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1969

THE STORIES AND ESSAYS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD:
A CRITICAL STUDY

by

RUTH M. PRIGOZY

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in English in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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1969

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ERRATA

The following changes should be made in the text:

Page 10, line four: "artificial as they may be" to "artificial as that may be."

Page 23, line six: "notably" to "notable."

Page 51, line fifteen: "father" to "rather."

Page 96, note twelve: "Nathaniel" to "Nathanael."

Page 131, line twenty: "flories" to "glories."

Page 135, line one: "becom-s" to "becomes."

Page 195, line one: "stypifying" to "stupefying."

Page 255, line eight: "sunning" to "stunning."

Page 268, line twelve: "anateurish" to "amateurish."

PREFACE

For much of the material on which this dissertation is based I am indebted to the Rare Book and Manuscript Division of the Princeton University Library, particularly to Mr. Alexander P. Clark, Curator of Manuscripts, and Mrs. Wanda Randall, his assistant.

While at Princeton, I consulted the following material from the Fitzgerald collection:

1. Stories--Three file boxes, divided alphabetically, of most of the published stories and essays and a sizable number of unpublished works and fragments. Many of the folders contain two or three carbon copies of a story, each marked by the author's corrections or revisions.

2. Tearsheets--Two boxes of Fitzgerald's own collection of tearsheets of the stories and essays as originally published in the magazines. The tearsheets are copiously marked by Fitzgerald with underlinings, marginal notations and often a note at the top of the title page, "Stripped and permanently buried," or "Not to be reprinted!"

3. Bertie Barr Collection--Contributed by Mrs. Barr, a friend of Fitzgerald's from the thirties, a file containing a number of stories in typescript form.

4. Marie Shank Collection--Another file of stories, some unpublished, contributed by Marie Shank, Fitzgerald's

former secretary, containing a number of the stories in typescript and autograph form.

5. The Esquire Collection--Correspondence with Esquire magazine editors and tearsheets of stories originally published in that magazine.

6. F. Scott Fitzgerald Additional Papers: Works--Two boxes of additional papers consisting of early contributions to the Nassau Literary Magazine and several unpublished articles and stories.

7. Sheilah Graham Collection: File contributed by Miss Graham containing correspondence, reading lists Fitzgerald prepared for her, a short story written by Miss Graham and edited by Fitzgerald, and other items relevant to his last years in Hollywood.

8. Ledger--Large book where Fitzgerald recorded the sale and price he received for each of his published works, dating from 1922. The Ledger also contains an "Outline Chart of My Life"--briefly recorded recollections from his childhood and continued regularly through 1936, occasionally after that date.

Abbreviations: SEP Saturday Evening Post
 NLM Nassau Literary Magazine
 WHC Woman's Home Companion

Collected Stories

Flappers and
Philosophers,
1921

	<u>Other Major</u> <u>Collections</u>	<u>First Publication</u>
The Offshore Pirate		1920 SEP
The Ice Palace	Cowley	1920 SEP
Head and Shoulders		1920 SEP
The Cut-Glass Bowl		1920 <u>Scribner's Mag.</u>
Bernice Bobs Her Hair	Cowley	1920 SEP
Benediction (See "The Ordeal," June 1915, NLM)		1920 <u>Smart Set</u>
Dalrymple Goes Wrong		1920 <u>Smart Set</u>
The Four Fists		1920 <u>Scribner's Mag.</u>

Tales of the Jazz Age,
1922

The Jelly Bean	<u>Six Tales...</u>	1920 <u>Metropolitan Mag.</u>
The Camel's Back	<u>Six Tales...</u>	1920 SEP
May Day	Cowley	1920 <u>Smart Set</u>
Porcelain and Pink		1920 <u>Smart Set</u>
The Diamond As Big As the Ritz	Cowley	1920 <u>Smart Set</u>
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button	<u>Six Tales...</u>	1921 <u>Collier's</u>
Tarquin of Cheapside	<u>Six Tales...</u>	1921 <u>Smart Set</u>
O Russet Witch (Orig. "His Russet W.")	<u>Six Tales...</u>	1921 <u>Metropolitan Mag.</u>
The Lees of Happiness	<u>Six Tales...</u>	1920 <u>Chicago Sun.Trib.</u>
Mr. Icky (See "The Usual Thing"-1916, NLM)		1920 <u>Smart Set</u>
Jemina (See <u>NLM</u> , 1916)		1921 <u>Vanity Fair</u>

All the Sad Young Men,
1926

The Rich Boy	Cowley	1926 <u>Red Book</u>
Winter Dreams	Cowley	1922 <u>Metropolitan Mag.</u>
The Baby Party	Cowley	1925 <u>Hearst's Inter- nat'l</u>
Absolution	Cowley	1924 <u>American Mercury</u>

All the Sad Young Men,
1926 (continued)

Other Major
Collections

First Publication

Rags Martin-Jones and
the Prince of Wales
The Adjuster
Hot and Cold Blood

Six Tales...
Six Tales...

1924 McCall's
1925 Red Book
1923 Hearst's Inter-
nat'l

"The Sensible Thing"
Gretchen's Forty Winks

Cowley
Six Tales...

1924 Liberty
1924 SEP

Taps At Reveille, 1935

(Basil Duke Lee)
The Scandal Detectives
The Freshest Boy
He Thinks He's
Wonderful
The Captured Shadow
The Perfect Life

Cowley
Cowley

1928 SEP
1928 SEP

(Josephine)
First Blood
A Nice Quiet Place
A Woman With a Past

Cowley

1930 SEP
1930 SEP
1930 SEP

Crazy Sunday
Two Wrongs
The Night of Chan-
cellorsville
The Last of the Belles
Majesty
Family In the Wind
A Short Trip Home
One Interne
The Fiend
Babylon Revisited

Cowley
Cowley

1930 SEP
1930 SEP
1935 Esquire
1929 SEP
1929 SEP
1932 SEP
1927 SEP
1932 SEP
1935 Esquire
1931 SEP

The Stories of F. Scott
Fitzgerald, Sel. by
Malcolm Cowley, 1951
(Stories uncollected
elsewhere)

Magnetism
The Rough Crossing
The Bridal Party
An Alcoholic Case
The Long Way Out
Financing Finnegan
Three Hours Between Planes
The Lost Decade

1928 SEP
1929 SEP
1930 SEP
1937 Esquire
1937 Esquire
1938 Esquire
1941 Esquire
1939 Esquire

Afternoon Of An Author,
1958

Other Major
Collections

First Publication

(Basil Duke Lee)
A Night At the Fair
Forging Ahead
Basil and Cleopatra

1928 SEP
1929 SEP
1929 SEP

Outside the Cabinet-
Maker's
Author's House
One Trip Abroad
"I Didn't Get Over"
Afternoon Of An Author
Design in Plaster
News of Paris--Fifteen
Years Ago

1928 Century Magazine
1936 Esquire
1930 SEP
1936 Esquire
1936 Esquire
1939 Esquire
1947 Furioso

The Pat Hobby Stories,
1962

All published in
Esquire

Pat Hobby's Christmas Wish
A Man In the Way
"Boil Some Water--
Lots of It" Cowley
Teamed With Genius Cowley
Pat Hobby and Orson
Wells
Pat Hobby's Secret
Pat Hobby, Putative Father
The Homes of the Stars
Pat Hobby Does His Bit
Pat Hobby's Preview
No Harm Trying Cowley
A Patriotic Short Cowley
On the Trail of Pat
Hobby
Fun In An Artist's
Studio
Two Old-Timers Cowley
Mightier Than the Sword
Pat Hobby's College Days

1940
1940
1940
1940
1940
1940
1940
1940
1940
1940
1940
1941
1941
1941
1941
1941
1941
1941

The Apprentice Fiction of
F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1965

The Mystery of the Raymond
Mortgage

1909 Now and Then
(St. Paul's
Academy)

Reade, Substitute Right
Half
A Debt of Honor
The Room with the Green Blinds

1910
1910
1911

The Apprentice Fiction
of F. Scott Fitzgerald,
1965 (continued)

Other Major
Collections

First Publication

A Luckless Santa Claus	1912	<u>Newman News</u>
The Trail of the Duke	1913	
Pain and the Scientist	1913	
Shadow Laurels	1915	<u>Nassau Literary</u>
The Ordeal	1915	<u>Magazine</u>
The Debutante	1917	(all of the
The Spire and the Gargoyle	1917	following)
Tarquin of Cheepside	1917	
Babes in the Woods	1917	
Sentiment--and the Use of Rouge	1917	
The Pierian Springs and the Last Straw	1917	
Appendix: The Death of My Father		undated

Collected Essays

The Crack-Up, 1945

Echoes of the Jazz Age	1931	<u>Scribner's Mag.</u>
My Lost City	1932	<u>first publication</u>
Ring	1933	<u>New Republic</u>
Sleeping and Waking	1934	<u>Esquire</u>
The Crack-Up	1936	<u>Esquire</u>
Handle With Care	1936	<u>Esquire</u>
Pasting It Together	1936	<u>Esquire</u>
Early Success	1937	<u>American Cavalcade</u>

Afternoon Of An Author,
1958

Princeton	1927	<u>College Humor</u>
Who's Who--And Why	1920	<u>SEP</u>
How to Live on \$36,000 A Year	1924	<u>SEP</u>
How to Live on Practi- cally Nothing a Year	1924	<u>SEP</u>
How to Waste Material: A Note on My Generation	1926	<u>Bookman</u>
Ten Years in the Adver- tising Business	1929	<u>Princeton Alumni Weekly</u>
One Hundred False Starts	1933	<u>SEP</u>

Uncollected Stories

<u>Title</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Issue</u>
Myra Meets His Family	1920	SEP	March 20
The Smilers	1920	Smart Set	June
The Popular Girl	1922	SEP	April 11, 18
Two For A Cent	1922	Metropolitan	April
Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar	1923	Hearst's Inter- national	May
Diamond Dick	1924	Hearst's Inter- national	April
The Third Casket	1924	SEP	May 31
The Unspeakable Egg	1924	SEP	July 12
John Jackson's Arcady	1924	SEP	July 26
The Pusher in the Face	1925	Woman's Home Companion	February
Love In the Night	1925	SEP	March 14
(Our Own Movie Queen-- written mostly by Zelda Fitzgerald	1925	Chicago Trib.	June 7)
One Of My Oldest Friends	1925	WHC	September
A Penny Spent	1925	SEP	October 10
Not In the Guidebook	1925	WHC	November
Presumption	1926	SEP	January 9
The Adolescent Marriage	1926	SEP	March 6
The Dance	1926	Red Book	June
Your Way and Mine	1927	WHC	May
Jacob's Ladder	1927	SEP	Aug. 20
Love Boat	1927	SEP	Oct. 8
The Bowl	1928	SEP	Jan. 21
At Your Age	1929	SEP	Aug. 17
The Swimmers	1929	SEP	Oct. 19
(The Millionaire's Girl-- written mostly by Zelda Fitzgerald	1930	SEP	May 17)
A Snobbish Story	1930	SEP	Nov. 29
The Hotel Child	1931	SEP	Jan. 31
Indecision	1931	SEP	May 16
A New Leaf	1931	SEP	July 4
Emotional Bankruptcy	1931	SEP	Aug. 15
Between Three and Four	1931	SEP	Sept. 5
A Change of Class	1931	SEP	Sept. 26
A Freeze-Out	1931	SEP	Dec. 19
Diagnosis	1932	SEP	Feb. 20
Six Of One	1932	Red Book	Feb.
Flight and Pursuit	1932	SEP	May 14
The Rubber Check	1932	SEP	Aug. 6
What A Handsome Pair	1932	SEP	Aug. 27
On Schedule	1933	SEP	March 18
More Than Just a House	1933	SEP	June 24
I Got Shoes	1933	SEP	Sept. 23
The Family Bus	1933	SEP	Nov. 4

Uncollected Stories (continued)

<u>Title</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Issue</u>
No Flowers	1934	SEP	July 21
New Types	1934	<u>SEP</u>	Sept. 22
In the Darkest Hour (The Count of Darkness, Part I)	1934	<u>Red Book</u>	October
Her Last Case	1934	<u>SEP</u>	Nov. 3
Shaggy's Morning	1935	<u>Esquire</u>	November
The Passionate Esquimo	1935	<u>Liberty</u>	June 8
The Intimate Strangers	1935	<u>McCall's</u>	June
The Count of Darkness (Part II)	1935	<u>Red Book</u>	June
Zone of Accident (reprinted in England as Except to Bill)	1935	SEP	July 13
Too Cute For Words	1936	<u>SEP</u>	April 18
A Kingdom in the Dark (Part III)	1935	<u>Red Book</u>	August
Fate In Her Hands	1936	<u>American Mag.</u>	April
Image On the Heart	1936	<u>McCall's</u>	April
Three Acts of Music	1936	<u>Esquire</u>	May
Inside the House	1936	<u>SEP</u>	June 13
The Ants At Princeton	1936	<u>Esquire</u>	June
An Author's Mother	1936	<u>Esquire</u>	September
"Send Me In, Coach"	1936	<u>Esquire</u>	November
Trouble	1937	<u>SEP</u>	March 6
The Honor of the Goon	1937	<u>Esquire</u>	June
The Guest in Room 19	1937	<u>Esquire</u>	October
In the Holidays	1937	<u>Esquire</u>	December
Strange Sanctuary	1939	<u>Liberty</u>	December 9
The End of Hate	1940	<u>Collier's</u>	June 22
On An Ocean Wave (by "Paul Elgin")	1941	<u>Esquire</u>	February
The Woman From Twenty-One	1941	<u>Esquire</u>	June
Gods of the Darkness (Part IV)	1941	<u>Red Book</u>	November
The Broadcast We Almost Heard Last September	1947	<u>Furioso</u>	Fall
Discard	1948	<u>Harper's Bazaar</u>	January
The World's Fair	1948	<u>Kenyon Review</u>	Autumn
The Last Kiss	1949	<u>Collier's</u>	April 16

Uncollected Essays and Humorous Sketches

This Is A Magazine	1920	<u>Vanity Fair</u>	December
What I Think and Feel At Twenty-Five	1922	<u>American Mag.</u>	Sept.
Imagination and A Few Mothers	1923	<u>LHJ</u>	June
The Most Disgraceful Thing I Ever Did	1923	<u>Vanity Fair</u>	October

Uncollected Essays and Humorous Sketches (continued)

<u>Title</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Issue</u>
Making Monogamy Work	1924	<u>Metropolitan</u> <u>Syndicate</u>	January
Our Irresponsible Rich	1924	<u>Metrop. Synd.</u>	February
The Cruise of the Rolling Junk	1924	<u>Motor</u>	Feb., March, April
The Moment of Revolt That Comes to Every Married Man	1924	<u>McCall's</u>	March
Wait Till You Have Children of Your Own	1924	<u>WHC</u>	July
What Do We Wild Young People Want For Our Children	1924	<u>WHC</u>	July
The Flapper's Little Brother	1924	<u>McCall's</u>	December
My Old New England Farm- house on the Erie	1925	<u>College Humor</u>	August
What Became of Our Flappers and Sheiks (with Zelda Fitzgerald)	1925	<u>McCall's</u>	October
A Short Autobiography	1929	<u>New Yorker</u>	May 25
Girls Believe in Girls	1930	<u>Liberty</u>	Feb. 8
Salesmanship on the Champs-Elysees	1930	<u>New Yorker</u>	Feb. 15
A Book of My Own	1937	<u>New Yorker</u>	Aug. 21

Unpublished works - including fragments

Cheerful Title - fragment
 Day Off From Love - fragment
 Dearly Beloved - story
 A Full Life - story
 I Never Thought the Day Would Come - monologue
 Lo, the Poor Peacock - story
 Miss Frankenstein - fragment
 My Generation - essay
 Offside Play - story
 Pat Hobby's Grey Days - fragment
 Pat Hobby's Hour - fragment
 The Pearl and the Fur - story
 Produced by Pat Hobby - fragment
 Rescue - fragment
 Reunion At the Fair - Pat Hobby fragment
 Salute to Lucy and Elsie - story
 Thank You For the Light - story
 Women In the House - story

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The publication last year of Jackson Bryer's massive bibliography on the critical reputation of F. Scott Fitzgerald¹ makes it almost mandatory that anyone undertaking a new study of Fitzgerald justify the endeavor. Bryer's description of over 2,000 reviews, books and articles about Fitzgerald suggests that any new critical perspectives on this author will have to emanate from some future, entirely fresh-eyed generation of scholars.

However, amid all the critical activity Mr. Bryer so accurately reports, there is one area--the short stories and essays--which has remained until now virtually untouched save for passing references in a score of books and articles concerned primarily with the novels, and one Ph.D. dissertation.² The author of the dissertation, proceeding on the assumption that there is no reason to investigate "dreary" stories of dubious quality, "insufficiently complex" to justify analysis,³ confines his discussion to less than one-third of the 217 stories and essays, published and unpublished, in the Fitzgerald canon. Surely Fitzgerald's reputation as a major American writer is sufficient reason to examine everything he wrote. A detailed critical study

is all the more imperative since this work constitutes the bulk of his literary activity. The same devotion to literary scholarship which applauds, from Berkeley to Washington Square, the discovery of a new Whitman poem demands that we pay at least some attention to the hitherto unregarded efforts of an important figure in twentieth-century American literature.

A useful purpose will be served simply if this study rescues Fitzgerald's stories and essays, once and for all, from the corruptions of biographical interpretation. They deserve a new treatment without sidelong glances at the author's state of sobriety while working, or futile guesses about the pernicious effect on his career of a "psychotic wife," a "fading reputation," and "high living."⁴

Fitzgerald was always serious about his short stories and essays. As early as 1920 he remarked, not altogether facetiously, "The real business of life" is "the proper mixture of description and dialogue in the short story."⁵ Yet the argument most frequently advanced for disregarding this work is that it consists of "potboilers" turned out in haste under the pressure of accumulating financial obligations. The underlying assumption here is that Fitzgerald lacked seriousness, that he "sold out"⁶ early to the purveyors of slick, tawdry sentimental fiction--the large-circulation magazines--in exchange for the money that would secure his entrance into the luminous and luxurious world he described so brilliantly. This view of Fitzgerald

assumes further that he wrote to specifications dictated by the editors of these magazines--like Lorimer of the Saturday Evening Post--and that he lived for twenty years alternately writing and apologizing for his magazine work. Even Edmund Wilson, his close friend, inaccurately observed that Fitzgerald's notebooks represented "an activity of his mind and craft so much higher than his rather inferior magazine fiction that it was difficult for him to incorporate them [the notebooks] in it."⁷ In fact, the notebooks consist largely of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs "stripped" from these stories and then "permanently buried" or excluded from subsequent re-publication.⁸

Much of the blame for these misconceptions is Fitzgerald's. Critics are only too willing to take a writer at his word, especially if the word is self-deprecatory. Fitzgerald used "trash" unsparingly to describe his magazine efforts. "My trash for the Post grows worse and worse as there is less and less heart in it. Strange to say my whole heart was in my first trash."⁹ But he never really thought of his stories and essays as trash, as his letters, notebooks and essays make patently clear. In the same letter in which he describes his "trash," he confesses his inability to "write down"--to do, in other words--what his friends and critics assumed he had been doing all along. "People don't seem to realize that for an intelligent man writing down is about the hardest thing in the world." What Fitzgerald did exhibit was a kind of bravado, subtly

disarming the critics by incorporating their judgments and dicta into his own vocabulary. James E. Miller concludes that Fitzgerald was "frivolous and irresponsible" when he said, "'The Camel's Back' was written one day in the city of New Orleans, with the express purpose of buying a platinum and diamond wrist watch which cost six hundred dollars."¹⁰ Normal intelligence and common sense dictate that we regard this confession as the defiance of a very young, brash and happy man suffering only from the headiness of instant success. Actually, Fitzgerald never relaxed his professionalism and personal pride in the craft of writing. He put the best of himself into his stories:

I have asked a lot of my emotions--one hundred and twenty stories. The price was high, right up with Kipling, because there was one little drop of something--not blood, not a tear, not my seed, but me more intimately than these, in every story, it was the extra I had. Now, it has gone and I am just like you now.¹¹

Later, after his health had failed, his reputation had dwindled, and his money had disappeared, he clung tenaciously, even defiantly, to his craftsman's pride. "All the small writers look up to me. I am a top-notch--I am the maitre. My stories get truer and truer. I can't keep the truth out of them. I am part of the race consciousness and so have influenced the language of youth and youth itself."¹²

Perhaps because of his total commitment to his art, Fitzgerald was often a notoriously poor judge of his own work. Possibly his most serious failure at characterization is Philippe in the medieval stories, about whom he remarked,

"He is one of the best characters I've ever drawn."¹³ He told Kenneth Littauer that one story, which should have remained unpublished, was finished "to my satisfaction... because the last version felt right."¹⁴ "The Intimate Strangers," from any angle an outstanding failure, he described on his tearsheet as "one of my most dramatic stories," and he thought highly enough of it to recommend it, modestly, to a good friend.¹⁵

Occasionally, his judgments were sound,¹⁶ but these represent isolated cases of objectivity rather than adherence to rigorous critical standards. Not unexpectedly, such random evidence has allowed otherwise perceptive critics to ignore his questionable judgments and conclude, as James E. Miller does, that Fitzgerald's ability to criticize himself resulted in the elimination of technical and artistic weaknesses from his work. "Fitzgerald's quick awareness and frequently clear understanding of his own failure in craftsmanship must have figured importantly in the development of his fictional technique."¹⁷ Miller's remark, of course, is applicable to only a few stories and to the novels.

We may say, then, that Fitzgerald was at all times completely serious about his magazine work and that his self-criticism should be regarded partly as the unrelenting devotion to his art which disallowed objectivity, partly as an understandable desire to disarm his critics by appearing to accept their verdict.

Along with the false notion that Fitzgerald was frivolous, that he consciously bartered his talent, there is the aforementioned pervasive opinion that his stories and essays were written to slick magazine specifications. There are two inaccuracies here which should be dispelled. The first is that the Saturday Evening Post and the other popular magazines in which his work appeared published only worthless fiction. Each issue of the Post contained eight or nine short stories and a lengthy serial; admittedly much of this fiction was inferior. But it also published many excellent stories by such notable writers as William Faulkner, Ring Lardner and Sinclair Lewis.¹⁸

The second and more serious assumption involved in the widespread condemnation of Fitzgerald as a "hack" writer is that forms and conventions for the short story were dictated by magazine editors. These men did not, in fact, speak with one voice. George H. Lorimer, editor of the Saturday Evening Post until 1935, was himself an author and he demanded an unusually high standard from his Post writers. He allowed them wide latitude in choice of subject and form, although within the area of commercial acceptability which depended on professional smoothness, readability, and verve. The Post encouraged, but did not demand, strong plots, leisurely narrative, a good mixture of dialogue and action and vivid characters. These requirements, while not stimulating radical departures from tradition, also did not necessarily constrict or hamper creative instincts. Happy

endings were not prescribed, as proved by the publication in the Post of "Babylon Revisited," "The Rough Crossing," "Two Wrongs," and "One Trip Abroad." The typical or predictable Post stories offer greater testimony to the paucity of imaginative short story writers than to the rigidity or decorum of its editors.¹⁹

Fitzgerald's letters underscore his independence as well as his dedication to his work. Although commercial writing is, he admits, a "definite trick," he brings to it the "intelligence and good writing" to which a sensitive editor like Lorimer might respond. In Lorimer's successor, "an up-and-coming young Republican who gives not a damn about literature," he places the blame for the plethora of "escape stories about the brave frontiersmen...or fishing, or football captains...nothing that would even faintly shock or disturb the reactionary bourgeois."²⁰ He concedes that he has tried but cannot write such stories. "As soon as I feel I am writing to a cheap specification my pen freezes and my talent vanishes over the hill...."²¹ To his agent, Harold Ober, he confesses that he cannot "rush things. Even in years like '24,' '28,' '29,' '30, all devoted to short stories, I could not turn out more than 8-9 top-price stories a year. It simply is impossible--all my stories are conceived like novels, require a special emotion, a special experience--so that my readers...know that each time it'll be something new, not in form but in substance."²²

His correspondence with Maxwell Perkins and Arnold

Gingrich shows him fighting his editors with fierce tenacity for the retention of a single comma. "I would a hundred times rather half a dozen errors creep in than have half a dozen humorous points and carefully considered rhythms spoiled by some school marm."²³ He is neither facetious nor factitious when he reiterates, "The only way I can write a decent story is to imagine no one's going to accept it and who cares. Self-consciousness about editors is ruinous to me."²⁴

Finally, the most persuasive argument for a new study of Fitzgerald's short stories and essays is simply that they must be evaluated as literature--and can be evaluated only by thoughtful and thorough consideration of every one of them. It is apparent almost at the outset that Fitzgerald was an uneven short story writer, far better than critics have generally maintained, yet one who produced few wholly successful works. By virtue of his extraordinary rhetorical gifts, there are elements of such brilliance in a remarkably large number of the stories that Ellen Moers, flouting the majority view, declares in a hyperbolic leap: "It may be argued that Fitzgerald's best work, with the one exception of The Great Gatsby, appeared in the 'slicks.' The two dozen or so first-rate stories among those bought by the Post, McCall's, Red Book, Liberty and so on easily contain more first-rate work than he put into any one of his long novels."²⁵

If after careful scrutiny of the stories and essays and without making sweeping judgments which are hardly likely to

hold up, we are able to determine when and why Fitzgerald succeeds or fails, if we can in the end offer criteria against which we and others may judge this work, we shall have served both Fitzgerald and the cause of literary scholarship well.

Excluding letters and notebooks, the Fitzgerald material on which this study is based includes 97 collected stories, 77 uncollected stories, 17 collected essays and sketches, 19 uncollected essays and sketches and 24 unpublished stories, essays, fragments and working outlines. The uncollected works include magazine fiction originally published in Red Book, The Saturday Evening Post, The Women's Home Companion, Liberty, and McCall's, among other popular magazines. Fitzgerald kept tearsheets on which he carefully underlined sections which might be excised for future use and where he indicated by terse comments where he was less than satisfied with a published work. The tearsheets have been consulted wherever available, and have proved especially useful in studying the uncollected works which were not edited by Fitzgerald for re-publication.

Excluding the apprentice fiction which dates from 1909, the stories and essays appeared in the commercial magazines from 1920 to 1940 during Fitzgerald's lifetime (only about half of them have been collected), and posthumously, in 1941, 1948 and 1949. In 1965, his apprentice fiction was published.²⁶ The inaccessibility of much of the Fitzgerald canon underscores the need for a complete and uniform

edition of his works.

Succeeding chapters are based on the belief that to comprehend or appreciate a work of art, one must first isolate its separate elements from the context of the whole, artificial as they may be. There is no other way by which we may set up useful evaluative criteria. E. K. Brown notes, "All criticism...is artificial....The artificiality is justified if when one turns back from the criticism to the novels these appear more intelligible and more delightful."²⁷ The same may be said of the short story. If the elements selected for study are in themselves real and not constructed distinctions, if they are vitally significant to the successful evaluation of the entire work, then the study need never bog down in trivia. The simplest and most obvious elements in a work of fiction are Plot and Plot Movement, or how the plot develops; Character, including the author's distance from his characters and his narrative point of view; Rhetoric, the art of writing well in prose, including imagery, symbolism, narration, and dialogue; and Theme, his subjects and how he treats them. Accordingly, subsequent chapters will deal with each one of these elements in connection with F. Scott Fitzgerald's stories and essays. (The distinction between Fitzgerald's fiction and non-fiction is not significant except, of course, for Plot.) Although the apprentice fiction and the Pat Hobby stories seem to fall into separate categories--the one significant less for the stories themselves than for what they reveal

about Fitzgerald's development, and the other forming a unit as no other group of stories do, functioning almost as an epigraph to his career as a short story writer--they will be discussed along with the other stories throughout the study. The last chapter will include final evaluation of Fitzgerald's stories and essays and a discussion of their relationship to his novels.

Underlying this study are three assumptions about Fitzgerald's stories and essays: first, that the keynote is variety--in types of stories, methods, fictional techniques, settings, even character. Unfortunately and perhaps as a result, it is entirely possible for someone to read a Fitzgerald story and not recognize his hand in it. Unlike Hemingway and Faulkner, he usually failed to imprint or project on his work a distinctive individual style. (A possible exception is his rhetoric.)

The second assumption is that Fitzgerald, even early in his career, experimented frequently with themes, plots and characters, less often with rhetoric. It is not accurate to say that he worked entirely within the old or genteel tradition of the short story.²⁸ The late stories are markedly different from the early group and exhibit a willingness to replace characteristic forms with, for Fitzgerald, radical innovations (i.e., "Three Acts of Music").

And the third assumption, already implied, is that Fitzgerald's stories and essays reveal a marked pattern of development. They fall into three groups: the early stories

about golden flappers and idealistic philosophers; the middle, embarrassingly sentimental, often mawkish stories where paradoxically, the level of his interests is higher than ever; and finally, the late stories, marked by new techniques--ellipsis, compression, suggestion--but curiously enervated, shorn of feeling. Close to these but yet alone stand the Pat Hobby stories, where the old vitality re-emerges in a last hurrah of corrosive bitterness--a literature of humiliation.

In 1960, Charles Fenton, surveying the state of American literary scholarship,²⁹ deplored "the jerry-built quality of the present edifice of Fitzgerald scholarship." He blamed it on the absence of a "preparatory and appropriate survey or analysis of his work" preceding the publication of many reviews, critical essays and Arthur Mizener's biography.³⁰

Although the situation Fenton described has improved during the last eight years, the novels have been the major beneficiaries of the new scholarship.

Among the eight recent full-length studies of Fitzgerald,³¹ several significantly explore his technique as a writer. Kenneth Eble's F. Scott Fitzgerald covers more of the short stories than any of the others, but since his is a critical survey of Fitzgerald's life and work, he is able to devote no more than a few lines to a story.

James E. Miller explores primarily Fitzgerald's craftsmanship as a novelist, but he does trace the relationships

between several stories and the novels. Here too, concern is primarily with the latter and although, like Eble's, Miller's remarks are always perceptive, the stories receive inadequate attention.

Henry Dan Piper's critical portrait is a careful and comprehensive account of Fitzgerald's development as a writer, with particularly valuable analyses of the author's late Hollywood fiction, notably the Pat Hobby stories. Piper devotes his efforts chiefly to the novels and introduces considerable biographical data to support his critical claim--that Fitzgerald's middle-class background was the decisive factor in the development of his point of view toward the rich.

Richard Lehan's book, the latest study of Fitzgerald's craftsmanship, leans too heavily on biography--"Fitzgerald's sense of his experience"--to support his critical premise, that Fitzgerald was a romantic writer in the Keatsian tradition. The result is an imbalance between close textual analysis and absorption in the "complexity of [Fitzgerald's] life."

Sergio Perosa's study of Fitzgerald traces the author's stylistic maturation from a romantic to a Jamesian or English style which Perosa prefers. He also analyzes a number of the stories, pointing up their connections with the novels. Many of Perosa's critical judgments are questionable (his negative verdict on "The Rich Boy," for example), and several factual inaccuracies appear (for example, he

incorrectly identifies the narrator of "A Short Trip Home" as "Ellen's little brother," when in fact he is a lifetime friend, about her age, and probably in love with her).

Robert Sklar's recent study of Fitzgerald cites many of the stories to develop a thesis: that Fitzgerald's fictional growth must be observed in terms of its relationship to the conventions of the genteel tradition.³² Although Sklar relies strongly on his premise, he is more successful in his analyses of the novels to which he brings critical objectivity than in his descriptions of the stories which he sees solely in terms of their relationship to his thesis.

One of the most important scholarly works of recent years is Matthew J. Bruccoli's The Composition of "Tender Is the Night," a sedulous textual analysis of many fragments and drafts of the novel, tracing the evolution of Fitzgerald's techniques and ideas.

The studies by Goldhurst and Turnbull are strictly biographical; the first describes Fitzgerald's relationships with friends and colleagues, and the second is an excellent and objective portrait by one who knew and liked the author.

In the two major historical surveys of the American short story of his era, both Ray B. West and Austin M. Wright pay scant attention to Fitzgerald's contribution to the genre.³³ Out of the hundreds of articles about Fitzgerald described in Bryer's bibliography, a few deserve special mention for their illumination of important aspects

of his art: Wright Morris, "The Function of Nostalgia";³⁴ William Troy, "F. Scott Fitzgerald--The Authority of Failure";³⁵ D. W. Harding, "Mechanisms of Misery."³⁶ These essays, along with the careful studies of Fitzgerald's craftsmanship by Eble, Miller, Piper, Bruccoli and Sklar, point the way for future Fitzgerald scholars.

NOTES

¹Jackson Bryher, The Critical Reputation of F. Scott Fitzgerald (New Haven, 1967).

²Kenneth C. Frederick, The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald, unpubl. diss. (Univ. of Michigan, 1963).

³Ibid., p. 6.

⁴Harry T. Moore, Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Craft of Fiction, by Richard D. Lehan (Carbondale, Ill., 1966), p. vi.

⁵F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Who's Who--and Why," Saturday Evening Post, Sept. 18, 1920; reprinted in Afternoon of an Author (Princeton, 1957).

⁶John Berryman, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," Kenyon Review, VIII (Winter, 1946), 109-110. "...He couldn't use his gift because he no longer had it. He had sold it for money.... Fitzgerald appears to have lived his life in the well-heeled world of popular writing...he accepted its standards, made his friends in it, castrated his work for it and took its rewards."

Sergio Perosa, The Art of F. Scott Fitzgerald, trans. by Charles Matz and the author (Ann Arbor, 1965), p. 6.

"A desperate drive to make money...compelled him to the writing of numberless short stories of little or no value."

John Kuehl, "Scott Fitzgerald's Critical Opinions,"

Modern Fiction Studies, VII (Spring, 1961), 3. "Scott Fitzgerald wrote for money more bad fiction than any other American of similar stature."

⁷Edmund Wilson, Introduction to "Notebooks," The Crack-Up (New York, 1945), p. 91.

⁸The phrase, "stripped and permanently buried," appears on almost one-half of the tearsheets of the stories in the Princeton collection of his papers. His method was, after publication, to comb the stories for particularly felicitous or vivid phrases, transfer them to his notebooks and then use them, wherever appropriate, in the novels. Wilson's inaccuracy reveals only his lack of familiarity with the stories as originally published--not an uncommon failing in Fitzgerald's critics.

⁹To. H. L. Mencken, May 24, 1925, The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, ed. by Andrew Turnbull (New York, 1963), p. 481.

¹⁰James E. Miller, Jr., F. Scott Fitzgerald--His Art and His Technique (New York, 1964), pp. 52-53.

¹¹"Notebooks," p. 165.

¹²Quoted in Andrew Turnbull, Scott Fitzgerald (New York, 1962), p. 259.

¹³To Maxwell Perkins, Dec. 24, 1938, Letters..., pp. 281-283.

¹⁴To Kenneth Littauer, July 18, 1939, Letters..., p. 586.

¹⁵To Mrs. Margaret Turnbull, May 11, 1935, Letters..., p. 438.

¹⁶Turnbull, p. 162. He told his agent that "'Your Way and Mine'...hasn't one redeeming touch of my usual spirit in it"; to Arnold Gingrich, May 11, 1935, Letters..., p. 524. "Esquire holds up beautifully but my dog story ['Shaggy's Morning'] was rotten."

¹⁷Miller, p. 53. Miller quotes Fitzgerald's judgment of "The Lees of Happiness"--a disappointment from any standpoint: "Of this story I can say that it came to me in an irresistible form, crying to be written. It will be accused perhaps of being a mere piece of sentimentality, but, as I saw it, it was a great deal more. If, therefore, it lacks the ring of sincerity, or even of tragedy, the fault rests not with the theme but with my handling of it."

¹⁸See Kenneth Eble, F. Scott Fitzgerald (New York, 1963), p. 61.

¹⁹The Post did reject "That Kind of Party," a Basil story, because it concerned kissing games; it is a poor story, mechanical and contrived, a likelier reason for its rejection?

²⁰To Zelda Fitzgerald, May 18, 1940, Letters..., p. 117.

²¹Ibid. The letter continues, "I honestly don't blame them for not taking the things that I've offered to them from time to time in the past three or four years. An explanation of their new attitude is that you no longer have a chance of selling a story with an unhappy ending....In fact the standard of writing from the best movies, like "Rebecca" is, believe it or not, much higher at present than that in the commercial magazines such as Collier's and the Post." This last is only partly true. It is in large measure an attempt to explain away his late (1935 on) failures and rejection slips. The reason is neither the mediocrity of his editors and the magazines nor his "selling out," but rather, his putting serious subjects into moribund forms. And his charge that stories with unhappy endings were unsalable is another rationalization for failure, common in his letters of this period.

²²To Harold Ober, July 2, 1935, Letters..., p. 399. Earlier, in 1930, he had admitted to his difficulties with form: "These Post stories in the Post are at least not any spot on me--they're honest and if their form is stereotyped people know what to expect when they pick up the Post."

²³To Maxwell Perkins, Dec. 18, 1934, Letters..., p. 258. He was referring to the Basil Duke Lee Stories.

²⁴To Harold Ober, rec. May 13, 1930, Letters..., p. 396;

to Kenneth Littauer, probably late July, 1939, Letters..., p. 588, he wrote, "I know that [stories about young love] is what is expected of me, but in that direction the well is pretty dry and I think I am much wiser in not trying to strain for it but rather to open up a new well, a new vein. You see, I not only announced the birth of my young illusions in This Side of Paradise but pretty much the death of them in some of my last Post stories like 'Babylon Revisited.' Lorimer seemed to understand this in a way. Nevertheless, an overwhelming number of editors continue to associate me with an absorbing interest in young girls--an interest that at my age would probably land me behind the bars." This attitude is not a product of his emotional state or his age. As early as 1920, he wrote to Perkins (Letters..., p. 145) complaining about his need for money: "Here...am I with six hundred dollars' worth of bills and owning Reynolds \$650.00 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." The last point is Fitzgerald's subjective interpretation of editors' demands; when he stopped "doing debutantes," they continued to buy his stories.

²⁵Ellen Moers, "F. Scott Fitzgerald: Reveille At Taps," Commentary (December, 1962), p. 527.

²⁶The Apprentice Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1909-1917, ed. John Kuehl (New Brunswick, N.J., 1965).

²⁷E. K. Brown, Rhythm in the Novel (Toronto, 1950), p. 7.

²⁸See Austin McGiffert Wright, The American Short Story in the Twenties (Chicago, 1961) and Robert Sklar, F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Last Laocoön (New York, 1967).

²⁹Charles Fenton, "The Last Years of 20th Century American Literature," South Atlantic Quarterly, LIX (Summer, 1960), 322-338.

³⁰Arthur Mizener, The Far Side of Paradise (New York, 1951).

³¹Kenneth Eble, F. Scott Fitzgerald (New York, 1963); William Goldhurst, F. Scott Fitzgerald and His Contemporaries (Cleveland and New York, 1963); Perosa, The Art of...; Miller, F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and...; Lehan, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Craft of Fiction; Henry Dan Piper, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait (New York, 1965); Turnbull, Scott Fitzgerald; Matthew J. Bruccoli, The Composition of "Tender Is the Night" (Pittsburgh, 1963).

³²"The genteel tradition was a mode of order; by criticizing the genteel tradition, adapting it, and finally transforming its values, Fitzgerald more than any other American novelist of the present century attained in his fiction the power to create an alternative vision of order, an Apollonian vision of moral order and lasting beauty," Sklar, p. 3.

³³Wright, The American Short Story..., and Ray B. West, Jr., The Short Story in America 1900-1950 (Chicago, 1951).

³⁴Wright Morris, "The Function of Nostalgia: F. Scott Fitzgerald," The Territory Ahead (New York, 1958), pp. 157-170.

³⁵William Troy, "F. Scott Fitzgerald--The Authority of Failure, Accent, VI (Autumn, 1945), 56-60.

³⁶D. W. Harding, "Mechanisms of Misery," Scrutiny, III (December, 1934), 316-319.

CHAPTER TWO

PLOT AND PLOT DEVELOPMENT

Although Fitzgerald once remarked, facetiously, that all fiction represents variations on two or three basic plots, his own stories convincingly contradict his theory. If, for the purpose of discussion, we select only the most obvious similarities, it is possible to group the plots into four major types or genres, with notably diversity within each genre.¹

In addition to categorizing his plots, the ensuing discussion will attempt to resolve a number of problems in connection with plot and plot development: How do Fitzgerald's stories develop, through dramatization and narration or both? How long are they? Are they episodic or tightly constructed, "well-made"? What specific fictional techniques recur frequently? Final evaluation of Fitzgerald's proficiency in this important area will be based on these and similar considerations.

The Supernatural, the Fantastic, the Fabulous

Several Fitzgerald stories clearly fall into the category of fantasy, using supernatural devices, suspense and mystery, and fabulous, fabricated milieus as critical elements in plot structure. In a few cases, plot reversal is

effected by supernatural means. In "The Adjuster," Fitzgerald combines a realistic surface, homiletic intention and supernatural agent in a unique, yet not entirely successful mixture. Dr. Moon, the supernatural figure, is introduced purely as a deus ex machina in a story which is concerned with the growth of maturity and responsibility in a selfish young married woman. He functions as a melodramatic substitute for character development and narrative control. What Fitzgerald is unable to realize dramatically, he inserts mechanically in the person of the enigmatic, didactic Dr. Moon, a strange amalgam, half-psychiatrist, half fortune-teller. The latter appears at regular intervals when the plot begins to falter to re-order the direction of events. Thus, he prevents Luella from deserting her sick husband, he compels her to take up the irksome, neglected role of wife, mother and housekeeper, and he rewards her at the end by confessing that he has never really existed: she has merely grown up and he symbolizes her growth. He is on hand, also, to deliver to Luella a final homily on performing one's duties unselfishly. At the end, he is unmasked portentously in a revelation that can only be regarded as dramatically anti-climactic and symbolically anemic:

"Who am I?"...His worn suit paused in the doorway. His round, pale face seemed to dissolve into two faces, a dozen faces, a score, each one different yet the same--sad, happy, tragic, indifferent, resigned--until threescore Doctor Moons were ranged like an

infinite series of relections, like months stretching into the vista of the past.

"Who am I?" he repeated; "I am five years."

Similarly, in another morality tale, "One Trip Abroad," the supernatural element again enters the plot in human form, but here it is worked more closely into the fabric of the story. In this Dorian Gray-like situation, a young couple, Nicole and Nelson Kelly, on the path of dissolution and degeneration, see themselves at crucial moments in the process of their decay, in the guise of another young couple. The dissipation of which they are unaware in themselves, they notice in their doubles. As in the Oscar Wilde story, the most vivid scene occurs at the end, where in one shocking horrifying moment, the Kellys recognize themselves in the other couple. Although the supernatural is intrusive throughout the story, aside from the memorable moment at the end, it is not necessary to the successful development of the plot. Like "The Adjuster," a supernatural device forces on the characters an awareness which should have come from within themselves.

What adds impressiveness to this story is the suggestion of supernatural elements functioning in the background. The opening sentence strikes an ominous note: "In the afternoon the air became black with locusts and some of the women shrieked, sinking to the floor of the motorbus and covering their hair with travelling rugs." All nature seems to reflect the tumult and disorder of the Kellys' lives,

suggests in fact a primordial force surrounding, compelling and eventually engulfing them. It follows them through the pleasure haunts of Europe, where Nature is Byronic--grand, majestic, threatening--replete with storms, vast lakes, and craggy mountaintops.

They dined on the hotel veranda under a sky that was low and full of the presence of a strange and watchful God...waters...a little sinister beneath the surface....An approaching storm...came swiftly, first falling from the heavens and then falling again in torrents from the mountains, washing loudly down the roads and stone ditches; it came with a dark, frightening sky and savage filaments of lightning and crashing, world-splitting thunder, while ragged and destroyed clouds fled along before the wind past the hotel. The mountains and the lake disappeared completely; the hotel crouched alone amid tumult and chaos and darkness.

Finally, the climax reinforces our sense of the extraordinary and unreal when, at the moment of revelation, the storm enters its last desperate, convulsive throes:

The last clouds were lifting themselves over the Bernese Alps. Suddenly, with a final intensity, the west flared with pale white lightning. Nelson and Nicole turned, and simultaneously the other couple turned, while for an instant the night was as bright as day. Then darkness and a last low peal of thunder....

In the moment of recognition, the two supernatural elements in the story--the other couple and the malign force which seems to have been released into the universe--meet, and in their meeting, the Kellys realize at last that they have lost not only "peace and love and health," but their souls as well.

In "The Cut-Glass Bowl," while the supernatural device--the bowl--is again an evil force, it is, unlike the Kellys' doubles or nature's "Watchful God," totally inanimate. (Dr. Moon, of course was not evil.) It is difficult to regard the cut-glass bowl as the dynamic force of cold, unfeeling fate as it is represented in the plot. Catastrophes pile up alarmingly, but the bowl seems hardly capable of functioning as the agent of so much destruction. Fitzgerald gives it supernatural attributes, but because the bowl has a far too enigmatic portent thrust upon it, its raucous little recital at the end is essentially meaningless.

"You see, I am fate," it shouted, "and stronger than your puny plans and I am how things-turn-out and I am different from your little dreams, and I am the flight of time and the end of beauty and unfulfilled desires, all the accidents and imperceptions and the little minutes that shape the crucial hours are mine. I am the exception that proves no rules, the limits of your control, the condiment in the dish of life."

In the same way, Fitzgerald "plants" supernatural devices in "No Flowers" and "Her Last Case." In the former, when Marjorie, the heroine, awakens from a dream, she sees beside the fireplace the flowers her grandmother had, in her (Marjorie's) dream, thrown to the floor. The rest of the story is realistic, but this one suggestion of fantasy places it in the company of Fitzgerald's other supernatural plots.

In "Her Last Case," Fitzgerald adds a supernatural fillip to a story redolent of Southern tradition, modern

psychoanalysis and Gothic melodrama. At the end of the story, the hero, Ben Dagonet, who has retreated from a tortured present into an idealized past, fancies he hears voices and sees his dead ancestors in the great front hall of his mansion. At least we think it is his fancy, except that the heroine, even as she clung "frantically...to the last shreds of reality...saw that the big front door was still open." In this story, as in "The Cut-Glass Bowl" and "No Flowers," the supernatural is intimately connected with the passage of time, a recurring theme in Fitzgerald's short stories.

In each of the preceding stories, Fitzgerald uses supernatural figures or objects in essentially realistic milieus and situations, and in each case the supernatural device is either extrinsic and mechanical or merely superfluous and frequently jarring beside surface realism. Were any or all of these devices removed, there would be little appreciable damage to the story, perhaps with the exception of "One Trip Abroad" where the suggestion of an evil force lurking in the universe adds to the effectiveness of the phantom couple. Fitzgerald's supernatural plots, then, seem purely expedient and do not constitute particularly noteworthy or extraordinary additions to the rather stylized literature of supernaturalism.

Although Fitzgerald wrote only one story which might be classified as a mystery,² a number of the stories fall into that genre because the forces of darkness are personified

in an ominous, non-human creature. In "A Short Trip Home," we learn at the end that the contemptuous, truculent gangster, Joe Varland, who persistently threatens the heroine, has died in another city prior to his last confrontation with the narrator. In leading up to this climactic scene, Fitzgerald, by suggestive manipulation of milieu and incident, invests the story with suspense, tension and a pervasive mood of horror reminiscent of Poe. Again, however, the supernatural figure jars with the realistic milieu; Joe Varland is "a perplexing mixture of fantasy and realism," (Eble)³ wholly successful neither as a psychological projection of the narrator and the heroine nor as a menacing symbol of evil. He is simply a common thug.

