. "Books were, however, his first interest and it was the novel, not the short story,

16. Ibid.

17. Fitzgerald, Tales of the Jazz Age, p. viii.

18. Ibid., p. xi.



that he described as 'the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another.' 19

#### 4. Writer in Retrospect

Only in the past few years, especially since the publication of Mizener's biography, has Fitzgerald begun to take his place among great American novelists. The novel which insured that place was The Great Gatsby. It was a long, hard climb for Fitzgerald; and in Fitzgerald's development as a writer, the novice can find much to emulate and much to reject.

In summarizing the attributes of Fitzgerald as a lasting American novelist, we find many excellent points in his favor:

1. He displayed a remarkable personality and sophistication, immense capacity to keep in step with the times and clothe them in superb words and imagery, and a theme of universal appeal--all of which was evident in This Side of Paradise.
2. He could pack much excitement into a few pages in a dénouement in a clear masterful writing style, as exemplified in The Beautiful and Damned.

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19. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Stories of, p. xix.

3. His compact, yet well-defined plot, with its intense subjective-objective author-reader relationship and mastery of character portrayal, irony, symbolism, and paradox, exemplified in The Great Gatsby, is transcendent.
4. His intense, intimate character associations and evident scientific research into the machinations of the human mind are thought-provoking in Tender is the Night.
5. His mellowed style and ability to self-inflict irony in The Last Tycoon exhibit skill only acquired by the most mature writer.

On the other hand, one must guard against the early puerile exhibitions of This Side of Paradise, and the rambling incoherency of Beautiful and Damned and Tender is the Night. A lesson can be learned from the life of Fitzgerald also: popular opinion is difficult to change. The opinion that Fitzgerald was first a short story writer, and secondly a novelist is gradually changing, however. Popular notion wears well, and lasting fame as a novelist is something earned through the years. One step in the right direction was the Fitzgerald revival period in 1949-51, during which all of Fitzgerald's novels were reprinted and a collection of his short stories was published.

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The Fitzgerald revival, spurred on by Arthur Mizener's biography The Far Side of Paradise did much to substantiate Fitzgerald's position as a novelist. Since 1949 The Great Gatsby has been re-examined and found near-perfect; today it is presented as number one on a list of recommended novels for high school and college reading, by a company selling other reprints like Rabbitt, Green Mansions, and A Farewell to Arms.<sup>20</sup> It is understandable that Gatsby, with its masterful style and compactness, would be a good novel to interest young people in the fundamentals of good writing.

Those who study Fitzgerald can readily see that this "cracked plate" as he called himself, has something to offer all literary enthusiasts. He is a novelist who speaks with the authority of success and the authority of failure. He is, in a sense, a literary judge, who realized his own shortcomings too late, a teacher who met with all the pitfalls of a writing career, whose literary style reached perfection once. A study of his life, his ideals, and his reflections can point the way to success and save one from many of the mistakes of beginning writers. His fame as an American novelist will indeed be lasting.

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20. See "A Recommended Reading List For High Schools and Colleges," [p. 3], published by Bantam Books, Inc., Spring, 1954.

APPENDIX



The above picture of Fitzgerald is a picture that was taken when he was twenty-one years old. The writer is indebted to Mrs. Conrad Little for allowing it to be reproduced. It has appeared previously in several leading magazines.

The picture on the following page is a photograph of a portrait of F. Scott Fitzgerald painted by the Richmond Artist David Silvette two years before Fitzgerald's death. It was discovered after the Richmond Book and Author Dinner in 1951 which Arthur Mizener attended. It seems that when Silvette met Mizener at the dinner he recalled having the portrait in his attic.

Fitzgerald's relatives say they had forgotten about the portrait until the dinner and that the reason that Fitzgerald did not buy it at the time it was painted was that he was in dire financial straits at the time. The story goes that Mizener offered Silvette \$2500 for the portrait, but Silvette would not sell it. At any rate, the picture is by far the best one ever made of the author. It has never been used previous to this thesis. When it is compared with the earlier picture on page 92, one can see the immense change from immaturity to maturity in Fitzgerald's features.



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VIA

Clifton Lanier Warren was born in Portsmouth, Virginia twenty-two years ago. After graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School with honors, in 1949, he entered the University of Richmond with the intention of becoming a lawyer. But his intense interest in English and history led him to veer slightly from his three-year pre-law course and pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree, which he received in 1952, before entering a law school. However, after a semester's try at law, he found English, especially the technique of novel writing, more to his taste, and decided to work toward a Master's degree in English.

Twentieth century authors and their novels, and the history of Virginia during the decade of the 1920's draw his attention most. Writing is his hobby, and he is engaged at present in planning a first novel, which is concerned with the exploits of a Dismal Swamp bootlegger during the "roaring twenties." He is a member of the faculty of Great Bridge High School in Tidewater Virginia.