"The Guest in Room 19" is also a "tough number" but here, Fitzgerald merely plays with the idea of a supernatural agent.⁴ The guest, whom the two old men believed was "Death" calling on them, thereby causing their fatal heart attacks, turns out to be only the brother of the manager of the hotel where they lived. Ironically, "the guest" remarks at the end, "Both those old guys looked exactly like death itself to me." In each story, Fitzgerald is intrigued by the idea of a non-human figure living in a very human, carefully particularized environment.

In "O Russet Witch," he plays with fantasy and the supernatural, naming his main character "Merlin" Grainger, his bookshop the "Moonlight Quill," and creating an enchanting girl who appears at intervals in Merlin's dreary life to

remind him that gaiety, beauty and adventure still exist. She, like the "tough" in "The Guest in Room 19," turns out to have been quite human all along, but the story's effects derive from skillful juxtaposition of realism and fantasy, minute observation and absurd exaggeration. The problem here is, as Kenneth Eble notes,⁵ that "...we never know whether it intends to be a fantasy or a realistic story, to be serious or merely diverting." Arthur Mizener remarks that Fitzgerald "...was always in danger when he was writing fantasy" because he made "so much fantastic that nothing seemed remarkable."⁶ Although Mizener calls all of these stories "fantasies," the distinction needs to be drawn between those in which one or two supernatural elements appear and those in which the flight of fancy is sustained, where pretension to reality is totally abandoned for purely imaginative excursions.

"The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" is a slight but successful attempt at absurdity: the situation involves the birth of a very old man whose life diminishes from old age to infancy until he peters out into nothingness. Wryly satiric in tone, deft and amusing in execution, this story is completely harmonious with Fitzgerald's initial absurd premise. And in such cases, where conception and execution mesh perfectly, the author can convey unobtrusively his concern with a number of serious themes, as he does here with the passage of time and the absurdity of conventional behavior.

In "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," Fitzgerald does not contain his subject and theme within a realistic setting. He thus creates a world into which he can comfortably project his imaginative, expansive, vision of American big business. He must show the growth of fabulous riches in a world almost more opulent than the human mind can encompass, a world of stupefying luxury beyond the most lavish excesses of the Hollywood it so closely resembles. Here is an American West, bigger and more extravagant than in the wildest Western tall story it subtly parodies. As we willingly suspend disbelief, the world of Fitzgerald's imagination takes on the colorations of the Oriental kingdom belonging to "some Tartar Khan." The chateau itself is very like the pleasure dome of Kubla Khan, and the sights, smells, sounds of luxury assault and ultimately deaden the senses until the lavish phantasmagoria moves before us in a waking dream.

Remarkably, Fitzgerald sustains this geographic flight from the opening in Hades, to St. Midas School (the same name as the school in "Benjamin Button"), to the twelve wizened old men in the wasteland town of Fish, to the diamond mountain retreat of Braddock Washington. Yet the action, which departs wildly from probability, is so rooted in the familiar, recognizable patterns of human behavior that after the initial shock has receded and we have accepted the fanciful premise, we are forced to make invidious comparisons between the rise of American big business in the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the growth of Braddock Washington's empire.

Fitzgerald, then, is more successful in a sustained fantasy than in an essentially realistic story where supernatural devices intrude mechanically and destroy verisimilitude. Similarly, several otherwise realistic stories revolve around a fantastic and wholly artificial situation conceived by the hero in order to intrigue and thereby win the heroine. These stories work in much the same fashion as those employing supernatural devices and are rarely more successful.⁷

If considerable time has been spent on this genre, it is because Fitzgerald's natural affinity was for the fantastic, the ineffably gorgeous. He wrote relatively few stories with supernatural motifs because he was able to realize his affinity through milieu: he created a fabulous setting for most of his stories, a setting too fabulous, in fact, for strict reality yet too vividly realized for pure fantasy.

Manners, Milieu, Mood

Our consideration of plot requires attention not only to incident and action, ordering and juxtaposition of events, but also to the framework into which a central situation fits. Perhaps the majority of Fitzgerald's stories may be classified according to several elements extrinsic to specific incidents but intrinsic and in fact crucial to

plot movement: manners, milieu and mood. Undoubtedly the last two are more elusive and intangible than the first, but there are too many Fitzgerald stories in which dependence on milieu or evocation of mood must be considered the single most significant factor in plot development and where the stories, if they are to be classified at all, must be regarded as stories of manners and/or milieu or mood. This is particularly true of love stories where usually it is not enough to say that a story is a "love story" and leave it at that. Every Fitzgerald story reflects what Richard Chase calls the "deepest impulses of the social group as well as their external manifestations,"⁸ and what Paul Rosenfeld calls "the environment not so much in its superficial aspects as in its pitch and beat."⁹

"Bernice Bobs Her Hair" is an early story, slight in intent and execution yet animated by an authentic and minute representation of manners and social milieu in which newly-emancipated young American women live. The central action involves the transformation of a socially inept, gauche, unpopular girl, Bernice, into a much sought-after, socially sophisticated "flapper." In the course of Bernice's education, Fitzgerald reveals the intricate system of manners on which social success depends. In a paragraph resembling the brilliant catalog of visitors to Gatsby's party, Fitzgerald adroitly identifies the small but representative social group Bernice wishes to emulate:

From Otis Ormonde, who has two more years at Hill School, to G. Reese Stoddard, over whose bureau at home hangs a Harvard law diploma; from little Madeleine Hogue, whose hair still feels strange and uncomfortable on top of her head, to Bessie MacRae, who has been the life of the party a little too long...

The plot hinges on Bernice's daring threat to bob her hair and invite her whole crowd to witness the momentous event. In the relationship between Bernice and her cousin, Fitzgerald exposes the cruelty underlying the social relationships of young people, the competition for popularity which impels Marjorie to jibe at and cruelly taunt Bernice until she must carry out a promise Marjorie knows she had made, initially, in jest. But Marjorie herself is an example of the new emancipated woman who desires only to shake free from the limitations imposed upon her by society and to face life courageously, unhampered and unfettered. In a short, fervent speech, she confesses to Bernice her abhorrence of society's hypocritical expectations of women and exhorts her cousin to relinquish the morals of a defunct generation:

"What a blow it must be when a man with imagination marries the beautiful bundle of clothes that he's been building ideals around, and finds that she's just a weak, whining, cowardly mass of affectations!...Her whole early life is occupied in whining criticisms of girls like me who really do have a good time."

In a later story, "Presumption," the central action is merely the means of illustrating the manners of a strict social caste system. San Juan Chandler, son of a retired

clergyman, poor relation of his socially prominent Cousin Cora, visits her at the fashionable New England resort (modeled perhaps upon Newport), Culpepper Bay. He is aware immediately of the fine but resonant differences between this milieu and his middle class origins. "There was a spaciousness, an air of money and pleasure about Culpepper Bay for which San Juan Chandler, a shy, handsome, spoiled, penniless boy from a small Ohio city was unprepared."

Gradually, but remorselessly, the denizens of the plush resort make quite clear to Juan the existence of an intricate network of socially acceptable behavior from which he, as a too-bumptious bourgeois, is forever excluded. Slowly he becomes aware that, "There are enough rich families to form a self-sufficient and exclusive group....On the dude ranch they had all dressed alike; here his ready-made Prince of Wales suit seemed exaggerated in style, his hat correct only in theory--an imitation hat--his very ties only projections of the ineffable Platonic ties which were worn here at Culpepper Bay. Yet all the differences were so small that he was unable quite to discern them." In an extraordinarily cruel scene, one of them tells him pointedly,

"Just who the devil are you anyhow?"

"My name is Chandler."

"Well, Mr. Chandler, you're in the way here--is that plain? Your presence here is an intrusion and a presumption."

The other young people slight him at dinner conversations, talking of the Adirondacks "and they all seemed to know the group who had been there." His anomalous position makes it

impossible to pursue successfully the hand of a rich girl, Noel, whom he loves. "Oh, he had seen well enough that he was not essentially of Noel's sort, that being rich in Akron wasn't enough at Culpepper Bay." After he makes his fortune on a preposterous business scheme (a bit of mechanical plot trickery), he again seeks to marry Noel. The entire story apparently is designed to lead up to the confrontation scene between Juan and Noel's aunt, Mrs. Poindexter, who represents the social force against which he has been fruitlessly striving. In Mrs. Poindexter, Fitzgerald makes no attempt to portray a human being; instead, he uses her as a symbolic repository for the values, manners, conventions of her class. Even her appearance is stylized:

Mrs. Poindexter was perhaps thirty-five, and of that immaculate fashion which the French describe as *bien soignée*. The inexpressible loveliness of her face was salted with another quality which for want of a better word might be called dignity. But it was more than dignity, for it wore no rigidity, but instead a softness so adaptable, so elastic, that it would withdraw from any attack which life might bring against it, only to spring back at the proper moment, taut, victorious and complete. San Juan saw that even though his guess was correct as to Noel's being in the house, he was up against a force with which he had had no contact before. This woman seemed to be not entirely of America, to possess resources which the American woman lacked or handled ineptly.

She receives Juan "with a graciousness, which though it was largely external, seemed to conceal no perturbation underneath." After Juan firmly announces his intention of marrying Noel and his refusal to be bound by pre-War

conventions which regarded fashionable society as irretrievably closed to a person of middle class origin, Mrs. Poindexter softly but firmly instructs Juan in the rudiments of acceptable social conduct. As the blinds before his eyes part, he realizes how inflexible is their code, how unassailable their fortress, how relentless and uncaring their exclusiveness:

He realized now that fundamentally they were all akin--Cousin Cora, Noel, her father, this cold, lovely woman here--affirming the prerogative of the rich to marry always within their caste, to erect artificial barriers and standards against those who could presume upon a summer's philandering. The scales fell from his eyes and he saw his year and a half of struggle and effort not as progress toward a goal but only as a little race he had run by himself, outside, with no one to beat except himself--no one who cared.

Unfortunately, in a gesture of colossal wish-fulfillment on Fitzgerald's part, a misunderstanding involving mistaken identity is cleared up and the hero and heroine are united in an unbelievably sentimental embrace.¹⁰

Two popular and technically successful stories, "Winter Dreams" and "The Rich Boy," although composed of a number of carefully balanced, harmonious elements, must, nevertheless, be regarded as essentially stories of manners. Like The Great Gatsby ("Winter Dreams" was written three years before Gatsby, "The Rich Boy" immediately after), both plots turn on conflicts between the very rich and a representative of the middle class--a contrast explored in the minutiae of social gestures, moods, conventions and customs. In the

opening sentence of "Winter Dreams," the class lines of the village surrounding the luxurious golf club are skillfully drawn.

Some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses with a neurasthenic cow in the front yard, but Dexter Green's father owned the second-best grocery store in Black Bear--the best one was "the Hub," patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island--and Dexter caddied only for pocket money.

The manners of the two classes compose the matrix of the story, and the romantic situation serves primarily as the medium through which Dexter becomes educated to the practicalities of social mobility and eventually to the spuriousness of his winter dreams. Along the way, the world of Judy Jones--who symbolizes both the beauty and the meretriciousness of Dexter's dreams--becomes clear; slowly, with each successive revelation a cruelly destructive pattern of life emerges. For the rich, as Dexter learns, growing ever more enervated and effete, need the vitality of his class whom they absorb and then carelessly destroy:

...the men who had already loved Judy Jones... He knew the sort of men they were--the men who when he first went to college had entered from the great prep schools with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers. He had seen that in one sense he was better than these men. He was newer and stronger. Yet in acknowledging to himself that he wished his children to be like them he was admitting that he was but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang.

The success of "Winter Dreams," however, results not only from the particularity of Fitzgerald's description of manners, but also from the exploration of several significant

themes--love, time, youth and beauty. The carefully structured, fully-realized social milieu adds ballast and authenticity to the central situation involving Dexter and Judy.

In "The Rich Boy," from the outset, the central fact of Anson Hunter's existence is explored in terms of subtle, carefully cultivated shadings and gradations of social behavior that set him apart from the narrator. His English governess taught him to speak the language "clearly and crisply and well" so that he "grew to speak as she did... words and sentences all crisp and clear and not run together as ours are"...with an accent "peculiar to fashionable people in the city of New York." The world of "high finance, high extravagance, divorce and dissipation, of snobbery and privilege" is the arbiter of Anson's existence and apart from this world, there would be no Anson Hunter, no central action, no complexity of situation and thus, no story. The sedulous delineation of social scene shows Fitzgerald at his very best, here as well as in his very minor efforts.

Although we will discuss Fitzgerald's treatment of milieu at greater length in connection with rhetoric, milieu must be regarded, in a number of stories, as central to plot development. In stories classified under milieu, action depends so much on setting, that despite other factors in plot structure, without their milieus, these stories would falter and collapse.

In a number of stories,¹¹ the hero creates an elaborate,

exciting and luxurious world in order to capture the fancy of a beautiful, but bored and satiated heroine. Here the world, not the characters, situations or incidents, is the dominant element of plot. In "A Penny Spent," an American millionaire, Horace Bushmill, meets an impoverished, formerly affluent young compatriot at the Brix Grill in Paris--"one of those places where things happen...One thing is certain--that before you melt out into the green-and-cream Paris twilight you will have the feel of standing for a moment at one of the predestined centers of the world." The young man, Corcoran, quickly employed by Bushmill, accompanies the latter's wife and daughter on a tour through Europe. After initially boring and annoying Hallie, the daughter, by making the dutiful, expected stops at historic landmarks, Corcoran accepts her challenge--to show her what a good time really is, based on his unsurpassed ability to spend large sums of money lavishly in pursuit of a graceful life.

From this point on, milieu takes over the story in wildly extravagant settings of unsurpassed luxury and romantic lushness. From Paris to Naples and other pleasure haunts of Europe, settings multiply, character fades, action wilts, yet the reader is sustained, indeed exhilarated by this vicarious voyage into exotic locales:

The Bay of Naples was rough as they set out that morning, and the little steamer staggered like a drunken man through the persistent waves....When the steamer reached the coast of the rocky, cheerful little

island, dozens of boats put out from shore and swarmed about dizzily in the waves as they waited for passengers to the Blue Grotto....They approached the shore, heading for a small dark opening in the rocks.... A momentary passage through darkness, then a vast space opened up around them and they were in a bright paradise of ultra-marine, a cathedral cave where the water and air and the high-vaulted roof were of the most radiant and opalescent blue. as she leaned forward to plunge her hand under the surface the strange light enveloped them like a spell and their lips touched-- then all the world turned to blue and silver, or else this was not the world, but a delightful enchantment in which they would dwell forever.

Similarly, in "Love in the Night," Cannes, a starlit fairyland, is far more impressive than the boy-meets-girl situation with its ineffectual, pasteboard figures and sentimental clichés. By returning again and again to milieu, Fitzgerald succeeds in transforming a fundamentally trivial conception into a memorable literary experience:

It was dark in Cannes harbor, rather it seemed dark after the brightness of the promenade that Val had just left behind. Three frail dock lights glittered dimly upon innumerable fishing boats heaped like shells along the beach. Farther out in the water there were other lights where a fleet of slender yachts rode the tide with slow dignity and farther still a full ripe moon made the water bosom into a polished dancing floor... ...Eastward lay the dark Cape of Antibes, and then Nice, and beyond that Monte Carlo, where the night rang chinking full of gold. Some day he would enjoy all that too....But tonight, that stream of silver that waved like a wide strand of curly hair toward the moon... ...Even the Mediterranean turned obligingly to a deep wine color in the spring evenings and fishing boats with robin-breasted sails loitered exquisitely offshore... ...They glanced shoreward at the line of mysterious and alluring lights, the big toy

banks with candles inside that were really the great fashionable hotels, the lighted clock in the old town, the blurred glow of the Cafe de Paris, the pricked-out points of villa windows rising on slow hills toward the dark sky....
 ...They were the essential trapping of Love in the Night....

Memories of the ante-bellum South dominate the action in "Diagnosis" and "The Dance." In the latter--a suspense story replete with heavy Freudian psychology and Gothic trappings--the lazy, sultry atmosphere hangs heavily over the hero on his arrival in Alabama, permeates and indeed outweighs the action:

Two days later Charlie Clayhorne got off the train at Montgomery, feeling strange as he felt himself enveloped by the familiar, unforbidden atmosphere of many Negroes and voices pleading calm and girls painted bright as savages to stand out against the tropical summer....Later on the local train that bore him an hour farther south, he felt himself merging minute by minute with the hot countryside, the lush vegetation, the clay roads, the strange, sluggish primeval rivers flowing softly under soft Indian names...

Outside the May night was hot, a still night, velvet, soft-pawed, splattered thick with stars. It drifted heavy and sweet into the large room where we sat and where we would later dance, with no sound in it except the occasional long crunch of an arriving car on the drive. Just at that moment I hated to leave Davis as I never had hated to leave a town before--I felt that I wanted to spend my life in this town, drifting and dancing forever through these long, hot, romantic nights.

In "The Dance," the suspense and mystery is subsidiary to the evocative and haunting setting of the Southern town. The brooding, incalculable evil lurking beneath a smooth surface leads Fitzgerald to a remarkably Conradian conclusion:

We live in New York. Small towns make us both uncomfortable. Every day we read about the crime waves in the big cities, but at least a wave is something tangible that you can provide against. What I dread above all things is the unknown depths, the incalculable ebb and flow, the secret shapes of things that drift through opaque darkness under the surface of the sea.

"Crazy Sunday" is a story about Hollywood and about one extraordinary man, Miles Calman, as observed by Joe Coles, a young writer. Because the story lacks a single focus, attention shifting from Joe to Miles with neither dominating the action, it succeeds, paradoxically, on the level of milieu. From the outset, Hollywood, a "damn wilderness," vies with Joe and Calman for center stage--and wins. Joe's admiration for Miles, "Everything he touched he did something magical to," is not supported except through hearsay. Miles simply does not participate sufficiently in the action to emerge as anything more than an interesting enigma. But Hollywood transcends, compels, structures the plot. The rhythm of the story is the rhythm of Hollywood life, from crazy Sunday, "not a day, but rather a gap between two other days," to the other six days of frantic irrelevancy in a new wasteland.

Behind, for all of them, lay sets and sequences, the long waits under the crane that swung the microphone the hundred miles a day by automobiles to and fro across a county, the struggles of rival ingenuities in the conference rooms, the ceaseless compromise, the clash and strain of many personalities fighting for their lives. And now Sunday, with individual life starting up again, with a glow kindling in eyes that had been glazed with monotony the afternoon before. Slowly as the hours waned they came awake like "Puppenfeen" in a toy shop: an

intense colloquy in a corner, lovers disappearing to neck in a hall. And the feeling of "hurry it's not too late, but for God's sake hurry before the blessed forty hours of leisure are over."

The action begins and ends in Miles Calman's house where the ambience promotes the wildly exhibitionist performance which wins Joe instant notoriety. "Miles Calman's house was built for great emotional moments--there was an air of listening, as if the far silences of its vistas hid an audience, but this afternoon it was thronged, as though people had been bidden rather than asked." Outside, "the Pacific, colorless under its sluggish sunset"--the American Riviera--reflects the gray joylessness of the garish, absurd agglomeration in the Calmans' living room:

...The group at the next table, the sad, lovely Siamese twins, the mean dwarfs, the proud giant from the circus picture...the yellow-stained faces of pretty women, their eyes all melancholy and startling with mascara, their ball gowns garish in full day.

When Joe regards the assemblage, "people of bravery and industry, superior to a bourgeoisie that outdid them in ignorance and loose living, risen to a position of prominence in a nation that for a decade had wanted only to be entertained," he is driven, in a moment of semi-drunken, lavish good will to entertain them, "his blood throbbing with the scarlet corpuscles of exhibitionism."

In this five part story, Part One is chiefly devoted to describing the Hollywood scene and Joe's place in it. In Part Two, the tensions within Joe, previously adumbrated,

become insistent and are released in his notorious performance. In Parts Three and Four, the intricate relationship between Miles and Stella ensnares Joe. The Calmans fight with one another but remain, to the end--even after Miles' death--self-sufficient, tightly insulated by sexual desire and mutual dependency. Joe can never really matter to them. Like Tom and Daisy in The Great Gatsby, they pick people up, use them, cast them out and remain isolated in their cold, imperturbable, essentially decadent world.

In the last three sections, the action moves incrementally, alternating between episode and scenic description, culminating in the circus-like parade Joe observes at the theater as he waits for Stella:¹²

...Obscure replicas of bright, particular picture stars, spavined men in polo coats, a stomping dervish with the beard and staff of an apostle, a pair of chic Filipinos in collegiate clothes, reminder that this corner of the Republic opened to the seven seas, a long fantastic carnival of young shouts which proved to be a fraternity initiation.

Everything seems tinselly, tawdry--artificial as a Hollywood B-picture, conceived and executed in plastic. "There were Christmas trees already in the shop windows and the full moon over the boulevard was only a prop, as scenic as the giant boudoir lamps of the corners."

At the end, Joe leaves the Calman house "which now hummed and palpitated with the life that flutters around death like protective leaves," and bitterly takes up his life made empty and futile after the death of "the only American-

born director with both an interesting temperament and an artistic conscience."

"Crazy Sunday" then is a haunting vignette of Hollywood, and it is a measure of Fitzgerald's artistry that he succeeds despite a serious flaw in action and characterization.

"Mood" stories are similar to stories of milieu, but it is more difficult to isolate the source of their effects in a particular setting or locality. Perhaps their effects might be described as emanating from intense feeling--so strongly projected that it transcends everything else. Although this sounds perilously close to impressionistic criticism, there is a recognizable basis for this claim. In "The Sensible Thing,"¹³ a foolish, mechanical plot twist is unimportant in a story elevated by the hero's poignant, desperate love. Whatever else may be gimcrackery, the feeling is decidedly real, and is enhanced by delicate images of dusk, sunset, clouds, love transfixed in the past, love "hanging heavy on the air." The South is again the scene, but it is subordinate to the pervasive romantic mood.

Although "The Scandal Detectives" is an entirely different kind of story, humorous, with crisp vivid narrative, sharply-observed details, few rhetorical digressions, there are whole scenes bathed in a twilight glow, like the first, where Basil feels the first faint stirrings of sexual interest. The mood may best be described as tender and tranquil--that of a middle-aged man fondly reconnoitering over the emotional battlegrounds of his youth.¹⁴

In "Outside the Cabinet Maker's," the style--brief, intense, compressed--reflects the subject, a delicate moment of communication between a father and his child. The narrative suggests that such moments are rare; at one point the child speaks "abstractedly," and at the end, after their moment has passed, they ride on "abstractedly." They cannot enter one another's world, but the father, through the fairy tale he weaves as they sit outside the cabinet maker's, captures the child's imagination and conveys to her his love which heightens and sustains the brief vignette.

Finally, in "An Alcoholic Case," only the bleak, level mood of despair remains after the story ends. In this fictional companion-piece to the "Crack-Up" essays, Fitzgerald traces through the eyes of the nurse, an alcoholic artist's gradual drift to death, his unspoken acceptance of failure and waste, his slow but certain surrender to extinction, "His Will to Die...and for all her training and experience," the nurse "knew she could never do anything constructive with him." The mood is evoked by the contrasts between the idealistic, healthy, vital nurse and the defeated, sick, enfeebled patient. Her clinical detachment mutely underscores his tragedy and the result is a sustained mood of subdued but haunting sadness.

"Fairy Tales"

A number of stories fall into a category most aptly described as "fairy tales." That is, plots usually turn on a resolution imposed from outside the central action in

order to elevate the heroine (or more often the hero) rapidly from poverty and social ostracism to wealth and social acceptance. Although many are love stories, a too-strident insistence on the Cinderella, rags-to-riches plot with its mechanical denouements and sentimental cliches robs these stories of authentic, recognizable feeling. Unlike the mood stories where love is often realized beyond the confines of the plot, in the "fairy tales" there is usually very little emotional contact between characters.

Several "fairy tales" are constructed around a competition in which a millionaire offers a prize--often his daughter and a place in the family business--for the hero's successful completion of a task. Usually one of the peripheral motifs in these stories is the glorification of the American entrepreneurial spirit. In "The Third Casket," millionaire Cyrus Girard sends for the sons of his three best friends, hoping to find someone to succeed him after his retirement. He employs them for a trial period, but they are closely matched and he is unable to decide on a successor. He gives them each a two-week vacation, believing that their use of leisure will provide him with the clue he needs for his decision. Predictably, the winner turns out to be the one young man who refused to loaf, went to Chicago, scored a major business coup for his employer and for good measure, married the boss's daughter! At the end, employer and son-in-law realize that the business needs men like them--whose consuming ambition allows no time for

relaxation--and Girard puts off his retirement to 80.

In "Your Way and Mine," like "The Third Casket," the young man employed by the millionaire-fairy godfather gets the position and the girl by demonstrating his independence from his employer. In "The Adolescent Marriage," the competition for an architectural award results in the hero's designing an enchanted cottage for his story-book marriage and is rewarded, also by a fairy godfather, with the cottage, the girl and an assured future.

It is remarkable how many subsidiary elements reinforce an almost childlike belief in the totally unreal world the story projects. Take, for example, the description of the prize cottage:

The little house, fragile, yet arresting, all aglitter like a toy in its fresh coat of robin's-egg blue, stood out delicately against the clear sky. Set upon new-laid sod between the two other bungalows, it swung the eye sharply toward itself, held your glance for a moment, then turned up the corners of your lips with the sort of smile reserved for children. Something went on in it, you imagined; something charming and not quite real. Perhaps the whole front opened up like the front of a doll's house; you were tempted to hunt for the catch because you felt an irresistible inclination to peer inside.

In the three stories cited, all written between 1925 and 1927, Fitzgerald's attention focuses on the Cinderella myth contained in the American dream of success. His attitude is essentially serious, even committed to a belief in the wondrous possibility of sudden good fortune. Perhaps it is his total acceptance of the miraculous that strikes a discordant note in unabashedly trivial and

artificial plots.

We have noted previously how the hero of "Presumption," San Juan Chandler, makes a lucky investment and thus acquires enough wealth to live comfortably for the rest of his life. The big business deal, the fortuitous encounter, the unexpected legacy--these are the rewards for enduring years of poverty and neglect.¹⁵ In "The Rubber Check," the hero even bears the burden of a wicked, much-married mother who is indifferent to his fate. Val Schuyler, the hero, has made a social career for himself from a name adopted from one of his stepfathers, manners acquired from living on the periphery of social aristocracy, and a natural flair for spending money gracefully. Unfortunately, he has no money and is doomed to hover perpetually on the fringes of the class to which he aspires.

The plot winds circuitously from party to party, functioning almost as a social documentary on the lives of the very rich. Val inherits money, loses money, and muses on the fate of one who has lived his life in service to the upper class. Finally, after several scenes which meander between farce and sentiment, he wins the girl while performing the symbolic function of tending a rich man's garden. There are, here, a number of interesting problems with which we shall be concerned later, particularly in connection with characterization and distance. But for now, the "fairy tale" must be regarded as a straitjacket and the story, for all the interesting side issues it raises, is severely limited

by a weak and formalized structure.

"Flight and Pursuit" and "Not in the Guidebook" follow heroines through series of adventures taking them from disastrous middle-class marriages to new romances, new riches and new husbands. In each case, instead of a fairy godfather, the action is engineered by a Prince Charming and resolution depends on a surprise twist. Although in both stories, scenic description functions effectively in the background--Cherbourg and Paris in "Not in the Guidebook" and New York and Italy in "Flight and Pursuit," and each pursues several serious themes--again the Cinderella plot is a heavy burden and the other elements, although noticeable, fail to transcend its limitations. This is not to say that these stories are unmitigated failures, but rather that the "fairy-tale" plot supersedes theme, characterization, mood and milieu. "Flight and Pursuit," especially, rewards further analysis in terms of Fitzgerald's treatment in the thirties of several troublesome and inconsistent ideas.

"Lo--the Poor Peacock," an unpublished story, may well stand as a paradigm of what can go wrong with a "fairy-tale" plot. From the outset, disasters pile up unremittingly: a father and daughter struggle against financial reverses, the mother is laid up ill in a sanatorium, the daughter begins to lose respect for her father, she is then mistakenly accused of theft in her school--there is no surcease in sight for accumulating misery.

Miraculously, fortune reverses itself. The invalid mother provides the clue which father and daughter need to make their old farm profitable; the injustice to the daughter is exposed; the father gets the big textile account from a fairy godfather (a vice-president of the textile firm) who comes to the house and is impressed with the stoic cheerfulness of the little girl: "Daddy needs a woman to take care of him," and all is well again. To be fair, Fitzgerald tries to inject symbolism into the story--having to do with peacocks and suffering--but it is unclear. He indicates that through sheer will power and a determination to survive, the course of events may be altered, but change in fortune comes about not as the logical outgrowth of characters in action, but mechanically through accident and the beneficence of outsiders. Unlike those plots which use fantasy, successfully or not, as a colorful element in believable plot development, "fairy-tale" plots use unbelievable stratagems to arrive at artificial denouements. If they are successful on any level, it is certainly not that of plot.

Humor, Parody, Farce, Satire

The last significant division into which Fitzgerald's plots fall is humor, including parody, farce and satire.¹⁶ Throughout his career, Fitzgerald wrote a number of brief sketches of humorous intent. They are, by and large, forced, self-consciously literary and quite dated. A few are embarrassingly inept. They are not really stories,

just short occasional pieces, one or two pages long, where the narrator relates a humorous anecdote in which he figures as the butt of the joke ("My Old New England Farmhouse on the Erie" or the much longer "Cruise of the Rolling Junk").¹⁷

Although Fitzgerald was usually unsuccessful when he consciously set out to write a humorous piece, he had a richly inventive comic sense. Many stories are notable for the author's obvious enjoyment of the humor underlying human relationships. In the Basil Duke Lee stories, adolescent intensity is presented in its comic as well as painful aspect. In "Financing Finnegan," an account of the humorous exploits of a mulcting writer turns into wry and sympathetic acknowledgement of the difficulties besetting a once-popular figure who is trying to make a comeback: "Finnegan will click again."

Fitzgerald is not a parodist. In an early sketch, "This is a Magazine," he attempts without success to parody the styles of several contemporary writers. Occasionally in a story, he unconsciously parodies himself, but this is a matter of rhetoric rather than plot and will be discussed as such.

Perhaps the less said the better about occasional unwittingly farcical scenes like the one in "The Rubber Check" where Val dons several layers of clothes to escape from his hotel without paying the bill. Fitzgerald wrote only three outright farces: "The Honor of the Goon," "The Passionate

Eskimo," and "Women in the House" (unpublished). Unfortunately, the first two were published. All three are appallingly, abysmally bad stories, without one redeeming trace of Fitzgerald's usual style. When he tries to write a funny story without a theme, a moving idea, Fitzgerald usually fails. Although he occasionally overburdens his stories with theme, he simply cannot write unless he has something to say. In the two published stories, the central characters are not human beings but embarrassingly chauvinistic jokes--a Malayan and an Eskimo. Fitzgerald's contempt for them and for his material is obvious throughout: characters run through trite and degrading activities, action is a frantic pace of vacuous buffoonery; even on the level of farce these stories are inept. The third, "Women in the House," is a curious potpourri. The wrong man receives a cardiogram telling him he is seriously ill and has to learn to live as an invalid. So many divers elements are introduced--a Hollywood star landlord, marijuana discovered growing on the premises, a movie queen who rejects the presumed invalid, a secretary who loves him, a nurse who tries to control him--that there is no way out save through slapstick comedy. The whole situation blows up in a farcical melee out of which the hero and heroine emerge in a romantic embrace. All three efforts indicate that Fitzgerald was not a humorist except incidentally, that he probably realized his limitations in this area and therefore did not often make the attempt.

In "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," humor functions satirically. John Ungar's youthful, middle-class naiveté serves as comic foil for the absurdly opulent world of the Braddock Washingtons. Here is Fitzgerald's comic sense at its best--reminiscent of other biting satirical moments like the parties in The Great Gatsby, the description of Gatsby's guests, the opening conversation among Nick, Daisy and Jordan, all brilliant flights of serio-comic fancy. Although Fitzgerald makes satirical thrusts in a number of stories--against bohemians in "A Snobbish Story," against middle-class morality in "O Russet Witch"--only one story may be properly considered a satire, "On Schedule."¹⁸ Here, he gently satirizes people who try to live by inflexible rules, but a mechanical plot makes it a dismal failure. His satire, like his humor, is best when it functions subtly, as one among several elements in a story. Because Fitzgerald sees life as essentially tragic,¹⁹ his comedy often turns into a literature of the absurd; underneath surface hilarity lurk frustration, failure, sickness and death.

Undoubtedly there are other categories into which several stories may fall, and many stories may easily fit into more than one, but classifying stories is only a convenient descriptive device, approximate at best, and not to be applied rigidly.

Structure and Composition

We may make some generalizations about the structure

and composition of Fitzgerald's short stories. First, they reveal a marked pattern of development from the early apprentice fiction to the late Pat Hobby stories. The apprentice fiction represents an amateur expression of subject and themes Fitzgerald would treat with far greater virtuosity five or ten years later. Several of them were, in fact, revised and published in commercial magazines or found their way into his first novel.²⁰ In spite of youthful clumsiness, they illustrate clearly Fitzgerald's facility in plotting. Focusing on one central action, using dramatic techniques to render scenes of emotional intensity, employing sophisticated fictional devices to develop action, they indicate Fitzgerald's professional approach to problems of plot construction, including narrative distance and point of view. Like the early published stories (through 1923), the plots rely more heavily on building contrasts between characters, settings and social milieus than upon complexity of incident. Plots of typical middle-period stories (there are, of course, exceptions within each group) are far more complex, even to the point of over-plotting. Yet, in the middle stories, especially those of the thirties, Fitzgerald's concerns are far more serious and wide-ranging than ever before. His problem here is with plot structure--how to cast new ideas and subjects into tried, familiar forms. He does not solve it until the late thirties (and then only partially); consequently, typical stories of 1929-1935 are strangely discordant--serious themes forced

out of trivial situations and moribund plot structures. The stories of this period, which perhaps more than any others earned Fitzgerald the reputation of a "hack," display not so much a diminishing talent as a search for forms suitable to his new interests. Most of them are dismal failures, particularly where plot is concerned. Nearly all of them are absorbing purely on the level of theme. The late stories--after 1935--are quite dissimilar in style and structure from the early and middle groups. They are bare, unadorned sketches or vignettes, anecdotal, minimally plotted, compressed and dramatized rather than narrated. Only one early story, "Outside the Cabinet-Maker's," displays these techniques to a similar degree. Finally, each of the Pat Hobby stories turns on one incident designed to illustrate the contemptible nature of the anti-hero, Pat Hobby. These stories reflect Fitzgerald's new vitality, but it is energy spent on corrosive bitterness. The Pat Hobby stories form a unit; together they add a new chapter to the "black" tradition in American literature.²¹

The length of Fitzgerald's stories parallels their chronological development. The apprentice stories are anywhere from 800 to 8,000 words;²² during the next ten to fifteen years, stories of 10,000 words are not uncommon. His last efforts are brief, usually 500 to 2,000 words, the result only in part of Esquire's stringent space limitations, and sufficiently unique to support the conclusion that even without Esquire this work would be

substantially as it appears.

Most of his stories employ standard fictional techniques used in the novels: central complication, descriptive passages, dramatic climaxes and confrontations, reversals of fortune. All these are present, but proportions differ markedly from story to story. And like the novels, the stories rarely turn on one action; more often, even in the shortest, slightest story there are several actions of equal weight. Characteristically, Fitzgerald's stories contain three to ten parts, with three or more episodes further divided according to scene changes, chronology, action, even dialogue. Looking more closely at the stories, we can discover at least half a dozen combinations of fictional elements.

The Well-Made Story

The well-made story is constructed around one central action, using fairly equal proportions of narrative, dialogue and scenic description.²³ "Majesty" is a light, amusing story with a moderately interesting theme and considerable dramatic effectiveness.²⁴ It opens with a philosophical statement, "The extraordinary thing is not that people in a lifetime turn out worse or better than we had prophesied; particularly in America that is to be expected. The extraordinary thing is how people keep their levels, fulfill their promises, seem actually buoyed up by an inevitable destiny," which is then illustrated in the

life of Emily Castleton, an "arty" young woman of twenty-four who, in Part One, runs off leaving the most eligible bachelor in town waiting at the altar. The opening section concludes in a crescendo of excitement following a suspenseful, comic, more than faintly satiric delineation of milieu. Again, Fitzgerald uses the device so successfully exploited in The Great Gatsby, the comic catalogue of names, in this case wedding guests:

Beyond the massed hats in the van of the church the two families sat in front rows on either side. The Blairs--they were assured a family resemblance by their expression of faint condescension, shared by their in-laws as well as by true Blairs--were represented by the Gardiner Blairs, senior and junior; Lady Mary Bowes Howard, nee Blair; Mrs. Potter Blair; Mrs. Princess Potowki Parr Blair, nee Inchbit; Miss Gloria Blair, Master Gardiner Blair III, and the kindred branches, rich and poor, of Smythe, Bickle, Diffendorfer and Hamm. Across the aisle the Castletons made a less impressive showing--Mr. Harold Castleton, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Castleton and children, Harold Castleton, Junior, and from Harrisburg, Mr. Carl Mercy and two little aunts named O'Keefe hidden off in a corner.

Part Two describes the aftermath of Emily's act. The tone is subdued, the action placid as William Blair, the young man, salvages his name and his pride by marrying Emily's cousin Olive, who has always loved him, before the morning papers print the story of Emily's desertion. Part Three covers a much longer time span as it quickly fills in the events of the next year and prepares the way for the major, much more dramatic confrontation with Emily. Mr. Castleton sends a pair of modern ambassadors, Blair and

Olive, to Europe to find Emily, who has dropped from sight save for brief and tantalizing rumors of her faintly scandalous activities in the company of slightly derelict European lesser nobility. After an exciting chase taking the couple through the capitals of Europe, they find Emily in a seedy boarding house of a Hungarian suburb accompanied by a disreputable-looking, down-at-the-heel crew of men. In the presence of Blair and Olive, the small, stout man in Emily's entourage is revealed as the exiled Prince who has successfully fought off a coup and is to be crowned King of a small Eastern European principality and married to Emily. The scene is a deft, amusing and well-paced blend of dialogue, narrative and scenic description ending on a note of high comedy.

Part Four, which takes place some years later, is an ironic epilogue: the Blairs, standing on the balcony of their London hotel, see among the royal assemblage parading below, Emily, jewelled and furred, graciously saluting the appreciative throng. The story ends wryly, as Blair asks his little daughter, "'Which would you rather do, baby--marry me or be a queen?' The little girl hesitated. 'Marry you,' she said politely, but without conviction."

"Majesty" is a slight story which succeeds entirely on its own level--a blend of light, graceful comedy and mild irony. The plot is simple and linear, without lapses or digressions, from Emily's initial flight to her eventual coronation. Characterization develops through plausible

action, and all the other elements in the story are equally interrelated.

"Dalrymple Goes Wrong" is just as well-made but a far more serious story than "Majesty." Like Hemingway's "Soldier's Home," it treats, ironically but more whimsically, the subject of the returning soldier. Young Bryan Dalrymple arrives in Hoboken, his home town, in a blaze of glory. As a war hero, he is feted and lionized by the townspeople and just as quickly allowed to drop into penniless obscurity. Dalrymple's story is a tale of promises broken, hopes thwarted, ambition stultified--told with ironic humor and dry, biting wit. Dalrymple quickly learns that the American way to success is through cutting corners and making connections rather than the much-vaunted hard work. He thus becomes a bandit, entering the houses of the rich and stealing jewels and other valuables. In an ironic reversal at the end, the leading citizens of the town reward his ostensibly industrious performance as a stock clerk by proposing to put him in the State Senate--provided he "hasn't got too many ideas...about how things ought to be run." Dalrymple acquiesces; he has found that the road to success lies in contravening society's moral statutes and placing confidence solely in himself. Society has handed him the banner of hypocrisy and he will learn to carry it forward, without idealism, into the future:

The world was opening up suddenly--the State Senate, the United States Senate--so life was this after all--cutting corners--

cutting corners--common sense, that was the rule. No more foolish risks now until necessity called--but it was being here that counted... there was no payment--all that was drive--drivel.

"Dalrymple" is an eight-part story, brisk, economical and dramatic. As in so many stories, Fitzgerald generalizes about the theme in an ironic philosophical opening passage. The action commences with Dalrymple's celebrated return which contrasts vividly with the next dramatic scene--an interview with a prospective employer, Mr. Macy, one of the town bigwigs who had told Dalrymple to drop by for a job. Mr. Macy shatters Dalrymple's illusions by making him--and reluctantly, for he has no desire to hire Bryan at all--a stock clerk. Part Three is the center of the story and the longest section; it traces gradually Dalrymple's initiation into a cold and uncaring business ethos, to his realization that the path to success lies in daring and imagination rather than servitude and obedience. In this section, Fitzgerald uses naturalistic detail to delineate the bleak, hopeless existence of the lowest-echelon, white-collar labor. The next four parts are brief and dramatic, following Dalrymple through a series of successful burglaries out of which he derives a new sense of benign well-being. The reversal at the end is perfectly congruent with preceding action and in fact neatly underscores the theme. From initial statement through each complication, "Dalrymple Goes Wrong" moves steadily without halt or digression, employing a series of stock-taking or

reconnoitering scenes to move the plot toward a logical climax and ironic reversal.

The Story of Dialogue, Setting, Rhetoric--Minimal action

Most of Fitzgerald's stories are not "well-made"--that is, they consist of unequal proportions of fictional elements. Some, like "Jacob's Ladder," are constructed around rhetorical effects--dialogue and descriptive passages--with little or no action.²⁵ In "Jacob's Ladder," a curious cross between "Pygmalion" and Sister Carrie, the hero, Jacob Booth, meets a beautiful but ignorant young woman, educates and polishes her until she is scouted by Hollywood and becomes a famous movie star. The episodes are flat and desultory; whatever action there is is telescoped by the narrator's summaries. Lack of action offers scant opportunity for vivid characterization; Jacob's prevailing mood--apathy--ultimately engulfs the action. The central scene in Part One, Jacob's initial conversation with Jenny, points up their class differences. In Part Two, they converse again, this time about the differences between love and passion. Part Three is a "clean-up" section: many unbelievable developments are reported, but without action or excitement--Jacob, jealous of Jenny, goes to the doctor to see if an old larynx injury may be cured so that he will be able to sing again; there is no hope of cure; so he becomes engaged to a widow; they "snarl" at each other, break the engagement; he plans a trip to

Europe, cancels it and goes instead to California to see Jenny. None of this is dramatized; incidents are so rapidly and flatly summarized that they convey the illusion of inaction. Jenny doesn't love Jacob because he doesn't thrill her. In Part Five, Jacob thwarts an attempted blackmail plan directed against Jenny. Again, he proposes to her and again she tells him he doesn't thrill her. In Part Six, back in New York, Jenny visits Jacob and tells him she's found someone who does thrill her. He is caught up in waves of misery, walks down Broadway, sees her name in lights, goes into a theatre and watches her on the screen. All of these incidents are recounted through flat reportage; all is incident, not action.²⁶ As the preceding summary suggests, the plot is trivial, digressive, aimless. But scenic description is sharp, particularly the succession of tea and cocktail parties Jenny and Jacob attend in Hollywood. Dialogue is plentiful, but curiously uneven. It fails to contribute to the development of action. With so many flaws, the story is nevertheless engrossing primarily because it has richly suggestive overtones--themes faintly adumbrated through heightened rhetoric, intriguing but never fully realized, particularly the revelation of boredom and apathy among rich, hollow Americans:

Like so many Americans, he valued things rather than cared about them. His apathy was neither fear of life nor was it an affectation; it was the racial violence grown tired. It was a humorous apathy. With no need for money, he had tried--tried hard--for a year and a half to marry one of the richest women in America.

If he had loved her, or pretended to, he could have had her; but he had never been able to work himself up to more than the formal lie...

Fitzgerald also reveals a deep concern with problems of character and responsibility:

"I think you'll find that the other things will come, will be there before you know it--and what you called a thrill will seem a joke to you because life isn't for boys and girls, Jenny, but for men and women..."

and with the renewing, revitalizing power of youth:

He rode away in a mood of exultation, living more deeply in her youth and future than he had lived in himself for years...Through her eyes he had seen old colors once more; now they had faded back into the gray tapestry of the past.

We can only conclude from this that plot, for Fitzgerald, is not the essential element in a story. Indeed, often it is a mere device he picks up and drops, depending only on its relevancy to whatever idea consumed him at the moment. For the "theme" story, Fitzgerald often prefers the "plot" of dialogue and setting, like "Jacob's Ladder," where his rhetorical skill flourishes while action languishes.

The Story of Dialogue and Narrative--Economical Rhetoric

Fitzgerald constructs a number of plots with similar concentration on dialogue and narrative, variety of paltry incident and paucity of significant action, but lacking the colorful rhetorical passages of "Jacob's Ladder."²⁷

Bare, unadorned narrative is usually the exception rather than the rule for Fitzgerald, and fortunately, since rich descriptive passages add depth and weight to even the most

trivially-conceived and executed plots. (Although "The Rich Boy" develops through simple narrative and dialogue, without soaring rhetorical effects, an artful and complex rhetoric evolves out of the relationship between the narrator and the other characters [see Chapter Three], what may seem bare and straightforward prose demands Fitzgerald's finest rhetorical virtuosity.)

In "Six of One," Fitzgerald does no more with the bare skeleton of plot than he finds necessary to bring events to a conclusion. A purely synthetic concatenation of events, with little suspense, no momentum, no central action, undoubtedly leaves him little room for artistic effects. Part One constructs the artificial plot: two middle-aged men, Barnes and Schofield, watching with admiration a sculptured-looking group of young men--Schofield's sons and four of their friends--all handsome, athletic, well-dressed, casually elegant. After Schofield extols their superior qualities, Barnes challengingly says that he can pick out six boys from any high school in America, give them a superior education and they will outclass Schofield's group. "These boys," says Barnes, "are only asked to be serious about trivial things." The two ensuing sections of this four-part story follow the destinies of Barnes' young men and one of Schofield's through a wildly exaggerated chain of events. Part Four takes place ten years later. Barnes returns to Schofield's home and learns what became of the original group. Predictably, most of the young men born

to wealth and social position have failed to live up to their potential. But since several of Barnes's group have also failed, the experiment has proved nothing except that in any social class, the strong will survive. The loosely meandering episodes effectively destroy the reader's interest in the destinies of the young men. As if to compensate for the "shaggy-dog" character of the plot, Fitzgerald tacks on a moral totally undeveloped through action and characterization, which by extension, converts the story into a commentary on American life:

His own experiment--he didn't regret it, but he wouldn't have done it again. Probably it proved something, but he wasn't quite sure what. Perhaps that life is constantly renewed, and glamour and beauty make way for it; and he was glad that he was able to feel that the public could survive the mistakes of a whole generation, pushing the waste aside, sending ahead the vital and the strong. Only it was too bad and very American that there should be all that waste at the top; and he felt that he would not live long enough to see it end, to see great seriousness in the same skin with great opportunity--to see the race achieve itself at last.

This rhetorical appendage at the end serves as a retreat from the preceding flat and cheerless narrative which was itself necessary simply to hold an over-complicated, meandering plot together.

Plot complications render the central situation insignificant and Fitzgerald's serious concern over the generation gap is lost by the wayside. Here, as in almost every one of his stories where plot depends exclusively on dialogue interspersed with prosaic, terse, minimal narrative, the central action is either so mechanical or complex that

all of Fitzgerald's resources are spent on moving events along. There is little room left for rhetorical experimentation except when it serves a purely mechanical function as when, at the end of "Six of One," it concludes an inconclusive plot.

The Multiple-Plot Story

Although "May Day" has always been regarded as one of his most interesting and popular (as well as most anthologized) stories,²⁸ Fitzgerald never wrote another one like it.²⁹ Instead, he salvaged from "May Day" several structural and technical devices--contrasting and parallel episodes, kaleidoscopic impressions, shifting rhetorical patterns--for use in other short stories, but turned to the more expansive novel form to develop the multi-level plot.³⁰

We have noticed previously how Fitzgerald often opens a story with a philosophical passage that sets the tone and adumbrates the theme. In "May Day," the opening lines are heavily ironic, measured, musical and solemn, with unmistakably Biblical overtones. The passage serves, structurally, to unify under a common subject the diverse episodes which follow. Thematically, by offering moral commentary and judgment of contemporary American society that is supported by the ensuing action, it raises the latter to a level beyond its immediate significance.

The opening scenes of this eleven-part story establish the setting, introduce the characters and major action--Gordon Sterrett's drift to death. The action is constructed

around a series of sharply allusive contrasts between Gordon and a former Yale classmate, Philip Dean. Dean's social world, to which Gordon tries frantically to cling, is epitomized in exquisite clothes and bodily well-being--the "trinkets and slippers," the "splendor" and "wine of excitement" of the invocation.

As Philip Dean emerges from the bathroom, "polishing his body...everything about him radiated fitness and bodily comfort." He dons fresh underwear, inspects "his calves and his knees under the morning sunshine, patting his bare ankles," while Gordon Sterrett, "slender, darkly handsome" with a "blue semicircle of ill health...heightened by an unnatural glow which colored his face like a low incessant fever" tries anxiously to claim his attention. After Gordon asks Dean for a loan of the \$300 he needs to extricate himself from the demands of a lower-class young woman with whom he has become seriously involved, Dean does not answer immediately. Instead, he returns to the delightful complexities of his toilette: "Dean tied his tie precisely, brushed his eyebrows and removed a piece of tobacco from his teeth with solemnity. Next he filled his cigarette case, tossed the empty box thoughtfully into the waste basket and settled the case in his vest pocket." Later, after refusing Gordon, he thinks again of his body, "Think I'll go back to the hotel and get a shave, haircut and massage."

Philip's clothes are carelessly heaped around the room. Like Gatsby, he owns "a family of thick silk shirts littered

on the chairs and impressive neckties and soft woolen socks--a shirt of very heavy silk, yellow with a pale blue stripe...nearly a dozen of them." Later, he will, with rapt attention, select not one but a dozen neckties, "each one after long consultations with the other man. Did he think narrow ties were coming back? and wasn't it a shame that Rivers couldn't get any more Welsh Margotson collars? There never was a collar like the 'Covington.'" Clothes, Philip's and later Edith Braden's "crime-fur-trimmed opera cloak" and "cunning embroidered stockings," symbolize indecent, lavish waste--riches piled in arrogant profusion, insulating their possessors from the unpleasant reality of Gordon's plaintive plea for help and the mob's strident demands for social justice.

Gordon's plight, underscored by his clothes, "shirt cuffs ragged and linty at the edges and soiled to a faint gray," his tie, "of former glory...faded and thumb creased" which could "no longer hide the jagged buttonholes of his collar," explains eloquently why Gordon and Philip "quite suddenly and definitely hated each other." Fittingly, Gordon spends his last hours in a hotel room decorated only with "clothes, dishevelled, rumpled clothes on the floor," the apogee of his mental and physical disarray.

As Dean brusquely refuses the loan, Gordon wonders "why he had never before noticed how much those upper teeth projected."

Part Three shifts conspicuously to a cheap restaurant

from which two human beings emerge: "ugly, ill-nourished, devoid of all except the very lowest form of intelligence, and without even that animal exuberance that in itself brings color into life; they were lately vermin-ridden, cold and hungry in a dirty town of a strange land...." These "poor, friendless" creatures are, like Gordon Sterrett, totally unprepared for the grim, uncaring, post-war New York City and again, like Gordon, "they would be tossed as driftwood to their deaths."

Part Four introduces, again in sharp contrast to the returning soldiers, the key figure of Edith Braden who appears in both levels of plot and thus helps tie the apparently disordered and unrelated episodes together. Again, the emphasis is on physical presence:

She thought of her own appearance. Her bare arms and shoulders were powdered to a creamy white. She knew they looked very soft and would gleam like milk against the black backs that were to silhouette them tonight. The hairdressing had been a success; her reddish mass of hair was piled and crushed and creased to an arrogant marvel of mobile curves. Her lips were finely made of deep carmine; the irises of her eyes were delicate, breakable blue, like china eyes.

The hint of something hidden behind Edith's apparent vacuity is unfortunately unrealized in action: "There was a streak in her of that same desire to ponder, of that adolescent idealism that had turned her brother socialist and pacifist." And Henry Braden, Edith's brother, whose socialism has a bookish, artificial quality, is stiff and wooden--but the brisk action as the angry mob descends on

his headquarters, quickly directs our attention away from him and toward the sudden, climactic death of one of the two soldiers. Carrol Key's death occurs when, after hours of drinking in a small room adjacent to the Biltmore's ballroom, the scene of several dramatic encounters among the major participants in the action, the two soldiers are swept up in the embattled crowd, determined to put the Bolsheviks to rout. They all arrive at Henry Braden's office where Key is pushed out of a window by the jostling crowd. After this the action accurately reflects the prevailing disorder; it moves unevenly from the Biltmore to Child's 59th Street and back to the Biltmore, staggers, lingers, falters even, through a series of brief, colorful incidents, strange encounters, uneasy and discordant liaisons--Gordon and his girl, Jewel Hudson; Peter Hummel and Philip Dean--masquerading as "Mr. In and Mr. Out"--and through it all, Gus Rose, the other soldier, to whom the whole scene "was a colorful circus of beauty and riotous pleasure."

It ends as it must, in violence; Gordon blows out his brains, but his death grows out of the scene, not the interplay between character and action. Carrol Key's death at the hands of the violent mob seems equally forced and unconvincing. Although Fitzgerald devotes a great deal of attention to Gordon, it is all external, naturalistic detail: "The man was drunk. He wore a dinner coat with a dishevelled tie and shirt swollen by spillings of water and wine. His eyes, dim, and bloodshot, roved unnaturally from

side to side. His breath came short between his lips." Gordon remains a flat passive character, more acted upon than acting, and one whom the reader never really understands. Like the two soldiers, he is beaten by society--and because he is, as a character, unrealized through even one single significant act--his death is ultimately as pathetic and as meaningless and strangely unmoving as Carrol Key's.

There is much more, but the multi-level plot, composed in impressionistic flashes, shifting kaleidoscopic patterns of scene and incident, and thematic contracts, distinguishes "May Day" and illustrate how Fitzgerald would incorporate into his novels fictional devices originated in the stories.

The Outline Story--Brief, Dramatic, Compressed and Undeveloped

Fitzgerald's last stories are, as we have noted, brief, compressed, almost wholly dramatized, a fictional shorthand relying on dialogue far more than before--sharper, clearer, more authentic--minimal narrative and bare, anecdotal plots, often no more than brief outlines or vivid vignettes.³¹ Because there is so little of it, narrative commentary always figures significantly in plot development, and the narrator, whether author or character, is an important factor in the story.

The situation in "The Lost Decade" (1939) is simple: Orrison Brown, one year out of college and working for a magazine, is instructed by his boss to take a man, a visitor who has been away for ten years, out to lunch. The rest of

the story consists of their conversation and a series of clinically detached observations by Orrison, clues by which the enigmatic figure of Trimble, the visitor, is finally revealed as a former drunkard who has lost ten years of his life in an alcoholic maze.

The story achieves its effects through Orrison's curiosity about Trimble which we, through the young writer's eyes, share. His observations, youthful, intelligent, sympathetic, make the revelation of Trimble's secret poignant and unforgettable. Brief as it is, Orrison's shock at Trimble's tale is a fitting climax to the laconic but allusive dialogue on which the plot turns:

"What do you want to see most?" Orrison asked, as they sat down. Trimble considered.

"Well--the backs of people's heads... their necks--how their heads are joined to their bodies. I'd like to hear what those two little girls are saying to their father. Not exactly what they're saying but whether the words float or submerge, how their mouths shut when they're finished speaking. Just a matter of rhythm... the weight of spoons...so light. A little bowl with a stick attached. The cast in that waiter's eye..."

and the last lines,

(Orrison) "Jesus," he said to himself.
Drunk for ten years."

He felt suddenly of the texture of his own coat and then he reached out and pressed his thumb against the granite of the building by his side.

Fitzgerald carries the elliptical dramatic method further, too far in fact, in "Three Acts of Music." Although the story is constructed like a play, the characters have no names, are in fact scarcely defined. Only their

limitations are obvious, not what or who they are. The narrator suggests this at the beginning, "What were they--no. This is about music." We have seen how many of Fitzgerald's stories, early and late, are not about people but about milieu, music, landscape, moonlight and so forth. Here, Fitzgerald hints vaguely at things--music and money, experience and opportunity, the life we permit to pass us by. The situation, barely sketched, involves a poor girl and a young man from an old Vermont family who do not marry because of ill-defined pressures from the outside. All they have, all they are left with, are the strains of the popular songs they enjoyed together through the years. Dialogue revolves around the songs and their composers, the lyrics suggesting the life the two characters might have lived. Their meager happiness is expressed in superficial lyrics to which the girl attributes an unwarranted depth of feeling. To her, love is romantic, nostalgic, thoughtless, like the words of a popular song. Although she has an intuition of there being something more, these words and melodies are the very fabric of her life; they thwart her wistful search for the elusive meaning of happiness:

She hesitated before the wide horizon of how she might have lived. How she might have married this man, borne him children, died for him--of how she had lived out of sordid poverty and education--into power--and spinsterhood. And she cared not a damn for her man any more because he had never gone off with her. But she wondered how these composers had lived. Youmans and Irving Berlin and Jerome Kern and she thought that if any of their wives turned up in this hospital she would try to make them happy.

Although too much is left for the reader to infer, "Three Acts of Music" is a memorable excursion into a level of popular American culture whose impact has been virtually ignored in literature. Fitzgerald correctly sees the world of popular music as a reflection of the American pattern of life, particularly the dream of success. It is regrettable that the story remains only an unrealized outline, for Fitzgerald daring and experimental, but too thin to arouse more than casual interest in the reader.

Specific Literary Techniques

The preceding pages have dealt with plot type and structure in Fitzgerald's stories, along with the proportionate distribution of fictional elements within the stories. We have alluded to several specific techniques employed in connection with the beginning and ending of stories, the use of contrasting scenes and incremental episodes, stock-taking or reconnoitering scenes (i.e., in "Jacob's Ladder" where on several occasions Jacob mulls over and sums up preceding incidents, and in "Dalrymple" where the hero evaluates his current situation in terms of future expectations), and thematic contrasts (used most effectively in "Babylon Revisited" as well as in "May Day"). There are several other devices that Fitzgerald uses frequently enough to command our attention.

Fitzgerald uses, in addition to the philosophical passages, several other introductory devices:³² the address

to the reader ("The Camel's Back," "The Lees of Happiness"); dramatic or startling description or dialogue ("First Blood," "Two Wrongs"); scenic description followed immediately by a characteristic action related to the description ("The Last of the Belles," "The Jelly Bean").

The stories characteristically employ three kinds of endings: the surprise or sudden reversal of action, often similar to but far more sophisticated than the O. Henry ending ("The Offshore Pirate," "Benediction," "Myra Meets His Family," "Two For a Cent"); the coda or epilogue, a very brief, flat, often anti-climactic section or passage adding a circular movement to the plot by going back to a symbol or theme used in the beginning ("The Ice Palace," "The Swimmers," "The Scandal Detectives"); the rhetorical, tacked-on ending, either sentimental and unrelated to what has gone before ("A New Leaf," "The Bridal Party"); or a strong, unsentimental, somewhat didactic statement ("Emotional Bankruptcy," "A Woman with a Past"). Rhetorical endings are the most common and, because they depend on romantic cliches and heavy sentimentality, the least successful. The reversal ending is usually too mechanical and artificial. The coda or epilogue generally adds a welcome dimension to the plot: it reinforces the theme, logically concludes the action, and unifies the customarily episodic plot.

In even the most trivial Fitzgerald story, there is usually one vivid or memorable scene that stands out from

the rest and adds depth and distinction to the entire story, like the haircut scene in "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," the dice game in "The Jelly Bean," the masquerade ball in "The Camel's Back," the bookstore-basketball game in "O Russet Witch," the struggle with the evil spectre in "A Short Trip Home," Charlie's first visit to the Peters' home in "Babylon Revisited."

Flashback scenes appear on occasion, with uneven results. In "I Got Shoes" and "The Dance," flashback is purely mechanical; it adds some suspense to elaborately contrived, but hopelessly banal plots. In "Absolution," however, flashback connects Rudolph Miller, "the beautiful little boy with eyes like blue stones, and lashes that sprayed open from them like flower-petals," who carries in his heart "a dark poison," with the half-crazed priest, Father Schwarz, with "cold watery eyes" who, in the still of the night, wept cold tears of suppressed desire, "brooding through grotesque labyrinths." When Rudolph comes to see the priest, he is in abject fear. Father Schwarz tells the boy to pull himself together. He speaks softly, reassuringly, and Rudolph tells him the story which began three days ago. It is a tale of a young boy's fears and passions in an environment of rugged austerity and grim religiosity, ending with a lie in the confessional booth. When it is over, the priest's complete breakdown reinforces the significance of the boy's story. The pressure of his environment had driven him into the "lonely secret road of adolescence." Father Schwarz

had followed that lonely road to the end, suppressing along the way the natural passions aroused by the rustle of Swede girls along the path by his window and in Romberg's Drug Store "when it was dusk and the yellow lights shone inside and the nickel taps of the soda fountain were gleaming, and he had found the scent of cheap toilet soap desperately sweet upon the air." Flashback adds dramatic intensity to the encounter by supplying the details leading up to Rudolph's spiritual crisis, and connecting Rudolph's background with Father Schwarz's. It also points up the resemblances among apparently dissimilar characters by tying that quality in which Carl Miller (Rudolph's father) was deficient, "the sense of things, the feel of things, the hint of rain in the wind on the cheeks," to Rudolph's conviction that "there was something ineffably gorgeous somewhere that had nothing to do with God," and to Father Schwarz's dream of an amusement park, where "a lot of people get together in the best places" and "things go glimmering."

From Hollywood, and undoubtedly from his experience as a script writer, Fitzgerald borrows a number of techniques: fade-outs, dramatic exits, melodramatic complications, scenic digressions, the last lines from one scene repeated as the first lines of the next scene, violins playing in the background and even ending music! He sometimes takes phrases from the script writer's vocabulary: "We shift the Camera Angle to Carlos Davis, arising in a dream bedroom," ("Women in the House") and in the same story, "And

at this point, as they say in picture making, the Camera Goes into the House, and we go with it." And plot complications are too often patterned on Hollywood B-pictures.

In general, Hollywood's influence on Fitzgerald's short stories is negative. Only when he takes the Hollywood scene and uses it critically and objectively--in The Last Tycoon--or ironically--in the Pat Hobby stories--does it add an important dimension to his work. Typically, the cinematic device in a Fitzgerald short story is a purely mechanical excrescence.

Plot Defects

We have noticed in passing several weaknesses in Fitzgerald's plots. If upon closer examination we can isolate most of those defects which plague his short fiction, perhaps we may postulate evaluative criteria.

The most serious problem in Fitzgerald's stories is a frequent discrepancy between conception and execution--the plot that starts off in one direction and for no apparent reason, artistic or thematic, heads in another, or after a strong start, falters and limply peters out. "Benediction" is a morality tale in which the ironic ending makes all that preceded it seem pointless and irrelevant. Lois, a young flapper on a visit to her seminarian brother, Keith, undergoes an intense mystical experience in the chapel. She is ostensibly so moved by it and by her brother's homilies that she decides to cancel a daring assignation.

Inexplicably at the end, she tears up the telegram cancelling the meeting with her prospective lover. Here, Fitzgerald's motives are unclear. Is he trying to say that true conversion requires much more than a passionately mystical response to religious symbols? Is he attempting to depict the modern flapper as irretrievably lost to the saving grace of Catholicism? Or does he mean to suggest that Catholicism is vestigial, that it no longer has the power to effect moral alteration in the young? The ending makes anything more than blank conjecture impossible.

"Indecision" is purportedly the story of a young man's inability to choose between two women who symbolize two different kinds of love. Their attractiveness and desirability place him in a quandary. But the problem is that the characters who are supposed to represent alternative modes of life are blurred and indistinct; the only differences between the two women are those of age, physical appearance and mannerism. Intrinsic differences are barely discernible to the reader. If the hero's tortured indecision is to be credible, the differences between the alternatives should be significant. Here they are not, and the story is a hopelessly muddled jumble of irrelevancies. "When he was with Rosemary, making life fun with jokes for her, he thought of Emily, who was 25 and carried space around with her into which he could step and be alone with their two selves, mature and complicated and trusting and almost in love." The hero's "dilemma" is wholly factitious; were it not for

the vividly realized milieu, "Indecision" might better be left to oblivion.

Only a small handful of the stories are unredeemably trivial.³³ In these, neither in conception and execution, nor characterization and theme is there any relief from superficiality. Utter triviality is the exception rather than the rule, however; critics have mistakenly labeled as trivial a great number of stories in which a trivial plot and characters belie a serious theme or purpose. In such stories, plots are sometimes built on situations where boy-meets-girl, complications ensue, the lovers separate only to be reunited at the end.³⁴ Triviality consists in the way the characters meet, separate and re-unite, the nature of the complications and the insignificance of characters' values and aspirations. Most of the defects in Fitzgerald's plots work toward this end: they are facile and artificial techniques which have denied these stories in the past the claim to seriousness. Three of the four major plot defects add weight to the charge of triviality: Fitzgerald's plot techniques in some stories are simply not up to his own standard of craftsmanship.

The most obvious defect is synthetic, mechanical plot movement where cheap devices or tricks effect reversal or denouement. Change does not grow out of action, but is imposed artificially from the outside, as in "Hot and Cold Blood" where the woman for whom Jim refuses to give up his seat turns out to be his pregnant wife. In "The Swimmers,"

Henry Marston tricks his wife and her lover into signing a release for the children and an admission of fraud by telling them their boat is drifting out to sea. Later, he miraculously encounters the young girl he had met in Europe years before who shared his passion for swimming; they go off together into the sunset. Completely unbelievable and forced, these twists undercut and cheapen the serious theme--the contrast between American power and European tradition. "The Swimmers" is decidedly not a failure, but mechanical manipulation of plot mars its effectiveness.

Mechanically constructed, synthetic plots are often simply too predictable to command more than cursory interest. In "Two For a Cent," Abercrombie, rich, successful, friend of statesmen and presidents, returns to his home town where he meets Hemmick, an out-and-out failure, friendless and obscure, who resides in Abercrombie's old homestead. In the course of Abercrombie's acrimonious verbal assault on the town, he reveals that he was able to leave town, as a youth, purely by the chance acquisition of a penny. It turns out that the other man, Hemmick, by losing the penny Abercrombie found, was prevented from leaving town. Destiny is the result of paltry accident; the young, energetic, ambitious boy turns into a listless, lethargic failure and the lazy, shiftless young "jelly-bean" becomes a successful man of the world, all because a penny has been dropped by the former and found by the latter. This plot is pat and predictable; its neatness discourages our conjectures on fate and the

vicissitudes and ironies of life.

Similarly, "Two Wrongs" is a flat, set-up account of a marriage in which the husband's neglect results in the wife's delivery of a still-born child. She retaliates by failing him when he grows ill and dependent upon her. The positive qualities in the story are tangential: the themes of failure and wasted potential, the ephemeral nature of fame and material success, the self-concern which destroys love and marriage--all are diminished by a synthetic, predictable, poorly-constructed plot.

Several stories illustrate Fitzgerald's unfortunate tendency to lapse into melodrama, often accompanied by unabashed sentimentality--an excessive indulgence in pity and sympathy. "Diamond Dick" is a good example of both. Here, Fitzgerald's penchant for the fabulous becomes merely an escape into sensationalism, and all the hypocritical meaningless words Hemingway would expunge from our vocabulary are enlisted to support a foolish, hopelessly cliched plot.

Diana Dickey, at age ten, decided to emulate a romantic underworld figure and nicknamed herself "Diamond Dick." She cultivated the rough speech and careless slouch of a gangster. Years later, a "dark little beauty with tragedy eyes and a rich voice stirring in her throat," she again assumes her childish identity in order to rescue her lover (really her husband) who, suffering from amnesia incurred in a wartime accident, has fallen into the clutches of a grasping, lower-class (of course), "pulpy-soft" (always a

pejorative term to Fitzgerald) woman. The entire scene at the end deserves to be quoted, so rife with sentiment, so cloyingly romantic, so hopelessly melodramatic is it:

"Excuse me," said Diana slowly, "but I think you've got my man."

"Help!" cried Elaine wildly. "Oh, she's hurt me! She's hurt me!"

"Shut up!" Diana's voice was hard as steel. "You're not hurt. You're just pulpy and soft. But if you start to raise a row I'll pump you full of tin as sure as you're alive. Sit down! Both of you. Sit down!"

"Now," said Diana, "I'm going to tell you a little story. It's about a girl who went to a war once and met a man who she thought was the finest and bravest man she had ever known. She fell in love with him and he with her and all the other men she had ever known became like pale shadows compared with this man that she loved. But one day he was shot down out of the air, and when he woke up into the world he'd changed. He didn't know it himself but he'd forgotten things and become a different man. The girl felt sad about this--she saw that she wasn't necessary to him any more, so there was nothing to do but say good-bye.

"So she went away and every night for a while she cried herself to sleep but he never came back to her and five years went by. Finally word came to her that this same injury that had come between them was ruining his life. He didn't remember anything important any more--how proud and fine he had once been, and what dreams he had once had. And then the girl knew that she had the right to try and save what was left of his life because she was the only one who knew all the things he'd forgotten.. But it was too late. She couldn't approach him any more--she wasn't coarse enough and gross enough to reach him now--he'd forgotten so much.

"So she took a revolver, very much like this one here, and she came after this man to the apartment of a poor, weak, harmless rat of a girl who had him in tow. She was going to either bring him to himself--or go back to the dust with him where nothing would matter any more."

After reading a passage like this, we may well ask if there can be any redeeming features to the story. To our amazement, and delight, stories like "Diamond Dick" often abound in the most felicitous rhetoric, vivid milieus and graceful narrative, like the following passage Fitzgerald extrapolated from "Diamond Dick" for use in The Great Gatsby:

But she was young and the artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the Beale St. Blues, while five hundred pairs of gold and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the gray tea hour there were always rooms that throbbed incessantly with this low sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor... Diana sat without moving while the night breeze made cool puffs and ruffles on her chiffon dress. The moon had risen higher now, and floating in the Sound was a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the stiff, tinny drip of the banjos on the lawn.

What is even more amazing is that there follows hard upon these lines one of the worst, most sentimental and excessively romantic endings Fitzgerald ever wrote:

Yet perhaps if the occasion should arise, Diamond Dick would come to life again from the colored cover and, with spurs shining and buckskin fringes fluttering in the breeze, ride into the lawless hills to protect her own. For under all her softness, Diamond Dick was always hard as steel--so hard that the years knew it and stood still for her and the clouds rolled apart and a sick man, hearing those untiring hoof beats in the night, rose up and shook off the dark burden of the war.

In "The Popular Girl," Fitzgerald shamelessly plays

upon the reader's feelings in the Cinderella story of beautiful, once-rich and popular Yanci Baldwin, now poor and forgotten by her friends. Down to her last dime, with no place to go and no one to turn to, but unwilling to admit her desperation, she is rescued by the Prince Charming who has known all along about her poverty and pretensions to wealth. Again, however, richly evocative prose redeems a trite and meretricious plot.

We have already noted, particularly in connection with "Three Acts of Music," that Fitzgerald's later stories are often bare, anecdotal and thin, and as a result of underplotting, they are curiously drained and lifeless, lacking the buoyancy Fitzgerald's rhetorical flights can supply.³⁴

Other stories are clumsily overplotted, disorganized, episodic and uneven. In the case of "Indecision," the cause is lack of a centrally unifying idea. In "Between Three and Four" the idea is too clear, if anything, too simplistically moralistic to allow for deviation in rhetoric or theme. Action moves toward its inevitable end--but the plot is overly-engineered, unnecessarily complex.

In the depression era, Howard Butler, a quiet, unexceptional man, branch manager of a furniture company, must decide whom to dismiss from his office staff. He decides upon Mrs. Summer, a widow with whom he had been in love thirty years ago. She pleads for the job which she needs to support her son through college and he tells her to return next week, some day "between three and four" for

possible re-employment. The following week, when she arrives he refuses to see her. From this point on, the story moves in fits and starts, uneven and needlessly complicated. Butler goes home, sees a headline about a woman's suicide, asks the maid reading the paper if the woman's name is Summer, learns that it is, and that night dreams about her death. The next day, still remorseful, he returns to the office, sees an apparent apparition of Mrs. Summer in the ante-room, meets his own employer who scolds and dismisses him, sees the apparition again, becomes frightened and jumps out the window. The long arm of coincidence functions overtime; it turns out that the suicide was not Mrs. Summer (the maid merely confirmed the name, but she couldn't read), Mrs. Summer was not an apparition but was actually sitting in the ante-room, the owner all along had planned to fire Butler and not Mrs. Summer. "Between Three and Four" is essentially a character study of a man who is dead inside. It has several effective moments, but the mechanically coincidental, overly-complex plot flaws a serious attempt to understand a paltry human being. As the plot develops, the cards become stacked so heavily against Butler and the sympathy lavished on Mrs. Summer so excessive that the story is riddled with the maudlin sentimentality it might have avoided by probing more deeply into the origin of Butler's neurosis. What causes Butler's selfishness, his death in life? Is he meant to suggest a whole segment of the population during the depression? Because his role is

never made clear, the story lacks firmness and credibility; plot complications do not replace logical interaction between character and action.

We have noted earlier that symbolism in "The Cut-Glass Bowl" is poorly worked into the fabric of the story. Failure to use symbolism properly, however, is a flaw only in a few early stories.³⁵ Later, Fitzgerald's symbolism is generally smooth, occasionally effective, but never as brilliant as it is in The Great Gatsby (see Chapter Four: Rhetoric for a fuller discussion).

In the foregoing discussion, we have considered several criteria in analyzing plot in a Fitzgerald short story: coherence of theme, level of seriousness, structure and development of action through description and dialogue, logical evolution of plot through interplay of character and incident, and functional use of symbolism. Obviously, any or all of these are equally applicable to any short story, not only Fitzgerald's. They are, in fact, conventional fictional standards and they indicate the conclusion we must draw from our discussion: that there are no plot characteristics peculiar to Fitzgerald's stories, no immediately identifiable signs of his craftsmanship in this area. We may, as we have in the preceding pages, evaluate plot in terms of general criteria and point out particular deficiencies or flaws; we cannot identify Fitzgerald's distinctive techniques in plotting except to say that his failure to develop his plots logically, through the inter-

play of character and incident (with the result that they seem synthetic and mechanical) is greater than in any other area we have studied. Plot is the weakest, least imaginative and experimental element in Fitzgerald's stories. Although he was aware of the innovations other writers of the twenties were bringing to the short story form (see Chapter Six), he remained (with a few exceptions near the end) dependent on the plot techniques of earlier writers.

While every successful Fitzgerald story cannot be evaluated by each of the criteria postulated, every story of merit should embody at least a few of the principles of plot development and structure outlined above. A story which, I think, may be evaluated in terms of all the proposed criteria is "The Ice Palace."

The opening scene establishes theme, setting and, through significant action, the character of Sally Carrol Hopper, the heroine. "The Ice Palace" is about the differences between the South, which stands for warmth, carelessness and generosity, feeling, tradition and life, and the North--cold, hard materialism, selfishness and death. The action involves Sally Carrol's desire for something more than the swimming, dancing and playing that fill up her languid, somnolent lazy summer days.

At the end of Part One, the quality of the Southern tradition is summed up in a scene laid in a cemetery, glorifying the ante bellum South, a mythic South such as it never was and never could have been:

"....these were just men, unimportant...but they died for the most beautiful thing in the world--the dead South...I've tried...to live up to those past standards of noblesse oblige...streaks of strange courtliness and chivalry in some of these boys an' stories I used to hear from a Confederate soldier who lived next door and a few old darkies...there was something, there was something!"

For Sally Carrol, the symbol of the dead South is the grave of Margery Lee, a young girl who died during the Civil War.

Everywhere in this first section there is heat and languor; characters move and speak unhurriedly, reflecting the tenor of their lives.

In Part Two, with the introduction of the Northern element, Harry Bellamy, "tall, broad and brisk," the tempo quickens. The warm summer is over; it is November and time for the serious business of life. Sally Carrol becomes engaged to Harry and they plan to go North to meet his family. In Part Three, from the first sentence, "All night in the Pullman it was very cold," and for all of the scenes laid in the North, it is penetratingly cold. There is no relief for Sally Carrol who cannot, for as long as she remains in the alien environment of Harry's home, get warm. The icy weather symbolizes a way of life: no sense of play, no social badinage, no graciousness, no heritage of manners and style, only a chilling obedience to the forms of life. Even the people are gray and desiccated. Harry's "cold lips" kissing her, reinforce the pervasive, unrelenting chill.

In Part Four, the relationship between Sally Carrol and

Harry hardens after a dinner-time quarrel when Harry refers to Southerners as "lazy and shiftless" and later, when the vaudeville orchestra plays "Dixie," she is painfully reminded of what she has left behind.

Part Five again takes up the motif: "It was a particularly cold night." The action builds to an apocalyptic climax as Sally Carrol loses her way in the glittering cavernous maze of the "ice-palace, like a damp vault connecting empty tombs." Here, ice, snow and palace are symbolically united as death:

She was alone with this presence that came out of the North, the dreary loneliness that rose from ice-bound whalers in the Arctic seas, from smokeless, trackless wastes where were strewn the whitened bones of adventure. It was an icy breath of death; it was rolling down low across the land to clutch at her.

Death, suggested early at the cemetery, is reinforced by Sally Carrol's thoughts of "great piles of snow on her grave," "the deathlike faces of Northerners," and her dream, as she falls down in the darkened palace, of rejoining the dead Margery Lee "with a young, white brow, and wide, welcoming eyes, and a hoop-skirt of some soft material that was quite comforting to rest on."

The ice palace functions brilliantly as a symbol of the imminent death of the spirit, the inevitable accompaniment of life in a new, raw, mercantile Northern city. By contrast, there is no similarly effective symbol of the South; Sally Carrol's memories and ideals are flaccid and overly romantic. The early cemetery scene and young Margery Lee

seem merely parodies of nineteenth century graveyardism; no suitable symbolic embodiment of the Southern ideal exists in "The Ice Palace," perhaps because of a failure of imagination, perhaps because that past is a totally unrealized and unrealizable myth.

The last section returns to the original scene; it is April in Sally Carrol's Southern town and "the wealth of golden sunlight poured a quite enervating yet oddly comforting heat over the house where day long it faced the dusty stretch of road." Sally Carrol has experienced a purgatory in ice; chastened, contented, even indolent, she takes up her old life with new expectations.

There is far more to "The Ice Palace" than this outline suggests: decor, like the new but charmless library in Harry's house; dialogue, the dinner-party where Sally Carrol first experiences disappointment and disillusion with Harry; characters, the men--hard, brisk, athletic; the women--faded, dull, apathetic, "They don't indulge in the cheering luxury of tears"; social position, shades and nuances of class distinction and throughout, wealth of goods going hand in hand with poverty of spirit, death and snow versus life and lilacs.

"The Ice Palace" is not Fitzgerald's greatest story, for there are other structural and aesthetic elements to consider besides plot which affect our evaluation. On this one level, however, it is unqualifiedly successful and perhaps it is not amiss to suggest that any story in which

the plot conforms to the criteria we have outlined above, regardless of other defects, cannot be adjudged a failure.

NOTES

¹Division into genre is at best only an analytical device; every Fitzgerald story is a mixture of genres. No one story is pure fantasy, pure satire, pure milieu. The major plot element, that which distinguishes the story from other stories, determines the category into which a story is placed.

²"The Dance." This is Fitzgerald's only detective story. Here, he does not use supernatural devices but, as in "One Trip Abroad," creates an atmosphere of brooding evil; here, in a Southern town.

³Kenneth Eble, p. 128.

⁴Eble, in connection with "A Short Trip Home," sees Fitzgerald's obsession with evil as relating to an "intensely moral view in which evil is active and dominant over a will which is weak or passive," pp. 128-129. The same situation obtains in "The Guest in Room 19."

⁵Ibid., p. 79.

⁶Mizener, The Far Side of Paradise, p. 156.

⁷See "Myra Meets His Family," "Flight and Pursuit," "The Smilers," "Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales."

⁸Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (New York, 1957), pp. 157, 162.

⁹Paul Rosenfeld, "Fitzgerald before The Great Gatsby," from Men Seen: Twenty-Four Modern Authors (1925); reprinted in F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, edited by Alfred Kazin (Cleveland and New York, 1951), p. 72.

¹⁰I interpret this ending not as Fitzgerald's obedience to the "happy ending" dictum, but rather as his own literary escape into an unrecapturable but always haunting world of young love, for which he had not yet conceived a substitute.

¹¹See especially "The Rough Crossing," "Love Boat," "Rags Martin Jones and the Prince of Wales," "The Offshore Pirate."

¹²Fitzgerald's description here is remarkably similar to the memorable scene at the end of Nathaniel West's The Day of the Locust (1939), not in particular details but in effect.

¹³"The Last of the Belles," also set in a Southern town, carries the same haunting, evocative mood.

¹⁴See "Three Hours Between Planes" for a similar mood.

¹⁵See also "A Penny Spent" and "More Than Just a House."

¹⁶There are three religious stories in the Fitzgerald canon but they are significant less for plot than for theme. "Absolution," using a naturalistic style, falls into the categories of manners and mood; "Benediction" and "One of My Oldest Friends" are modern miracle stories and thus might

be classified under the heading of supernatural.

¹⁷See for example, "What I Think and Feel at Twenty-Five"; "Imagination and A Few Mothers"; "Making Monogamy Work"; "A Short Autobiography"; "Salesmanship on the Champs-Elysees." There are at least ten more sketches in a similar vein.

¹⁸"The Broadcast We Almost Heard Last September," published posthumously, although it satirizes war reporting, is too slight to be regarded as a story.

¹⁹Fitzgerald's tragic sense is implicit throughout his stories. (See Chapter Five: Theme.) Comments in his letters and essays make his view of life quite clear:

To John Grier Hibben, June 6, 1920, Letters of...., p. 462:

"My view of life, President Hibben, is the view of the Theodore Dreisers and Joseph Conrads...that life is too strong and remorseless for the sons of men."

To Marya Mannes, October, 1925, ibid., pp. 488-489:

"America's greatest promise is that something is going to happen, and after a while you get tired of waiting because nothing happens to people except that they grow old, and nothing happens to American art because America is the story of the moon that never rose."

"Pasting It Together," in The Crack-Up (New York, 1945), p. 84:

"This is what I think now: that the natural state of the sentient adult is a qualified unhappiness."

²⁰"The Ordeal" (Nassau Literary Magazine) was later revised and published as "Benediction"; "Tarquin of Cheap-side" (Nassau Literary Magazine) later published in Smart Set; "The Debutante" (Nassau Literary Magazine) was later incorporated into This Side of Paradise.

²¹See. R.W.B. Lewis, Trials of the Word (New York, 1965) for an interesting discussion of America's "black books," the apocalyptic tradition in American literature.

²²For a good analysis of the structure of Fitzgerald's apprentice fiction, see Kuehl, pp. 88-89.

²³See also the Basil Duke Lee stories, "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," "Emotional Bankruptcy."

²⁴To Harold Ober, received May 13, 1930, Letters of...., p. 396:

"Do you know a good agent in Hollywood you might persuade to interest himself in 'Majesty'? It's constructed dramatically like a play and has some damn good dramatic scenes in it."

²⁵For dialogue and setting, little action, see "At Your Age," "The Bowl," and "The Offshore Pirate."

²⁶I should like to draw a distinction between incident and action: "incident" refers to an essentially meaningless circumstance which lacks significance in terms of characterization or theme; "action" I use in much the same way as Charles C. Walcutt, Man's Changing Mask (Minneapolis, 1966),

p. 25, when he differentiates between situation and significant action: "The great tragic action moves through the heart of the society's beliefs. The western melodrama moves through situations of violence, fear, love, honor and courage that do not engage the characters in depth....";

p. 28: "If it is possible for promising depth of characterization to shoal off into nothing as the action loses significance, can the opposite happen? Can trivial characters gain roundness and weight because a slight action becomes more significant? Yes, this pattern is to be found in Lillian Hellman's Toys in the Attic...."

²⁷These include, among others, some of Fitzgerald's least successful efforts: "Your Way and Mine," "The Pusher in the Face," "Inside the House," "Gretchen's Forty Winks," "The Unspeakable Egg" and "One Interne."

²⁸John Berryman, "F. Scott Fitzgerald...", p. 109, dissenting from the majority, describes "May Day" as "banal, fundamentally disordered."

²⁹"A Change of Class" uses a double plot, but very ineptly.

³⁰James E. Miller, Jr., F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and ..., p. 54, describes Fitzgerald's technique here as that "which John Dos Passos was to use later on a much larger scale: the independent and simultaneous development of several apparently unrelated lines of action, which are merged

occasionally in seemingly accidental ways. All the lines of action, though only loosely related to each other in plot, are directly and intimately associated in theme, and any occasional 'contacts' serve a thematic purpose."

³¹See also "Afternoon of an Author," "News of Paris Ten Years Ago" (published posthumously), "An Author's Mother," "The Long Way Out," "On an Ocean Wave" (published, after Fitzgerald's death, under the pseudonym "Paul Elgin"), "In the Holidays," "Strange Sanctuary," "I Didn't Get Over," "Dearly Beloved" (unpublished).

³²In "Absolution," the opening passage suggests a parable; in "The Smilers," it is heavily and awkwardly portentous.

³³"The Passionate Esquimo," "One Interne," "The Third Casket," "Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales," "Inside the House," "The Pusher in the Face," "The Unspeakable Egg."

³⁴"In the Holidays," "Send Me In, Coach," "Design in Plaster," "Dearly Beloved."

³⁵"Benediction," "One of My Oldest Friends."

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTER AND DISTANCE

In almost every Fitzgerald short story there are problems in characterization. Several critics identify but fail to trace to their source two major areas of difficulty: first, distance or point of view,¹ what James E. Miller sees as Fitzgerald's failure "to differentiate between his own and the points of view of his fabulous characters,"² or what Leslie Fiedler considers "a failure of irony and detachment that amounts finally to a failure of intelligence, an indulgence of the 'second-rate sensitive mind.'"³

The second reason for critical dissatisfaction is Fitzgerald's "contempt for his characters, for their behavior and for their values" (Sklar),⁴ his inability to create protagonists of commanding and elevated stature. His heroes seem "absorbed in petty and minuscule social successes....Their struggle to get on a guest list is a parody of human enterprise....Whether written in 1919 or 1939, the stories place a heavy valuation on what is seen to be a petty struggle by participants, author and reader alike" (Richard Ellmann).⁵

Even after a more detailed investigation of the problems in characterization, our assessment of Fitzgerald's

achievements in this area is likely to be similar to the critics'. But we are interested not only in identifying the problems, but in discovering why they exist, and determining how they affect our evaluation of the whole story. How significant, in fact, is characterization in a Fitzgerald story?

Usually, Fitzgerald's stories do not depend for their effects solely or primarily upon their characters. (The exceptions are "The Last Kiss" and "A New Leaf" where the emphasis is on a central figure who dominates the action.) Furthermore, Fitzgerald's characters are types rather than individuals, not unusual in a short story.⁶ In a novel, characterization develops through a series of situations in which a character acts in one of a number of possible ways.⁷ Gradually, based upon his choice of action, a typical pattern emerges which enables us to identify him on both the basis of his previous behavior and our resultant expectations. In the short story, there is normally not enough room for character growth through several revealing situations. To the contrary, the character in a short story is usually faced, at the most, with only one or two significant choices. Therefore, it is far more difficult to individualize a character in a story than in a novel. The reader must be content with much less in the way of characterization, and the character as type should be regarded as acceptable, at times even desirable, in accordance with the economy of the short story form.⁸

If the reader does not expect excellence in characterization in a short story, he generally looks for something else: subject, theme, plot, mood, sufficient to satisfy his limited expectations. Because his are "theme" stories, Fitzgerald is interested in his characters chiefly as vehicles and repositories for ideas. Characters are less interesting in themselves than in what they stand for. Characterization is rarely memorable, yet the reader's dissatisfaction with a story commonly stems less from failure in characterization than from deficiencies in plotting. "Flatness" in characterization may be cited as a specific defect, but it is usually ancillary to or even occasioned by weak construction of scene and incident.

The two major problems of characterization in Fitzgerald's stories, both of which critics have hinted at, concern distance and action. In connection with the first, the author's treatment of his characters is directly traceable to the degree of his involvement with them. Ultimately, distance is perhaps the single most important factor in judging the effectiveness of characterization, especially where the young male protagonist is concerned.

The second problem concerns the relationship between character and action: how consistent is a character's behavior, how logical, how coherent in terms of the whole plot is the action in which he is engaged? How active or passive is his role in the development of plot? Character does not exist apart from action. Only by studying a

character within the context of events, especially those events which embody significant cultural values or ideas can we determine who he is, what he stands for, and how successfully he functions in the story.

Before studying problems in characterization in Fitzgerald's stories, let us look at some typical characters.

Fitzgerald's Women

"Cruel" women

There are two kinds of women in Fitzgerald's stories, first, the beautiful, selfish, bored, vain, often cruel and predatory young woman who easily enslaves her admirers, like Ardita Farnham in "The Offshore Pirate." Ardita, bored with the luxury of her life, seeks excitement and adventure outside the norms of family and social class. She is slangily rude, gives the "effect of a high-spirited precocious child," finds that "selfish people" bore her rather less than unselfish people, "but as yet there had not been one she had not eventually defeated and brought to her feet." For all this, Ardita is courageous in her own way: she values above all independence and conviction; she is "hard" and unrelenting in her determination to be faithful to her ideals. But the situation in which she is involved, a trumped-up piracy by a poor young man who turns out to be a millionaire pursuing her more cleverly than her other suitors, is too trivial to support Ardita's impassioned enunciation of her credo.

Josephine Perry, in a series of stories, is the most vivid and multi-dimensional of Fitzgerald's selfishly cruel women; through her, he conveys the tragedy inherent in a totally self-absorbed life. Women like Josephine are doomed, he implies; momentary perception of their tragic destinies impels them to strike out at society, and particularly at the young men who idolize them.

In "First Blood," we meet Josephine during an argument with her family. Fitzgerald's tone is detached, gently ironic, amused:

The force of her lies came from her sincerity and from her simple and superb confidence that whomsoever she loved must love her in return. Josephine was never either ashamed nor plaintive. She was in the world of being alone with a male, a world through which she had moved surely since she was eight years old. She did not plan; she merely let herself go, and the overwhelming life in her did the rest.

Supremely self-confident in her budding beauty, Josephine sets her sights beyond the limits suggested by age and inexperience. She pursues and captures the most eligible "older" man in her set, only to reject his slavish devotion when it is finally proffered. The object of her desires, once attained, loses its fascination; Josephine must go on to ever more thrilling and elusive conquests:

Still looking at him, she tried to think, but she could only think how unattractive and rather terrible she found him now, and try not to let him see it. There would have been no use saying the simple truth--that she could not help what she had done, that great beauty has a need, almost an obligation, of trying itself, that her ample cup of emotion had spilled over on its own

accord, and it was an accident that it had destroyed him and not her.

In the early Josephine stories, Fitzgerald's tone is unvaryingly indulgent toward the young Josephine and her romantic forays. "She united her eyes with his, every glint a spike--perhaps from the railroads on which their family fortunes were founded, and upon which they depended." In this story, Fitzgerald shares the young men's appreciation of her beauty, particularly Ed Bement's conviction that with her body next to him, her "face shining like fire through the darkness, nobody so beautiful could ever do anything really wrong." But Josephine's successes invariably prove empty. Perpetually seeking after new thrills, she longs for the ideal man who she thinks might satisfy once and for all her insatiable craving for romance and novelty.

Last night in bed I was thinking of the sort of man I really could love, but he'd be different from anybody I've ever met. He'd have to have certain things. He wouldn't necessarily be very handsome, but pleasant looking, and with a good figure, and strong. Then he'd have to have some kind of position in the world, or else not care whether he had one or not; if you see what I mean. He'd have to be a leader, not just like everybody else. And dignified, but very pash, and with lots of experience, so I'd believe everything he said or thought was right. And every time I looked at him I'd have to get that thrill I sometimes get out of a new man; only with him I'd have to get it over and over every time I looked at him, all my life.... Principally I'd want to be always sure of loving him. It's much more fun to love someone than to be loved by someone. ("Emotional Bankruptcy")

In each story, however, the young man disappoints her. She gradually grows numb with satiety (in Fitzgerald's day,

promiscuity ostensibly involved only kissing) until even a kiss fails to arouse her.

The youthful flirtations of "A Nice Quiet Place" deepen in "A Woman With a Past" into a frantic search for fulfillment in love, but each conquest brings Josephine only boredom and ennui. She had "developed early and lived hard"; the young men respond to her "with a fatal sameness, a lack of temperament that blurred their personalities."

She had grown bored with the waning September days and it seemed as though it had happened once too often. Christmas with its provocative shortness, its travelling glee clubs, had brought no one new. There remained in her only a persistent, a physical hope: hope in her stomach that there was someone whom she would love more than he loved her.

In "Emotional Bankruptcy," by the time she finally meets the perfect man, a war hero, it is too late for her. She no longer has the capacity to feel anything for anyone. After he kisses her, she confesses, "I feel nothing at all....I've got nothing to give you. When you kissed me I wanted to laugh....You're everything I've always wanted.... But I've had everything." Josephine is emotionally bankrupt, no longer appealingly flirtatious and amusing either to the author or the reader, but empty, frozen, slightly repellent. Fitzgerald drops his ironic detachment at the end and moralizes on the human waste which might be tragic were it associated with someone less trivial and self-centered than Josephine Perry: "She was very tired and lay face downward on the couch with that awful, awful

realization that all the old things are true. One cannot both spend and have. The love of her life had come by, and looking in her empty basket, she had found not a flower left for him--not one."

Of women raised amid wealth and profusion, Fitzgerald seems to say that underneath their "hardness" and beauty they are profoundly afraid of emptiness. Josephine's bold adventures, Ardita's brave speeches, Vienna Thorne's (in "The Bowl") steely moralism, Nancy Lamar's frantic gaiety and Judy Jones' unthinking cruelty represent attempts to shore up their defenses against impending disaster: they parallel the author's similar endeavor, through rhetoric, to blot out the grim and tragic certainties of life.

Sympathetic women

The other type of woman is an equally beautiful, courageous, long-suffering, noble and self-sacrificing creature who, conquering adversity, usually manages to win her man. Fitzgerald forgets his admonition to John Peale Bishop: "Try to find more 'bright' characters; if they're scrubwomen, give them hot sex attraction and charm. This is such a good trick I don't see why it's not more used.... I always use it just as I like to balance a beautiful word with a barbed one."⁹ His "good" women are almost uniformly dull.

In Caroline ("Flight and Pursuit"), "desperately adaptable, desperately sweet-natured," Fitzgerald attempts

to dramatize the plight of a sensitive, emotionally-scarred young woman whose feelings are frozen. Proceeding under the psychologically naive assumption that "Women are fragile that way...You do something to them at certain times and literally nothing can ever change what you've done," he constructs a story about a young woman so emotionally damaged by an unsuccessful love affair and a disastrous marriage-on-the-rebound, that she tries to keep herself aloof from human attachments. Caroline suffers nobly and ignobly (she joins in the dissolute European night life) throughout complicated plot maneuvers. Although at the end, recuperating from tuberculosis, she responds to the claims of love and parental responsibility, she is too sodden and lifeless to sustain interest as the object of a study of emotional growth. She walks like a zombie through scenes of stunning luxury (she has, too fortuitously, been given a position as travelling companion to a wealthy older woman) and at the end, as she awakens to love, she has all the depth and authenticity of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Paula Jorgenson, in "*New Types*," looks like a typical beautiful society girl. She is, however, a model posing for advertisements featuring society women while visiting her wealthy aunt at a seaside resort. Paula is stonily impassive. When the young man, Leslie, asks her what she does, She replies, "I could be anything they wanted me to be if I knew what it was....A lot of us don't know any more." (Here, the character interpolates the theme: an uncertain era

breeds "new types," unsure and groping, but unafraid.) Although Paula appears grasping--"I take what I can get"--Leslie falls in love with her. At the end, she is revealed as the noblest creature imaginable: her life has been an act of total self-sacrifice for the benefit of a dying husband. She has been working at a sordid occupation only to earn enough money to pay for his operation.

After a mawkish dialogue at the end, when Paula tells Leslie her secret, he is so lost in admiration for her that she becomes emblematic of all that is noblest and best in America:

He prepared to revise his opinions. Leslie had been face to face with the terrible floods in the Yangtze River in 1926, the delivering to solemn women of the bodies of brothers, fathers, sisters, children--seeing them taken up into death in the enveloping arms of their religion....

So with Paula now facing her proud mask, he saw his country all over again. He felt, simultaneously, that awesome loneliness of that which had led them all here, and a pride in the fact that somehow they had done so many of the things they had promised to do in their hearts.

The ambition, of lonely farmers perhaps--but the cloth of a great race cannot be made out of the frayed lint of tired princes....

Paula is never realized as a character. She makes a number of gestures but does not define herself through her own actions. Only the author's interpolated analysis at the end supplies the clue to her personality: it is so freighted with sentiment as to seem totally unbelievable.

Similarly, the heroine of "The Lees of Happiness" is completely synthetic. Roxanne, a young bride, remains with her husband after he has suffered a near-fatal paralytic

stroke which has turned him into a vegetable. She suffers gallantly and uncomplainingly through years of misery and deprivation, thinking only of the living corpse upstairs. Roxanne conforms to Fitzgerald's idea of goodness and morality; she bears the burden of disaster without complaint. Nowhere does she betray the slightest doubt or reluctance regarding her self-sacrifice. Her unquestioning acceptance of a situation which palpably does not demand her as its second victim, her needless self-immolation destroys the already tenuous credibility of the plot.

As we have noted, Fitzgerald's sympathetic women are flat, colorless and uninteresting. They are more acted upon than acting and thus fail to generate interest or excitement. The heroine of "The Dance" is also the narrator of the story but she is neither individualized nor endowed with enough sparkle to render her at the least, like the villainess in the story, an interesting type. She is more decent than the typical Fitzgerald heroine: "I'm not mean enough to take a man away from another girl"; compassionate: "the notion of a forlorn darky crouching dismally in a desolate bog waiting for dawn and death depressed me for a moment"; and honest: "It would be easy for me...to say that I believed Charley Kincaid all the time. But I didn't." But until she informs us, there is nothing to indicate even that she is a woman, so bland and reportorial is her narrative.

Although Yanci Baldwin in "The Popular Girl" at first

represents "graceful youth, arrogant, languid," bored and vain: "I have to have compliments all the time in order to live....," Fitzgerald soon drenches her in sentiment and robs her of even the distinction of unpleasantness. Yanci's father dies and she is left penniless. The rest of the story details her brave attempts to maintain a facade of popularity and financial independence while at the same time her small resources are being slowly depleted. The mildly satiric tone at the beginning, the early dialogue parodying the popular boy-girl slang turns into overly-sympathetic identification with the heroine as soon as she loses her money. From this point, Yanci's struggle becomes at once quite serious and almost totally ridiculous. And she, as the heroine, grows diffuse and amorphous, as Fitzgerald gushes over her plight:

The beautiful Yanci, so profuse, so debonair, so careless with her gorgeous adjectives, had no adjectives for this calamity. She crept upstairs like a hurt child and sat before a mirror, brushing her luxurious hair to comfort herself.

Although the sympathetic women in "Diagnosis" and "The Freeze-Out" are equally uninteresting, their deficiencies are less striking and significant. Sara Etherington in "Diagnosis" is merely the catalyst for her fiance's recovery from a psychological disturbance. Since he, not she, is the focal point of the story, she is presented with functional economy. Similarly, Alida, in "The Freeze-Out," the beautiful object of Forrest Winslow's attentions, is important only insofar as she symbolizes a new class and

new values.

Childish Women

Sally Carrol Hopper is unique in that she is the only sympathetic heroine in Fitzgerald's short stories who remains interesting from start to finish. Part of her appeal is that she possesses one trait which, whether in a languid, vital, sympathetic or unsympathetic woman, Fitzgerald admires: childishness. Sally Carrol's dreams and ideals are adolescent: her sense of play, which Harry derides, "That's for kids," focuses on "hitching rides" and building snow men. In the context of the story, her childishness is attractive, contrasting with the grim solidity of the Northerners.

Dolly Borden in "Discard," a posthumously published story, is older than Sally. She is one of Fitzgerald's "little women" who, regardless of age, shoulder male responsibilities and exhibit a Faulknerian courage: they endure. Dolly, a movie star, survives her rival's malicious threats against her home, husband and popularity. To achieve victory, she does very little more than exist; although a friend remarks, tritely, "Get an x-ray of her heart....It's big enough to sell for a mural," Dolly's goodness is unrealized through her actions. She does little more than smile sweetly through adversity while her admirers stand gaping in awe of her nobility. Ostensibly her childishness conceals strength: childish innocence combined with sophistication is, for Fitzgerald, an irresistible

combination of womanly charms.

Unfortunately, "Discard," constructed around Dolly and obviously conceived as a character study, falls far short of its intention because in addition to the flaws already cited, Dolly is observed at too great a distance and with the unalloyed admiration commonly reserved for a statue. Furthermore, as we shall discuss later, the author's ambivalence toward the young man who functions as central intelligence is an insuperable barrier to consistent characterization.

We have already noted how the little girl in "Lo, the Poor Peacock" shoulders adult responsibilities. Fitzgerald experimented with a few stories¹⁰ involving another motherless young girl, Gwen, who lives with and takes care of her father. He planned a series of stories in which Gwen would function very much as Basil Duke Lee does, but they are decidedly inferior efforts. Fitzgerald's tone towards Gwen is uneven: at times indulgent or amused, gushing or flatly bored. Gwen's childish pranks are limp and joyless; Fitzgerald tries but fails to add a serious adult dimension to her character in "The Pearl and the Fur" (unpublished); "Like all the children growing up in her generation, she had accepted life as a sort of accident, a great bag where you took what you could get and nothing was very certain." There is a distinct impression that Fitzgerald simply did not understand little girls of from twelve to fourteen (a difficult age), and that he found the contretemps of pre-adolescence less than intriguing. At any rate, he abandoned

Gwen along with the idea for the series.

Honorita in "Babylon Revisited" and the child in "Outside the Cabinet-Maker's" are far more successful. Toward each child, the father's devotion is delicate and genuine. Honorita's little-womanness borders on sentimentality, but Fitzgerald never goes over the edge. Here, by offering less interpretation of the child's motives than demonstration of her behavior, he accomplishes what he failed to achieve in "Lo the Poor Peacock" and the Gwen stories.

Finally, Fitzgerald sees childishness in all women as a special charm. In "The Adjuster" Louella's selfishness exists "side by side with a childish beauty and, in consequence, Charles Hemple had begun to take the blame upon himself for situations which she had obviously brought about." Ardita Farnham, "though she was nineteen, she gave the effect of a high-spirited precocious child....The utter childishness of her beauty" is part of the spell she casts over Toby Moreland. Hallie Bushmill in "A Penny Spent" is "young and vivid and light, with boy's hair and a brow that bulged just slightly, like a baby's brow." And Honorita, in "Your Way and Mine" is another childlike femme fatale: "Her figure was slight and childish and when she smiled you were afraid that she might expose the loss of some baby teeth, but the teeth were there, a complete set, little and white." The dramatic possibilities inherent in a situation where childish innocence is threatened by powerful evil forces are not lost on Fitzgerald: "But the furies were

after Fifi now--after her childish complacency and her innocence, even after her beauty--out to break it all down and drag it in any convenient mud" ("The Hotel Child").

Because the emphasis on childishness in connection with grown women frequently becomes cloying, we may conclude that Fitzgerald is on firmer ground when he deals with actual, not fancied, children. His apparently strong attraction to childish women is a trap into which he occasionally falls, discarding common sense and objectivity en route.

"Hard" Women

In both sympathetic and unsympathetic female characters, Fitzgerald frequently goes to absurd and unrealistic lengths to illustrate the quality he values perhaps above all others: "hardness." This may mean either stoical endurance or amorality depending on the woman and her role in a story. However, even if a woman is "hard" in pursuit of totally ignoble and selfish ends, Fitzgerald indicates his respect for her singlemindedness and strength.

We have already noted how Diana Dickey's courageous "hardness" defeats her adversary's "pulpy" softness. Paula Jorgenson, too, hardens herself against love and sympathy to achieve a noble end. And Pamela, the heroine of "The Last Kiss" is a fascinating mixture of "innocence and predatory toughness." (Like Pamela, Vienna Thorne, the unsympathetic girl in "The Bowl," is a curious, contradictory blend of hardness and fragility: "In spite of all the warmth and

delicacy of her face, the figure that somehow reminded me of an exquisite romanticized little ballerina, there was a quality in her that was hard as steel.")

Jim Lennard ("The Last Kiss"), 35, a newly-successful Hollywood producer, meets a very young English girl, Pamela Knighton, about whom he sees "something sad and a little lost." She relates her history to him, a sordid account of accepting gifts from old men in order to survive. Jim himself is not above reproach. Although he finds it repugnant, he engages in bribery as part of the price for success within the Hollywood system. Jim, haunted by Pamela's face, hires her for a bit part. She causes trouble on the set and he is forced to let her go. Against the "swift wheels of the industry he can do nothing." She is ultimately blacklisted for her intransigence and dies of pneumonia. The problem in the story is Fitzgerald's indecision about both Pamela and Jim. The fault, he seems to say, lies in Pamela, in her hardness and total self-absorption that distorts her sense of reality, but the persistent emphasis on milieu suggests that the industry and Jim as its representative are equally to blame. Jim tries to lecture Pamela on the behavior essential to success on Hollywood's terms: doing what you must, doing the best job you can, smoothly, without questioning, but she refuses to be instructed. Her character remains an interesting enigma, unclear to Jim, to the reader and to Fitzgerald. However, she is a vivid picture of the other side of the coin: the hard, unthinking

and aimless person who destroys herself rather than others.

Nancy Lamar in "The Jelly Bean," like Pamela, destroys herself. Longing to escape the dead South and find excitement and romance in exotic places, she looks for adventure recklessly. Her striking good looks and soft femininity belie her hard and unflinching assault on propriety.

Both Ardita ("The Offshore Pirate") and Marjorie ("Bernice Bobs Her Hair") insist on the value of courage, the essence of which is hardness or toughness. Finally, there is Myra ("Myra Meets His Family"), jaded at twenty-one, left penniless after a wealthy childhood, trying to marry a young man for his money. After having been made the butt of his joke (he is aware of her mercenary intentions), Myra does not wilt; instead she turns the tables on him, and keeps the engagement ring, remarking, "I've always had a strong penchant for souvenirs." Fitzgerald's attitude toward Myra changes; her endurance of the humiliating prank, her "hardness" in salvaging self-respect out of certain disaster, turns her from the predatory, self-seeking female of the early section to the stoical, courageous heroine of the end.

"Languid" Women

Fitzgerald's "vital" women (Judy Jones and Ardita are good examples) are energetic, vivacious and active. We have already noted how they may overwhelm, even devour their suitors. His "languid" women, although composed and impassive on the surface, are often more complex and destructive than the others. They are maddeningly unassailable,

frequently goading ardent young men into feverish and hopeless pursuit. Others are limp, motiveless, mere pawns of circumstance.

Sally Carrol Hopper is, as we have seen, languid and passive. Tied to an unrealizable dream, she succumbs to her fiance's influence. After her shocked awakening to the emptiness of the life he proposes, she performs her one self-propelled act: she returns home. Up to this point, she has drifted under the spell of her dream and its illusory embodiment in Harry.

Amanthis, in "Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar," like Sally Carrol, loves to lie in a hammock and watch the world go by. Although after the first scene she is lost in the vagaries of a synthetic plot, she is notable as another embodiment of attractive indolence. But Sally Carrol and Amanthis are exceptions. Most of Fitzgerald's languid women are anti-heroines. Jonquil in "The Sensible Thing" is impervious to George's impassioned proposals; she does not attack him directly but with unnecessary cruelty feeds his jealousy by meeting his train with two young admirers in tow. She is immovable in her determination not to marry George unless he can provide her with financial security; it is "the sensible thing." Beneath the "fresh and pale" face, "dark, velvet eyes," and melting softness lies a cruelly destructive ego.

Aillie Calhoun, "The Last of the Belles," is an intriguing blend of languor and energy. Her indolence is the

carefully cultivated style of the popular Southern belle:

She had the adroitness sugarcoated with sweet, voluble simplicity, the suggested background of devoted fathers, brothers and admirers stretching back into the South's heroic age, the unfailing coolness acquired in the endless struggle with the heat. There were notes in her voice that order slaves around, that withered up Yankee captains, and then soft, wheedling notes that mingled in unfamiliar loveliness with the night.

Ailie's self-absorption leaves her unresponsive to her most faithful admirers, totally indifferent to genuine feeling. After learning of the death of a young airman who had threatened to kill himself if she rejected him, she reveals her incapacity for pity and sympathy for her victims:

She looked at me a second longer as if to be quite sure. Finally she was sure. Then she sighed in such a quaint little way that I could hardly believe my ears, and her brow went up in what can only be described as mock despair...I looked uncomfortably at the ground, aware that she was calling my attention to her involuntarily disastrous effect on men.

The narrator assumes that Ailie is one of those people who are "strong and attractive and could do what they wanted." Although he sees critically her cruelty as well as her charm, she is for him endlessly fascinating.

Lower-Class Women

Lower-class women, on whom Fitzgerald heaps scorn and derision, function generally as villainesses and corrupters. Or, if the lower or middle-class girl is the heroine of a Cinderella story, Fitzgerald carefully differentiates her by culture, breeding or beauty from typical members of her class. We have noted his treatment of Diana's adversary in

"Diamond Dick." Like her, Kitty, Roxanne's foil in "The Lees of Happiness," is slovenly, dirty, "nervous without being sensitive, temperamental without temperament, a woman who seemed to flit and never light." Mae Purley, the beautiful lower-class girl in "Love Boat" whom Bill rejects because of her social class, is, he realizes in later years, a "hard, commonplace article" in a beautiful body. Her mother is "mountainous and soiled," the father, "anemic, beaten." But as a young girl, Mae was clean and fresh. No breath of squalor touched the "pale pure youth of her cheeks."

Jenny, in "Jacob's Ladder," speaks poorly and lacks style and polish. But her beauty enables her to transcend her social class. She is, to Jacob, an "angel" (Fitzgerald originally wrote "a saint," but changed it in galleys) even though he first sees her at her sister's murder trial. (The sister is, of course, gross and unredeemable.) Jenny learns quickly; "She let herself become grave and sweet and quiet as the night...." Later, a new Galatea, she has developed discrimination and taste, an appreciation of "quiet and simple things," and takes the place in the Hollywood firmament to which her beauty entitles her.

Olive, Merlin Grainger's wife ("O Russet Witch") is betrayed as drably middle class by her commonplace dreams and aspirations:

There would be a cottage in a suburb, a cottage painted blue, just one class below the sort of cottages that are of white stucco with a green roof. In the grass around the cottage would be rusty trowels and a broken green bench

and a baby-carriage with a wicker body that sagged to the left. And around the grass and the baby-carriage and the cottage itself, around his whole world there would be the arms of Olive, a little stouter, the arms of her neo-Olivian period, when, as she walked, her cheeks would tremble up and down ever so slightly from too much face-massaging.

Violet, in "A Change of Class," is shrill, demanding, and social-climbing; she and her husband have pulled themselves out of the working class but are pathetically unable to acquire the facade of middle-class respectability.

"They were...made sterile and devitalized by their new environments, paying the price exacted for a passage into the middle class."

"Soft" and "pulpy" are pejorative words in Fitzgerald's lexicon. Jewel Hudson in "May Day," like Diana's rival, kisses Gordon with "soft pulpy lips," an immediate clue to her character and subsequent role in the story.

All of these women are unsavory, coarse and slatternly; even their names are flat and unromantic: Jewel, Violet, Kitty, Olive rather than Jonquil, Yanci, Ardita, Amanthis. They destroy their men and it is much less pleasurable to fall victim to them than to Judy Jones whose torture is exquisitely satisfying.

Fitzgerald takes pains to assure his readers that Caroline ("Flight and Pursuit"), although poor, comes from a "good" family, and, while living in a semi-slum, holds herself aloof from "the commonness and vulgarity that she had never touched before." Her husband had acquired a faint patina of good breeding which, for one moment, had

deceived her into marrying him. She detests him and his family and thinks "how terrible it would be" if the lover who had jilted her should come and find her "sordid in a mean street."

But wealth has redemptive power; other troubles follow Caroline but none degrades as much as being forced to live beneath one's class, and in poverty to boot.

There is no aesthetic or structural principle behind Fitzgerald's delineation of lower-class women. It betrays not so much simple snobbery, although that is undoubtedly involved, but fear and insecurity at the prospect of entrapment in a lower middle-class environment which for him is devoid of grace, culture and hope--the very principles of life. Fitzgerald associates poverty and lack of refinement with spiritual extinction; consequently, money and social success are never ends in themselves, but rather means toward fulfillment.

Fitzgerald's Women and the Problem of Distance

Fitzgerald maintains a fairly constant critical detachment toward his female characters, even those, like his "childish" and "hard" women whom he seems to admire. In only two stories does his detachment lapse seriously, "The Popular Girl" and "The Hotel Child." In the former, he identifies too closely with Yanci Baldwin's plight. Her intense struggle to regain her former position as the center of a gay social whirl is too petty and unconvincing to

warrant the lavish sympathy in which Fitzgerald bathes it.

Lack of detachment in "The Hotel Child" stems from another source: Fitzgerald's prejudice against Jews. Fifi Schwartz is Jewish first, a heroine second. Although she is the object of snobbery and prejudice among the guests at her hotel, Fitzgerald shares much of their distaste for her. She is his only heroine who does not have a serious love affair. Her beauty is blatantly sexual: "Her body was so assertively adequate that one cynic had been heard to remark that she always looked as if she had nothing on underneath her dresses." None of Fitzgerald's typical heroines are as ripe and voluptuous as Fifi. And, unlike the flawlessly beautiful heroines, her beauty is marred by a "big nose" and "high forehead."

"There is no flaw or fault in you."

"Oh, yes," said Fifi modestly. "I got a sort of big nose. Would you know I was Jewish?"

Guests at the hotel criticize her taste: "Ghastly...the stage, the shop window, the manikin's parade," and Fitzgerald does not contradict their verdict. He treats her indulgently, like a beautiful child toward whom he feels ambivalent desire. Because of her big nose, over-ripe sexuality, lack of refinement and questionable taste (all of which connote Jewishness to Fitzgerald), she is not permitted to share the happy destiny awaiting the typical Fitzgerald heroine: the glitter and excitement of Monte Carlo, Spain or the tropics. Instead, he sends her back home to a dreary prospect: marriage to the boy next door. The best

Fifi can hope for are the drab certainties of middle-class America.

Fitzgerald so shares Fifi's values that at the end he weeps with her over her glittering loss:

But for Fifi all the romance of life was rolled up into the last three impressionable years in Europe. She remembered the tall guardsmen in Rome and the old Spaniard who had first made her conscious of her beauty at the Villa d'Este at Como, and the French naval aviator at St. Raphael who had dropped her a note from his plane into their garden, and the feeling that she had sometimes, when she danced with Borowki, that he was dressed in gleaming boots and a white-furred dolman.

Character and Rhetoric

Because Fitzgerald is obviously less interested in and involved with his female characters than his male, he uses description as a substitute for action. Either by a few selected words devoted to one physical trait (a technique usually reserved for villainesses and minor characters--male and female--i.e., "Carl Miller's thin, white hairless body") or by a lengthy encomium on the heroine's beauty, rhetoric becomes character. Fitzgerald tries little else in the way of characterization save to place his heroine in a series of situations over which she has no control.

Such descriptive passages are heavily stylized, remarkably similar from one to the next. Any one of them might be lifted whole from one story and inserted in another without affecting characterization or plot in either.¹¹

Fitzgerald focuses on the heroine's coloring, bone structure, features, facial expressions, animation, grace

and style. A few examples may be instructive:

(In these stories, and in so many others, rhetoric serves to camouflage flat and uninteresting characters. Our attention is so drawn to the vivid details of the heroine's beauty that her vacuity and insipidity are largely obscured.)

"Her Last Case"-- He glanced at it (her face) across the veranda--at a face whose every contour seemed to be formed to catch the full value of light or shadow, so that no angle could be turned far enough aside to obscure the delicate lines along the ridges of cheek bone, brow, chin and throat. A sculptor's not a painter's face, but warmed and brought back into full life by the bright healthy warm blue eyes.

"Indecision"-- Her face, flushed with cold and then warmed again with the dance, was a riot of lovely, delicate pinks, like many carnations, rising in many shades from the white of her nose to the high spot of her cheeks. Her breathing was very young as she came close to him--young and eager and exciting. Her lips were faintly chapped, but soft in the corners...a glaze of childish passion in her eyes....

"More Than Just a House"--

The sun shopped among the yellow strands of her hair, poured around the rosy tan of her cheeks and spun along the arms that she regarded abstractedly as she talked to him...She turned her slender smile full upon Lew for a moment, and then aimed it a little aside, like a pocket torch that might dazzle him.

"New Types"-- She was a rather tall girl. Her ash-blond hair seemed weather-proof save for a tiny curtain of a bang that was evidently permitted, even expected, to stir a little in a mild wind. She was ruddy brown and without visible make-up, yet with an unmistakable aura about her person of being carefully planned. Under minute scallops that were scarcely brows her eyes were clear and dark blue, even the irises were faintly blue and melted into the pupils' darkness. Her teeth were so white against the tan, her lips so red, that in combination with the blue of her eyes

the effect was momentarily startling--as startling as if the lips had been green and the pupils white.

Judy Jones survives the weight of Fitzgerald's rhetoric, for she is the only important female presented alternately through lavish description and supporting action. Thus, after her first appearance in the story, at age eleven, Judy demonstrates through her rudeness to her governess the validity of the initial appraisal: "At eleven, she was beautifully ugly as little girls are apt to be who are destined after a few years to be inexpressibly lovely and bring no end of misery to a great number of men. The spark, however, was perceptible. There was a general ungodliness in the way her lips twisted down at the corners when she smiled, and in the--Heaven help us--in the almost passionate quality of her eyes. Vitality is born early in such women. It was utterly in evidence now, shining through her thin frame in a sort of glow."

Grown up, even more beautiful than as a child, she proves that she is "the most direct and unprincipled personality with which he (Dexter) had ever come in contact."

She was not a girl who could be 'won' in the kinetic sense--she was proof against cleverness, she was proof against charm; if any of these assailed her too strongly she would immediately resolve the affair to a physical basis, and under the magic of her physical splendor the strong as well as the brilliant played her game and not their own. She was entertained only by the gratification of her desires and by the direct exercise of her own charm. Perhaps from so much youthful love, so many youthful lovers, she had come, in self-defense, to nourish herself wholly from within.

In one situation after another, Fitzgerald insists upon Judy's beauty and demonstrates through relevant action (i.e., her callous pursuit of Dexter so that his fiancée may not have him, although she, Judy, is not really interested in him) her self-centeredness. Although too much is narrated, filtering through Dexter's consciousness, rather than dramatized and thus weakening the dramatic impact of Judy's personality, nevertheless she does achieve a rare distinction among Fitzgerald's anti-heroines.

Fitzgerald describes his male characters less obtrusively and elaborately, often confining his observations to the color of the hero's eyes (frequently "gray"), hair and physique, or his "red-rimmed" eyes if he is a faded alcoholic (Pat Hobby, Charlie in "Diamond Dick"). Description rarely serves as an escape from characterization through action as it does in the case of his women.

Fitzgerald's Male Characters

Fitzgerald's male characters fall into three major classes, based on wealth and social position: the insider--a rich young man from birth; the outsider, hopelessly excluded from the wealthy social class to which he aspires; and the third--accepted by upper-class society but usually of middle-class origin, and thus able to regard it with the familiarity of the insider and the detachment of the observer. The problem of authorial distance is significant in connection with Fitzgerald's treatment of male figures. In almost every case, he identifies with the outsider so

closely that the result is often bathos and self-pity. Fine lines of plot and theme become blurred in a welter of emotion. Toward the insider, Fitzgerald is so detached that the rich young man often emerges wooden, artificial and stereotyped, what Lionel Trilling calls an "ideograph"¹² rather than a character. An important exception is "The Rich Boy" where the narrator, rather than the protagonist, conforms to the third type. This is true also of Nick in The Great Gatsby and Andy in "The Last of the Belles." Anson Hunter, Gatsby and Ailie Calhoun respectively are the protagonists of these works, as their titles suggest. The narrator, in each case, is a functioning member of the inner circle, but because of differences in background and origin ("The Rich Boy") or in Andy's case, a certain style, is never really one of them. Thus he, like other typical in-between characters, is at once part of and apart from the society providing the values by which he chooses to live. He never yields completely to those values and although he is unaware of it, his questioning of the assumptions by which the very rich or the very popular live saves him from spiritual extinction.

This is not to say that Fitzgerald is unsuccessful in his portraits of the outsider. On the contrary, his young men on the way up are often ingratiating, intelligent, perceptive and sensitive.¹³ As heroes of their stories, they often fail because instead of offering resistance to the forces allied against them, they succumb limply and

their author then lapses into an orgy of commiseration. Often, the outstanding scene in these stories involves the hero's humiliation at the hands of the insider. Invariably, scenes of humiliation are poignant, even lacerating ("Presumption" and "The Rubber Check") but their effect is mitigated by Fitzgerald's fatal penchant for milking the last drop of pathos out of a situation. Nothing in Fitzgerald is more acutely rendered than the pain of the outsider. His feeling for the sufferer may be genuine and profound, but he cannot transcend his hero's misery sufficiently to render it moving and credible. The result is, as noted earlier, bathos and self-pity.

The Outsider

Fitzgerald seems unable to channel the profound feeling released by sympathetic identification with the outsider into new awareness or understanding of the experience.¹⁴

Jim is "The Jelly-Bean" of the story, the perennial outsider to whom all avenues are closed, all entrances blocked. He is the last in the line of a once-illustrious old Southern family, now depleted, enervated, reduced to the status of boarding-house proprietors. This is the other side of the South, the side Sally Carrol perceived and tried to flee--the South that destroys. Jim basks in the faded glory of his forebears; he is painfully shy, indolent, withdrawn. With perhaps his last flicker of energy, surprising even to himself, he accepts a former schoolmate's impulsive

invitation to a party.

Among those attending the party is the beautiful and notorious Nancy Lamar whom Jim, even as a child, had worshipped at a distance. After Jim recoups Nancy's considerable losses in a crap game, she appreciatively kisses his cheek. Overwhelmed, Jim is momentarily regenerated. He determines to restore to his family its lost luster, to go out into the world and make himself worthy of Nancy Lamar's kiss. But he reverts quickly to type after learning of Nancy's elopement. Back at the pool parlor, he is once more the "jelly-bean," facing a bleak and unpromising future.

The problem in "The Jelly-Bean" is that while Jim is a pitiable figure, not for a moment does he seem capable of altering the destiny which character and environment have cut out for him. Furthermore, Nancy's kiss is too sentimental and trivial a device to effect Jim's regeneration. Jim is a victim of Fitzgerald's ambivalence: on the one hand, he is sympathetic and likeable; on the other, he is pitiable, a weak dreamer at the mercy of his flaccid idolatry of Nancy Lamar and a tawdry dream of success embodied in faded flories of the South. Whether Fitzgerald intends it or not, Jim's is an ironic regeneration. Yet, because he is presented over-sympathetically for two-thirds of the story, the reader is unprepared to regard it as ironic and must take seriously Jim's alteration and the possibility of his escaping the fate of his family. On a serious level, Jim's regeneration-through-a-kiss and subsequent disillusion are sentimental

and unimpressive; he is not a sufficiently interesting or important character to warrant the attention the author devotes to him. Fitzgerald's close identification with Jim's plight as an outsider results in trivializing and sentimentalizing the action.

In "Presumption" and "The Rubber Check" the outsider is snubbed, ostracized and condescended to. Fitzgerald draws with painful clarity vivid accounts of humiliation suffered by his eager young men at the hands of the old aristocracy. Val, in "The Rubber Check," has been for years in attendance on the wealthy, the extra man at their intimate dinners, a charming but penurious hanger-on. After an incident in which, self-protectively, he has issued a rubber check which his wealthy mother refused to cover, he is subjected to scornful and abusive attacks by those whose dinner tables he had once graced. "He had been snubbed so often in the past months that he had developed a protective shell to conceal his injuries."

Fitzgerald dramatizes every snub and rejection, abandoning plot lines to wallow in Val's misery. His identification with the outsider extends to a vicarious enjoyment of the hero's resurrection. Val's success is a veritable fairy tale; as abject as his humiliation had been, so glittering is his success:

Against his new background he was more than ever attractive to women; he could have married one of the fabulously wealthy Cupp twins, but for the moment he was engrossed in new gusto and he wanted to be foot-loose. Moreover, he went

into partnership with a rising art dealer and for a year or so actually made some money.

Regard him on a spring morning in London in the year 1930. Tall, even stately, he treads down Pall Mall as if it were his personal pasture. He meets an American friend and shakes hands, and the friend notices how his shirt sleeve fits his wrist, and his coat sleeve incases his sleeve like a sleeve valve; how his collar and tie are molded plastically to his neck.

Although Fitzgerald's identification with Val is very close, Val himself has no distinction, strength, or solidity. The multiple scenes of humiliation and social snobbery, vivid and moving as they may be, do not point in any direction. Had Fitzgerald exercised critical control over his material, perhaps by indicating that Val's tawdry values--identical to society's--are a greater obstacle to personal fulfillment and happiness than his poverty, he might have achieved the detachment of The Great Gatsby and "The Rich Boy." Instead, he offers feeling as a substitute for critical insight.

In "An Adolescent Marriage," too, Fitzgerald moons over Llewellyn, a young man suffering the unhappiness of thwarted love. Censured and ostracized for his role in the breakup of his adolescent marriage, Llewellyn retreats behind a wall of silent suffering. As a last gesture before leaving town, he designs a suburban cottage for an architectural competition. Fitzgerald devotes a significant portion of the story to brooding over Llewellyn's rejection by society, his need for love, his desire for the home he never had--the frustrated hopes which he pours into his design for the dream cottage. And again, after building Llewellyn's

plight into a crescendo of misery, he suddenly rescues his hero: Llewellyn wins the competition, his former bride awaits him in the cottage and he learns that his marriage had never really been annulled! And the good fairy behind his redemption is Chauncey Garret, the old man who from the outset set events in motion and later effected the resolution. Once more, Fitzgerald's excessive sympathy for the outsider turns a story into a revel of sentiment.

The heroine of "A New Leaf" finds that Dick Ragland's "being a sort of outcast added to his attractiveness for her...not the dissipation itself...but its result in making him so alone." Dick's history of self-destructiveness through alcoholism and dissipation is remarkable only in delineating the external evidences of emotional and spiritual decay. In a story ostensibly of character--of an insuperably weak young man similar to Gordon Sterrett and Dick Diver in both his weakness and charm--it is remarkably lacking in psychological penetration. Fitzgerald again focuses on the surface details of Dick's suffering. He commiserates with Dick's weakness for drink, but fails to individualize his character or even to arouse speculation in the reader on the cause of Dick's unhappiness.

Horace Tarbox, at the start of "Head and Shoulders" is an appealing, honest, straightforward, decent figure--an outsider, this time a student and the butt of his fellows' jokes. It is a humorous story involving reversal of roles: the intellectual becomes a vaudevillian and the dancer

becom-s a writer. Because of its slight and humorous intent, "Head and Shoulders" is not a sentimental exercise, but once again the author's identification with the outsider-protagonist injects a note of pathos, in this case, enhancing an otherwise superficial story.

In "May Day" we have already noted how involved Fitzgerald is with Gordon Sterrett's misfortunes. We never know why Gordon is incapable of action, why he succumbs so weakly to Jewel Hudson's threats, nor do we learn why Gordon, only in his early twenties, has already conceded his own failure and impotence. Fitzgerald's focus is squarely on Gordon's current predicament; as a result he never provides the essential clues for the understanding which should precede sympathy. Thus Gordon's fate seems another naturalistic portrait of the pitiable but not tragic effect of environment on a congenitally weak and unresistant character.¹⁵

In "The Sensible Thing," the mood, as we have remarked, transcends plot, characterization and theme. George is the outsider, the doer, the appealing young man with a romantic imagination:

All his life he had thought in terms of tunnels and skyscrapers and great squat dams and tall, three-towered bridges, that were like dancers holding hands in a row, with heads as tall as cities and skirts of cable strand. It had seemed romantic to George O'Kelly to change the sweep of rivers and the shape of mountains so that life could flourish in the old bad lands of the world where it had never taken root before. He loved steel, and there was always steel near him in his dreams, liquid steel, steel in bars, and blocks and beams and

formless plastic masses, waiting for him, as paint and canvas to his hand. Steel inexhaustible, to be made lovely and austere in his imaginative fire.

George's emotional intensity propels the story, makes us believe even that Jonquil Cary is worth the feeling he expends on her. In The Great Gatsby, Gatsby's dream centers on Daisy Buchanan, an older Jonquil, but through Nick's critical interpolations, Daisy is quite clearly a tawdry incarnation of Gatsby's romantic dream. "The Sensible Thing" is so engulfed in George's first love and nostalgia at its passing that although it is affecting purely on this level, one cannot help wondering how much more effective a story it might have been had Fitzgerald treated George and his dream critically and objectively.¹⁶

Although Fitzgerald's identification with the outsider often causes a story to become maudlin, it sometimes tends to awaken the reader's sympathy for the protagonist and consequently to kindle his interest in the plot. The residue of warmth resulting from the author's attachment to the character leaves the reader with a vivid impression that Fitzgerald's young male characters are, as Ellen Moers insists, "utterly attractive."¹⁷ Even in as slight a story as "Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar," the young outsider is so ingratiating that we overlook, as we do throughout Fitzgerald's stories, his participation in trivial activities. Fitzgerald prepares the way for his heroes' engagement in significant action, but generally leaves them and the reader

stranded on a sea of emotion. He rejects the dramatic advantages of conflict in favor of descriptive insistence--frequently poignant--on feelings, of injured pride, humiliation and the pain of social ostracism:

Despite the hospitality shown to Amanthis, the doors of Southampton were closed to him. Polite to, or rather fascinated by him as his pupils were from three to five, after that hour they moved in another world.

His was the position of a golf professional who, though he may fraternise and even command on the links, loses his privileges at sun-down. He may look in the club-window but he cannot dance. And, likewise, it was not given to Jim to see his teaching put into effect. He could hear the gossip of the morning after--that was all.

In "Dalrymple Goes Wrong," the hero, Bryan Dalrymple, is quite as sympathetic and attractive as Fitzgerald's other outsiders. But the tone of this story is consistently detached. Bryan's exploitation at the hands of the community and his employer, Mr. Macy, is treated humorously and ironically. Nowhere does Fitzgerald permit his sympathy for his hero to deteriorate into bathos. Consequently, the plot does not bog down in sentiment or nostalgia, but moves swiftly and economically toward the ironic conclusion. Dalrymple is a successful character for two reasons: when situations require him to act, he does so, carefully weighing alternatives;¹⁸ and Fitzgerald sees the situation in a humorous as well as pathetic light. Very little energy is thus wasted in working up compassion for the character; instead, Fitzgerald provides Bryan with situations enabling him, as a character-in-action, to effect a solution. In

one line, Fitzgerald illustrates how Dalrymple disposes of superfluous pangs of conscience: "He found that it was on the whole better to give up considering himself as a rebel. It was more consoling to think of everyone else as a fool."

"Dalrymple Goes Wrong" is, of course, a satirical thrust at contemporary values; we should not expect from it the emotional intensity of "The Sensible Thing." Merely on the level of characterization, however, Fitzgerald's distance results in a crisp, sharply drawn protagonist, less wistful but more direct, the outsider who "makes it" but who will always remain with one foot in the other camp, looking on and laughing to himself. Bryan thus conforms more closely to the third class of hero, standing both within and outside the group.

By far the most serious problem in connection with stories about the outsider is the author's shifting stance toward his characters. "The Bridal Party" opens with Michael's receipt of a wedding invitation from his former girl friend, Caroline. For each of them, their affair had been "first love," but Caroline had rejected Michael because he had neither money nor prospects; he had been drifting, unable to "find himself." "He...lost her, slowly, tragically, uselessly, because he had no money and could make no money; because, with all the energy and good will in the world, he could not find himself; because, loving him still, Caroline had lost faith and begun to see him as something pathetic, futile and shabby, outside the great, shining stream of life

toward which she was inevitably drawn."

Now, after receiving the invitation, he meets Caroline and her fiancé, Hamilton, on a Paris street. On seeing her, Michael feels the surge of his old love and realizes he can never be happy without her. Realizing the emptiness that will surely engulf him after her marriage, he determines not to give up until it is an accomplished fact.

From this point on, Fitzgerald's identification with Michael as the outsider is very close.

The entire clan; they had always hated him, except her mother; always discouraged his courtship. What a little counter he was in this game of families and money! Under his hat his brow sweated with the humiliation of the fact that for all his misery he was worth just exactly so many invitations....Michael glanced up nervously as four people came in. He felt suddenly that his dinner coat was old and shiny; he had ordered a new one that morning. The people who had come in were rich and at home in their richness with one another--a dark, lovely girl with a hysterical little laugh...two confident men whose jokes referred invariably to last night's scandal and tonight's potentialities, as if they had important roles in a play that extended indefinitely into the past and the future....

...As he said this he could not prevent his mouth from drooping....

...Two pairs of eyes were regarding her--Rutherford's noncommittal and unrequiring, Michael's hungry, tragic, pleading.

Then, Fitzgerald's initial identification with Michael as a sensitive outsider suddenly shifts; he focuses on his hero's self-pity and resentment of Hamilton which soon become maudlin. The author's attitude toward Michael seems even more inconsistent when he suddenly turns Hamilton from a watered-down Tom Buchanan into a strong, resourceful man

of action, beside whom Michael seems weak and ineffectual. Fitzgerald seems to admire Hamilton's clean-cut solidity and despise Michael's weaknesses, but he also recognizes Hamilton's insensitivity and arrogance, as well as his crass, superficial philosophy:

"I saw what happened to most of my friends... and I decided it wasn't going to happen to me. It isn't so difficult; if you take a girl with common sense, and tell her what's what, and do your stuff damn well, and play decently square with her, it's a marriage. If you stand for any nonsense at the beginning, it's one of those arrangements --within five years the man gets out, or else the girl gobbles him up and you have the usual mess.

...Women aren't so darn sensitive. It's fellows like you (Michael) who are sensitive; it's fellows like you they exploit--all your devotion and kindness and all that....This all sounds pretty crude to you, Mr. Curly, but it seems to me that the average man nowadays just asks to be made a monkey of by some woman who doesn't even get any fun out of reducing him to that level. There are darn few men who possess their wives any more, but I am going to be one of them."

To add to the confusion, the plot skitters and abruptly unravels. Michael conveniently inherits a quarter of a million dollars, upon which Caroline tritely remarks, "I can't tell you how glad I am. I've always thought you were the sort of person who ought to have money." Hamilton then meets his share of disaster: he loses all of his money and his liaison with another woman is exposed. But unlike Michael--and here is where the shift occurs--Hamilton does not languish, does not bemoan his fate or retreat behind defensive self-pity; he faces up to his poverty and indiscretion, and with Caroline, looks to the future, unafraid.

Caroline and Hamilton, as if defying ill-luck and fate and the future, descended the stairway to the reception, each with a glass of champagne held defiantly on high.

Struck by the nobility and freedom of their gesture, Michael is suddenly lost in admiration for them both; he sees their gesture as representing a way of life: "'This is our way of doing things,' he thought. 'Generous and fresh and free; a sort of Virginia-plantation hospitality, but at a different pace now, nervous as a ticker-tape.'" Michael, suddenly face to face with grace under pressure, is cured of his love for Caroline.

Fitzgerald then tries to extend his story to include a commentary on modern life, and in so doing, abandons all pretense of characterization and verisimilitude. He retreats behind a wall of rhetoric as if, by interpolating "significance," he can patch together a hopelessly split story:

Standing unself-consciously in the middle of the room to see which was the American ambassador, he realized with a start that he hadn't really thought of Caroline for hours. He looked about him with a sort of alarm, and then he saw her across the room, very bright and young, and radiantly happy. He saw Rutherford near her, looking at her as if he could never look long enough, and as Michael watched them they seemed to recede as he had wished them to do that day in the Rue de Castiglione--recede and fade off into joys and griefs of their own, into the years that would take the toll of Rutherford's fine pride and Caroline's young, moving beauty; fade far away, so that now he could scarcely see them, as if they were shrouded in something as misty as her white billowing dress.

Michael was cured. The ceremonial function, with its pomp and its revelry, had stood for a sort of invitation into a life where even his

regret could not follow them. All the bitterness melted out of him suddenly and the world reconstituted itself out of the youth and happiness that was all around him, profligate as the spring sunshine. He was trying to remember which one of the bridesmaids he had made a date to dine with tonight as he walked forward to bid Hamilton and Caroline Rutherford good-by.

Although Fitzgerald again tries to manipulate his reader's response to the characters, there is no reconciliation of tensions at the end. Hamilton's final gestures do not erase the animosity and contempt he inspired previously, and Michael's miraculous recovery is pat and unconvincing. Only the bright panoply of the wedding festivities, the fine observations of manners and morals, the spurious but glowingly romantic aura attached to a way of life--"our way of doing things"--saves "The Bridal Party" from the pall cast by amorphous and inconsistent characterization.

Shifting attitudes toward the outsider occur also in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," where John Unger is alternately appealing and ridiculous. Because of his precarious position and Fitzgerald's concern with social implications of the plot, John soon enlists the reader's sympathy. In the beginning, however, Fitzgerald parodies, in John, youthful American innocence; later, when John enunciates the theme of the story, he sounds like a disillusioned, embittered old philosopher.

In "O Russet Witch" the pattern is identical: Fitzgerald admires Merlin Grainger's "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life," but deplores his fundamentally middle-

class outlook. Thus, Fitzgerald's sympathy for the outsider and the fact that he does aspire alternates with contempt for Merlin's inability to use his dream to save himself. Merlin, Fitzgerald suggests, is destroyed by his dreams because he has succumbed to middle-class mediocrity which conspires to destroy the dreamer who, unlike Gatsby, makes no attempt to make his dreams realities. (Gatsby, however, is also defeated, so the fate of both the active and passive dreamer in a Fitzgerald story appears bleak.)

In "Jacob's Ladder," Fitzgerald identifies closely with Jacob's dreams but not with Jacob himself who is weak, hollow, apathetic and frequently unpleasant. As a result, the story is curiously off-balance. Similarly, in "World's Fair" (published posthumously in 1948 but originally written as a sketch for Tender is the Night), although the reader reacts with Francis' disgust to the decadence around him, he cannot but infer from the clues dropped by Dinah and Seth, the other principals in the action, that Francis' judgment and values are probably unreliable.

In "Discard," the central intelligence is George, a teen-age boy who worships his aunt Dolly, the major character. George, however, is callow and unintelligent. Moreover, he is hopelessly lost in admiration of his aunt and therefore unable to comment intelligently about anyone with whom she comes into contact. He makes portentous social observations which on closer scrutiny prove meaningless or hopelessly enigmatic: "That was it...people here seemed to want to

get out in the country and cling instead of really going places."

And in "The Offshore Pirate," Fitzgerald's ambivalence toward the outsider destroys an already slender thread of credibility. He uses the authentic frustration and anger of the outsider toward inhibitory institutions in order to enlist the reader's sympathy for young Curtis Carlyle. Curtis tells Ardita of his yearning for the money that might buy him beauty and "all those things which he was beginning to lump under the general head of aristocracy, an aristocracy which it seemed almost any money could buy except money as he was making it." Although the dream is, once again, trivialized--"Can't you see us travelling round and spending money right and left and being worshipped by bell-boys and waiters?"--Curtis' emotional commitment is as convincing as Gatsby's. But he is then revealed as rich, aristocratic Toby Moreland who, by masquerading as a poor outcast, has enlisted the sympathies of heroine and reader alike. Ardita is charmed by her hero's ingenuity but the reader is undercut by a "false ordering of feeling" (Mizener).¹⁹ In "The Offshore Pirate," then, Fitzgerald's distance reveals the duality which in every case affects characterization.

Dexter Green, one of Fitzgerald's more interesting young men, carries with him "the sense of being a trespasser." Here too, although his tendency to lose himself in his hero's plight is kept in check, he lapses on several occasions,

in each case sacrificing objectivity toward the object of Dexter's dream. Although Judy Jones defines herself clearly through her actions, Fitzgerald is as imbued as Dexter with her beauty and charm and seems to succumb as completely as his hero to the force of her personality. Thus, at intervals, the author's point of view merges with Dexter's. Unlike The Great Gatsby where Nick consistently objectifies the Daisy-Gatsby relationship, Fitzgerald's critical detachment dissipates in scenes of dramatic and emotional intensity. Although Fitzgerald as omniscient narrator comments retrospectively near the end on the significance of events by which he has been profoundly moved--he fails to counteract the effects of his earlier lack of detachment. Thus, he loses the balanced impersonal tone so scrupulously cultivated from the outset. Were Fitzgerald throughout the critical commentator he is only periodically, "Winter Dreams" might be as successful as *The Rich Boy*." The differences lie in characterization as a function of the author's distance.

The Insider

Fitzgerald's rich young men are for the most part stiff and unconvincing. Although he lovingly chronicles the intimate details of their breeding, physical attributes and material possessions, they remain shadowy forms performing empty and ritualistic gestures.²⁰

Perry Parkhurst, in "The Camel's Back," is an insider

temporarily out of favor with his fiancée. Like Nicole in Tender Is the Night, he is the end product of a complex and intricate industry devoted to the care and cultivation of an American leisure class:

I want you to meet Mr. Perry Parkhurst, twenty-eight, lawyer, native of Toledo. Perry has nice teeth, a Harvard Diploma, parts his hair in the middle. You have met him before-- in Cleveland, Portland, St. Paul, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and so forth. Baker Brothers, New York, pause on their semi-annual trip through the West to clothe him; Montmorency and Co. dispatch a young man posthaste every three months to see that he has the correct number of little punctures on his shoes. He has a domestic roadster now, will have a French roadster if he lives long enough, and doubtless a Chinese tank if it comes into fashion. He looks like the advertisement of the young man rubbing his sunset-colored chest with liniment and goes East every other year to his class reunion.²¹

In addition to his glossy superficiality, Perry demonstrates a crass and callous social snobbery, directed against the foreign-born as well as the American lower classes. The story is, of course, a farce where the action coincides with Perry's triviality: determined to win back his fiancée, he dresses up as the front half of a camel, with a hired taxi-driver serving as the rear. They attend a masquerade party where a farcical mock-marriage between Perry and his fiancée turns into the real thing. The absurdity of the action militates against commendation of the story's humor and pace. The tone is "smart-alecky" and cute from the outset: "The glazed eye of the tired reader resting for a second on the above title will presume it to be merely

metaphorical. Stories about the cup and the lip and the bad penny and the new broom rarely have anything to do with cups or lips or pennies or brooms. This story is the exception. It has to do with a material, visible and large-as-life camel's back.

"Starting from the neck we shall work toward the tail. I want you to meet Mr. Perry Parkhurst....I want you to meet his love...." The many awkward and unnecessary authorial intrusions indicate Fitzgerald's uneasiness with his subject. We must conclude simply that he has no emotional commitment to his major character and as a result, the story lacks feeling--even the meretricious sentiment and nostalgia that occasionally engulfs the outsider. "The Camel's Back" is a joke, employing cheap devices and insupportable class attitudes to sustain it and bring it to a conclusion. Even as a farce it is deficient in wit and dexterity. (It was chosen one of the "best" stories of 1920 by the O. Henry Best Stories committee.)

Forrest Winslow, hero of "A Freeze-Out," is a recent graduate of Yale, currently working in his father's business in Minnesota. He is bored and listless; only a pretty face or a popular tune can rouse him from his lethargy. After meeting Alida, a beautiful "corn-colored girl," daughter of a newly-rich merchant with questionable business connections, Forrest suddenly becomes the staunch defender of social equality. His new heroism takes the form of supporting Alida's family's application for membership in his exclusive

club. Forrest's "rebellion" is a tempest-in-a-teapot. He is clearly motivated by Alida's beauty, and his attempts to instruct his father in the desirability of the new social mobility have a hollow ring. Personal bravery and strong conviction are less significant in his protest than Alida's physical attractiveness coupled with a liberal dose of noblesse oblige. Fitzgerald never conveys the sense that Forrest is capable of feeling. He seems simply not to know him as he knows Dalrymple, or George O'Kelly, or any one of his middle class protagonists.

In "Love Boat," Bill is, like Forrest, a scion of a wealthy established family. "Behind him lay an extremely successful career at Harvard and a youth somewhat more austere than the average, and this fall he would disappear for life into the banking house of Read, Hoppe and Co. in Boston." During the course of his passionate love affair with the beautiful but hopelessly lower-class Mae Purley, he knows, at the back of his mind, he must some day marry someone "suitable" to his background and prospects. Although he is ostensibly heartbroken over his separation from Mae, and for years afterward thinks wistfully about what-might-have-been, he seems utterly incapable of anything more than an adolescent involvement. His lassitude and dissatisfaction after eight years of marriage is inexplicable; Fitzgerald never places him in a situation where he is forced to act, and by doing so, reveal himself as a distinct individual. With Mae, he had drifted until their

affair inevitably terminated with the war and his departure for battle. After he returns years later and learns that she had never really loved him, he goes back to his wife, purged of both memory and desire for his first love. But Bill is a stick: his "suffering" and restlessness are as contrived and unconvincing as Fitzgerald's description of his passion: "Life burned high in them both; the steamer and the people were at a distance in darkness. It was one of those times."

As a result of the author's distance from his main character, "Love Boat" lacks drama. Fitzgerald tells, insists, describes, using narrative to stress the purity of Bill's love and the incandescence of Mae's beauty. The more portentous, insistent and artificial the rhetoric, the less credible and acceptable the characters:

What was it they said? Did you hear it? Can you remember? Later that night she remembered only his pale wavy hair and the long limbs that she followed around the dancing floor.

...She was thin, a thin, burning flame, colorless yet fresh....She was a changeling whose lips alone had escaped metamorphosis, whose lips were the only point of contact with reality.

Even the dialogue reflects the patently synthetic nature of their love; while the humor falls flat:

"Then you live near?"

"Only about twenty-five miles from you,"

Bill said. "Isn't it funny?"

"Isn't it funny?"

They looked at each other, a trifle awed in the face of such manifest destiny....Mae's hand lay on his arm, playing with a loose ravel of his tweed coat. They had not kissed yet--that was coming in a minute. That was coming any time

now as soon as every cup of emotional moonlight had been drained of its possibilities and cast aside. She was seventeen.

Throughout "Love Boat," Fitzgerald is the lens through which we must look to see characters and situation, much smaller than life, shadowy, insubstantial and indistinct.

A series of rich young men, Corcoran in "A Penny Spent," Scott in "The Popular Girl," John in "Rags Martin-Jones..." serve as romantic interests for heroines of the stories. Although their roles are purely subordinate and mechanical, they are similarly endowed with those qualities and attributes associated with the very rich: Scott is an orphan with a half-million of his own. Bored and sarcastic, his remarks are falsely urbane, self-consciously literary: "Park Avenue...it's one of the most beautiful streets in the world, I think, perhaps chiefly because it hasn't any leprous park trying to give it an artificial suburbanity."

Corcoran and John Chestnut play up to the caprices of spoiled debutantes. Fitzgerald never gets inside them as he does his poor, struggling, ingratiating outsiders, even though the latter may be maudlin. Fitzgerald noted that the very rich are different from you and me and, he might have added, not nearly as accessible. Only when he objectifies his own conflicting attitudes toward the insider--as in "The Rich Boy"--does he resolve the problem of distance and create a character capable of eliciting the reader's attention and concern.

The Observer-Participant

It is particularly clear in stories where either the protagonist or the narrator is both part of and detached from a social group that authorial distance is the decisive factor in characterization. We have noted that the hero of "Dalrymple Goes Wrong," while striving fiercely for success, implicitly distrusts the representatives and symbols of the social class he aspires to join. Dalrymple's cynicism, filtered through Fitzgerald's coolly impersonal point of view, results in one of the more likeable and persuasive male characters in his fiction.

Like Dalrymple, Joe Coles, in "Crazy Sunday," is able both to evaluate and at the same time participate in events. Joe is only a small cog in the wheel of the Hollywood production industry; he understands and accepts wholly the rules of the game, but does not completely share its values, and even if he did, he is neither successful nor famous enough for Hollywood to accept him. After his inept performance at the Calmans' party, he recognizes his anomalous position: "He felt the mood of the crowd. It was the resentment of the professional toward the amateur, of the community toward the stranger, the thumbs-down of the clan." Fitzgerald's narration is often indistinct from Joe's observations, i.e., Joe's thoughts of Miles, "He even brought that little gamin alive and made her a sort of masterpiece" are similar in tone to the author's remark about Stella, "She hovered somewhere between the realist

of realities and the most blatant of impersonations." Joe's judgments, coupled with Fitzgerald's objective narration, add significance to an otherwise unexceptional plot.

In "Babylon Revisited," Charlie Wales' awareness of the changes in himself and in his society objectifies the action, neutralizing a potentially sentimental situation--a father's attempt to reclaim his child. Charlie's position is acutely uncomfortable: he has, through indiscretions committed years ago, made himself an outsider to the "good" people, represented by Lincoln and Marion Peters. In order to win back his child from the Peters, he must prove to them his new stability and adherence to their values. The difficulty of his task is compounded by their dislike and distrust of him. Fitzgerald constructs the plot around a series of contrasts: between Charlie and the Peters, past and present, illusion and reality, dissipation and steadiness, gaiety and grimness, Paris and America, adults and children. As in "Crazy Sunday," the author's tone, detached, critical, ironic, merges with Charlie's self-critical, but not self-pitying awareness, heightening the contrasts and adding meaning to even the briefest observations. "I spoiled this city for myself. I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone."

So much for the effort and ingenuity of Montmartre. All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly

realized the meaning of the word "dissipate" --to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something.

...It was warm here, it was a home, people together by a fire. The children felt very safe and important; the mother and father were serious, watchful. They had things to do for the children more important than his visit here. A spoonful of medicine was, after all, more important than the strained relations between Marion and himself. They were not dull people, but they were very much in the grip of life and circumstances. He wondered if he couldn't do something to get Lincoln out of his rut at the bank.

Because Fitzgerald steadily maintains his distance throughout and does not lose himself in Charlie's unhappiness, the reader sympathizes not only with Charlie but with Marion Peters as well:

Marion shuddered suddenly; part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire; but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice--a prejudice founded on a curious disbelief in her sister's happiness, and which, in the shock of one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill health and adverse circumstances made it necessary for her to believe in tangible villainy and a tangible villain.

At the end, in what is assuredly his golden opportunity to descend into bathos, Fitzgerald studiously eschews sentimentality for wry realism.

He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever. But he wanted his child, and nothing was much good now, beside that fact. He wasn't young any more, with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have by himself. He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone.

But of course, they can make him pay forever, and the implication is that they will.

It would be incorrect to suggest that distance alone makes "Babylon Revisited" a superb story: dialogue is uniformly excellent, mood, thematic contrasts, and especially milieu, Fitzgerald's ineffable sense of place, are equally effective. But the author's distance makes Charlie Wales a credible, sympathetic and memorable character.

In the Josephine Perry stories, Fitzgerald is ambivalent toward his heroine. But there is no doubt of his attitude toward Basil Duke Lee who, in another series of stories, is a consistent and successful character. Basil is never wholly accepted by the other youngsters. Because of his sensitivity, intensity, and competitiveness, he differs from them; they know it and resent it. He is frequently the butt of their jokes and recipient of their insults. However, Fitzgerald handles Basil's anguish and humiliation by bringing to bear the perspective of the adult on the loneliness and misery of an adolescent. Basil not only endures, but even learns from each of his painful experiences--upstaging by Hubert Blair, that paragon of youthful charm and virtuosity; rejection by Imogene Bissel, a juvenile femme fatale; and more seriously, ostracism and debasement by his prep-school classmates. Basil's fatal flaw is his loquacity; he cannot resist pointing out his own superiority and his fellows' deficiencies. It is a hard lesson but he finally learns, after years of misery, the value of discretion. He is, however, destined to remain the outsider, "one of the poorest boys in a rich boys' school," the

romantic dreamer, an Arsene Lupin (his fictional ideal) who at the decisive moment is "incapable of action."

(Like so many of Fitzgerald's outsiders, while Basil wants to be accepted by the group, he is never satisfied when they do accept him.) His fierce ambition spurs his recovery after each disaster: "Time after time the same vitality that had led his spirit to a scourging made him able to shake off the blood like water..." (and here Fitzgerald's characteristically ironic attitude toward Basil is quite clear) "...not to forget but to carry his wounds with him to new disasters and new atonements--toward his unknown destiny." By adopting Basil's hyperbolic evaluation of the situation, the narrative forms an ironic but not unkind commentary on the young hero's driving ambition. Because Fitzgerald understands and takes seriously the problems of adolescence, yet remains always the detached but totally sympathetic observer, the Basil Duke Lee stories never succumb to a flaccid, Booth Tarkington-like sentimentality.²²

Characterization is also likely to be successful where the narrator, if not the protagonist, plays a peripheral role in the central action. His familiarity with the principals, combined with his objectivity toward the situation in which he is not the chief participant, generally results in ideal narrative distance.

In "The Bowl," the young man who narrates the story of football player Dolly Harlan admits that one of the bases of their friendship is that he has always known he could

never be a football player too, and thus by implication, could never compete in the most important area of Dolly's life. The narrator understands Dolly's dualism: on the one hand, hating the violence and danger of the game and on the other propelled by a "constant, sure, cold aggression," an overwhelming need to prove his heroism and capacity for leadership: "Morally, he captained every team he played on."

Dolly is an interesting character primarily because he is observed through the eyes of a narrator who shares his shrewd observations with the reader; his subtle and penetrating remarks add credibility to Dolly's apparently aberrant behavior and serve as the key to our understanding the story's major complication: his love affair with Vienna Thorne.

First, the narrator notes the implications of Dolly's appearance:

He was one of the handsomest men I ever knew...; he appeared tall and slender in street clothes, his hair was dark, his eyes big and sensitive and dark, his nose aquiline and, like all his features, somehow romantic. It didn't occur to me then, but I suppose he was always pretty vain--not conceited, but vain--for he always dressed in brown or soft light gray, with black ties, and people don't match themselves so successfully by accident.

As soon as he introduces Vienna, it is obvious that there will be a conflict of personalities between her and Dolly: "For a moment the corners of her lips fell as if in dismay that she had met someone stronger, more confident, more challenging than herself."

When the narrator recalls the night Dolly and Vienna declared their love for one another, his sympathy adds a poignant but unsentimental note to the memory, very like Jordan's evocative reminiscence of the Gatsby-Daisy love affair: "When I think of my own love passages at Princeton, I always summon up that night of Dolly's, as if it had been I and not he who sat there with youth and hope and beauty in his arms." And it is he who points up the significance of both Dolly's attachment to football as well as his new romantic liaison with Daisy Cary--a version of Rosemary in Tender Is the Night:

My mind, brightened by the lights and the cheerful tumult, suddenly grasped the fact that all achievement was a placing of emphasis--a molding of the confusion of life into form.

...Dolly turned away, alone with his achievement, taking it for once to his breast. He found suddenly that he would not have it long so intimately; the memory would outlive the triumph and even the triumph would outlive the glow in his heart that was best of all. Tall and straight, an image of victory and pride, he moved across the lobby, oblivious alike to the fate ahead of him or the small chatter behind.

...They (Daisy and Dolly) understood each other. They were both workers; sick or well, there were things that Daisy also had to do. She spoke of how, with a vile cold, she had had to fall into an open-air lagoon out in Hollywood the winter before...She was eighteen and I compared her background of courage and independence and achievement, of politeness based upon realities of cooperation, with that of most society girls I had known. There was no way in which she wasn't inestimably their superior--if she had looked for a moment my way--but it was Dolly's shining velvet eyes that signaled to her own.

Like the narrator of "The Bowl," Andy's relationship with the principal character of "The Last of the Belles,"

Aillie Calhoun, is close enough to allow for familiarity and sympathy, yet not so intimate as to preclude objectivity and reliability. At the beginning, Andy establishes himself as the honest, straightforward narrator, acting as observer and participant in the action: "...She must have seen that we were emotionally incompatible. So I became her confidant instead" (of her lover). As confidant, Andy is as aware of as many of Aillie's motives as she cares to reveal. And his early inclination to fall in love with her (which he ruefully concedes is not altogether dead) allows him to regard her with compassion although he realizes fully her capacity for destruction: "Of course I should have made one of those fine moral decisions that people make in books and despised her. On the contrary, I don't doubt that she could still have had me by raising her hand."

For most of the story, Andy's careful, judicious, balanced judgment controls plot and characters; toward the end, however, his nostalgia for his own pre-war youth affects his distance and eventually blunts the impact of his observations. Thus, Aillie becomes symbolic of the South, of Andy's lost youth, and of the thwarted romantic possibilities of his own life. And the story, which is about Aillie Calhoun, shifts to the narrator's plaintive recollection of his own youthful feelings. At the end, Andy's memory and desire are all that matter; Aillie Calhoun, the puzzling, fascinating "last of the belles," so perceptively and sharply characterized, is lost under the weight of the

narrator's nebulous search for meaning.

Oddly enough, a girl seen at twilight in a small Indiana station started me thinking about going South. The girl, in stiff pink organdie, threw her arms about a man who got off our train and hurried him to a waiting car, and I felt a sort of pang. It seemed to me that she was bearing him off into the lost midsummer world of my early twenties, where time had stood still and charming girls, dimly seen like the past itself, still loitered along the dusky streets. I suppose that poetry is a Northern man's dream of the South. But it was months later that I sent off a wire to Ailie, and immediately followed it to Tarleton.

...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....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.

Ailie is finally only a memory, "something that blew a little in my mind on warm nights when I remembered the magnolia flowers."

"The Rich Boy" perhaps best illustrates Fitzgerald's use of the narrator-participant. From its famous introduction, "Let me tell you about the very rich," to the memorable valediction, "Perhaps they promised that there would always be women in the world who would spend their brightest, freshest, rarest hours to nurse and protect that superiority he cherished in his heart," the narrative is firm, measured and controlled. Even the melodramatic affair

between Edna and her lover fits perfectly into the careful mosaic of incident and judgment wrought by the ideal narrative distance.

The narrator at once establishes his relationship to Anson Hunter, the rich boy. Brought together by chance, as officers in the war, their backgrounds are totally dissimilar. Anson is an Easterner, raised without "idealism or illusion," who accepts without reservation the world of high finance into which he was born. The narrator is from the West, did not go to Yale, is a member of the middle class, has lived among the "brothers" of the rich, "but this one has become my friend." He is thus capable of observing the minutiae of upper class behavior. It is all unfamiliar and intriguing; scarcely a nuance goes unnoticed. The "we" of the prologue clearly distinguishes Anson from the narrator and the reader, thus effecting the necessary separation between subject and point of view.

They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand. They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves. Even when they enter deep into our world or sink below us, they still think that they are better than we are. They are different.

The last sentence is particularly important:

The only way I can describe young Anson Hunter is to approach him as if he were a foreigner and cling stubbornly to my point of view. If I accept his, for a moment, I am lost--I have nothing to show but a preposterous movie.

Because the narrator never assumes Anson's point of view, his reliability is unquestionable and the reader's attention remains fixed on Anson; his attitudes and feelings --of boredom, or apathy--are paramount and not the narrator's. As though determined to prove for once that "the country of the rich" need not be "as unreal as fairy land," the narrator never diverges from his subject and with clinical care traces the events and implications of Anson Hunter's life to their inevitable end.

He need say no more, commit their destinies to no practical enigma. Why should he, when he might hold her so, biding his own time, for another year--forever?

...He had an instinctive and rather charitable knowledge of the weaknesses of men and women, and, like a priest, it made him the more concerned for the maintenance of outward forms. It was typical of him that every Sunday morning he taught in a fashionable Episcopal Sunday-school--even though a cold shower and a quick change into a cutaway coat were all that separated him from the wild night before.

Following a series of incidents chronicling Anson's affair with Paula Legendre, the narrator returns to fill in the events and analyze the changes the last three years have wrought in Anson. From this point on, he, like the narrators in "The Bowl" and "The Last of the Belles" is Anson's chief confidant; he is with Anson on the ship when the latter receives word of Paula's death in childbirth. "For the first time in our friendship he told me not a word of how he felt, nor did I see the slightest sign of emotion."

The narrator's decorum is impeccably firm and authoritative; there are no unnecessary flights of romantic fancy, no nostalgic forays into lost youth, and significantly,

no extraneous interpolations of scenic description.

Although milieu is as important to plot development here as in any Fitzgerald story, it is in this story, knit into the fabric of the narrative. For example, the Palm Beach scene, where Anson follows Paula, is not an exotic illusion; it describes exactly what the story is about.

Palm Beach sprawled plump and opulent between the sparkling sapphire of Lake Worth, flawed here and there by house-boats at anchor, and the great turquoise bar of the Atlantic Ocean. The huge bulks of the Breakers and the Royal Poinciana rose as twin paunches from the bright level of the sand, and around them clustered the Dancing Glade, Bradley's House of Chance, and a dozen modistes and milliners with goods at triple prices from New York. Upon the trellised veranda of the Breakers two hundred women stepped right, stepped left, wheeled, and slid in that then celebrated calisthenic known as the double-shuffle, while in half-time to the music two thousand bracelets clicked up and down on two hundred arms.

And our last glimpse of Anson is again colored by the narrator's subtle evaluation, lending a thoroughly satisfying finality to the story.

Sergio Perosa believes that in "The Rich Boy" and "The Last of the Belles," "Fitzgerald's creative powers seem clearly on the wane....'The Rich Boy' lacks the quality of dramatic development...becomes a kind of essayistic comment rather than a story...suffers from a lack of dramatic intensity...has none of those poetic moments that enlivened an earlier story on the same topic, 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz,'...the use of the 'narrator' involved in the story is not completely controlled....(He) intrudes with

superfluous observations and explicit comments, so that finally he destroys the structural unity that he should actually give the story."²³

I believe the reverse is true: that the narrator prevents "The Rich Boy" from lapsing into the melodrama and sentimentality of "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," that the even, controlled point of view fixes the subject--Anson Hunter--firmly at the center of the action and thus provides the "structural unity" Fitzgerald's stories so often lack. I think, too, that the "essayistic comment" which Perosa deplores adds philosophical significance to action and character. Finally, narrative distance allows the principal character sufficient freedom to act; Anson is neither tied to a mechanical plot nor submerged under the author's emotion. Each incident, subjected to the narrator's interpretation, proves essential to character development, Anson and Paula, Anson and Dolly, Anson and Edna--every relationship affords Anson an opportunity for significant choices and thus reveals new facets of his personality. The charge that the story lacks dramatic intensity seems to me entirely unfounded; it lacks only melodramatic intensity.

In Anson Hunter, Fitzgerald has succeeded beyond his intention: "Begin with an individual and before you know it you have created a type." Anson is not only the rich boy, but perhaps more important as a measure of Fitzgerald's artistry, he is the type who is first an individual.

The Fitzgerald Persona

Fitzgerald himself, as the persona in several essays, is perhaps his most successful character. In "My Lost City," he is the outsider at first, dazzled and intoxicated by the splendor of New York. We share in the excitement of Fitzgerald's first thrilling glimpse of the city's wonders, but it is tempered by the perspective of the mature narrator:

I was Dick Whittington up from the country gaping at the trained bears, or a youth of the Midi dazzled by the Boulevards of Paris. I had come only to stare at the show, though the designers of the Woolworth Building and the Chariot Race sign, the producers of musical comedies and problem plays, could ask for no more appreciative spectator, for I took the style and glitter of New York even above its own valuation.

"One Hundred False Starts" seems at first like a writer's confession. "So runs an interview with one of the champion false-starters of the writing profession--myself." Quickly, however, Fitzgerald laughs at himself and then expatiates on his problems as a writer until they become generic problems of all writers. His technique is to relate an anecdote and follow it with a serious analysis, culminating in a moment of high seriousness and concluding in an easy colloquialism:

These old mistakes are now only toys--and expensive ones at that--give them a toy's cupboard and then hurry back into the serious business of my profession. Joseph Conrad defined it more clearly, more vividly than any man of our time: "My task is by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel--it is, before all, to make you see."

It's not very difficult to run back and start over again--especially in private. What you aim at is to get in a good race or two when the crowd is in the stand.

The famous series of "Crack-Up" essays begins with the assumption that "Of course all life is a process of breaking down." The matter-of-factness of Fitzgerald's prose renders the tragic material more moving than might a highly charged, dramatic or plaintive exposition. We like the narrator first because he confesses his weaknesses, the ordinariness of his aspirations, with the same candor that he later details his spiritual malaise: "My two juvenile regrets--at not being big enough (or good enough) to play football in college and at not getting overseas during the war--resolved themselves into childish waking dreams of an imaginary heroism that were good enough to sleep on in restless nights"; and second, because he does not seek our sympathy or our help, only our understanding.

Throughout, the narrative combines objective detail with intimate and poignant revelation:

I had gone on about my affairs in the city where I was then living, not caring much, not thinking how much had been left undone, or what would become of this and that responsibility, like people do in books; I was well insured and anyhow I had been only a mediocre caretaker of most of the things left in my hands, even of my talent.

...I began to realize that for two years my life had been a drawing on resources that I did not possess, that I had been mortgaging myself physically and spiritually up to the hilt. What was the small gift of life given back in comparison to that?--When there had once been pride of direction and a confidence in enduring independence.

In "Handle With Care," he abstracts himself even further from the conditions of his own suffering. His intention here seems chiefly analytical: What happened? How did it happen,

and especially, what, if anything is left for him to salvage?

Life, ten years ago, was largely a personal matter....It seemed a romantic business to be a successful literary man--you were not ever going to be as famous as a movie star but what note you had was probably longer-lived--you were never going to have the power of a man of strong political or religious convictions but you were certainly more independent. Of course within the practice of your trade you were forever unsatisfied, but I, for one, would not have chosen any other.

He never turns aside from past mistakes and present disillusion:

For sixteen years I lived pretty much as this latter person, distrusting the rich, yet working for money with which to share their mobility and the grace that some of them brought into their lives....So there was not an I any more--not a basis on which I could organize my self-respect--save my limitless capacity for toil that it seemed I possessed no more. It was strange to have no self--to be like a little boy left alone in a big house, who knew that now he could do anything he wanted to do, but found that there was nothing that he wanted to do--

The essay ends on a facetious, but not unattractive parenthetical address to the reader:

(The watch is past the hour and I have barely reached my thesis. I have some doubts as to whether this is of general interest, but if anyone wants more, there is plenty left, and your editor will tell me. If you've had enough, say so--but not too loud, because I have the feeling that someone, I'm not sure who, is sound asleep--someone who could have helped me to keep my shop open. It wasn't Lenin, and it wasn't God.)

In "Pasting It Together," the best of the three essays, the Fitzgerald persona relaxes his detachment and in a final narrative digression of sheer brilliance offers a bitterly

ironic resolution that extends beyond his life and into society's.

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:

"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--ah, 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 headmaster on visitors' 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 living kindness common to all those from Washington to Beverly Hills who must exist by virtue of the contorted pan.

The voice too--I am working with a teacher on the voice. When I have perfected it the larynx will show no ring of conviction except the conviction of the person I am talking to. Since it will be largely called upon for the elicitation of the word "Yes," my teacher (a lawyer) and I are concentrating on that, but in extra hours. I am learning to bring into it that polite acerbity that makes people feel that far from being welcome they are not even tolerated and are under continual and scathing analysis at every moment. These times will of course not coincide with the smile. This will be reserved exclusively for those from whom I have nothing to gain, old worn-out people or young struggling people. They won't mind--what the hell, they get it most of the time anyhow.

.....
So what? This is what I think now; that the natural state of the sentient adult is a qualified unhappiness. I think also that in an adult the desire to be finer in the grain than you are, "a constant striving" (as only those people say who gain their bread by saying it) only adds to this unhappiness in the end--that end that comes to our youth and hope. My own happiness in the

past often approached such an ecstasy that I could not share it even with the person dearest to me but had to walk it away in quiet streets and lanes with only fragments of it to distil into little lines in books--and I think that my happiness, or talent for self-delusion or what you will, was an exception. It was not the natural thing but the unnatural--unnatural as the Boom; and my recent experience parallels the wave of despair that swept the nation when the Boom was over.

I shall manage to live with the new dispensation, though it has taken some months to be certain of the fact. And just as the laughing stoicism which has enabled the American Negro to endure the intolerable conditions of his existence has cost him his sense of the truth--so in my case there is a price to pay. I do not any longer like the postman, nor the grocer, nor the editor, nor the cousin's husband and he in turn will come to dislike me, so that life will never be very pleasant again, and the sign Cave Canem is hung permanently just above my door. I will try to be a correct animal though, and if you throw me a bone with enough meat on it I may even lick your hand.

From an intensely personal documentation of one writer's loss of faith and will, "The Crack-Up" essays end as a scathing attack on a hypocritical, life-denying society. And the narrator himself, bitter and caustic certainly, but honest, rueful and self-reliant, emerges as a thoroughly credible and appealing character. He is unforgettably moving too, when, at the end of "Sleeping and Waking," from the perspective of despair, he pays a moving tribute to life as he once lived it, apotheosized in the lyrics of a popular song:

My dreams now, after the catharsis of the dark hours, are of young and lovely people doing young lovely things, the girls I knew once, with big brown eyes, real yellow hair.

"In the fall of '16 in the cool of the afternoon

I met Caroline under a white moon

There was an orchestra--Bingo-Bango
 Playing for us to dance the tango
 And the people all clapped as we arose
 For her sweet face and my new clothes--"
 Life was like that, after all; my spirit soars
 in the moment of its oblivion.

Character and Distance in the Late Stories

In the late stories, as in "The Crack-Up," Fitzgerald is again detached from and involved with his characters.²⁴ However, the flat, enervated, essayistic tone is less satisfactory when used in fiction. Characters in these stories²⁵ are smaller than life, drained, listless, thoroughly fatigued. Fitzgerald seems less capable of involvement in their actions than in their apathy. The omniscient narrator of "Afternoon of an Author" is indistinguishable from the central character. Narrative is unemotional and economical, strangely haunting in its dry precision. "The perfect neurotic...by-product of an idea, slag of a dream," the author, prepares to go outside for a walk, the first one in many days. His thoughts are of mental and physical fatigue--his own and others: "Those Civil War leaders seemed to him realized very suddenly how tired they were--Lee shrivelling into another man, Grant with his desperate memoir-writing at the end." On the bus ride, in the barber shop, he ruminates over what he is now, what he once was, what he might have become, his struggles and especially his weariness and inertia. There are no highs or lows, only a quiet drift toward death. The faint note of self-pity stems from physical debility rather than emotional

outrage.

Although in the late stories Fitzgerald strikes a judicious balance between involvement and detachment, his characters are often convincing but limp and lifeless. Arthur Mizener points to Fitzgerald's recovery of distance in the late stories, but he omits mentioning how damaging the lack of narrative vitality proves to characterization.²⁶

Character and Action

Because character grows out of action, the action in a work of fiction should meet three requirements to produce effective characterization: it should involve conflict, i.e., give the character an opportunity to choose from among alternatives; it should be significant, i.e., mean something above and beyond the immediate situation--it should be important in terms of cultural values; and the action in which the character engages must be consistent with his previous behavior and the reader's expectations.²⁷

Fitzgerald's problems in characterization are directly related to these three requisites. In "One Trip Abroad," Nicole and Nelson offer no resistance whatsoever to the threatening forces surrounding them. They drift heedlessly down the path of dissolution, unaware and even indifferent to the fact of their own decay. Their characters are drawn in external and superficial details--clothing and demeanor, usually in contrast to a particular social group. For example, at the outset the Liddell Mileses, bored, hard,

sophisticated, thoroughly conversant with the "in" people and places, appraise the Kellys in a passage that might easily have come from Henry James:

Mr. and Mrs. Miles did not fail to notice their air of good breeding, of a specifically "swell" background, expressed both by their unsophistication and by their ingrained reticence that was not stiffness. If they held aloof, it was because they were sufficient to each other, while Mr. and Mrs. Miles' aloofness toward the other passengers was a conscious mask, a social attitude, quite as public an affair in its essence as the ubiquitous advances of the Smyrna-American, who was snubbed by all....The Mileses had, in fact, decided that the young couple were "possible" and, bored with themselves, were frankly approaching them.

The Kellys seem unable to discern the spuriousness of the Mileses' gentility; nor do they recognize Oscar Dane as a sycophant and Count Chiki Sarolai as an impoverished relic of the minor nobility, both clinging to them like leeches. At the end, their plight is merely pathetic, never tragic: "Why did we lose peace and love and health one after the other?" Actually, Fitzgerald never convinces us that they ever had or ever were any more than the empty shells who at the end stare horrified into a bleak and barren future.

Fitzgerald's intention in "Indecision" is obviously to symbolize in two women two different kinds of love, and to allow the hero to decide between the two. Why then, since the story does turn on the matter of choice, does Tommy emerge as probably Fitzgerald's least convincing male character? Among the many reasons, one is certainly that he either drifts or vacillates like the Kellys. We have

already noted that the choice is artificial; the two women are indistinct except for physical differences. More important, the conflict is synthetic; Tommy's mind flits back and forth between Emily and Rosemary. His juvenile dreams romanticize them both. He dallies with each girl but commits himself to neither and never really responds to a situation. His only decision is as motiveless as the adjective "abrupt" implies: seeing Rosemary dancing with another man, "he came to the abrupt decision that he would ask her to marry him": Tommy runs literally, with feverish intensity, from one girl to another; at the conclusion, his engine apparently runs out of steam and Fitzgerald cuts off the story ludicrously: "With the sound of his own voice the other image faded from his mind forever." If Fitzgerald's purpose is to show in Tommy the pernicious effects of indecisiveness, his protagonist is unequal to the task. He would have had to be first a believable character from the beginning so that any change would register immediately on the reader. Tommy is insufferably blank and dense from start to finish. And the story offers contrivance in lieu of conflict; for example, "His first instinct next morning was to phone her immediately; his second was to sulk proudly in his room." Tommy must be regarded surely as the most banal and neurotically juvenile character in Fitzgerald's fiction.

The second requirement, that the action be significant, we have already discussed indirectly in Chapter Two. The situations in many of the stories are simply too trivial to

take seriously as literature. In "Indecision," if the two girls symbolized conflicting cultural and philosophical values, the story might well lay claim to our attention. But here, as in the stories previously cited, the central action is simply not important except for ten minutes light diversion. And the character who expends great stores of energy on an essentially trivial problem is unlikely to arouse the reader's interest.²⁸

Pat Hobby is among Fitzgerald's best-defined characters, but because the actions in which he participates lack significance, he is also among the most limited. After reading the seventeen stories and half-a-dozen fragments in which he appears, we have no difficulty in describing him: He is an incompetent, a snob, an alcoholic, a petty black-mailer, a dreamer, a would-be lecher, a leech, a whiner, a conniver, a thief, a scab, a coward, an informer, an eternal outsider. He is lazy, ubiquitous and dishonest. Although he is rigidly excluded from the Hollywood power center, his perverted sense of justice leads him to identify with the producers rather than their hireling writers like himself and the exploited or discarded actors and directors--the dregs of the industry. He aspires to every flashy Hollywood-American success symbol--Filipino servants, swimming pools, "bottle [of liquor] and girls," "meals at the Brown Derby." Pat is a firm ally of the status quo, or more properly, the past into which he seeks to escape the sordid, depressing present.

Fitzgerald's technique in the Pat Hobby stories is to devise situations in which Pat, faced with alternatives, consistently selects the action most likely to degrade him further. And the alternatives do not embody significant cultural values. How much energy, for example, can be expended on choosing between spending a day at the races and scrounging a few "fast bucks" on the lot to replenish a dwindling supply of liquor?

In "Pat Hobby's Christmas Wish," at the beginning, Pat has hired a new secretary just before Christmas, after having fired another to avoid giving her a Christmas gift. He joins his new secretary in constructing a blackmail plot against a producer. The plot misfires before achieving its purpose--elevating Pat Hobby to producer. In another story, Pat steals an idea for a script from another writer who turns out, to his chagrin, to be a girl friend of the producer to whom he sells the story ("A Man in the Way"). Once again, Pat is humiliated. In another, he furiously assaults a writer who has the temerity to sit at the Big Table reserved for the leaders of the industry. Indignant at the bare suggestion of social equality, Pat appreciates only the desire to join, not challenge the power structure. He is thus personally affronted by the presumption of a lower-echelon hireling who places himself on the same footing with the executive class. Later, the writer is revealed as "one of them" and the incident as a joke among insiders. Again, Pat is the scapegoat.

In one story after another, Pat sinks to lower and lower levels of activity; trickery and connivance are his tools. But for all his duplicity, Pat is pathetically unsuccessful in his attempts to "put one over on them." Each situation ends in debacle, humiliation and further degradation. And yet, for all his faults, he is a strangely moving figure in these stories of the absurd: the eternal fall-guy who admits honestly in a moment of painful clarity, "I've been cracked down on plenty." We know that given money and success Pat would be no better and no worse than the typical Hollywood producers, people aptly named "Fraker, Bleister, Shaker," who mock and revile him. But Fitzgerald places a considerable share of the responsibility for the Pat Hobbys on the industry which consistently substitutes synthetic for human values, which cynically dangles plastic dreams before despicable weaklings like Pat Hobby, dreams that exploit and destroy genuine talent. Pat Hobby is the slag end of Hollywood, the nether side of Monroe Stahr, The Last Tycoon.

Fitzgerald characterizes Pat, as noted, through a series of actions which degrade and dehumanize him until, at the end, we see Pat employed as a clerk in a seedy motel. Although he rises from the ashes of each humiliation, his resiliency erodes. Pat comes back, but each time he gets a smaller share of the Hollywood pie.

The language of these stories is racy and colloquial and the tone consistently ironic and detached:

Pat was forty-nine. He was a writer but he had never written much, nor even read all the "originals" he worked from, because it made his head bang to read much. But the good old silent days you got somebody's plot and a smart secretary and gulped benzedrine "structure" at her six or eight hours every week. The director took care of the gags. After talkies came he always teamed up with some man who wrote dialogue. Some young man who liked to work ("A Man in the Way").

We get to know Pat through the eyes of others, through his own words and the narrator's laconic description. When Jack Berners looked at him, "He saw a sort of whipped misery in Pat's eyes that reminded him of his own father. Pat had been in the money before Jack was out of college--with three cars and a chicken over every garage. Now his clothes looked as if he'd been standing at Hollywood and Vine for three years." ("A Man in the Way")

"He's glad if he can get work two or three times a year. For dirty work he's available. For money he'd shoot his parents, he'd shoot his best friend." ("Produced by Pat Hobby"--unpublished)

Pat is the bête noir of the industry, their own ineffectual Frankenstein monster to whom they relentlessly throw a bone--a week's writing job--to rid themselves of his ubiquitous presence.

Whatever Pat says he makes ridiculous by his pretensions --"Bernard Shaw was out here--and Einstein, but they couldn't make the grade," and malapropisms, like "hyacenda."

Details of Pat's physical appearance are remarkably few, but so suggestive that he seems perhaps the most visually rendered character in all of Fitzgerald's fiction. Yet the

following lines are the only clues to Pat's appearance:

Red, old eyes--"Pat Hobby's Secret"

Permanently bloodshot eyes--"Pat Hobby's
Christmas Wish"

Old eyes--"Pat Hobby's Secret"

"His eyes not so very bloodshot"--"Pat Hobby,
Putative Father"

The red-rimmed eyes of the watcher--"The Homes
of the Stars"

Pat's red-rimmed eyes tightened--"Pat Hobby Does
His Bit"

Pat's dismal, red-streaked eyes)
Pat's liverish eye) "Pat Hobby's Preview"
She could never let those red-
rimmed eyes come close
to her...)

He glanced into Pat's red-rimmed eyes--"No
Harm Trying"

His thin grey hair--"On the Trail of Pat Hobby"

Pat was forty-nine with red-rimmed eyes and a
soft purr of whiskey on his breath--
"Fun in an Artist's Studio"

The red-rimmed eyes of Pat Hobby--"Mightier Than
the Sword"

His battered hulk got in motion--"Teamed with Genius"

Pat gritted what was left of his teeth and
produced--"Pat Hobby's Hour"--unpublished

Finally, a faint but perceptible note of pathos
occasionally creeps into the narrative, mitigating somewhat
the reader's distaste for Pat. Fitzgerald accomplishes this
by pointing up briefly but sharply the contrast between Pat
Hobby today and yesterday: "Then he bent down over his desk,
his shoulders shaking as he thought of that happy day when

he had a swimming pool."

"Once Pat had been a familiar figure at the Big Table; often in his golden prime he had dined in the private canteens of executives. Being of the older Hollywood he understood their jokes, their vanities, their social system with its swift fluctuations. But there were too many new faces at the Big Table now--faces that looked at him with the universal Hollywood suspicion. And at the little tables where the young writers sat they seemed to take work so seriously. As for just sitting down anywhere, even with secretaries or extras--Pat would rather catch a sandwich at the corner."

Summarizing, Pat Hobby is a skillfully rendered but almost totally negative character; every action in which he participates further diminishes and trivializes him. The bitter, mocking narrative is relentlessly cruel, disallowing Pat even a vestige of dignity out of each humiliation. Pat has no moral sense, no self-awareness, no conception of freedom except in terms of the "cash, cars, girls and swimming pools which swam in a glittering montage before his eyes." He is so thoroughly and systematically degraded by Fitzgerald that he is not a "free" character, free, that is, to live any way but as an errand boy basking in the waste of the past.

Obviously, there is less opportunity for a character to act inconsistently in a short story than in a novel simply because a novel offers more situations requiring him to act.

As we have noted in connection with plot, Fitzgerald writes a longer-than-average story, made up frequently of several situations instead of one central action. Thus we often may study a character in terms of a normal and expected pattern of behavior, and as a result, we may determine when he is acting believably. Often, Fitzgerald is notably weak in consistency of characterization.²⁹

"John Jackson's Arcady" is about a successful middle-aged business man, a leading citizen of his town, who feels that his life has been a failure. He believes that he has missed the deeper satisfactions that come out of close ties with others. His son is a failure, his wife ran off with another man ten years ago; he is alone save for his business associates and the adulation of his community for whom he symbolizes the American dream of success. To John Jackson, the dream is empty and hypocritical:

Life had stripped him clean of all happiness and all illusion....People who would hear him speak...they believed in rules, all the young men in the city believed in hard and fast rules, and many of them clipped coupons and sent away for little booklets that promised them the riches and good fortune they desired.

When he is asked to speak before a group of townspeople on "What Have I Got Out of Life," he decides after a retrospective view of his life, that the answer must be "Nothing." He vows not to deliver a platitudinous speech, but to leave his town and seek the happiness he missed as a young man. He is deeply cynical about the meaning of his success and suspects his employees of insincerity in their show of

admiration and affection for him.

John Jackson returns to his home town, which had taught him the simple decencies and kindnesses by which he had tried to live.

This was his own house, as no other house would ever be; within these plain walls he had been incomparably happy. Here he had known and learned that kindness which he had carried into life. Here he had found the secret of those few simple decencies, so often invoked, so inimitable and so rare, which in the turmoil of competitive industry had made him to coarser men a source of half-scoffing, half-admiring surprise. This was his house, because his honor had been born and nourished here; he had known every hardship of the country poor, but no preventable regret.

He visits his former sweetheart and their romance is rekindled. But she retracts her promise to run away with him because of her deeper loyalty to her home, husband and children. John Jackson, blind with misery, decides to go back to his town and make the speech--but it will be, he determines, devoted to the truth: that his life is empty, that he has got nothing out of life.

I shall tell them the truth; that life has beaten me at every turning and used me for its own obscure purposes over and over, that everything I have loved has turned to ashes, and that every time I have stooped to pat a dog I have felt his teeth in my hand. And so at last they will learn the truth about one man's heart.

Up to this point, the story is moving, if sentimental in certain details, like memories of his dead brother, the description of his childhood sweetheart, and his reconciliation with Alice; the authentic mood of despair makes the sentimental clichés seem irrelevant.

Back home, on the day that he is to speak, he accidentally overhears one of the employees whom he had suspected of hypocrisy declare his love and admiration for John Jackson. "When he told me yesterday, suddenly, that he was going away, I thought to myself that if he never came back I didn't--I didn't want to go on living. That man makes everything in the world seem all right."

Later, elated by the enthusiastic applause that greets his entrance into the auditorium, John Jackson's despair turns to hope; a new, heady optimism overtakes him, his eyes swim with tears of gratitude, and overcome, he steps up to the podium:

"What have I got out of life?"

He stretched out his arms wide, as if to include them all, as if to take to his breast all the men and women and children of this city. His voice rang in the hushed silence. "Everything!"

As a result of this inconsistent and totally unmotivated action, what might have been an excellent study of middle-aged disillusionment turns into a spate of romantic drivel, as insincere as the sentiment John Jackson earlier attributed to his fellow men.

In a much later story, "On An Ocean Wave," (published under the name of "Paul Elgin"), Gaston T. Scheer, a business-tycoon and financial superman, is sailing to Europe on a vast luxury liner along with his wife Minna and his mistress who is secreted below in her cabin. In the three-part story, the first shows Gaston Scheer wheeling and dealing over

ship-to-shore cable: "Gaston T. Scheer--the man, the company, the idea--five feet eight, carrying himself with dash and pride, walking the deck of the ocean liner like a conqueror. This was when it was something to be an American--Spring of 1929." He scrupulously lives up to a Napoleonic self-image: "'Women are small potatoes,' said Scheer disgustedly. 'Did you see that cable from Claud Hanson today that said he'd gladly die for me?'"

The story is, as Arnold Gingrich noted, "cynical and hard-boiled--captures the feeling of the period."³⁰ Minna Scheer, romantic and deeply unhappy, has a shipboard romance with a drab professor. "She had been a good girl so long, but now almost everybody she knew was raising the devil and it was a thrilling discovery to find that she could join in with such pleasure." After Scheer learns of her affair, he responds by having the professor killed--thrown overboard. This seems to me to be completely inconsistent with the portrait previously sketched of a cruel, but careful business man. Gaston Scheer is simply too calculating to overlook the consequences of incurring even a suspicion of murder; there is no reason for him to jeopardize his empire by exterminating so paltry a challenge to his omnipotence. Further, if Fitzgerald means to suggest that financiers in the riotous pre-depression era were prone to murdering their adversaries, he is incredibly naive. Or, if his intent is to symbolize the illegal lengths to which the American tycoon will resort to insure his power, he has

failed utterly to convey the requisite symbolic or mythic import through the preceding narrative. On the levels of character and plot then, the concluding action is inconsistent; "On An Ocean Wave," although it contains an excellent sketch of a brutal native American superman, ultimately fails.

Although the problem of authorial distance is closely tied to the relationship between character and action--the significance of action is of course determined by the author's point of view--it must be regarded independently as the single most important factor affecting characterization in Fitzgerald's short stories. Consistency of characterization and significance of action are general criteria, applicable to every work of fiction. But in Fitzgerald's case, success or failure of major characters resides in the relationship of the narrator or the protagonist to the central action and relevant social group. If he maintains a critical position as participant-observer, he will emerge, almost without exception, as a credible and interesting character. As an "insider," he is likely to be a pasteboard, "set-up" figure; as an "outsider," a flaccid, diffuse, sentimentalized victim. It follows that the degree of Fitzgerald's identification with his characters, his own ability to strike a balance between pity and understanding, is the criterion by which we may evaluate his characters. On this basis, we conclude that characterization is rarely altogether successful in a Fitzgerald story, and that in

general, authorial over-identification leads Fitzgerald to sentimentalize and thus weaken his characters irreparably.

But ineffectual or unbelievable characters do not necessarily mean that a story is without merit. Because characterization is not Fitzgerald's strongest area, he usually compensates for deficiencies chiefly through heightened rhetoric, vivid milieus--the sense of place to which we have alluded--manners and evocative mood. If we concede that a story cannot be wholly successful if its characters lack distinction, we must also admit that Fitzgerald's lyrical, rhythmic prose can rescue an otherwise flawed work from total obscurity.

NOTES

¹James E. Miller, Jr., F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and..., p. 118; Joseph Katz, "The Narrator and the Rich Boy," Fitzgerald Newsletter, #32 (Winter, 1966); Kenneth Eble, F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 58; H. D. Piper, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait, p. 158; Paul Rosenfeld, "Fitzgerald Before the Great Gatsby," reprinted in Kazin, ed., F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, p. 76; William Troy, "Scott Fitzgerald: The Authority of Failure," reprinted in Mizener, ed., F. Scott Fitzgerald: A collection..., p. 21; Malcolm Cowley, Exile's Return (New York, 1934, 1951), p. 293.

²Miller, p. 118.

³Leslie Fiedler, "Some Notes on F. Scott Fitzgerald," from An End to Innocence, reprinted in Mizener, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection..., p. 74.

⁴Robert Sklar, F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Last Laocoon, p. 150.

⁵Richard Ellmann, "A Talent as Big as the Ritz," New Statesman, LXVI (November 22, 1963), 746.

⁶Kenneth Eble, p. 63.

⁷See Charles C. Walcutt, Man's Changing Mask, Chapters One through Four for a detailed discussion of these matters.

⁸Eble, p. 63.

⁹Letter to John Peale Bishop, May, 1935, Letters of ..., pp. 367-8.

¹⁰See "The Pearl and the Fur" (unpublished), "Too Cute For Words" (1936), "Inside the House" (1936).

¹¹The Notebooks contain one section devoted exclusively to descriptions of women, many of them identical to passages in the stories, others ready to be used without revision, The Crack-Up: Notebooks, pp. 131-146.

¹²Lionel Trilling, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," The Liberal Imagination, reprinted in Mizener, ed., F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection..., p. 18.

¹³Ellen Moers sees these figures as replicas of Fitzgerald himself; Ellen Moers, "F. Scott Fitzgerald: Reveille at Taps," p. 526.

¹⁴See also Adrian in "The Rough Crossing," Tom Squires in "At Your Age," Roger in "Gretchen's Forty Winks," among others.

¹⁵For a pattern similar to "A New Leaf" and "May Day," see also Bill McChesney in "Two Wrongs."

¹⁶Eble, p. 103 remarks on "the essentially hollow quality in 'The Sensible Thing' and 'Gretchen's Forty Winks.'" The hollowness stems from lack of objectivity toward the hero's values, in "The Sensible Thing" toward George's

conception of love and in "Gretchen's Forty Winks" toward Roger's dream of success as embodied in advertising.

¹⁷Moers, p. 526.

¹⁸The idea that a character defines himself most effectively through action, although not typical of modern criticism, is central to Professor Walcutt's thesis. He traces the development of the modern concept of character as an absolute, existing apart from and independent of action, from the early belief that "only the deed mattered," "the character [as well as motive] was identified in the deed," to the "notion of motive apart from the deed," the belief that "no deed could fully and truly represent a deep character." The romantic belief held that "any deed, any setting was inadequate to the spirit and therefore an outrage to it. Through this evolution it is plain that character came to seem a mixture or interplay among essence, motive, and deed; then perhaps more essence than act; and then so complex that no act could reveal it. So as we move into the twentieth century character often becomes a repository of a vast amount of knowledge and feeling that has a life of its tormented own apart from any serious action in which the author might engage it" (pp. 301-355).

¹⁹Arthur Mizener, Introduction to Flappers and Philosophers (New York, 1959), p. 14: "There is something wrong with giving feelings he cared most for--the feelings about success without opportunity for the good life--to

Curtis Carlyle, who is not a character at all but a momentary invention of Toby Moreland, the one kind of person who, as a rich boy, could never know these feelings."

²⁰The exception is George Hannaford in "Magnetism," more interesting than any other insider, but equally lifeless. Here, Fitzgerald's clinical dissection of a "charming" man lacks warmth and dramatic intensity.

²¹This is true also of the heroine of "Rags Martin-Jones..." "She was finished with that delicacy, with that care, as though the long lifetime of some worker in fragility had been used to make her so."

²²Tarkington's sentimentality is most apparent in Seventeen where he makes Willie Baxter a completely passive pawn for Lola, and unrestrainedly plays on the reader's sympathies. The Penrod stories are closer in spirit to the Basil Duke Lee group, but Tarkington (whom Fitzgerald greatly admired) lacks Fitzgerald's compassionate and serious approach to the problems of adolescence. Tarkington sees Penrod from the perspective of a detached, adult observer for whom the antics of youth are highly comic. He is certainly sympathetic toward Penrod, but it is a more superficial, indulgent sympathy than that which results from a truly serious consideration of his character.

Fitzgerald, while remaining the detached, ironic observer, makes Basil's suffering acute and affecting. Basil's adventures are amusing, to be sure, but the reader

is never permitted to overlook the torment of a young boy growing up. Tarkington avoids the whole area of sex in his treatment of adolescence, while Fitzgerald, from the first Basil story, delicately explores the problem of sexual awakening in adolescents.

Robert Sklar summarizes Fitzgerald's debt to Tarkington and the considerable influence the older writer (who also attended Princeton) exerted on his life and work, pp. 6-10.

²³Sergio Perosa, The Art of..., p. 84.

²⁴I have set these stories apart only in connection with our discussion of narrative distance where they differ markedly from the others. The late stories are few in number and distinctive chiefly in this respect.

²⁵See also "In the Holidays" (1937), "Strange Sanctuary" (1939), "An Author's Mother" (1936), "The Woman from Twenty-Once" (1941).

²⁶Arthur Mizener, Introduction to Afternoon of An Author (New York, 1958), p. 11.

²⁷Charles C. Walcutt makes each of these points; note particularly his discussion of the characters in mystery stories as examples of lack of consistency in characterization, note, p. 28.

²⁸"At Your Age," "The Unspeakable Egg," "One Interne."

²⁹"What A Handsome Pair," "I Got Shoes," "Fate in her Hands."

³⁰Arnold Gingrich, Letter to Fitzgerald, February, 1941, Esquire file of Princeton University Fitzgerald papers.

CHAPTER FOUR

RHETORIC

Our discussion of rhetoric will focus, as the term suggests, on Fitzgerald's use of language in the short stories and essays--on narrative style, rhythm, imagery, symbolism--on the arrangement and selection of words, on prose patterns and poetic effects. Up to this point, we have touched on rhetoric peripherally as it functions in connection with plot and character. Here the attempt will be to study it systematically, first, because it represents Fitzgerald's greatest strength and second, because rhetoric tells us more about the merits of the stories than any single other element in their composition and structure. Fitzgerald's gifts as a writer are primarily lyric and poetic; lapses in plot and characterization did not concern him nearly as much as using the wrong word: "In revision, Fitzgerald was chiefly interested in the movement of his sentences and in the accuracy or vividness of his descriptive phrases. Only rarely did he alter the organization of a paragraph--and almost never did he revise for meaning. But he was endlessly patient about trying to make a sentence more graceful or striking" (Matthew J. Bruccoli).¹

Thus, his stories have a literary quality--a delight in the multifarious uses of language--which places them, even

at the worst, several notches above the well-made stories of the twenties and thirties. "His art lay...in the skill with which he used dialogue, imagery...and atmosphere to revitalize the old myths and give them present-day relevance" (Henry Dan Piper).²

Alfred Kazin, however, sees Fitzgerald's ebullient use of rhetoric as a not-unmixed blessing. It places, he asserts, a "filmy curtain" between the emotion and the fact; "a lightly running river of little golden words...so thickly suffused that in 'The Crack-Up' even the most awesome admission of personal bankruptcy and irremediable loneliness had to be subtly bent to sound good...."³ There is some descriptive validity to Kazin's charge, and in our discussion of the uses of rhetoric we shall assess the aesthetic reasons which lead Fitzgerald to bury whole scenes and especially emotional peaks under "blankets of excellent prose."⁴

What is it in Fitzgerald's style that is endlessly attractive to the reader? It is not, certainly, distinctiveness or eccentricity, neither of which is characteristic of his prose.⁵ Kenneth Eble notes accurately that although Fitzgerald believed he had set his own personal stamp on everything he wrote, "...it lacks the distinctive qualities which make Hemingway's style an influential one and which make Faulkner's capable of such powerful effects."⁶ Kazin calls it "the light yet jewelled style, careless and knowing and affable."⁷ Fitzgerald possesses the rare

ability to call forth the sympathetic mood of the reader and to so absorb his attention in a rhythmic, almost musical passage that banalities in plot, characterization or idea are either forgotten or overlooked.

In the stories as well as the novels, Fitzgerald's descriptive gifts are strikingly apparent. The vivid scene rather than the whole story lingers in our memory: with a few selected details, usually in atmosphere or decor, he creates a mood against which the dramatic situation stands out in relief. In "News of Paris," a late sketch, merely two lines, "It was quiet in the room. The peacocks in the draperies stirred in the April wind," provide the ideal background for a brief but haunting retrospective account of dissolution, apathy and tired sexuality in the pre-depression boom.

Nowhere is Fitzgerald's ability to isolate the suitable detail more unerring than in "Babylon Revisited," where the first scene communicates the sense of dislocation and change which has overtaken Paris in the thirties: the gray, deadened present set off against a rosy, riotous past: "...the stillness in the Ritz Bar was strange and portentous ...; the doorman, usually in a frenzy of activity at this hour, gossiping with a chasseur by the servants' entrance: a single bored voice in the once-clamorous women's room....," and the arrival of a group of homosexuals, the symbol of dissolution: "Nothing affects them...stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they go on forever."

Fitzgerald is very much like his predecessors, Henry James and Stephen Crane, in his use of vividly sketched scenes, each one evoking in the reader strong sensory and pictorial impressions which remain long after intricacies of plot and nuances of dialogue have faded, scenes like Madame Merle and Isabel Archer discussing clothing in Portrait of a Lady, Madame de Vionnet's chambers in The Ambassadors, Maggie's soiled and broken home in Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, the depressing poverty of Henry Fleming's farm and the laconic farewell he takes of his mother in The Red Badge of Courage.

Fitzgerald's description is at its best functional, at its worst merely decorative.⁸ And at its best, his descriptive prose so intrigues and convinces that the reader suspends disbelief and gradually grows to share the author's "crazy conviction that strong men from northern universities involved with beautiful southern girls of good family are important" (Richard Ellmann).⁹

After analyzing the elements of Fitzgerald's prose style, we shall of course consider its use in the stories. The premise underlying our discussion is that Fitzgerald created what Richard Poirier aptly calls "a world elsewhere,"¹⁰ a fairy-tale world replete with its own conventions and milieus: New York, Lake Forest, Naples, Paris, Cannes--free of the tensions in his own all-too-depressingly familiar environment; that he projected his imagination through the rhetoric of nostalgia "so far and so often into

the past"¹¹ into a never-never land of beauty, stupifying luxury and fulfillment, idyllic and exotic, that it might, through re-creation, erase forever the sordid and meaningless present. Fitzgerald's other world is a refuge from fear and anxiety, satiety and void; it is his answer to death and deterioration. Through a profusion of words, images--especially the sights, sounds, smells of luxury--perhaps existence itself might take on new meaning and possibility; in any event, the words themselves might provide a refuge from the storm. Fitzgerald's imaginative possession of another world may be looked upon as an "expansion of the self....In works where this expansion of self occurs there is less a tendency to criticize existing environments...than an effort to displace them. So that even at the moment of worldly defeat the hero has managed to create, like the exiled Coriolanus, at least the illusion of 'a world elsewhere.'"¹²

In part, Fitzgerald's sporadic departures from existing society are couched in a heavily stylized rhetoric of romance. Poirier notes that the "imaginative environment" in works where this displacement occurs is usually differentiated from the established environment of history and society as belonging to the romance, while the other is said to belong to the novel.¹³ In Fitzgerald's case, elements of romance appear side by side with strict delineation of manners and social groups. Thus, Richard Chase's attempt¹⁴ to classify The Great Gatsby as a novel of manners,

persuasive as it is, does not stand up against the infusions of heightened rhetoric at critical moments in the narrative, notably Daisy's youthful romance with Gatsby and the superb burst of rhetoric at the end as Nick Carraway broods over Gatsby's tragedy and the failure of the American dream. Fitzgerald's rhetoric breaks through the shackles of plot, character and theme; it cannot be contained in the stories any more than it can in the novels. It may destroy the structural unity of a story, but at the same time, it often adds a spectacular flourish to an otherwise inferior work.

The development of Fitzgerald's rhetoric forms almost a paradigm of his career as a short story writer, from the youthful writer of apprentice fiction where we first notice his groping toward a poetic prose style, to the embittered author of the Pat Hobby stories where he directs a savagely satirical attack against the Hollywood-American dream. In a few strangely effective late stories, rhetorical excesses are few, imagery is delicate and compressed, and atmospheric details brief but vivid. The other world seems no longer an idyllic refuge, but rather a fleeting shadow, a haunting memory. *Milieu*, while less spectacularly insistent, is equally evocative, but mellow, subdued. It is as if at the end, Fitzgerald no longer seeks to escape or to evade the tragic sense of life: coinciding with his loss of faith in a world elsewhere, he uses rhetoric less to arm himself against reality than to convey in poignant and

corrosive detail the inexorable and inescapable sadness that is indeed his vision of life.

Modes of Narrative

Fitzgerald's style is difficult to analyze chiefly because it is not idiosyncratic and easily recognizable, but varied and often unpredictable. His prose patterns are notably divers; they furnish the backgrounds which color and mold dialogue and dramatically-rendered situations.

Realistic:

Fitzgerald's narrative modes may be roughly grouped, for descriptive purposes, into eight or nine large, non-exclusive classes. The first and most recognizable is the realistic (he uses techniques commonly associated with naturalism which is, of course, a philosophy rather than a style). Fitzgerald's realism is sharply denotative, detailed, explicit, but it is rarely sustained throughout a story. The realistic mode may be differentiated from the romantic by the quality of the imagery and the rhythm of the individual line and paragraph. "The Fiend" is one of the few Fitzgerald stories which relies solely on realism throughout.¹⁵ From the flat, unemotional opening, "On June 3, 1895, on a country road near Stillwater, Minnesota, Mrs. Cranshaw Engels and her seven-year-old son, Mark, were waylaid and murdered by a fiend, under circumstances so atrocious that, fortunately, it is not necessary to set them down here," to the level, anti-climactic ending, "And he set off back home,

his boots sinking deep into the white diamond surface of the flats," the story moves swiftly and deliberately with descriptive passages held to a bare, but necessary minimum.

A decade passed. Crenshaw was gray at forty --he was white at fifty when the alternating routine of his fortnightly visits to the graves of his loved ones and to the penitentiary had become the only part of his life--the long days at Radmacher's were only a weary dream. Sometimes he went and sat outside the Fiend's cell, with no word said during the half hour he was allowed to be there. The Fiend too had grown white in twenty years. He was very respectable-looking with his horn-rimmed glasses and his white hair. He seemed to have a great respect for Crenshaw and even when the latter, in a renewal of diminishing vitality, promised him one day that on his very next visit he was going to bring a revolver and end the matter, he nodded gravely as if in agreement, said, "I suppose so. Yes, I suppose you're perfectly right," and did not mention the matter to the guards. On the occasion of the next visit he was waiting with his hands on the bars of the cell looking at Crenshaw both hopefully and desperately. At certain tensions and strains death takes on, indeed, the quality of a great adventure as any soldier can testify.

The plot, on the other hand, is intensely dramatic and thus, by keeping the narrative under firm control, focusing only on realistic surface details, the author makes the horror of the psychological study even more acute than it might have been had the narrative lapsed into romanticism. But because there are no vivid or heightened passages, "The Fiend" lacks dramatic intensity; the gray, stolid realism is so pervasive that we miss the emotional release Fitzgerald's prose usually provides. He felt this himself: "I think by this time you will have read and like 'The Fiend' which, spare and meager as it may be, has, I believe, a

haunting quality. At least the tale in itself had enough poignancy to haunt me long enough to keep in my skull for six years. Whether I've given it the right treatment, or disparaged it by too much peeling away of accessories, I can't say."¹⁶

A similar disparity between a melodramatic plot and realistic narrative exists in "A Short Trip Home."¹⁷ Here, the evil genius of Joe Varland which threatens momentarily to break out and absorb everything in its path, is checked by the graphically realistic surface which at times resembles Hemingway's best "naked eyeball" style. "He was dead. He was dead as hell--he had been dead all along." Touches of horror are effectively set off against a vividly realized, familiar background of holiday parties and decorative women. Yet at the end, it is the realistic narrative itself which mars the story: is Joe Varland a psychological projection of the narrator and the heroine? is he a gangland villain? or is he a symbol of lurking evil? Surface detail is so insistently realistic, narrative movement so persuasive and credible, that it is nearly impossible to determine exactly what has been going on.

Romantic:

It is much more common for Fitzgerald to juxtapose realism with romance; this is, in fact, his characteristic narrative mode.¹⁸ Two passages from "Jacob's Ladder" are typical of Fitzgerald's narrative technique. The first,

conventionally romantic in the best Fitzgerald manner, describes Jacob's reactions to the Borghese Gardens: milieu, mood, emotion blend harmoniously into romance. In the second, Jacob is scrutinizing the guests at a Hollywood cocktail party. Every nuance of gesture is vividly, realistically detailed:

He liked mankind that night under the summer moonshine of the Borghese Gardens. The moon was a radiant egg, smooth and bright as Jenny Delehanty's face across the table, a salt wind blew in over the big estates collecting flower scents from their gardens and bearing them to the roadhouse lawn. The waiters hopped here and there like pixies through the hot night, their black backs disappearing into the gloom, their white shirt fronts gleaming startlingly out of an unfamiliar patch of darkness.

At the first tea, Jacob noticed that there was an enormous preponderance of women over men, and of supernumeraries--lady journalists, cameramen's daughters, cutters' wives--over people of importance. A young Latin named Raffino appeared for a brief moment, spoke to Jenny and departed; several stars passed through, asking about children's health with a domesticity that was somewhat overpowering. Another group of celebrities posed immobile, statue-like in a corner. There was a somewhat inebriated, and very much excited author apparently trying to make engagements with one girl after another. As the afternoon waned, more people were suddenly a little tight; the communal voice was higher in pitch and greater in volume as Jacob and Jenny went out the door.

At the second tea, young Raffino--he was an actor, one of innumerable hopeful Valentinos--appeared again...Jacob gathered that this party was not considered to have quite the swagger of the other. There was a bigger crowd around the cocktail table. There was more sitting down.

The totality of the cocktails Jacob had swallowed was affecting him pleasantly, but try as he might, the plot of the party--the key on which he could find ease and tranquility--eluded

him. There was something tense in the air-- something competitive and insecure. Conversations with the men had a way of becoming empty and overjovial or else melting off into a sort of suspicion. The women were nicer.

Then, back again to the romantic mode for the crescendo of misery on which the story concludes in exaggerated and clichéd phrases like "the tide came thundering" and "the wave beat upon him."

...Jenny Prince.

Now that she no longer belonged to him, the name assumed a significance entirely its own.

It hung there, cool and impervious, in the night, a challenge, a defiance.

Jenny Prince.

"Come and rest upon my loveliness," it said. "Fulfill your secret dreams in wedding me for an hour."

...The name with its bright insistence, rode high upon the night....

The wave appeared far off, sent up white-caps, rolled toward him with the might of pain, washed over him. "Never any more. Never any more." The wave beat upon him, drove him down, pounding with hammers of agony on his ears.

Proud and impervious, the name on high challenged the night.

Jenny Prince.

She was there! All of her, the best of her--the effort, the power, the triumph, the beauty.

Fitzgerald's use of the romantic narrative mode is less effective in "Jacob's Ladder" than in "The Bowl" where it is firmer, less emotionally indulgent. The reason probably is that realism in the latter is a functional part of the narrative, indeed necessary to the football scenes where surface detail must be sharp, clear and forceful to convey the excitement and brilliance of the game. Romanticism in "The Bowl" is more firmly planted in particularity of scene than it is in "Jacob's Ladder." Because it refers to specific

scenic elements, it avoids the abstract romanticism of so much of Fitzgerald's writing in this mode. The following passage takes specific elements of milieus, holds them up to romantic scrutiny, and then somehow transforms them into sparkling new identities:

It was a bright cold November night and the rush of air past the open car brought a vague excitement, a sense that we were hurrying at top speed toward a brilliant destiny. The roads were packed with cars that came to long inexplicable halts while police, blinded by the lights, walked up and down the line giving obscure commands. Before we had been gone an hour, New York began to be a distant hazy glow against the sky.

...Late that evening I had occasion to go up to the deserted club for a book and they called me from a rear terrace which opens out to the ghostly stadium and to an unpeopled sweep of night. It was an hour of thaw, with spring voices in the warm wind, and wherever there was light enough you could see drops glistening and falling. You could feel the cold melting out of the stars, and the bare trees and shrubbery toward Stony Brook turning lush in the darkness.

In "Absolution," where the narrative is a combination of realism and romanticism, Fitzgerald's technique is obscured by the story's resemblance to naturalistic fiction. "Absolution" is not in the realistic tradition, but uses instead the subjects of naturalism within a romantic and subjective narrative. Rudolph Miller's bleak and cheerless home and family might have come directly from Dreiser, his mother "standing at the doorway in a wrapper, her wrinkled face compressing and squeezing and opening out into a new series of wrinkles which floated and eddied from neck to brow," and his father, beating the young boy with "the savage ferocity, outlet of the ineffectual man." There is

the suppressed, frustrated sexuality of the half-crazed priest, and the inescapable pressure of the natural elements, reminiscent of the best in Frank Norris' fiction: "the hot madness of four o'clock...the Dakota wheat thronged the valley of the Red River...the unavoidable sun." And as in Norris, there is in "Absolution" a steady alternation between realism and romance--looking at actuality and escaping into possibility.

The opening passage is rhythmic and measured, in tone and tempo as well as theme, suggestive of Sherwood Anderson's mythic parables of Midwestern grotesques:

There was once a priest with cold, watery eyes, who in the still of the night, wept cold tears. He wept because the afternoons were warm and long, and he was unable to attain a complete mystical union with our Lord. Sometimes, near four o'clock, there was a rustle of Swede girls along the path by his window, and in their shrill laughter he found a terrible dissonance that made him pray aloud for the twilight to come. At twilight the laughter and the voices were quieter, but several times he had walked past Romberg's Drug Store when it was dusk and the yellow lights shone inside and the nickel taps of the soda-fountain were gleaming, and he had found the scent of cheap toilet soap desperately sweet upon the air. He passed that way when he returned from hearing confessions on Saturday nights, and he grew careful to walk on the other side of the street so that the smell of the soap would float upward before it reached his nostrils as it drifted, rather like incense, toward the summer moon.

Ironic:

We have discussed elsewhere Fitzgerald's intermittent use of irony. In a few stories, irony is the primary narrative mode, sustained almost from start to finish without

impeding plot movement. Too many of the stories contain ironic lines and passages to discuss at length.¹⁹ In "Absolution," the ironic description of Carl Miller is typical: "Carl Miller had been incapable of establishing either with his superiors or his subordinates the reputation for approximate immutability which is essential to success in a hierarchic industry." In most of them, irony is directed at the symbols of status and success, at Hollywood and big business. Here, our discussion will be confined to those stories where irony is the predominant narrative style. The Basil Duke Lee stories are cases in point.²⁰

The narrative style of "A Night at the Fair," in action the first of the Basil stories, is characteristic of the series. Language, exaggerated and diffuse, gently mocks the heroic pretenses and lofty aspirations of the juvenile characters: Basil and Riply see a "blonde, gay, baby-faced girl" in a Blatz-Wildcat, with Speed Paxton, "dimly terrible --the wild and pampered son of a local brewer"... "ride off into the sunset in such a chariot, with the very hush and mystery of night." Later, the boys meet Elwood Leeming, a fourteen-year-old, the "dissipated one among the nice boys of the town." Ironic narrative controls the reader's sympathetic identification with the youthful protagonist. Every humiliation has its counterpoint in humor, every success its qualification in irony, as at the end of the story, when Gladys, after inviting Basil to visit her the next day, adds, "And bring Hubert Blair with you."

In "Forging Ahead," "the most undisguised wish-fulfillment story in the group,"²¹ Fitzgerald's romantic rhetoric is cast in the ironic framework of Basil's absorption of the Horatio Alger story, "Bound to Rise." Basil struggles to live up to his mythic counterpart, but for him, nothing happens: "The president's little daughter had not come by, dragged by a runaway horse," and he is forced to pursue other roads to success. Irony alternates with and sometimes reverts to romantic rhetoric, as in Basil's dream of Yale, "the faraway East...", New York, with its "vast breathless bustle...metropolitan nights...tense as singing wires...the very stuff of romance. But first, as a sort of gateway to that deeper, richer life, there was Yale. The name evoked the memory of a heroic team backed up against its own impossible goals in the crisp November twilight, and later, of half a dozen immaculate noblemen with opera hats and canes standing at the Manhattan Hotel bar. And tangled up with its glories, the vision of the inevitable, incomparable girl." Following hard upon the lyrical romantic dream is the dialogue between Minnie Bibble, the incomparable girl, and Basil, the dreamer. The flat ordinariness of their conversation is in ironic contrast to the exaltation of the preceding rhetorical passage. Although irony is less sustained here than in the other Basil stories, as the romantic dream runs away with plot, theme and character--"They pieced together all the shreds of romance they knew and made garments for each other no less warm than their childish passion, no

less wonderful than their sense of wonder"--the narrative always returns to its ironic framework: "There it was...the promise that she could lead him into a world in which he would always be happy."

To know Basil is to know how intrinsic is his unhappiness and how omnipresent his frustration; it is to know that no one, least of all a flirtatious Minnie Bibble, will ever lead Basil to enduring bliss. Kenneth Eble's remarks about "Basil and Cleopatra" aptly define the function of irony in all the Basil stories: "Fitzgerald's preoccupation with the truth and falsity of the romantic vision gives the story a substantiality beyond its rather thin plot. It is Fitzgerald's singular ability to dignify the trivial while remaining faintly ironic toward it that gives this story its best effects."²²

Confessional:

The confessional narrative mode, evident in The Crack-Up essays, uses irony as a tool, but despite intermittent whimsy, sarcasm, self-mockery and humor, its effects are deeply personal, poignant and tragic, rather than ironic. The narrative is conversational and matter-of-fact, both studiously simple and emotionally charged. It has the introspection of a private diary and the factuality of a business statement. Undoubtedly the revelation of a deeply personal nature is acceptable because of its simplicity: heightened, romantic rhetoric here would be disastrous to the mood and

matter of the confessions. It is not quite accurate to say, as Sergio Perosa does, that Fitzgerald's style reveals "no sentimental weakness...or concession to polemics or to self-pity."²³ There are lapses into both sentimentality and self-pity, but they are quickly and firmly controlled by irony and detachment. And perhaps the outstanding feature in the essays is their remarkably rhythmic quality, the use of parallel, balanced and contrasting sentence structure,

I must hold in balance the sense of the futility of effort and the sense of the necessity to struggle; the conviction of the inevitability of failure and still the determination to "succeed" and, more than these, the contradiction between the dead hand of the past and the high intentions of the future;

the incremental recitative of past folly and present despair,

I had gone on about my affairs in the city where I was then living not caring much, not thinking how much had been left undone, or what would become of this, and that responsibility, like people do in books; I was well insured and anyhow, I had been only a mediocre caretaker of most of the things left in my hands, even of my talent;

the use of surprise and shock to bring a section abruptly to its end,

And then, ten years this side of forty-nine, I suddenly realized that I had prematurely cracked.

Then, the steady, even narrative resumes, picking up the rhythm and language of the last line of the preceding sentence and building once again but on a higher emotional pitch, to a new shock, a new revelation, and as if to belie the homely, commonplace metaphors, a new resumption of despair,

I felt a certain reaction to what she said, but I am a slow-thinking man, and it occurred to me simultaneously that of all natural forces, vitality is the incommunicable one. In days when juice came into one as an article without duty, one tried to distribute it--but always without success; to further mix metaphors, vitality never "takes." You have it or you haven't it, like health or brown eyes or honor or a baritone voice. I might have asked some of it from her, neatly wrapped and ready for home cooking and digestion, but I could never have got it--not if I'd waited around for a thousand hours with the tin cup of self-pity. I could walk from her door, holding myself very carefully like cracked crockery, and go away into the world of bitterness, where I was making a home with such materials as are found there--and quote to myself after I left her door:

"Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" Matthew 5-13.

There are facetious digressions: "I have some doubts as to whether this is of general interest, but if anyone wants more, there is plenty left, and your editor will tell me....," and a note of self-pity creeps into his analogy of his soul to a cracked plate:

Sometimes, though, the cracked plate has to be retained in the pantry, has to be kept in service as a household necessity. It can never again be warmed on the stove nor shuffled with the other plates in the dishpan; it will not be brought out for company, but it will do to hold crackers late at night or to go into the ice box under the left-overs....

But he immediately goes on to the most vivid and moving section, and indeed the most personal; as the confession grows more revealing, the tone takes on even more of the conversational quality to which we have alluded, so that every metaphor stands out from the page, almost assuming a life of its own independent of the narrative:

Now the standard cure for one who is sunk is to consider those in actual destitution or physical suffering--this is an all-weather beatitude for gloom in general and fairly salutary day-time advice for everyone. But at three-o'clock in the morning, a forgotten package has the same tragic importance as a death sentence, and the cure doesn't work--and in a real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning, day after day. At that hour the tendency is to refuse to face things as long as possible by retiring into an infantile dream--but one is continually startled out of this by various contacts with the world. One meets these occasions as quickly and carelessly as possible and retires once more back into the dream, hoping that things will adjust themselves by some great material or spiritual bonanza. But as the withdrawal persists there is less and less chance of the bonanza--one is not waiting for the fade-out of a single sorrow, but rather being an unwilling witness of an execution, the disintegration of one's own personality....

...When a new sky cut off the sun last spring, I didn't at first relate it to what had happened fifteen or twenty years ago. Only gradually did a certain family resemblance come through--an over-extension of the flank, a burning of the candle at both ends; a call upon physical resources that I did not command, like a man over-drawing at his bank. In its impact this blow was more violent than the other two but it was the same in kind--a feeling that I was standing at twilight on a deserted range, with an empty rifle in my hands and the targets down. No problem set--simply a silence with only the sound of my own breathing.

In the final Crack-Up essay, "Pasting It Together," the narrator moves out of the strictly personal arena as he seeks to relate his spiritual malaise to the contemporary cultural disintegration. In the last three pages, Fitzgerald's mordant irony, whether directed outward or in self-deprecation, never relaxes. The narrator seems almost to draw strength out of a scathing attack on the modern organization man, to the point where his own renunciation and the

degradation of his final self-awareness seem to carry a measure of victory along with them: simply to be, without lying, pretending, to oneself or to others, to know finally the utter blackness of despair and to cease to expect--this may be hollow and dark, but it is a victory nonetheless.

The best description (Isador Schneider's) of the haunting yet comforting essays appeared over two decades ago: "It has a sad, unwincing convalescent serenity before cheerless vistas. It is composed with a modern elegance quite flawless in its way."²⁴

Elegiac:

Although the Crack-Up essays are retrospective, they are not, like a number of others, elegiac as well.²⁵ The past of The Crack-Up is held up to clinical scrutiny, analyzed, disposed of. By contrast, in the elegiac mode²⁶ (in "Princeton," "My Lost City," and passages in a few stories) Fitzgerald yearns, like Gatsby, to recapture the ever-glowing, elusive past, knowing all the while that it is unrecapturable and mourning the passage of time, evanescent youth, beauty and romance, even more desirable as they continually recede than when he fully possessed them.

The haunting sense of loss permeates and colors the writing, forming a mournful soliloquy on fleeting time and happiness:

I remember the last June night when, with two-thirds of us in uniform, our class sang its final song on the steps of Nassau Hall and some of us wept because we knew we'd never be quite

so young any more as we had been here. And I seem to remember a host of more intimate things that are now as blurred and dim as our cigarette smoke or the ivy on Nassau Hall that last night ("Princeton").

In "Princeton," the precise description, combined with subtle observation, the pure intelligence and grace with which the author approaches his subject, turns a brief vignette into the symbol of the narrator's loss and embodies the elegiac lyricism of the whole work:

The death of Johnny Poe with the Black Watch in Flanders starts the cymbals crashing for me, plucks the strings of nervous violins as no adventure of the mind that Princeton ever offered. A year ago in the Champs Elysées I passed a slender dark-haired young man with an indolent characteristic walk. Something stopped inside me; I turned and looked after him. It was the romantic Buzz Law whom I had last seen one cold fall twilight in 1915, kicking from behind his goal line with a bloody bandage round his head.

"My Lost City" is less a celebration of the "splendid mirage...glittering and white..." than it is an attempt to place the emotions associated with his early days in New York City in an adult perspective--to tuck away neatly memories and reminiscences so that they may enable him to make a temporary emotional truce with the present. In a sense, each of Fitzgerald's elegiac essays is deeply personal in the same way: together, they represent his attempts to control the past, to re-live the best moments of his youth so that they may be channeled constructively into the present. The past is always in danger, in both essays and stories, of getting out of control, of absorbing present cares and future aspirations. By going back, poeticizing,

celebrating, and simply re-living the halcyon days, Fitzgerald gives discipline and order to intense and nearly uncontrollable feelings. In the first part of "My Lost City," up to the vivid description of his return after three years, he says almost nothing of the city as an identifiable place, but rather as a symbol of his desires, as his private and personal milieu, as the background for autobiography. The external world is so highly charged with the writer's emotions and imagination that it assumes a purely subjective reality. The city, and the Jazz Age, are not seen as part of American social history except on a narrow scale. They are elements in Fitzgerald's novelistic-literary tale of his own lost youth and early success. For Fitzgerald, New York had "the glitter and iridescence of the New World." He mourns as much for the passing of what had been as for what he now knows, might have been:

But that night...life was mellow and safe, a finer distillation of all that I had come to love at Princeton. The gentle playing of an oboe mingled with city noises from the street outside, which penetrated into the room with difficulty through great barricades of books....As I hovered ghost-like in the Plaza Red Room of a Saturday afternoon, or went to lush and liquid garden parties in the East sixties or tippled with Princetonians in the Biltmore Bar, I was haunted always by my other life--my drab room in the Bronx, my square foot of the subway...my shabby suits, my poverty, and love....The gilded youth circling around young Constance Bennett in the Club de Vingt, the classmates in the Yale-Princeton Club whooping up our first after-the-war reunion, the atmosphere of the millionaires' houses that I sometimes frequented--these things were empty for me, though I recognized them as impressive scenery and regretted that I was committed to other romance.

And in "My Generation," although much of it is straightforward and unembellished, the same rhythmic, flowing narrative functions incrementally at the end, leading up to that famous and appropriate celebration of the past by Willa Cather--herself a master of the elegiac mode:

Well...many are dead, and some I have quarreled with and don't see any more. But I have never cared for any men as much as for these who felt the first springs when I did, and saw death ahead, and were reprieved...and who now walk the long stormy summer. It is a generation staunch by inheritance, sophisticated by fact--and rather deeply wise. More than that, what I feel about them is summed up in a line of Willa Cather's: "We possess together the precious, the incommunicable past."

Although it is generally sustained in the essays over much longer tracts of prose than in the stories, there are innumerable instances of elegiac narrative in the latter. Later, we shall consider the function of this mode within individual stories, but for now, it is sufficient to cite a few examples: In "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," the soaring, lyrical ending,

The past--the wild charge at the head of his men up San Juan Hill; the first years of his marriage when he worked late into the summer dusk down in the busy city for young Hildegard whom he loved; the days before that when he sat smoking far into the night in the gloomy old Button house on Monroe Street with his grandfather--all these had faded like unsubstantial dreams from his mind as though they had never been;

in "Winter Dreams," Dexter's plaintive recognition of lost illusions,

For the first time in years the tears were streaming down his face. But they were for him--

self now. He did not care about mouth and eyes and moving hands. He wanted to care, and he could not care. For he had gone away and he could never go back any more. The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.

"Long ago," he said, "long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more,";

and George O'Kelly's similar elegy on first love in "The Sensible Thing,"

"April is over. April is over. There are all kinds of love in the world, but never the same love twice."

Satiric:

We have noted Fitzgerald's successful use of satirical narrative in the catalogs of names in "Majesty" and "Bernice Bobs Her Hair." His satire, in the early work is, however, heavy-handed and fortunately infrequent. "The High Cost of Macaroni," for example, is a satiric treatment of Italy and Italians too intemperate for publication.

In "A Snobbish Story," he ineffectually satirizes young Bohemians, but the spokesman for his point of view, Josephine Perry's father, is so stuffy and priggish that the attempt backfires and Mr. Perry himself emerges as the one satirized. The Bohemians, although dirty, pretentious and erratic, seem infinitely preferable to a silly, spoiled debutante and her insufferably pompous father.

Fitzgerald consistently directs satiric narrative at

the pretentious middle class. In "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," his target is the go-getting business ethos of burgeoning nineteenth-century mercantilism: "In the idiom of his generation, Roscoe did not consider the matter 'efficient.'...Roscoe believed that 'live wires' should keep young, but carrying it out on such a scale was--was--was inefficient."

In "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," Fitzgerald uses satiric narrative almost exclusively in connection with John Ungar: "The simple piety prevalent in Hades has the earnest worship of and respect for riches as the first article of its creed--had John felt otherwise than radiantly humble before them, his parents would have turned away in horror at the blasphemy." Rhetorical patterns used to describe the appearance and actions of the Braddock Washingtons are varied, broken and uneven, composed of irony, parody, romanticism and realism. Although the story, in plot and theme, is a satire, the narrative mode is not predominantly satiric.

Fitzgerald is not completely comfortable with satiric narrative. His prose loses rhythm and elegance when he attempts satire (see "The High Cost of Macaroni," particularly), perhaps because he cannot maintain a consistent emotional stance for the duration of an essay or a story; Fitzgerald's romantic, subjective approach disallows the objectivity necessary for sustained satire. It is also probable that he lacked the sustained commitment to social reform usually accompanying satire. The Pat Hobby stories

are notable exceptions in their sharply satiric picture of Hollywood and the motion picture business. Their tone is even: bitter and mocking throughout, in the best Juvenalian tradition--indicating the author's conviction that human nature, at least in Hollywood, is thoroughly and irremediably rotten. The one flaw in the narrative, as satire, is that for all the apparent absurdity and exaggeration, Hollywood probably is exactly as Fitzgerald paints it. At first faintly suspicious, the reader is gradually convinced of the verisimilitude of Pat Hobby's world. Absurd as it is, Fitzgerald's picture of Hollywood often seems too realistic for satire. The Pat Hobby stories, aside from selected passages, fall somewhere between Juvenal and Nathanael West, lacking the bite and wit of the former and the bleak tragedy of the latter.

When Fitzgerald tries Horatian satire, he is decidedly more successful. In a few stories, he uses mock-heroic narrative techniques to satirize ridiculousness, pretentiousness and triviality. Less ambitious and vitriolic than his other satiric attempts, they are light, breezy, amusing and utterly mild jibes at minor social annoyances; their aim is to puncture pretentiousness rather than to effect serious reforms. In "O Russet Witch," there is a mock-heroic description of a crowd reacting to Caroline's beauty:

The crush had become terrific. No fashionable audience at a Yale-Princeton football game, no damp mob at a world's series, could

be compared with the panoply that talked, stared, laughed, and honked about the lady in black and lavender. It was stupendous; it was terrible. A quarter mile down the block a half-frantic policeman called his precinct; on the same corner a frightened civilian crashed in the glass of a fire-alarm and sent in a wild paeon for the fire-engines of the city; up in an apartment high in one of the tall buildings a hysterical old maid telephoned in turn for the prohibition enforcement agent, the special deputies on Bolshevism, and the maternity ward of Bellevue Hospital.

The noise increased. The first fire-engine arrived, filling the Sunday air with smoke, clanging and crying a brazen, metallic message down the high, resounding walls. In the notion that some terrible calamity had overtaken the city, two excited deacons ordered special services immediately and set tolling the great bells of St. Hilda's and St. Anthony's; presently, joined by the jealous gongs of St. Simon's and the Church of the Apostles. Even far off in the Hudson and the East River, the sounds of the commotion were heard, and the ferry boats and tugs and ocean liners set up sirens and whistles that sailed in melancholy cadence, now varied, now reiterated, across the whole diagonal width of the city from Riverside Drive to the gray waterfronts of the lower East side.

The dazzling Rags Martin-Jones similarly devastates all beholders:

A few porters fainted. A large sentimental shark which had followed the ship across made a despairing leap to see her once more, and then dove, broken hearted, back into the deep sea. Rags Martin-Jones had come home.

It is not surprising that the crowd goes berserk in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" and "The Camel's Back" for both plots turn on absurd and outlandish "gimmicks"; the mock-heroic descriptions are quite similar:

The word had gone around that a lunatic had passed the entrance examinations for Yale and attempted to palm himself off as a youth of eighteen. A fever of excitement permeated the

college. Men ran hatless out of classes, the football team abandoned its practice and joined the mob, professors' wives with bonnets awry and bustles out of position, ran shouting after the procession, from which proceeded a continual succession of remarks aimed at the tender sensibilities of Benjamin Button.

The scene that followed will go down forever in the annals of the Tallyho Club. Stout matrons fainted, one hundred per cent Americans swore, wild-eyed debutantes babbled in lightning groups instantly formed and instantly dissolved, and a great buzz of chatter, virulent yet oddly subdued, hummed through the chaotic ballroom. Feverish youths swore they would kill Perry or Jumbo or themselves or some one, and the Baptist preacher was besieged by a tempestuous covey of clamorous amateur lawyers, asking questions, making threats, demanding precedents, ordering the bonds annulled, and especially trying to ferret out any hint of prearrangement in what had occurred.

And in "The Perfect Life," Fitzgerald satirizes the ridiculous spectacle of aged and sober citizens trying to keep up with the young by learning the new dance steps:

Sedentary stockbrokers, grandmothers of sixty, Confederate veterans, venerable statesmen and scientists, sufferers from locomotor ataxia, wanted not only to dance but to dance beautifully. Fantastic ambitions bloomed in hitherto sober breasts, violent exhibitionism cropped out in families modest for generations. Nonentities with long legs became famous over night, and there were rendezvous where they could renew the dance, if they wished, next morning. Because of a neat glide or an awkward stumble, careers were determined and engagements were made or broken, while the tall Englishman and the girl in the Dutch cap called the tune.

The last passage is the most effective of the three because the plot of "A Perfect Life" is the least mechanical and synthetic. When Fitzgerald writes an unbelievable, absurd, obviously "gimmicky" story, he resorts to myriad

rhetorical tricks to keep the plot in motion. Mock-heroic narrative is merely one of them and as a ploy to capture and sustain the reader's attention and amusement, it is entirely successful.

Biblical:

Fitzgerald uses Biblical diction and rhythm in two fine stories, "May Day" and "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz." In the first, the inverted sentence construction--"Never had there been such splendor in the great city,"--archaic diction--"to taste of all the luscious feasts,"--the measured, repetitive cadence, the literary exclamations--"Alas! I have no more slippers! and Alas! I have no more trinkets!"--and the allusiveness of the opening and closing lines suggest, as James E. Miller notes,²⁷ the universality of the theme. "There had been a war fought and won and the great city of the conquering people was crossed with triumphal arches and vivid with thrown flowers of white, red and rose....So during all this time there were many adventures that happened in the great city and, of these, several --or perhaps one--are here set down." Thus, the passage lends unity to the discordancy of the plot: we are prepared for the relative autonomy of each ensuing "adventure" at the same time that we apply the clues to their unity provided by the opening. Further, the Biblical diction adds solemnity and dignity to the various episodes which, in and of themselves, might otherwise appear trivial. The opening

may be criticized for its youthful effulgence; it is, in fact, the rhetorical experiment of a young writer obviously relishing ornate and allusive language. Although the passage is entirely successful thematically and structurally, Fitzgerald does not henceforth make a habit of embellishing his prose with Biblical diction.

In "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," Biblical diction again coincides with theme; the description of Braddock Washington's supplicating God to spare his empire is couched in language and tone reminiscent of ancient patriarchs offering sacrifice to Jehovah:

Prometheus Enriched was calling to witness forgotten sacrifices, forgotten rituals, prayers obsolete before the birth of Christ. For a while his discourse took the form of reminding God of this gift or that which Divinity had deigned to accept from men--great churches if he would rescue cities from the plague, gifts of Myrrh and gold, of human lives and beautiful women and captive armies, of children and queens, of beasts of the forest and field, sheep and goats, harvest and cities, while conquered lands that had been offered up in lust or blood for His appeasal, buying a meed's worth of alleviation from the Divine wrath --and now he, Braddock Washington, Emperor of Diamonds, king and priest of the age of gold, arbiter of splendor and luxury, would offer up a treasure such as princes before him had never dreamed of, offer it up not in supppliance, but in pride.

Then the style shifts abruptly to modern business colloquialism as Braddock Washington, "getting down to business," tries to strike a bargain with God. Then it shifts back to the eloquent "high style" of the preceding paragraph, as Washington expatiates on the intricacies of his offering.

This section is the dramatic center of the story, and

thus, the grandiloquent Biblical narrative serves to magnify and focus it as the apex of an already exaggerated fantasy. Structurally, as in "May Day," narrative style adds the dimension that universalizes the theme.

Techniques and Elements in Narrative Style

Within the major narrative styles utilized by Fitzgerald, there are specific technical devices, particularly linguistic patterns, which occur with sufficient regularity to warrant our attention.

He frequently uses a prose technique mentioned previously in passing, incremental rhetoric. Particularly in the essays, generalization and overstatement alternate with precise, cumulative detail, to build the narrative to a quickened tempo and heightened emotional pitch. In "Echoes of the Jazz Age," his observation of social phenomena is fairly obvious, but through architectonic rhetoric--including parallel and repetitive phraseology and increasingly dramatic detail, it seems unique and memorable:

It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire.

Scarcely had the staid citizens of the republic caught their breaths when the wildest of all generations, the generation which had been adolescent during the confusion of the War, brusquely shouldered my contemporaries out of the way and danced into the limelight. This was the generation whose girls dramatized themselves as flappers, the generation that corrupted its elders and eventually overreached itself less through lack of morals than through lack of taste.

...By 1927 a wide-spread neurosis began to be evident, faintly signalled, like a nervous beating of the feet, by the popularity of cross-

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

By this time contemporaries of mine had begun to disappear into the dark maw of violence. A classmate killed his wife and himself on Long Island, another tumbled "accidentally" from a skyscraper in New York. One was killed in a speak-easy in Chicago; another was beaten to death in a speak-easy in New York and crawled home to the Princeton Club to die; still another had his skull crushed by a maniac's axe in an insane asylum where he was confined. These are not catastrophes that I went out of my way to look for--these were my friends; moreover, these things happened not during the depression but during the boom.

Rhetoric then falls off, becoming relaxed and discursive, almost taking a breath before it again climbs to an emotional range even more charged than previously. At the end of the essays as if unable to sustain the intensity which has been accumulating, Fitzgerald turns to the rhetoric of nostalgia to bring it to a muted, retrospective and manageable end.

Now once more the belt is tight and we summon the proper expression of horror as we look back at our wasted youth. Sometimes, though, there is a ghostly rumble among the drums, an asthmatic whisper in the trombones that swings me back into the early twenties when we drank wood alcohol and every day in every way grew better and better, and there was a first abortive shortening of the skirts, and girls all looked alike in sweater dresses, and people you didn't want to know said "Yes, we have no bananas," and it seemed only a question of a few years before the older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were--and it all seems rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings any more.

In "Sleeping and Waking," the insistent and pervasive tension results from the repetition of key words: "waste

and horror," and parallel phrases and constructions: "nor said this...nor broken myself...." Relaxation and semi-resolution come at the end in the retreat into nostalgia quoted in Chapter Two.

Waste and horror--what I might have been and done that is lost, spent, gone, dissipated, unrecapturable. I could have acted thus, refrained from this, been bold where I was timid, cautious where I was rash.

I need not have hurt her like that.

Nor said this to him.

Nor broken myself trying to break what was unbreakable.

The horror has come now like a storm--what if this night prefigured the night after death--what if all thereafter was an eternal quivering on the edge of an abyss, with everything base and vicious in oneself urging one forward and the baseness and viciousness of the world just ahead. No choice, no road, no hope--only the endless repetition of the sordid and the semi-tragic. Or to stand forever, perhaps, on the threshold of life unable to pass it and return to it. I am a ghost now as the clock strikes four.

Incremental rhetoric is similarly effective in the fiction. In "Winter Dreams," again the sentences are repetitive, deliberate and insistent in the description of Judy Jones' capricious treatment of Dexter:

She had treated him with interest, with encouragement, with malice, with indifference, with contempt. She had inflicted on him the innumerable little slights and indignities possible in such a case--as if in revenge for having ever cared for him at all. She had beckoned him and yawned at him and beckoned him again and he had responded often with bitterness and narrowed eyes. She had brought him ecstatic happiness and intolerable agony of spirit. She had caused him untold inconvenience and not a little trouble. She had insulted him, and she had ridden over him, and she had played his interest in her against his interest in his work--for fun. She had done everything to him except to criticize him--this she had not done--it seemed to him only because it might have

sullied the utter indifference she manifested and sincerely felt toward him.

The same thematic material, in another context, moves through a repetitive pattern of description and dialogue, from intensity to anti-climax:

It was during those three days that, for the first time he had asked her to marry him. She said, "maybe some day," she said "kiss me," she said, "I'd like to marry you," she said "I love you"--she said--nothing.

For a totally different effect, Fitzgerald piles detail upon detail, each linked with "and" to pictorialize Dexter's acute and painful loss:

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck's soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why, these things were no longer in the world! They had existed and they existed no longer.

Fitzgerald's use of this particular technique is neither original nor unusual in fiction. It requires nevertheless considerable technical virtuosity to succeed in employing a customarily novelistic device within the confines of the short essay or story. And, to use it in a short story along with a variety of other sophisticated fictional techniques, demands extraordinary verbal versatility. Perhaps the best example of a contemporaneous use of incremental, architectonic rhetoric may be found in Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy (1925), which runs to about one thousand pages.

Words and Usage

An intimate, homely quality in Fitzgerald's diction often brings his rhetorical flourishes down to earth. Frequently he will balance a highly-wrought image with a plain, unembellished simile:

They were opium eater's illusions, vanishing
with the smoke of the pipe, or you know what
I mean....

It is the six-page, ten-page, thirty-page
blobs of paper that grieve me professionally,
like unsuccessful oil shafts; they represent my
false starts. ("One Hundred False Starts")

His verbal dexterity and ingenuity are not nearly as striking as Melville's, Whitman's or Emily Dickinson's, to name a few masters of linguistic virtuosity. But he is verbally experimental, using intangible qualities visually: "Then a human oppression rose from the priest's worn clothes, and mingled with the faint smell of old food in the corners," (*Absolution*"); selecting onomatopoetic verbs and adjectives, "He strutted homeward along the staggering road" (*"Absolution"*); "The limousine crawled crackling down the pebbled drive" (*"Love in the Night"*); or merely choosing a strong visual verb or adverb to enliven a descriptive passage (*italics mine--R.P.*): "Bundled up children were splattering back to their hotels for tea" (*"Indecision"*); "the Dakota wheat thronged the valley of the Red River" (*"Absolution"*); "A family of thick silk shirts littered on the chairs" (*"May Day"*); "All the woman could see was the agate-green foliage-like spray, changing and complaining around the stern" (*"Not*

in the Guidebook"); "His wife lay nervously asleep" ("Absolution").

Several strongly connotative adjectives reappear throughout the stories: pejorative, like "pimplly" and "pulpy," or romantic, like "light," "glitter," "golden," "sparkling," "warm," "radiant." And finally, Fitzgerald sprinkles aphorisms liberally throughout the narrative--trivial, as in "The Offshore Pirate": "All life is just a progression toward and then a recession from one phrase--'I love you'"; or matter-of-fact, as in "Wait Till You Have Children of Your Own": "It is impossible to be vicious in a vacuum,"; or romantic: "France was a land, England was a people, but America...was a willingness of the heart" ("The Swimmers"); or philosophical: "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function" (The Crack-Up). And the fragment, tentatively titled "Rescue," (Fitzgerald crossed the title out, noting "no good--more cheerful"), begins with a typical bit of Fitzgeraldian philosophical wisdom: "If we go to our friends with material trouble they will help us about half the time--which is a pretty good average as the earth turns."

Many of the specific techniques described above appear with frequency in Fitzgerald's apprentice fiction. In these stories, Fitzgerald's verbal experiments indicate the future direction of his prose. They are often clumsy, clichéd, artificial and pretentious--the literary efflorescence of a

very young writer--but they are inventive, experimental and colorful, as the following description from "The Trail of the Duke" (1913) attests (here, the verbal inversions are pretentious but the use of strong verbs and participles adds visual solidity to the scene):

It was a hot July night. Inside, through screen, window and door fled the bugs and gathered around the lights like so many humans at a carnival, buzzing, thugging, whirring. From out the night into the houses came the sweltering late summer heat, over-powering and enervating, bursting against the walls and enveloping all mankind like a huge smothering blanket. In the drug stores, the clerks, tired and grumbling handed out ice-cream to hundreds of thirsty but misled civilians, while in the corners buzzed the electric fans in a whirring mockery of coolness. In the flats that line upper New York, pianos (sweatting [sic] ebony perspiration) ground out rag-time tunes of last winter and here and there a wan woman sang the air in a hot soprano. In the tenements shirt-sleeves gleamed like beacon lights in steady rows along the streets in tiers of from four to eight according to the number of stories of the house. In a word, it was a typical, hot New York summer night.

And, in "Reade, Substitute Right-Half," a very early story, Fitzgerald's selection of colorful and alliterative verbs and adjectives adds color and verve to the narrative:

The slogan thundered up the field to where the battered, crimson warriors [sic] trotted wearily into their places again....This time, there was no withstanding the rush and the huge Hilton fullback crushed through the crimson line, and again shaking off his many tacklers, staggered on toward the Warrentown goal.

Defects of Narrative Style

Fitzgerald's narrative is occasionally flat and awkward or cute, studied, arch or "smart." It is not uncommon for

lapses to occur in the midst of the most poetic descriptive passages. In "Indecision," immediately preceding the vivid line previously quoted describing the "bundled up children," the passage is padded with a lame attempt at humor: "Out the window, the snow on the pine trees was turning lilac in the first dusk; and because the world was round, or for some such reason, there was rosy light still on that big mountain, the Dent de Something." Or, in "Six of One," the most successful description may begin, limply and vaguely, "All five...were fine looking boys, very American, well-dressed in a careless but not casual way over well set-up bodies, and with responsive faces open to all four winds." The concluding lines are sharper, clearer, more pointed and particular:

Then he saw that they made a design, the faces profile upon profile, the heads, blonde and dark, turning toward Mr. Schofield, the erect, yet vaguely lounging bodies, never tense but ever ready, under the flannels and the soft angora wool sweaters, the hands placed on other shoulders, as if to bring each one into the solid free masonry of the group. Then suddenly as though a group of models posing for a sculptor was being dismissed, the composition broke and they all moved toward the door.

On occasion, Fitzgerald's narrative may become childish-ly simple, not in Hemingway's pseudo-simple manner, but in a flat, fifth-grade style:

Throughout a dinner party that night, she was still thinking, trying to accept the fact that a part of Killian and a part of herself would always be strangers. She wondered if that were especially her fate, or if it were everyone's fate. From earliest childhood she remembered that she had always wanted some one for her own....

...They stopped, they stared again; once more they laughed. His blue suit was dusty and there was mud and a little blood on his forehead. His teeth were very even and white; his eyes, sincere and straight as he tried to make them, as if he had been trying hard since early boyhood, were full of trouble for somebody ("The Intimate Strangers").

Most lamentable perhaps is Fitzgerald's frequent attempt at archness, cuteness, smartness, a self-consciously literary predilection which becomes less apparent in the later works:

New Jersey was warm, all except the part that was under water, and that mattered only to the fishes ("Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar");

The Majestic came gliding into New York harbor on an April morning. She sniffed at the tug-boats and turtle-gaited ferries, winked at a gaudy young yacht and ordered a cattle boat out of her way with a snarling whistle of steam. Then she parked at her private dock with all the fuss of a stout lady sitting down, and announced complacently that she had just come from Cherbourg and Southampton with a cargo of the very best people in the world ("Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales");

A murmur, half-gasp, half sigh, ripples from the audience (stage directions for one-act play, "Porcelain and Pink");

Sometimes, the prose is hackneyed and cliché-ridden:

Her dark eyes shone with mirth and Bill saw that she was really self-reliant. He stared at her and the impression of her beauty grew until, uncommitted by a word, by even a formal introduction, he felt himself going out toward her, watching the turn of her lips and the shifting of her cheeks when she smiled....

...His hands, tying the catgut, were sure and firm, the fine hands of a pianist, the tough hands of a pitcher combined. Bill thought how insecure, precariously involved, the patient would seem to a layman, and yet how safe he was with those sure hands in an atmosphere so made safe from time itself. Time had stopped at the door of the operating room, too profane to enter here ("One Intern").

In the early stories, Fitzgerald's problems in transitions are considerable, which is perhaps one of the reasons for multiple divisions within each story. Purely verbal transitions sometimes cause him difficulty, like the awkward introductions to hero and heroine in "The Camel's Back": "I want you to meet Mr. Perry Parkhurst....," "I want you to meet his love...."; the weak transition from description to action in "Six of One": "And now after all this biography, the story begins"; similarly, in "Myra Meets His Family," the clumsy admonition to the reader, "You will have to do your best with that. The story should have started long ago"; or the little transitional phrases designed to speed the action which stick out awkwardly and retard rather than impel the flow of narrative: "To keep the chronicle going one must skip through the days when Annie Lee's farm came to life again..." ("Lo, the Poor Peacock"); "And now Kiki went away for six months and things happened to her of which there is no room to tell here" ("Offside Play").

Fitzgerald's use of the scriptwriter's jargon to effect transition is equally unsuccessful: "And at this point, as they say in picture making, the Camera Goes into the House and We go with it" ("The Women in the House").

Closely tied to the problem in transition is that of authorial intrusion. In Fitzgerald's case, the address to the reader rarely works. As a transitional device it is unwieldy and artificial:

Remember this so you understand....

This story is not his biography, remember,

although things creep into it which have nothing to do with those dreams he had when he was young. We are almost done with them and with him now. There is only one more incident to be related here, and it happens seven years farther on ("Winter Dreams");

This is one of those stories that ought to begin by calling the hero "X" or "H---B---," because there were so many people drawn into it that at least one will read this and claim to have been a leading character....We come out and state that the man in the case is Emmet Monsen, because that is...his real name....But to take the modern privilege of starting a story twice, this tale should begin at another place... ("The Women in the House");

as an aside to the audience it is dismally pretentious and mechanical:

Ah Myra, how many ghosts must have flitted across your memory then!...She knew how to do things, did Myra!....

...She has given her youth to you; she has blown fragrantly through many ballrooms to the tender tribute of many eyes; she has roused strange surges of romance in a hundred pagan young breasts; and who shall say she hasn't counted? The particular Myra whom this story concerns will have to have a paragraph of history. I will get it over as swiftly as possible ("Myra Meets His Family").

Equally unsuccessful is Fitzgerald's use of artificial literary rhetorical devices: archaisms, inverted constructions, bombastic pseudo-poetic diction alternating with slang and colloquialism, like the inflated opening of "Dearly Beloved" and its periodic retreats into matter-of-factness:

O my Beauty Boy---reading Plato so divine!
O dark, oh fair, colored golf champion of
Chicago...Lily-Mary loved him, oft invited him
and they were married in St. Jarvis' Church in
North Englewood....

Bronze lovers, never never canst thou

have thy bronze child--or so it seemed for years....

In "The Lees of Happiness" the narrative is stilted and self-consciously literary, interspersed with archaisms and rhetorical questions:

You would look again--and wonder. Why you had never heard of her. Why did her name not linger in popular songs and vaudeville jokes and cigar bands, the memory of that gay old uncle of yours along with Lillian Russell and Stella Mayhew and Anna Held? Roxanne Milbank--whither had she gone? What dark trap-door had opened suddenly and swallowed her up?...No doubt she was dead--poor beautiful young lady--and quite forgotten. I am hoping too much....Was that swift water lashing under their feet--the fierce glint of some uncharted chasm?

The late stories are special cases: narrative is brief and unadorned, with few rhetorical flourishes. Fitzgerald sticks very close to the characters and their movements; rarely does he leave plot or theme for romanticism or nostalgia. Although these stories lack the obvious and glossy emotionalism of the others, they do not lack feeling. Because rhetoric is focused rather than diffused, the impact is brief but equally sharp. The best effects in the late stories derive from dialogue rather than narrative which is unexceptional. The major defect in the late stories, and it is impossible to cite a specific passage as illustration, is the colorless, flat narrative which seems to reflect the tenor and mood of all his late work.

Diffuse, strained and sentimental rhetoric is most obvious in the romantic narrative mode.²⁸ Fitzgerald circles around his subject, apparently relishing the flow of honeyed

words in which he bathes a scene (the first example is diffuse, the second both diffuse and sentimental):

....languid freshness and beauty that was sad and perishable as a memory in a dream....In its gaudy bazaars she felt her soul transported with turbulent delight, for to her eyes it held nothing ugly, nothing sordid, nothing plain ("The Popular Girl");

She sat beside Killian, making a special face of hers that was more like laughing than smiling, fingers pressed to a steeple over her heart. No one would ever let Killian and Sara stop, no one ever had enough, and as they sang on, their faces flushed with excitement and pleasure like children's faces, the conviction grew in Sara that they were communicating, that they were saying things to each other in every note, every bar of harmony. They were talking to each other as surely as if with words--closer than any two people in the room. And suddenly she was forever reconciled--there would always be this that they had had from the beginning, music and laughter together, and it was enough--this, and the certainty that presently, when their guests were gone, she would be in his arms ("The Intimate Strangers").

Fitzgerald's rhetoric here lacks the specificity of his best efforts. Using general and abstract adjectives and in "The Popular Girl, a great many of them, the rhetoric seems to float amorphously--never to land. Yet of "The Intimate Strangers," where narrative is diffuse throughout, Robert Sklar remarks, incredibly, that "Fitzgerald demonstrated his evocative romantic prose style, unimpaired, for the first time since Tender is the Night."²⁹

In the apprentice fiction, Fitzgerald often forces his rhetoric with romantically clichéd and overblown passages, as in "The Spire and the Gargoyle":

He was alone face to face with the spirit that should have dominated his life, the mother that he had renounced. It was a stream where he had once thrown a stone, but the faint ripple had long since vanished. Here he had taken nothing, he had given nothing; nothing--his eyes wandered slowly upward--up--up--until by straining them he could see where the spire began--and with his eyes went his soul. But the mist was upon both. He could not climb with the spire.

What is excusable in a young amateur, however, becomes maudlin and self-indulgent in a seasoned professional, as in the hopelessly hackneyed passages from two much later stories:

It was as if in the space of a week he had become a symbol of all she loved here; he was the fresh strength of coming on duty in the morning; he was the busy silence of the corridor at night; he was the summer sunlight on the red buildings across from her window, and the thrill of hurrying through the winter night just pleasantly a little cold in her thin nurse's cape. He was the majesty of duty she had seen through her young probationer's eyes; the skill of hands, the strength of nerve; he was all that it meant to be ever fearless and never tired. Even, she thought--with horror at the blasphemy--he was the great stone Christ in the entrance hall ("Trouble").

The stage! The very word frightened her. That was work, like school. But somewhere there must exist a world of which Peppy Velance's pictures were only an echo, and this world seemed to lie just ahead--proms and parties of people at gay resorts. She could not cry out to Mr. Harrison, "I don't want a career, because I'm a romantic little snob. Because I want to be a belle, a belle, a belle"--the word ringing like a Carillon inside her ("Inside the House").

There are important structural reasons for Fitzgerald's use of such rhetorical passages. But regardless of their function in the stories, as prose they are deficient in substantiality, clarity and precision of language and

thought. Perhaps more than any other aspect of his work, they have earned for Fitzgerald the reputation of a "hack" short story writer. They are so obviously inferior to his best style and they stand out so glaringly from his characteristically fine narrative technique, that one may easily forget that they are evident in only about twenty-five out of over one hundred sixty published stories. The tendency toward diffusion, sentimentality and excess is fortunately checked by Fitzgerald's rhetorical creation of his other world, where the romantic rhetoric is used not to describe amorphous feelings, but to create a hard, substantial--if imaginative--environment for his characters.

Uses of Rhetoric--Milieus

Fitzgerald's use of rhetoric is most striking in creating milieus. Not unlike life on Huck Finn's raft or Hemingway's big two-hearted river, Fitzgerald's world elsewhere is charged with ecstasy. He carries into it as many of the trappings of luxurious, sophisticated society as it can possibly contain. The societies in Mark Twain's and Hemingway's works were free in large part because civilization and its symbols were left behind. And both writers found solace and refuge in a close communion with an unspoiled nature. For Fitzgerald and his heroes, the imaginative world is resplendent with the things money can buy: diamonds, yachts, glittering mansions, marble balconies, satin and silk draperies, diaphanous gowns, silky furs, swift automobiles, gold and crystal chandeliers--a profuse,

lavish and unrestrained display of wealth. Fitzgerald is not oblivious to nature, but the natural world functions in his stories as background, providing the proper ambience in which his characters and situations move. In "The Freeze-Out" it is the description of the changing seasons, a memorable backdrop for a contrived plot. The setting is a town in Minnesota, first at the end of winter:

Here and there in a sunless corner skulked a little snow under a veil of coal specks, but the men taking down storm windows were laboring in shirt sleeves and the turf was becoming firm underfoot.

In the streets, dresses dyed after fruit, leaf and flower emerged from beneath the shed somber skins of animals; now only a few old men wore mousy caps pulled down over their ears;

then the sudden and brilliant arrival of summer:

Abruptly it became full summer. After the last April storm someone came along the street one night, blew up the trees like balloons, scattered bulbs and shrubs like confetti, opened a cage full of robins and, after a quick look around, signaled up the curtain upon a new backdrop of summer sky;

Then at the end, winter again, and its "cold glory" fusing with Forrest Winslow's ecstatic realization of love:

Meanwhile the days of this February were white and magical, the nights were starry and crystalline. The town lay under a cold glory; the smell of her furs was incense, her bright cheeks were flames upon a northern altar. An ecstatic pantheism for his land and its weather welled up in him. She had brought him finally back to it; he would live here always.

Seasonal change is equally effective in "At Your Age," where a few rhetorical flights rescue an appallingly poor plot:

He waited a fortnight while the city sank into the endless northern midwinter, where gray skies were friendlier than metallic blue skies, and dusk, whose lights were a reassuring glimpse into the continuity of human cheer, was warmer than the afternoons of bloodless sunshine. The coat of snow lost its press and became soiled and shabby, and ruts froze in the street.

...It was a long winter, even in a land of long winters. March was full of billowy drifts, and when it seemed at last as though the cold must be defeated, there was a series of blizzards, desperate as last stands. The people waited; their first energy to resist was spent, and man, like weather, simply hung on....Then early in April with a long sigh the ice cracked, the snow ran into the ground and the green, eager spring broke up through.

...The spring came fast now. The side-walks were damp, then dry, and the children roller-skated on them and boys played baseball in the soft, vacant lots. Tom got up elaborate picnics of Annie's contemporaries and encouraged her to play golf and tennis with them. Abruptly, with a final, triumphant lurch of Nature, it was full summer.

In "Winter Dreams," the change of seasons reflects and coincides with Dexter's moods. Like other Fitzgerald characters, he is extraordinarily sensitive to the natural world, and it is in terms of its effects upon people's lives that nature fascinates Fitzgerald. Dexter's spirits soar with the "gorgeous" Minnesota autumn:

In the fall when the days became crisp and gray, and the long Minnesota winter shut down like the white lid of a box, Dexter's skis moved over the snow that hid the fairways of the golf course. At these times the country gave him a feeling of profound malencholy--it offended him that the links should lie in enforced fallowness, haunted by ragged sparrows for the long season. It was dreary, too, that on the tees where the gay colors fluttered in summer there were now only the desolate sand-boxes knee-deep in crusted ice. When he crossed the hills the wind blew cold as misery, and if the sun was out he tramped with his eyes squinted up against the hard dimensionless glare.

In April the winter ceased abruptly. The snow ran down into Black Bear Lake scarcely tarrying for the early golfers to brave the season with red and black balls. Without elation, without an interval of moist glory, the cold was gone.

Dexter knew that there was something dismal about this Northern spring, just as he knew there was something gorgeous about the fall. Fall made him clench his hands and tremble and repeat idiotic sentences to himself, and make brisk abrupt gestures of command to imaginary audiences and armies. October filled him with hope which November raised to a sort of ecstatic triumph, and in this mood the fleeting brilliant impressions of the summer at Sherry Island were ready grist to his mill.

Fitzgerald's deeply sensitive appreciation of nature led to his "stripping" brief descriptive phrases and re-copying them into his notebook for possible re-use, like the line from "Myra Meets His Family," "walking with Knowleton under starry frosted bushes in one of the bare gardens...."

Only in "Family In the Wind," does he attempt to make nature instrumental in developing plot and theme: a tornado sets events in motion and another brings them to a conclusion. The ravages wrought by the storm, symbolizing the uncaring universe--"dark, impersonal, inconscient," awaken the cynical, alienated, alcoholic doctor to his responsibilities toward humanity. Nature--the withered Alabama countryside and the tornado--is the most impressive aspect of a story hopelessly mired in sentiment.

Nature, for Fitzgerald, is typically moonlight, starlight, lazy rivers, warm sultry afternoons, colors, scents and sounds of the real world which, transformed in the fairyland of his imagination, take on new and magical properties.

Place is always very important in his stories and

essays for what it indicates about the way characters feel and think. Henry Dan Piper puts it very well: "It comes as something of a surprise to find that an author whose fiction is so notable for its brilliant settings--Paris, Hollywood, the Riviera--took so little interest in places apart from their human aspects. Places held little interest for him until they acquired associations through personal relationships."³⁰

Thus Cannes, in "Love in the Night," is a dreamlike, sparkling Elysium because it is the setting for a love story. Fitzgerald seems to say that romance, as he envisions it, cannot exist in a world which lacks the "trappings of love in the night," moonlight, twinkling stars, white yachts gliding over the water, music, the scent of tropical flowers. What life lacks, he supplies in story after story and in the essays, as though insistently denying the possibility that the bliss of romantic love may be possible anywhere but on an enchanted isle.

In Fitzgerald, place enlarges, glows, swims before our eyes in a glittering montage of impressions, assaulting our senses and dulling our resistance to its enchantment. It is Andy's Tarleton, the Southern town of "The Last of the Belles":

I knew...that I had grown to love Tarleton...
And I can still feel that last night vividly,
the candlelight that flickered over the rough
boards of the mess shack, over the frayed paper
decorations left from the company's party, the sad
mandolin down a company street that kept picking
"My Indiana Home" out of the universal nostalgia

of the departing summer. The three girls lost in this mysterious men's city felt something too-- a bewitched impermanence as though they were on a magic carpet that had lighted on the Southern countryside, and any moment the wind would lift it and waft it away. We toasted ourselves and the South. Then we left our napkins and empty glasses and a little of the past on the table, and hand in hand went out into the moonlight itself. Taps had been played; there was no sound but the far-away whinny of a horse, and a loud persistent snore at which we laughed, and the leathery snap of a sentry coming to port over by the guardhouse.

It is Charlie's New York City ("Diagnosis"):

...the evening gem play of New York was already taking place outside the window....New York, with its flashing, dynamic good looks, its tall man's quick step.

It is Fifi Schwartz's Hotel des Trois Mondes in the Alps

("The Hotel Child"):

It is a place where one's instinct is to give a reason for being there--"Oh, you see, I'm here because---" Failing that, you are faintly suspect, because this corner of Europe does not draw people; rather it accepts them without too many inconvenient questions--live and let live. Routes cross here--people bound for private clinics or tuberculosis resorts in the mountains, people who are no longer persona grata in Italy or France. And if that were all----

Yet on a gala night at the Hotel des Trois Mondes a new arrival would scarcely detect the current beneath the surface. Watching the dancing there would be a gallery of Englishwomen of a certain age, with neckbands, dyed hair and faces powdered pinkish gray; a gallery of American women of a certain age, with snowy-white transformations, black dresses and lips of cherry red. And most of them with their eyes swinging right or left from time to time to rest upon the ubiquitous Fifi.

It is Josephine Perry's Chicago ("First Blood"):

It was October and a harsh breeze blew her along under trees without leaves, past houses with cold corners, past caves of the wind that were the

mouths of residential streets. From that time until April, Chicago is an indoor city, where entering by a door is like going into another world, for the cold of the lake is unfriendly and not like real northern cold--it serves only to accentuate the things that go on inside. There is no music outdoors, or love-making, and even in prosperous times the wealth that rolls by in limousines is less glamorous than embittering to those on the sidewalk. But in the houses there is a deep, warm quiet, or else an excited, singing noise, as if those within were inventing things like new dances. That is part of what people mean when they say they love Chicago;

or Lake Forest ("A Nice Quiet Place"):

Summer, summer, summer--bland inland sun and friendly rain. Lake Forest, with its enchanted verandas, the dancing on the outdoor platform at the club, and always the boys, centaurs, in new cars;

or New Haven ("A Woman with a Past"):

This was New Haven--city of her adolescent dreams, of glittering proms where she would move on air among men as intangible as the tunes they danced to. City sacred as Mecca, shining as Paris, hidden as Timbuctoo. Twice a year the lifeblood of Chicago, her home, flowed into it, and twice a year flowed back, bringing Christmas or bringing summer. Bingo, bingo, bingo, that's the lingo; love of mine, I pine for one of your glances; the darling boy on the left there; underneath the stars I wait.

It is above all Basil Duke Lee's New York City which symbolizes to the young boy, as well as to the mature narrator of "My Lost City," a world of possibility--the place synonymous with success, excitement, romance, energy and fulfillment. Piper calls Fitzgerald's "new uptown New York north of Forty-second Street essentially a Western city... And it was this circumscribed but Western image of New York--shimmering with the romance of unfulfilled possibilities--that Fitzgerald celebrated for the first time in our

fiction."³¹

There was a slate-pink light over the city and people in the streets carried with them little balloons of frosted breath. About them the buildings broke up through many planes toward heaven, at their base the wintry color of an old man's smile, on through diagonals of diluted gold, edged with purple where the cornices floated past the stationary sky ("The Perfect Life");

...Broadway was a blazing forest fire as Basil walked slowly along toward the point of brightest light. He looked up at the great intersecting planes of radiance with a vague sense of approval and possession. He would see it a lot now, lay his restless heart upon this greater restlessness of a nation--he would come whenever he could get off from school ("The Freshest Boy");

He was attuned to the vast, breathless bustle of New York, to the metropolitan days and nights that were tense as singing wires. Nothing needed to be imagined there, for it was all the very stuff of romance--life was as vivid and satisfactory as in books and dreams ("Forging Ahead").

Ultimately, particularity of place is less important than the feeling surrounding it. Fitzgerald's fairyland of the imagination rejects geography and history. Dexter Green, sitting on the veranda of the golf club might be five thousand miles away from the Minnesota lake he gazes on. The persona describing "How to Live on Practically Nothing," too, muses at twilight on an Italian landscape, peopled by his imagination:

It is twilight as I write this, and out of my window darkening banks of trees, set one clump behind another in many greens, slope down to the evening sea. The flaming sun has collapsed behind the peaks of the Esterels and the moon already hovers over the Roman aqueducts of Frejus, five miles away. In half an hour Rene and Bobbe, officers of aviation, are coming to dinner in their white ducks; and Rene, who is only twenty-

three and has never recovered from having missed the war, will tell us romantically how he wants to smoke opium in Peking and how he writes a few things "for myself alone." Afterwards, in the garden, their white uniforms will grow dimmer as the more liquid dark comes down, until they, like the heavy roses and the nightingales in the pines, will seem to take an essential and indivisible part in the beauty of this proud gay land.

And finally, the opulence of the wealthy home in "The Rubber Check" and the splendor of the fabulous mansion in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" are totally fanciful projections; they incarnate his world elsewhere:

The gate opened into a heavenlike lawn with driveways curling on it and a pet bear chained in the middle--and a great fantastic, self-indulgent house with towers, wings, gables and verandas, a conservatory, tennis courts, a circus ring for ponies and an empty pool. The gardener, grooming some proud, lucky roses....

Afterward John remembered that first night as a daze of many colors, of quick sensory impressions, of music soft as a voice in love, and of the beauty of things, lights and shadows and motions and faces. There was a white-haired man who stood drinking a many-hued cordial from a crystal thimble set on a golden stem. There was a girl with a flowery face, dressed like Titania with braided sapphires in her hair. There was a room where the solid, soft gold of the walls yielded to the pressure of his hand, and a room that was like a platonic conception of the ultimate prison--ceiling, floor, and all, it was lined with an unbroken mass of diamonds, diamonds of every size and shape, until, lit with tall violet lamps in the corners, it dazzled the eyes with a whiteness that could be compared only with itself, beyond human wish or dream....

Sometimes the floor under their feet would flame with brilliant colors, of pastel delicacy, of sheer whiteness, or of subtle and intricate mosaic, surely from some mosque on the Adriatic Sea. Sometimes beneath layers of thick crystal he would see blue or green water swirling, inhabited by vivid fish and growths of rainbow

foliage. Then they would be treading on furs of every texture and color or along corridors of palest ivory, unbroken as though carved complete from the gigantic tusks of dinosaurs extinct before the age of man...

...At dinner...each plate was of two almost imperceptible layers of solid diamond between which was curiously worked a filigree of emerald design, a shaving sliced from green air. Music, plangent and unobtrusive, drifted down through far corridors--his chair, feathered and curved insidiously to his back, seemed to engulf and overpower him as he drank his first glass of port. He tried drowsily to answer a question that had been asked him, but the honeyed luxury that clasped his body added to the illusion of sleep--jewels, fabrics, wines, and metals blurred before his eyes into a sweet mist.

Fitzgerald describes each setting with scrupulous attention to detail of decor and nature. His technique is to pack a passage with as many specific details as he can manage, to thus overwhelm and dazzle the reader as the characters are dazzled and dazed by the lavish beauty around them. Fitzgerald uses poetic imagery and figurative language extensively to describe milieu, decor, architecture, and people. Before discussing other uses of rhetoric, let us look directly at his imagery.

Imagery and Symbolism

Fitzgerald's descriptive prose resembles in subject and technique, romantic lyric poetry. Intense emotion crystallizes into sensory impressions, particularly through the technical devices associated with the lyric poem--assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, symbolism. The lyric quality of Fitzgerald's prose is most obvious in the emotional crises of the stories where the evocative

backdrop adds depth and intensity to the situation. Henry Dan Piper notes the technical similarities between the scene describing the lovers in the apprentice "Babes in the Woods," where Fitzgerald "introduces background imagery at strategic moments" and the passage at the end of The Great Gatsby, written seven years later, when "Fitzgerald ...fleshed out the bare bones of dialogue and imagery"³² with traditional poetic devices.

The content of Fitzgerald's imagery and symbolism is equally as romantic as the style, beginning with the derivative, turgid flow of romantic rhetoric in the early "Tarquin of Cheapside":

Darkness, like a great hand, cuts off the even flow of the moon....His guest turned on him a face pale as parchment in which two distraught eyes burned like great red letters....His guest, a grey ghost of misty stuff....The dream tore at him, scraped along his mind like a ragged knife.

Imagery is consistently sensory, never abstract or conceptual, romantic in the Keatsian rather than Shelleyan manner. Fitzgerald's similes and metaphors are delicate, liquid, rich, melodious: bridges, "like dancers holding hands in a row, with heads as tall as cities, and skirts of cable strand" ("The Sensible Thing"); trees, "like tall languid ladies with feather fans coquetting airily with the ugly roof of the monastery...trees like butlers bending courteously over placid walks and paths...trees...delicate lace on the hems of many yellow fields...." ("Benediction"); moonlight, "That stream of silver that waved like a wide strand of curly hair toward the moon" ("Love in the Night");

and the "vertical New York starlight" that "falls like lingering lightning into restaurant gardens" ("Financing Finnegan").

Colors, especially striking contrasts between light and dark, pale and vivid, abound in Fitzgerald's imagery. "The Offshore Pirate" is a riot of blue and gold--"a sea that was a blue dream, as colorful as blue-silk stockings, and beneath a sky as blue as the irises of children's eyes... the sun was shying little golden discs at the sea--if you gazed intently enough you could see them skip from wave tip to wave tip until they joined a broad collar of golden coin that was collecting half a mile out and would eventually be a dazzling sunset. About half-way between the Florida shore and the golden collar a white steam-yacht, very young and graceful, was riding at anchor and under a blue-and-white awning aft a yellow-haired girl reclined in a wicker settee...." The lake is "silver," the dew a "golden mist," the whole island a "miniature world of green and gold, a gilded bay smooth as glass and set round with tiny palms, the whole resembling the mirror of lakes and twig trees that children set up in sand piles."

Much early descriptive rhetoric is, like that in "The Offshore Pirate," overly dainty, precious, decorative, distressingly rococo, and although in the later stories his color imagery becomes less obviously pretty,--"spring came sliding up the mountains in wedges and spear points of green" ("Flight and Pursuit")--there is always, in

Fitzgerald's descriptive passages, the tendency to slide into the purely decorative and mannered expression. What raises the Maxfield Parrish description (in "May Day") above the decorative level are the historical and thematic resonances evoked by the statue of Columbus, a symbol which recurs and connotes a range of meanings beyond the events themselves, and which thus unifies the apparently disparate episodes:

The great plate-glass front had turned to a deep creamy blue, the color of a Maxfield Parrish moonlight--a blue that seemed to press close upon the pane as if to crowd its way into the restaurant. Dawn had come up in Columbus Circle, magical, breathless dawn, silhouetting the great statue of the immortal Christopher, and mingling in a curious and uncanny manner with the fading yellow electric light inside.

In this car sat the souls of Mr. In and Mr. Out discussing with amazement the blue light that had so precipitately colored the sky behind the statue of Christopher Columbus, discussing with bewilderment the old, gray faces of the early risers which skimmed palely along the street like blown bits of paper on a gray lake. They were agreed on all things, from the absurdity of the bouncer in Child's to the absurdity of the business of life. They were dizzy with the extreme maudlin happiness that the morning had awakened in their glowing souls.

Rarely do Fitzgerald's poetic effects appeal only to sight. In every scene, he carefully includes the typical evanescent sounds, smells, even tastes--what he calls in "Absolution," "the sense of things, the feel of things, the hint of rain in the wind on the cheeks"--the subtle qualities that add richness and verisimilitude:

--the clink of glasses and the slap of hand on the bars issued from saloons, cloisters of glazed glass and dirty yellow light ("Winter Dreams");

--the Moonlight Quill...a very romantic little store, considered radical and admitted dark. It was spotted interiorly with red and orange posters of breathless exotic intent, and lit no less by the shiny reflecting bindings of special editions than by the great squat lamp of crimson satin that, lighted through all the day, swung overhead.... The words "Moonlight Quill" were worked over the door in a sort of serpentine embroidery...and over all there was the smell of the musk, which the clever, inscrutable Mr. Moonlight Quill ordered to be sprinkled about--the smell half of a curiosity shop in Dickens' London and half of a coffee-house on the warm shores of the Bozphorus...

...Then he would trudge homeward, enter the dark hallway, and climb three rickety flights of stairs...The hall had an ancient smell--of the vegetables of 1880, of the furniture polish in vogue when "Adam and Eve" Bryan ran against William McKinley, of portieres an ounce heavier with dust, from worn-out shoes and lint, from dresses turned long since into patch-work quilts. This smell would pursue him up the stairs, re-vivified and made poignant at each landing by the aura of contemporary cooking, then, as he began the next flight, diminishing into the odor of the dead routine of dead generations ("O Russet Witch");

--Merlin stared breathlessly, half-hearing through an auditory ether Olive's low, soft monologue, as like a persistent honey-bee she sucked sweetness from her memorable hour. Merlin was listening to the clinking of ice and the fine laughter of all four...that laughter of Caroline's...stirred him, lifted him, called his heart imperiously over to her table...("O Russet Witch");

--they ate cold sliced chicken, salad, artichokes, and strawberry jam from the plentiful larder below ("The Offshore Pirate").

Even in a thoroughly uninteresting story, "Two For a Cent," Fitzgerald pays attention to the sights and sounds in the background:

Old newspapers in front of the house were not nearly so yellow as the sky when Abercrombie walked

up on the porch and sat down upon an immemorial bench, for the sky was every shade of yellow, the color of tan, the color of gold, the color of peaches. Across the street and beyond a vacant lot rose a rampart of vivid red brick houses and it seemed to Abercrombie that the picture they rounded out was beautiful--the warm earthy brick and the sky fresh after the rain, changing and gray as a dream....In the stucco bungalows pianos gave out hot weary notes that inspired the crickets to competitive sound, and squeaky gramophones filled in the intervals with patches of whining ragtime until the impression was created that each living room in the street opened directly out into the darkness.

Of all the sounds in modern life, the one most recurrent, most suggestive throughout the stories is music--particularly popular songs with romantic lyrics, and the lush romantic "Wiener Walzer."

"The Intimate Strangers" is constructed around two people drawn together by a shared delight in music. Trite and mechanical, it nevertheless conveys the author's conviction that music may indeed be the food of life. "Three Acts of Music," too, sketches the outlines of a romance in terms of popular lyrics. "Sleeping and Waking" turns to the lines of a lively popular tune to recall former happiness.

Fitzgerald pays close attention to the thematic relevance of titles and lyrics, as a comparison between two versions of "Discard" reveals. In the first, the popular songs are "Under My Skin," "A Fine Romance," and "It's Nice Work if you Can Get It." In a later version, the first two titles have been changed to "Lost" and "Gone." The third remains unchanged.

A similar correlation between the lyrics of popular

tunes and the theme of the story indicates how thoroughly Fitzgerald was immersed in popular music and how significantly it figures in the thoughts and feelings of his characters:

She danced away the late afternoon without a doubt to disturb her pleasure. The initial resentment at having missed an age of exceeding swank faded out in the nostalgic harmonies as Smoke Got In Her Eyes, and she strolled along the Boulevard of Broken Dreams, or wiggled coolly through the Carioca with flushed and panting men ("No Flowers");

Within the great bulky walls, fifty feet away, a sonorous orchestra proclaimed a feeling that someone was fooling, announced that someone was its lucky star, and demanded if it wasn't a lovely day to be caught in the rain. Inside those walls existed ineffable romance--an orchid-colored dream in which floated prototypes of their future selves, surrounded, engulfed, buoyed up by unnumbered boys. No one spoke; there was no more to say than the orchestra was saying to their young hearts, and when the music stopped, they did not speak ("Too Cute For Words");

...orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the Beale St. Blues, while five hundred pairs of gold and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust ("Diamond Dick").

And in those romances set in luxurious American seaside resorts or in the lush European woodland and mountain retreats, the music is similarly reflective of the tempo and tenor of the plot:

Caroline was sitting in the bar. The orchestra was playing a Wiener Walzer, and suddenly she had the sensation that the chords were extending themselves, that each bar of three-four time was bending in the middle, dropping a little and thus drawing itself out, until the waltz itself, like a phonograph became a torture ("Flight and Pursuit");

The air of a first tentative Wiener Waltz climbed up the branches of the wisteria and choked the window ("New Types");

They were passing the crisp pale green rink where Wiener Waltzes blared all day and the blazing colors...flashed against pale blue skies ("Indecision").

Fitzgerald's interest in music is obvious in the apprentice fiction: in "Babes in the Woods," where he conveys increasing tension by the background music--from "Chopsticks" to "Give me your hand/We're off to slumberland" to "Moonlight is bright/Kiss me Goodnight"; in "The Debutante," where "the tuning of violins comes in nervous twangs and discords up the stairs...there is a sudden burst of sound, as the orchestra swings into 'Poor Butterfly'"...and a final cacaphony of music and laughter emphasizing the gaiety and disarray of the festivities: "The violins and faint drums and a confused chord from a piano, the rich odor of powder and new silk, a blend of laughters all surge together into the room."

A passage from "The Intimate Strangers" epitomizes Fitzgerald's technique--packing his narrative with sensory impressions which create in the reader a romantic receptivity toward a scene and situation he would otherwise regard as ludicrous:

They climbed to the shadowy gallery and gazed down at the ambulating jewels and shimmering dresses, dressed hair bright under the chandeliers, and all against the gleaming backdrop of the floor. From time to time a face turned up to laugh, or exchange a mute, secret look, breaking the fabric of calculated perfection like round flowers among the straight lines of the rooms; and over the

kaleidoscope the music mingled with faint powder and floated up to the watchers in the sky.

I have found only a few instances in the stories where Fitzgerald's imagery is deliberately harsh, brutal or ugly, as the description of the dead soldier in "May Day"--"He had split his skull like a cracked coconut,"--or the confessional booth in "Absolution"--"like a large coffin set on send"--or the line reminiscent of "owl eyes" in The Great Gatsby--"shining brown eyes...bright as the glass eyes of a stuffed owl" ("Presumption")--or the memorable description of the Montana sunset in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" which Sidney Finkelstein uses to "prove" that Fitzgerald's imagery is "alienated."³³ The reverse is, of course, true. The description of the Montana sunset is brilliant but, at least in the stories, atypically Fitzgerald:

The Montana sunset lay between two mountains like a gigantic bruise from which dark arteries spread themselves over a poisoned sky....Out of the blue-black bruise in the distance crept a long line of moving lights upon the desolation of the land and the twelve men of Fish gathered like ghosts at the shanty depot to watch the passing of the seven o'clock train.

Here, the imagery is functionally relevant to the wasteland motif--the town of Fish which is in barren contrast to the luxury of the Washingtons' diamond mountain retreat.

Fitzgerald's landscape is not alienated, but is consistently humanistic, glowing and abundant with the sensations and impressions of the active human beings who inhabit his fictional universe.

We have discussed a few of Fitzgerald's symbols in

Chapters Two and Three--the ice palace, the cut-glass bowl, the cracked plate. Most symbols in the stories are man-made: clothing, houses, skyscrapers, even money.

Fitzgerald uses symbolism liberally in the apprentice stories: in "Shadow Laurels" where the light streaming in from the window symbolizes alternately the hero's father's life, and all human life; in "The Ordeal," where he embodies faith in the stained-glass window of the church; and in "The Spire and the Gargoyle," where the lofty buildings represent aspiration and success.

His commonest natural symbol is the moon, as used, for example, in "Love Boat." References to the moon recur strategically throughout the story to remind the hero of the happiness of his first love (they met on a moonlit night). At the end of the story, when he sits pensively at twilight, it appears suddenly overhead and brings back happier years. The moon is, to him, simply his youth. Its symbolic effectiveness grows gradually, taking on more than simple pictorial vividness, until it seems finally to sum up all the meaning of the story:

...the boat glides past Ulm, where the moon came up out of a boiler works, and West Esther, where it slid, unregretted, behind a cloud...

...The river was white with the moon which had changed from rosy gold to a wafer of shining cheese on high...

...The boat moved up the river through the summer night, while the launch, touched by its swell, rocked to and fro gently in the wide path of the moon....Next to the barge lay a steamer and people were going aboard; first a few people and then an increasing crowd. There was a breeze in the air and the moon came up rosy gold with a

haze around....Then it was twilight and there were voices downstairs, and suddenly there it was, in the sky over his lawn, all the restless longing after fleeing youth in all the world--the bright uncapturable moon.

Shoes, symbolizing the heroine's shoeless early poverty, are clumsily emphasized throughout the wooden, synthetic plot of "I Got Shoes," with ludicrous results:

Never had she tried so hard to put her ideas into words; notions of Warren Livingstone and old shoes were mixed up in her mind.

...And suddenly it seemed to her as if all those dozens and dozens and hundreds and hundreds of shoes made a barrier between him and her, between her and life, and she wanted to push it over or break through it.

Houses symbolize tradition and aristocracy ("More Than Just a House"), automobiles and skyscrapers mean aspiration and success ("Rags Martin Jones...") or the American Dream (the gold building in "Ten Years in the Advertising Business"), and money symbolizes life itself ("A Penny Spent"). Clothing frequently symbolizes social status. As Dreiser in An American Tragedy used clothing to trace Clyde Griffith's career--from the frayed cuffs of early poverty through the trim evening attire of social success to the black-and-white stripes of the last days in prison--Fitzgerald similarly focuses on individual details of dress which immediately clarify the wearer's social position: the "soft angora sweaters" of the rich young men in "Six of One"; the "suit with multiple buttons...and long pointed shoes" stigmatizing the poor outsider ("Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar").

Fitzgerald uses religious symbols in only two stories, in "Benediction" (a revised version of the apprentice "The

Ordeal") and in "One of My Oldest Friends," memorably in neither.

Generally, his use of symbols is effective but routine. The only extraordinary symbol is the diamond mountain and even that gives no hint of the skill and dexterity with which he is to employ recurring symbols--the "owl eyes," the billboard with the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg, the green light on the dock--to bring The Great Gatsby to a sunning conclusion.

Uses of Rhetoric--Plot and Theme

Fitzgerald uses heightened rhetoric to develop and move his plots, particularly to begin and end the stories. Although he sometimes tries a Balzacian technique--immersing the reader in milieu before introducing characters and situation--he usually employs shorter rhetorical devices to set events in motion. He opens his stories generally with an address to the reader,³⁴ or a dramatized situation,³⁵ or a scene-setting passage,³⁶ or a portentous philosophical statement.³⁷ In the first and last cases, where he is less successful than in the other two, rhetoric frequently seems forced and overly-literary. Normally, however, Fitzgerald's difficulty lies less in starting his stories than in ending them. He has no trouble initially in interesting his reader in the situation; problems arise later when he tries to bring events to a consistent and believable conclusion. The most serious weakness in the endings is Fitzgerald's use of rhetoric to circumvent the legitimate

conclusions his reader expects out of the preceding events, perhaps to evade their implications or to camouflage authentic feeling under a massive barrage of words. In almost every passage where this occurs, the themes are those common to Fitzgerald's fiction: romantic love, nostalgia, aspiration for success.

Fitzgerald uses concluding rhetoric unforgettably in The Great Gatsby, tying plot and theme together in a vivid, transcendent retrospect in the thoughts of Nick Carroway. But in the stories, the results are at best uneven, intimately tied to the development of plot and the relevance of the content of the concluding passage to the content of the preceding action. Both James E. Miller and Kenneth Eble have criticized the concluding rhetoric of "Winter Dreams":³⁸

The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.

And Arthur Mizener regards what one critic calls the "dying cadence"³⁹ of "The Sensible Thing" as a "bluff," citing Fitzgerald's own words--"blankets of excellent prose"--as evidence that he consciously practices evasion through rhetoric:⁴⁰

He knew that that boy of fifteen months before had had something, a trust, a warmth that was gone forever. The sensible thing--they had done the sensible thing. He had traded his first youth for strength and carved success out of despair. But with his youth, life had carried away the freshness of his love....

...April is over, April is over. There are

all kinds of love in the world, but never the same love twice.

In both "Winter Dreams" and "The Sensible Thing," as in most of his romantic, nostalgic fiction, concluding rhetoric is for Fitzgerald neither evasion nor bluff. From story to story, similarities in motif, theme and symbol indicate his passionate conviction of the importance and value of his message. His infusions of charged rhetoric offer unshakable evidence of his belief in and commitment to that other world beyond his own, a world of possibility, hope, and beauty. Through imagery, through sensory appeals, through the evocative re-creation of an idealized past and a fabulous future, Fitzgerald's stories as a whole have the effect of lifting and transporting the reader past the restrictions of his own limited environment. At first appalled at the sentiment, the nostalgia, the bathos of concluding passages, the critic may well decide that Fitzgerald was playing on the facile sensibilities of his readers. This is, I think, an erroneous assumption. The stories as a group testify to Fitzgerald's deep and abiding faith in the possibility, somewhere, of living a graceful life. That this life may be made up of questionable values of riches, of Hollywood-like romance, of tinselly fairgrounds and gilded mansions, is less important than that Fitzgerald asks his readers to share, perhaps ingenuously, but certainly sincerely, his dedication to a dream. This is not to say that because he believes in the content of his rhetoric it thus works successfully in the stories. Plot and theme

require skillful manipulation of fictional techniques. Fitzgerald's rhetoric often fails because at climactic moments of a story, he abandons character and situation for structurally irrelevant verbal embellishment, or for a thematic interpolation unrelated to the plot. When the passage is intimately connected to preceding fictional elements, as it is in Gatsby, or in "Winter Dreams" and "The Sensible Thing," concluding rhetoric may elevate the plot and lend transcendent significance to the theme. Unhappily, too often Fitzgerald uses excessive rhetoric to conclude a story, as if, in recognition of the paltriness of preceding situations and characters, he must demonstrate palpably to the reader that there is a level of meaning not immediately apparent. As a rule, the less "significant" the story, the more insistent the "message" at the end. Rhetoric thus consciously used to add a dimension which action and characters fail to develop, is so blatantly false to the action that one winces at the mechanical contrivance. (Fitzgerald winced too: on his tearsheet of "Love in the Night," he wrote "No!" next to the concluding lines.)

We might cite a score of stories ending on a high rhetorical pitch.⁴¹ Earlier, we noted the contrived romanticism concluding "Diamond Dick," where "the years stood still" for the heroine, and her husband, "a sick man, rose up and shook off the dark burden of the war." In "Trouble," an equally trivial story about a beautiful young nurse and a handsome doctor, the ending is just as artificial and

marred by the worst excesses of banal romanticism:

And as Trouble heard her voice saying those familiar words, all the things that made her unique and beloved, a symbol of something greater than herself, came flowing back into her. The rich warm self of Trouble bloomed again--a flower beside the bed of man's distress.

In a much better story, "The Swimmers," Fitzgerald hovers around a theme but loses it in convolutions of action. At the end, he attempts to give shape and substance to his ideas, but the language is so abstract and portentous that it reads like the jingoistic prose of an advertising blurb:

Watching the fading city, the fading shore, from the deck of the Majestic, he had a sense of overwhelming gratitude and of gladness that America was there, that under the ugly debris of industry the rich land still pushed up, incorrigibly lavish and fertile, and that in the heart of the leaderless people the old generosities and devotions fought on, breaking out sometimes in fanaticism and excess, but indomitable and undefeated. There was a lost generation in the saddle at the moment, but it seemed to him that the men coming on, the men of the war, were better; and all his old feeling that America was a bizarre accident, a sort of historical sport had gone forever. The best of America was the best of the world...America...was the graves at Shiloh and the tired, drawn, nervous faces of its great men, and the country boys dying in the Argonne...It was a willingness of the heart.

Even in the middle of a story, when the action straggles and falters, Fitzgerald uses rhetoric for a strategic retreat, notably in "At Your Age," illustrating first the rhetoric of nostalgia and then, after a quick narrative twist that cheapens the story, the rhetoric of romantic love:

As he drove away into the winter twilight, he followed this train of thought to a toally unprecedented conclusion. Perhaps the time of day was the responsible stimulant, for the shop

windows glowing into the cold, the tinkling bells of a delivery sleigh, the white gloss left by shovels on the sidewalks, the enormous distance of the stars, brought back the feel of other nights thirty years ago...For an instant the girls he had known then slipped like phantoms out of their dull matronly selves of today and fluttered past him with frosty, seductive laughter, until a pleasant shiver crawled up his spine.

.....

After the war he had suddenly felt poor, gone into business, and in ten years accumulated nearly a million dollars.

.....

Their cool cheeks and warm lips met in the crisp darkness, and, watching the icy moon over his shoulders, Annie knew that she was his surely and, pulling his face down, kissed him again, trembling with emotion.

The irrelevance of the first and third passages to the exigencies of story explains how Fitzgerald was able to "strip" them entirely from the story, transfer them to his notebooks and perhaps eventually incorporate them, unchanged, into one of the novels. Rhetoric, then, for Fitzgerald, when not bound thematically to his plot, is a fictional tool over which his mastery is unquestionable but his utilization only intermittently successful.

Uses of Rhetoric--Character

We have noted in Chapter Two Fitzgerald's use of rhetoric in connection with character, especially women. For men and minor characters, rhetoric is unromantic, sharp, controlled, and while less effusive, certainly more effective. Compare, for example, the description of the heroine, Ellen, of "A Short Trip Home" with that of the gangster, Joe Varland:

She had bewitchment suddenly in the twinkle of short hairs on her neck, in the sure clear confidence that at about eighteen begins to deepen and sing in attractive American girls. The lamp light shopped in the yellow strands of her hair ...in the bright restless sea of the dance... where she moved in an eddy of her own among the pleasant islands of colored favors set out on tables and the south winds from the brasses moaning across the hall....

...A hard thin-faced man of about thirty-five with an air of being scarred, and a slight sinister smile. His eyes were a sort of taunt to the whole human family--they were the eyes of an animal, sleepy and quiescent in the presence of another species. They were helpless yet brutal, unhopeful yet confident. It was as if they felt themselves powerless to originate activity, but infinitely capable of profiting by a single gesture of weakness in another...one of the sort of men..."hanging around," leaning with one elbow on the counters of tobacco stores, watching, though heaven knows what small chink of the mind, the people who hurried in and out. Intimate to garages, where he had vague business conducted in undertones, to barber shops and to the lobbies of theatres--in such places, anyhow, I placed the type, if type it was, that he reminded me of. Sometimes his face bobbed up in one of Tad's more savage cartoons, and I had always from earliest boyhood thrown a nervous glance toward the dim borderland where he stood, and seen him watching me and despising me. Once, in a dream, he had taken a few steps toward me, jerking his head back and muttering: "Say kid" in what was intended to be a reassuring voice, and I had broken for the door in terror. This was that sort of men.

Invariably, Fitzgerald's descriptions of minor characters are carefully detailed, vivid and sharp, saying not only all that needs to be said about their appearance, but underlining eccentricities in their gestures and indicating their social status as well. Charley, Dalrymple's co-worker, is a case in point:

Charley was twenty-six, with the faint musk of weakness hanging about him that is often mistaken for the scent of evil. It took no

psychological examiner to decide that he had drifted into indulgence and laziness as casually as he had drifted into life, and was to drift out. He was pale and his clothes stank of smoke; he enjoyed burlesque shows, billiards, and Robert Service, and was always looking back upon his last intrigue or forward to his next one. In his youth his taste had run to loud ties, but now it seemed to have faded, like his vitality, and was expressed in pale-lilac four-in-hands and indeterminate gray collars. Charley was listlessly struggling that losing struggle against mental, moral, and physical anemia that takes place ceaselessly on the lower fringe of the middle classes.

Henry McComas, in "Your Way and Mine," is another:

He was big all over, indeed his bulky body seemed to be in the very process of growth for it had ripped his coat at the back seam, while his trousers clung to thigh and calf like skin tights. His hair was yellow and tousled; you could see the path of his broad fingers in it--and his eyes were of a hard, brilliant blue but the lids cropping a little over them reinforced an impression of lethargy that the clumsy body conveyed. His age was twenty-one.

Both passages prefigure Fitzgerald's brilliant description of Tom Buchanan in The Great Gatsby, where the concentration on purely physical traits, through allusive adjectives, etches effortlessly and indelibly his character and personality as well:

...he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body--he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage --a cruel body.

The romantic haze through which Fitzgerald sees beautiful women, the mystery and enchantment they hold for him, so

colors and permeates his prose, that what emerges often is not a particular woman in a specific situation, but either a succession of romantic images, like the following, from his Notebooks:

...slender smile...aimed it a little aside, like a pocket torch that might dazzle him;

...dark and shining and driven;

...flashing fairness;

...her beauty...poised and secure as a flower on a strong stem;

...a dark little beauty with the fine crystal gloss over her that, in brunettes, takes the place of a blond's bright glow;

or, as in the case of Basil's inamorata, Minnie Bibble, the lyrical re-creation of a mood:

He held her away suddenly, looked at her, made a strained sound of delight. There it was, in her face touched by sun--that promise--in the curve of her mouth, the tilted shadow of her nose on her cheek, the point of dull fire in her eyes --the promise that she could lead him into a world in which he would always be happy.

Dialogue

Fitzgerald uses dialogue conventionally to illustrate how characters act and react toward one another and to render, dramatically, climactic moments in the plot. Because his rhetorical mode is lyric rather than dramatic, he does not use dialogue extensively until the late stories when perhaps because much of his lyrical energy has dried up, he concentrates on dialogue which, in turn, is stronger, more effective than in the earlier works. The apprentice fiction reveals the strengths and weaknesses that

characterize Fitzgerald's later use of dialogue--facetious and slangy or pretentiously literary on the one hand ("The Room With the Green Blinds," "Sentiment and the Use of Rouge") or sharp, compressed, lively and authentic on the other ("The Pierian Springs," "The Debutante," "Babes in the Woods"). Affectations like "Good God!" which dot the apprentice stories are virtually eliminated by 1920, but the same general approach, "fleshing out" the "bare bones of dialogue" (Piper)⁴² with whatever poetic devices on hand, is typical of all of Fitzgerald's efforts.

In the major stories, the use of dialogue is generally competent but uneven; only infrequently is it brilliant, as in Hemingway's stories or in The Great Gatsby. In "May Day," where dialogue is used more extensively than usual, there are varying levels of success. Dialogue between Philip and Gordon is standard: dramatic effectiveness is managed through the skillfully-inserted bits of description: the dialogue between Key and Rose, the two soldiers, is weak and contrived; but in the Biltmore dance scene, the bits and snatches of dialogue which set the scene are sharply, dramatically convincing. But not for long: stilted and literary lapses indicate that Fitzgerald's problem with dialogue is by no means resolved.

The verbal exchange between Edith and an admirer who cuts in on a dance captures rhythm and nuance of expression:

"You don't remember me, do you?" he said
gravely.
"I should say I do. Your name's Harlan."
"No-o-pe. Barlow."

"Well, I knew there were two syllables anyway. You're the boy that played the ukelele so well up at Howard Marshall's house party."
 "I played--but not--"

Later, however, when she presses Gordon to tell her his trouble, his answer is an embarrassing cliché, "I can't tell you. You're a good woman. I can't tell a good woman the story." Gordon's simile is pretentious and his reversion to slang--"loony"--awkward: "Things have been snapping inside me for four months like little hooks on a dress, and it's about to come off, when a few more hooks go. I'm very gradually going loony." Even allowing for his drunkenness, his remarks to Edith are maudlin and unrealistic: "Edith...I used to think I was clever, talented, an artist. Now I know I'm nothing. Can't draw, Edith. Don't know why I'm telling you this."

The dialogue continues in this uneven fashion, picking up somewhat in Peter's chat with Key and Rose, especially in the ironically-revealing ending that signifies the similarity between two dissimilar layers of American society where alcohol is the leveller:

"We got in a sort of fight for a while," said Kay after a pause, "but it was too far away."
 "A fight?--tha's stuff!" said Peter..."Fight 'em all! I was in the army."
 "This was with a Bolshevik fella."
 "Tha's stuff!" exclaimed Peter, enthusiastic.
 "That's what I say! Kill the Bolshevik! Ex-terminate 'em!"
 "We're Americuns," said Rose, implying a sturdy, defiant patriotism.
 "Sure," said Peter. "Greatest race in the world!" We're all Americuns! Have another."
 They had another.

But inexplicable are those jarringly false notes, like Jewel Hudson's remark as she hands the waiter a bill, "Here's a bribe," and the verbal exchanges between Jewel and Gordon are stilted and inept.

In "Two Wrongs," like "May Day," dialogue is extensive but only occasionally effective, notably in the opening scene, as Bill brags about his success with youthful and appealing brashness:

"Well, it's a tough business--casting agencies bursting with people that can all do anything, till I give them a try. How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"I'm twenty-six. Came here four years ago without a cent."

"My!"

"I could quit now and be comfortable the rest of my life."

"My!"

"Going to take a year off next year--get married...Ever hear of Irene Rikker?"

"I should say! She's about my favorite of all."

"We're engaged."

"My!"

"Babylon Revisited" and "Outside the Cabinet-Maker's" are two other stories where dialogue is both extensive and effective. In the former, it is so perfectly tied to mood and theme that it is unobtrusive, even when Charlie wistfully reminisces to Marian, "But it was nice while it lasted ...We were a sort of royalty almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us." In both stories, the light, bantering dialogue between father and daughter veers on sentimentality. In the former, it succeeds because of the carefully-timed questions Charlie inserts to determine how happy his daughter Honoria is with the Peters, and her

simple, plaintive question, "Why don't I live with you?"

In "Outside the Cabinet-Maker's," the fantasy father and daughter weave directly the dialogue between them and steadies the emotional interplay.

In the late stories, dialogue predominates over narrative except for brief, clipped observations. The following passage, from the incomplete sketch, "News of Paris... Fifteen Years Ago," illustrates Fitzgerald's technique:

"We'll have this afternoon--and then good-bye," said Ruth.

"Not even this afternoon," he answered solemnly, "I'm meeting the boat in an hour."

"I'm sorry, Henry. Hasn't it been fun?"

"Lots of fun. So much fun." He felt sincerely sad.

"It's just as well," said Ruth with a little effort. "I have fittings that I've postponed. Remember me when you go to the Opera or out to St. Germain." A little later he saw the spoon waving. [A signal from another girl--R.P.]

"Let me go first," he said. "I somehow couldn't bear to sit here and see you walk off."

"All right, I'll sit here and think."

In the Pat Hobby stories, dialogue is at least as important as narrative and it is uniformly brilliant. Fitzgerald captures the careless, elliptical jargon, the breezy slang of the uniquely-Hollywood sound:

Pat: "Whose this Welles?...Every time I pick up a paper they got about this Welles."

(talking to Marcus, the tycoon) "I want only one thing." From the long familiarity, he went into the foreign locution. "I should go in the lot any time. From nothing. Only to be there. Should bother nobody. Only help a little from nothing if any young person wants advice."

Problems in Dialogue

Fitzgerald's problems with dialogue are similar to those we have encountered in his narrative. Among other things wrong with the Medieval stories ("The Count of Darkness," "Kingdom in the Dark," "In the Darkest Hour," "Gods of the Darkness"), dialogue is incredibly poor--New York slang mixed with Fitzgerald's notion of hill-billy dialect and interspersed with "tough" romantic dialogue which reads like a movie script for Clark Gable:

His eyes had become covetous as he looked at her.
 "How would you like to be one of my habits?"
 "Oh sire, I would be so glad to be yours"--
 "What's your name, little baggage?"
 "Letgarde."
 "Who gave it to you? That Norman?"
 "It was my Christian name."
 "Come here and see what you taste like."
 After a while he released her with:
 "I've met worse kids. How you going to earn your keep? Can you get together some stew from the rations in the wagon--if we get up a couple boys to do the heavy stuff?"
 "I'll try it dar!--"
 "Call me 'sire!'...And remember; There's no bedroom talk floating around this precinct!"
 "All right, darl-- I mean, sire."
 "Well, run along."

The Medieval stories are a heavy-handed blend of seriousness and satire without a trace of Fitzgerald's rhetorical style, deplorably laden with facetious, anateurish dialogue.

Popular slang, after a lapse of over forty years, cannot help but seem dated, gauche and clumsy--even rude. Fitzgerald uses slang liberally, including pejorative epithets directed against minorities (see "Indecision"). He is

uniformly unsuccessful at capturing authentic speech patterns of the lower classes ("Night of Chancellorsville," "A Change of Class," "May Day"). The most frequent flaws in dialogue are similar to those in narrative, archness:

"Don't touch me," she said quickly. "You've been handling money."

"But not in my mouth, mother," he protested humorously ("Love in the Night");

sentimentality:

"When you were little they kept sending me snapshots of you, first as a baby and then as a child in socks playing on the beach with a pail and shovel, and then suddenly as a wistful little girl with wondering, pure eyes--and I used to build dreams about you. A man has to have something living to cling to. I think, Lois, it was your little white soul I tried to keep near me..." ("Benediction");

stilted, unconvincing and excessive romanticism:

"I even have to think before I can really remember how I stood waiting for you in the garden that night, holding all my dreams and hopes in my arms like a lot of flowers--they were that to me, anyhow. I thought I was pretty sweet. I'd saved myself up for that--all ready to hand it all to you. And then you came up and kicked me" ("Flight and Pursuit").

Fitzgerald's rhetoric is memorable for its lyrical quality. Defects in rhetoric result primarily from excess rather than ineptness. Rich rhetorical passages appear unexpectedly in the simplest, least memorable stories, redeeming the trivial, sentimental or facetious by their color, imagery and sheer lyricism ("Fate in her Hands," "On Schedule"). Unless we read many of the stories, we are unlikely to recognize the cumulative impact of Fitzgerald's rhetoric. From story to story, pictorial and

sensory effects multiply until we, almost oblivious to their accretion, accept the conventions and dimensions of Fitzgerald's imaginatively conceived world, and indeed, share in his delight and enchantment in a pleasure-laden universe.

Rhetoric is the one element that may rescue a story, but when plot, character and theme harmonize with the narrative style and dialogue supports and augments other fictional elements, in short, when the rhetoric fits precisely, the result is a masterpiece: "Babylon Revisited" or "The Rich Boy." And, it may be safely added, there is no successful Fitzgerald story where rhetorical effects are an incidental or unimportant part of the achievement.

NOTES

¹Matthew J. Bruccoli, The Composition of Tender is the Night (Pittsburgh, 1963), p. 166.

²Henry Dan Piper, F. Scott Fitzgerald--A Critical Portrait, p. 259.

³Alfred Kazin, "An American Confession," Quarterly Review of Literature, II (No. 4, 1945), 341-346; reprinted, quoted from Kazin, ed., F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work, p. 175.

⁴To Edmund Wilson, The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 342.

⁵Kenneth Eble, F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 157.

⁶Ibid., p. 158.

⁷Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (New York, 1942), p. 244.

⁸One critic has remarked that because Fitzgerald's description is so functional, "His writing is without static passages, giving it a remarkably continuous readability." Isador Schneider, "A Pattern of Failure," New Masses, LVII (December 4, 1945), 23.

⁹Richard Ellmann, "A Talent as Big as the Ritz," New Statesman, LXVI (November 22, 1963), 746.

¹⁰Richard Poirier, A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature (New York, 1967), p. 8.

¹¹Letter to Zelda Fitzgerald, Letters of..., p. 128.

¹²Poirier, p. 6.

¹³Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁴Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (New York, 1957).

¹⁵"The Cut-Glass Bowl," "One of My Oldest Friends," and "The Bowl," rely consistently on surface realism, with only occasional use of symbolism or romantic rhetoric.

¹⁶Letter to Maxwell Perkins, 11/24/34, Letters of..., p. 255.

¹⁷A disparity exists between realism and fantasy, as we have noted in Chapter Two, particularly in the elaborate schemes heroes concoct for heroines of "Myra Meets His Family," "The Offshore Pirate," and "Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales."

¹⁸A realistic surface is, in fact, typical of Fitzgerald's fiction, novels as well as stories, yet we would never classify him as a "realist," primarily because of the profusion of romantic rhetorical effects.

¹⁹See "The Diamond As Big As the Ritz," "Crazy Sunday," "Babylon Revisited," "Financing Finnegans," "The Rubber

Check," "Afternoon of An Author," and "First Blood," among others.

²⁰"The Scandal Detectives," "The Freshest Boy," "He Thinks He's Wonderful," "The Captured Shadow," "The Perfect Life," "A Night At the Fair," "Forging Ahead," "Basil and Cleopatra."

²¹Eble, p. 45.

²²Ibid., p. 31.

²³Sergio Perosa, The Art of F. Scott Fitzgerald, pp. 140-141.

²⁴Schneider, p. 23.

²⁵See "My Lost City," "Early Success," "Echoes of the Jazz Age."

²⁶See also "Jacob's Ladder" and "Love Boat."

²⁷James E. Miller, Jr., F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and..., p. 56.

²⁸See especially "The Swimmers," "Diamond Dick," "John Jackson's Arcady," "A Penny Spent."

²⁹Robert Sklar, F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Last Laocoon, p. 307. Sklar admits the story is in the "old sentimental manner."

³⁰Piper, p. 297.

³¹Ibid., p. 62.

³²Ibid., p. 35.

³³Sidney Finkelstein, Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature (New York, 1965), pp. 165-183.

³⁴See "The Camel's Back," "The Lees of Happiness."

³⁵See "First Blood," "The Bridal Party," "Two Wrongs," "The Adjuster."

³⁶See "The Diamond As Big As the Ritz," "Crazy Sunday," "One Trip Abroad," "O Russet Witch."

³⁷See "The Smilers" and "The Dance."

³⁸Miller, p. 102; Eble, p. 105.

³⁹K. G. W. Cross, F. Scott Fitzgerald (New York, 1964), p. 75.

⁴⁰Arthur Mizener, "The Maturity of F. Scott Fitzgerald," Sewanee Review, LXVII (Autumn, 1959), 658-675; reprinted in and quoted from Mizener, ed., F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 158.

⁴¹See "The Sensible Thing," "The Baby Party," "The Dance," "The Bowl," "The Lees of Happiness," "John Jackson's Arcady," "The Swimmers," "At Your Age," "New Types," "The

Passionate Esquimo," "Basil and Cleopatra," "Diamond Dick."

⁴²Piper, p. 35.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEME

Robert Sklar notes that the "one capacity which has still been withheld from Fitzgerald" is "the quality of critical and creative intelligence."¹ Because scholarly effort was, until recently, disproportionately directed to Fitzgerald's life as revealed through his letters, autobiographical essays, novels and the recollections of his contemporaries, the notion that he had few important ideas and little conceptual ability gained wide currency. Sklar believes that Fitzgerald, "in a sense more fully than any novelist of his generation," came to grips with "modern movements in Western culture and philosophy," and he traces the development of Fitzgerald's intelligence through his attempts to "master the genteel tradition."²

Although there may be less evidence of modern Western philosophy in Fitzgerald's work than Mr. Sklar suggests, the quality and range of Fitzgerald's intelligence, and particularly his intellectual curiosity, are greater than he has been credited with. Out of almost two hundred completed stories and essays, less than twenty-five were written purely as diversions;³ the rest treat a broad spectrum of themes relating to problems of life in contemporary American society.

Fitzgerald does not formulate a philosophical system to answer the questions he raises about the quality of modern life. Rather, he expresses his ideas speculatively and unsystematically, as perceptions of problems, often without ready solutions. Because Fitzgerald develops his themes through evocative sensory details rather than ratiocination and philosophical discourse, they appear incompletely conceptualized. In part, his lyrical prose style has led critics to underestimate him as a serious thinker. But he was serious, not only about his craftsmanship, but about his life, and by extension, about the possibility of a sensitive individual like himself living a graceful life in post-war America.

Within the larger themes of life, love, death and the American myth of success, there are in Fitzgerald's stories and essays innumerable shades and variations. I shall try to trace the often contradictory, sometimes confusing, but always thoughtful themes in this work and to show the development in his short pieces of the ideas which give form and substance to his novels.

The Apprentice Fiction

Fitzgerald adumbrates many of his later subjects in the apprentice stories. "A Debt of Honor" is a young boy's exploration of the meaning of heroism as embodied in conventional notions of self-sacrifice and military glory. "Reade, Substitute Right-Half" is a classic wish-fulfillment sketch of an underdog who makes good on the football field--

the physical inferior whose speed and dexterity outclass his teammates' greater brawn.

"Sentiment and the Use of Rouge" contrasts the new, relaxed war-time morality with older, tested values. It touches on the breakdown of sexual codes, on personal morality, on religion and belief, and on the boredom and ritualistic emptiness of upper-class life.

In "Shadow Laurels," Fitzgerald mourns the un-lived life and celebrates the power of the romantic imagination; in "The Spire and the Gargoyle," he regrets wasted opportunity and unfulfilled potential. "The Ordeal" presents a spiritual conflict in the soul of a novitiate between the call of "the world...gloriously apparent" and "the monastery vaguely impotent." "The Debutante" and "Babes in the Woods" treat class distinctions, young love, manners, morals, and the generation gap. In "The Pierian Springs" the themes are the artist's source of inspiration and the cruelty and hatred that can accompany love.

Most of the stories are brief; the themes are suggested or superficially explored. In "Sentiment and the Use of Rouge," however, Fitzgerald develops his theme with fictional sophistication. "Sentiment" is a three-part story about Clay Harrington Syneforth, a young soldier in the first World War who returns to his home in England for a two-day leave. What he encounters on his visit forms the core of the story. The central theme is change: between the England Clay knew, was raised in and loved, and the new

world to which he returns, its looser morals, neglect of conventions, disillusion with the old ideals of heroism and love, a world totally committed to the present moment and dedicated to pleasure and momentary satisfactions. The new world and its changes are epitomized for Clay in his sister who "seemed a bit loud and theatrical" with "obvious paint" on her face; later, in the atmosphere of a dance, he sees "artificial gayety rather than...stern calmness... in the faces of the girls half enthusiasm and half recklessness that depressed him." Clay is bewildered and disturbed by the change. He wonders why everyone looks so "loose, so socially slovenly." Eleanor Moorhead, who was his dead brother's fiance and with whom he quickly falls in love, explains to Clay how the war has altered values at home, how petty and meaningless words like "compromise," seem next to the important words of the day: "Life, Death and England," and how the new morality is a response to the soldiers who are to die. She speaks of morality as sexual license, "self-sacrifice...Young men going to get killed for us... We would have been their wives...we can't be...therefore we will be as much as we can....Good heavens, do you think people worry these days about where conversations take place, unless they're in wireless towers or shoreways in coast towns?"

But Clay does not understand. In the last section of the story, on the battlefield, Flaherty, an Irish Catholic soldier, brings up the question of faith. Flaherty

excoriates the English talent for prettying up reality.

"Blood on an Englishman always calls rouge to me mind."

(Here, the rouge on the young girls and blood on the soldiers are united symbolically.) "It's a game with him. The Irish take death damn serious." Fitzgerald is saying at the end that Clay's devotion to outward forms and conventions prevents him from perceiving what is really important in life. Because he lives and worships the surface symbols of a bygone era, he is incapable of recognizing that underneath the rouge, people have been genuinely and profoundly moved by the events behind the big, important words. Thus he dies uncomprehending, bewildered, frightened--of sex and sexual license, of the new morality, of the unexpected depths of feeling in his contemporaries--more afraid of life than of the death which awaits him on the battlefield.

There are many flaws in the story, particularly its schoolboy seriousness and its consciously "arty" narrative. But it is a very early example of Fitzgerald's concern with a major theme--social change--and the accompanying dislocation of values--which he treats brilliantly years later in "Babylon Revisited."

The Imaginative Life: The Romantic Imagination; The Value of Life and the Worth of Transient Things; Seize the Moment; The Unlived Life; Nostalgia, and the Return Home

From the earliest stories, through This Side of Paradise, to The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald is concerned with the romantic imagination and its power to transfigure reality.

Man has it within him, he says, to invest his life with radiance and sublimity. For the unimaginative, or for those whose dreams are thwarted by reality, whose active pursuit of ideals is frustrated by circumstance, life may become a cheerless prospect of routinized, mechanized subservience to form, of mere motion without grace or beauty. It may become, for some, the tragic awareness of utter hopelessness and emptiness, the decay that precedes death.

In "Imagination and a Few Mothers," an early essay-lecture on ideal maternal deportment, Fitzgerald defines the role of imagination in daily life:

Imagination is an attitude toward living. It is a putting into the terrific, life-long, age-old fight against domestic dullness all the energy that goes into worry and self-justification and haggling, which are the set devices of all of us for whiling away the heavy hours.

Fictionally, he carries the theme forward in a number of stories, more seriously in some than in others. In "O Russet Witch," a light story with serious overtones, Merlin Grainger embodies his romantic dreams in a beautiful young girl. Merlin is tempted on half-a-dozen occasions to give up his job and his dreary middle-class existence to pursue the elusive, unforgettable Caroline. But he never does. Instead, he marries drab, uninspiring Olive; they grow old together and his dreams grow dimmer under the weight of everyday living and the instruction of the moving pictures "which taught them patiently that they were the sort of people for whom life was ordered, and that something very

grand and brave and beautiful would soon happen to them if they were docile and obedient to their rightful superiors and kept away from pleasure."

Each time he is tempted to follow his dream, Merlin "fights it out," and through "sheer faint-heartedness," stays on. But at the end, Caroline turns out not to have been Merlin's dream; she is as real as he and has aged just as perceptibly, although more gracefully. They are finally brought to the same level--old age--and both are patronized and scorned by their grandchildren, the wave of bright, materialistic youth which threatens to trample the old values and traditions by which Merlin and Caroline have lived. Here, Fitzgerald raises several questions: Is Merlin blamable for his unfaithfulness to his romantic readiness, for not following as his imagination directs, for succumbing to ordinariness? Have the little lies by which he has lived, "the optimistic self-delusion that had kept him from misery," saved Merlin from the disillusionment he might have experienced had he followed his dream? Or have they prevented him from tasting fully the happiness which at the end he decides was illusory? A little of each, I think. Fitzgerald seems to say that Caroline, who lives in tune with her romantic imagination, is no better off at the end than Merlin Grainger who, like Rudolph Miller in "Absolution," has kept his dreams inviolate in a "little corner of his mind." Here, Fitzgerald surely suggests that the romantic imagination carries unsuspected danger with it: it may

frustrate as well as liberate, as Jay Gatsby was to discover. The question, Fitzgerald indicates, involves individual choice: should one actively pursue his dream or should he be content with the lesser, but certain, pleasures life affords? In "O Russet Witch," he examines both sides of the question and although weighted in favor of following the dream (chiefly through the attractive imagery surrounding Caroline and her movements), the answer is by no means certain.

In "A Full Life" (unpublished), although Fitzgerald treats the same subject humorously, he indicates that the romantic imagination can lead one (as it does his heroine) into foolhardiness and disaster. Dr. Wilkinson, the practical man who buries his dreams of writing and living glamorously on the French Riviera, is fascinated by the exploits of a legendary girl who follows her dreams to absurd lengths: she jumps from a building (fortuitously rescued by Dr. Wilkinson) and from ships. When last seen, she is shot from a cannon as human dynamite. From 1923 to 1937, Dr. Wilkinson, "now a stout, baldish man of forty," reads of her activities in the newspapers. When he meets her fifteen years after her first jump, she is the Comtesse of Frejus, member of a circus troupe, preparing to be fired from the cannon. "For him this was the high point of a somewhat humdrum and defeated life--he felt a great excitement, almost a reverence in the face of the moment." He asks the Comtesse for a clue to the motivation for her exploits.

Here, the story lapses into archness and irrelevance as she replies, "I'm full of dynamite. I always thought I'd go off." She then literally explodes, killing herself as well as Dr. Wilkinson, and the narrator concludes, "And so another glamour girl passes into history."⁴

But in "Outside the Cabinet-Maker's," Fitzgerald gently explores the creative role of the imagination as it transforms an ordinary situation into a moment of beauty and delicacy. Here, by their fanciful projection into a fairyland, father and child share a rare moment of understanding and communication. They cannot enter one another's world, but through the power of their imaginations, the adult and child meet and touch for once on a neutral, enchanted ground. In the creative process, the artist (represented by the father) surrenders part of himself forever for something "which he had created, but whose luster and texture he could never see or touch any more himself."

In "Absolution," Father Schwarz's diseased mind reaches out to "something ineffably gorgeous" in the fairgrounds at night, something little Rudolph Miller knows has "nothing to do with God." The priest's imagination has been crushed by rigid religiosity. The "hot, fertile life" he sees in the amusement park he invests with all the romantic radiance his frustrated dreams and repressed sexuality can muster. But Rudolph Miller's life is just beginning. Religion, poverty, and hard-line morality do their best to destroy his romantic readiness, but his imagination is the restorative

that provides an outlet for his buried life. He becomes Blatchford Sarnemington, with "suave nobility" flowing from him, living "in great sweeping triumphs." Rudolph recognizes that there is no place for Blatchford Sarnemington within the scheme of Father Schwarz's world. Romance, for the boy, is something that lies outside, somewhere in the world, far from the confessional booth. Rudolph's imagination saves him from Father Schwarz's fate. The priest has grown insane through years of thwarted hopes and suppressed desire. His mind, warped and twisted, still turns dimly to his own unfulfilled adolescent dreams, evoked again by the "rustle of Swede girls along the path by his window" and their "shrill laughter" which creates a "terrible dissonance" in his soul. Fitzgerald suggests that in Rudolph's perception of Father Schwarz's insanity and in his commitment to his own dreams lies freedom--the possibility of their realization.

Fitzgerald offers as a corollary, in a number of stories, that since the imagination can enrich life and infuse each moment with excitement and adventure, we should not live only in our dreams, but we should seize each moment as it comes and make romance out of daily life. Moments of beauty are rare; we must value them for their transiency and affirm the worth of every minute and hour of our lives.

If, however, we live oblivious to the beauty and grace that life can hold, in later years we, like Dr. Wilkinson, may look back in despair and regret on our unlived lives,

on waste, profligacy and unfulfillment. And we will forever wonder what we missed and why, and try unsuccessfully to go back and recapture what we never had. Or, having briefly tasted romance, we will spend ourselves, like Gatsby, in "desperate or ecstatic nostalgia."⁵ But the choice is not ours alone. Fitzgerald illuminates the sources of individual despair which reside in the community, blocking his heroes' paths when they try to reach out and achieve a richer life.

Fitzgerald once wrote in his notebooks (extrapolated from "Six of One"), "After all, any given moment has its value; it can be questioned in the light of after-events, but the moment remains. The young prince in velvet gathered in lonely domesticity around the queen amid the hush of rich draperies may presently grow up to be Pedro the Cruel or Charles the Mad, but the moment of beauty was there."⁶ His insistence on the necessity of cherishing and fixing forever in our memories those few blissful moments that life affords is an important motif in the stories and essays. Although his early treatment of the theme emphasizes the moment more than its passing, he carries with him always, even as a very young man, a tragic sense; the knowledge that bliss is ephemeral adds a poignant note to his annals of young love, and intensity to his descriptions of the moments of perfection. (Later, he works out his despair in his fiction by exploring the relationship between the blissful moment and the passage of time.)

In "The Offshore Pirate," Fitzgerald relies on the romantic, fin de siecle mood which he popularizes in This Side of Paradise. Ardita's bravura words and gestures are too stylized within the conventions of the genteel tradition for complete fictional credibility. Paradise is the first flush of love, when all the beauty in the world seems to be contained in a kiss: "Her sigh was a benediction--an ecstatic surety that she was youth and beauty now as much as she would ever know. For another instant life was radiant and time a phantom and their strength eternal." Although Ardita knows that the lines of the popular song in the background are true,

Time is a thief
Gladness and grief
Cling to the leaf as it yellows--

she insists that her lover maintain the fiction that now is forever, the lie by which life may be made bearable. "I want you to lie to me just as sweetly as you know how for the rest of my life."

Similarly, when the lovers' embrace in "A Penny Spent" transports them beyond time, and "all the world turned to blue and silver, or else this was not the world, but a delightful enchantment in which they would dwell forever," the effect is that of conventional romantic fiction.

Fitzgerald is saddened by the unawareness of happiness at the moment it is experienced. If we only knew how happy we were then, he seems to say, the rest of our lives might have been different, and better. This theme may be found

in all of the Basil Duke Lee stories, notably in "Basil and Cleopatra" where the narrator interpolates the significance of the moment which not only Basil, but "most Americans" are "seldom able to grasp...that this is the golden time... the great equation by which everything else will be measured."

Mrs. Clark, in "No Flowers," looks back sadly from middle age to the happiest day of her youth, regretting that she did not know then how brief her happiness was to be: "And just think...that was all I was ever going to have... those few minutes--and I didn't know it until they were over." She tries to instruct the young people that happiness lies in the present: "'It's now, right now,' she wanted to cry out to them. 'It's today, tonight; use it well.'"

But for Fitzgerald, happiness is no more satisfactory when we know that it is to fade than when we think it will last forever. Dexter Green's ecstatic moments with Judy Jones are, he knows, destined to end as abruptly as they began, but there is even less comfort for him in the knowledge that happiness is ephemeral than in the illusion that the moment will live forever. Like the others, Dexter mourns the passing moment: "Why these things were no longer in the world! They had existed and they existed no longer There was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time."

Josephine Perry, unlike most of Fitzgerald's characters, knows that she must seize the moment. She realizes early that beauty and charm fade quickly, "that any value she

might have was in the immediate shimmering present" and she spends her days pursuing momentary pleasures, trying to infuse every minute of her life with enchantment and romance. In a very short time, Josephine becomes emotionally bankrupt, no longer able to experience the happiness she has been seeking. Fitzgerald implies that although we should seize the moment and value bliss all the more for its transiency, we must also savor it, treasure its rarity and not cheapen our priceless moments by attempting to duplicate them.

Fitzgerald is as concerned with the unlived life as he is with the value of precious moments of happiness. He constructs many stories around the theme of frustrated and barren lives, of expectations unfulfilled and happiness untasted. To have had youth without the pleasures that belong to it is a source of irreconcilable sadness for him:

She hesitated before the wide horizon of how she might have lived. How she might have married this man, borne him children, died for him, of how she had lived out of sordid poverty and education...into spinsterhood. And she cared not a damn for her man any more because he had never gone off with her ("Three Acts of Music").

Orrison Brown, in "The Lost Decade," is appalled at the loss of ten years in a man's life. Just as the recovered drunkard in the story wants to barrage his senses with palpable life--"to see how people walk and what their clothes and shoes and hats are made of. And their eyes and hands...to shake hands"--Orrison, in a wave of horror, needs to feel "the texture of his own coat" and "the granite of

the building by his side" to convince himself of the reality of his own existence.

Life without happiness may be bearable if one is unaware of what he is missing and lives under the illusion that his life is really rich and romantic. When Nancy Lamar kisses Jim, "The Jelly-Bean," he feels at once a "vague and romantic yearning," and sees the possibility of a fuller life opening up before him. But his awakening to the awareness of a richer existence robs him of the illusions that until now have made his life endurable: "The casualness, the light-hearted improvidence, the miraculous open-handedness of life faded out." Nancy's world is barred to Jim and he sinks back into idle drifting days and evenings lounging at the pool hall; without illusions, his will became another unlived life.

Again, in "The Long Way Out," Fitzgerald regards the unfulfilled life as supportable for the unknowing. In this brief, underplayed story of Mrs. King who refuses to accept the reality of her husband's death and spends her life in a mental hospital waiting expectantly every afternoon for his arrival, existence is a charade, neither happy nor unhappy, blissfully unconscious of anything save expectation. As the doctor remarks, "It's not an unhappy life as far as we know and in some funny way it seems to set an example of tranquillity to the other patients." To the beholder, Mrs. King's unlived life is a tragic waste; to her, it is unending promise and possibility.

Fitzgerald's heroes desire to return to the past not only to re-live former happiness, but by recapturing youth, to secure another chance to realize their dreams. (The sources of Fitzgerald's nostalgia are social as well as personal; later we shall explore it as a concomitant of the American success myth.)

The heroes of "Love Boat," "John Jackson's Arcady" and "Three Hours Between Planes," all approaching or in middle age, feel that they have not realized the expectations of their youth. Restless, uncertain, groping, not knowing exactly what they are looking for, they turn back to the actual scenes of former happiness--to their boyhood homes or the settings of their first love affairs--trying to recover the elusive quality that once gave focus to their lives.⁸

Bill, in "Love Boat," feels "a vast nostalgia," "a certain discontent, a sort of chemical restlessness" stealing over him on summer nights. The years roll back and "odd memories of his youth...come back to him," particularly memories of Mae Purley, the girl he fell in love with years ago on a moonlit excursion on a river boat. He has treasured his memories of Mae over the years, but when he meets her again, he realizes at once how unrelated has been his dream to reality. Mae's lack of distinction and sensitivity repel him; he sees his youthful memories shattered: she admits that far from having been broken-hearted by his departure years ago, she had had an equally serious love affair with one of his friends soon after he left. When Bill

returns home, he recognizes that his discontent is endemic to his style and time of life; his nostalgia was neither for Mae nor for young love, but was simply "a restless longing after fleeing youth," which through understanding, he can accept and perhaps even dispel.

John Jackson's discontent is less amorphous than Bill's. He identifies it as disillusion with the hypocrisy and meaninglessness of his success. He rejects the empty rituals and rules by which people live, scrambling for riches and good fortune. John Jackson, too, goes back to the past, to his home town, to recover the meaning and promise life once held for him:

Within these plain walls he had been incomparably happy. Here he had known and learned that kindness which he had carried into life. Here he had found the secret of those few simple decencies, so often invoked, so inimitable and so rare, which in the turmoil of a competitive industry had made him to coarser men a source of half-scoffing, half-admiring surprise. This was his house, because his honor had been born and nourished here; he had known every hardship of the country poor, but no preventable regret.

He seeks out Alice, the woman he had once loved, and finds her still pretty, but faded and worn, married and with a family. Together, they rekindle their old feeling: "John Jackson felt that he had established dominance over time itself, so that it rolled away from him, yielding up one vanished springtime after another to the mastery of his overwhelming emotion....For twenty hours he had recaptured the power of seeing things through a mist of hope...."

But time is against them. Alice, tempted to leave her

husband and family, in the end reneges. Both come to realize that the past is an unrecapturable vision.

John Jackson buries his questions about the quality of his life and the emptiness of his success. He takes up his respected position in the community, and the story, which starts as a searching examination of the symbols and myths of success, turns from nostalgia to a sentimental reconciliation. John Jackson's doubts are quickly dispelled by the adulation of the townspeople. He has faced his youth, discarded his memories, and ceased to speculate on the gulf that exists between hope and fulfillment. Although his spiritual malaise is more than a restless longing for lost youth, he, like Bill, settles for the present on its terms. The return to the past has had, for Bill and John Jackson, a restorative effect. It relieves their frustrations by allowing them to re-examine the bases of their dreams. They emerge reconciled with the present, quietly accepting life without the illusions of youth.

"Three Hours Between Planes" is a brief, anecdotal story about the inadequacy of nostalgia. For years, Donald Plant has remembered his childhood sweetheart: "It was the sleigh ride he remembered most and kissing her cool cheeks in the straw in one corner while she laughed up at the cold white stars." Now, at the airport for a brief stop in his home town, he calls her and after a short visit realizes that his romantic dreams are unrelated to hers, that all the while she has mistaken him for someone else. He learns

that he cannot go back, that the people we invest with our romantic illusions will fail us and prove unworthy of our dreams. Here, Fitzgerald sees life as a process of gradual disenchantment. "For five blinding minutes he had lived like a madman in two worlds at once. He had been a boy of twelve and a man of thirty-two, indissolubly and helplessly commingled. Donald had lost a good deal, too, in those hours between planes--but since the second half of life is a long process of getting rid of things, that part of the experience probably didn't matter."

Nostalgia is, in the stories preceding "The Crack-Up," enough for Fitzgerald. He does not permit his heroes to despair of life, but allows them through a moment of insight into the sources of disillusion, to face the present if not hopefully, at least resignedly. Nostalgia, as we noted in Chapter Four, is for a time a mode of belief for Fitzgerald; it is sufficient for him simply to go back to the past, to evoke the sounds, sights, sensations of youth and thus purge himself temporarily of longing. When the past no longer comforts, when the present is empty and meaningless and the future seems hopeless, nostalgia turns into despair and Fitzgerald ceases to envelop his lost illusions in a romantic mist.

In the last years, Fitzgerald tries less and less to go back to the past, but occasionally the old belief returns and with it new vitality and he re-lives yet once more his early success:

It was not Monte Carlo I was looking at. It was back into the mind of the young man with cardboard soles who had walked the streets of New York. I was him again--for an instant I had the good fortune to share his dreams, I who had no more dreams of my own. And there are still times when I creep up on him, surprise him on an autumn morning in New York or a spring night in Carolina when it is so quiet that you can hear a dog barking in the next county. But never again as during that all too short period when he and I were one person, when the fulfilled future and the wistful past were mingled in a single gorgeous moment--when life was literally a dream ("Early Success").

Morality: Personal Morality, Shifting Moral Standards;
The Generation Gap; Erosion of Values; "Character,"
Education, Psychology and Religion as Moral Standards;
"Aristocracy"

Van Wyck Brooks takes Fitzgerald to task for not portraying an alternative to the decadent world of the very rich, for not offering to his readers an environment where hard work, industry and learning are the accepted social values.⁹ Fitzgerald epitomizes the "truncated lives" of twentieth century American writers who fail because they do not know how to live, how to be, in Fitzgerald's words, better "caretakers of their talent." Brooks suggests that Fitzgerald retains the point of view of "the spellbound boy who could only say 'The very rich are different from us.'" Implicit in his criticism is the notion that Fitzgerald is unable to distinguish between and even shares the questionable values by which so many of his characters live.

The inaccuracy of Brooks' assumption is immediately apparent to anyone who has ever read The Great Gatsby. Marius Bewley notes, "Fitzgerald's illustration of the

emptiness of Daisy's character--an emptiness that we see curdling into the viciousness of a monstrous moral indifference as the story unfolds--is drawn with a fineness and depth of critical understanding, and communicated with a force of imagery so rare in modern American writing, that it is almost astonishing that he is often credited with giving in to those very qualities which The Great Gatsby so effectively excoriates."¹⁰

Fitzgerald is, as Lionel Trilling writes, "a moralist to the core."¹¹ Throughout the stories and essays, he searches steadily for moral order, weighing always the "social virtues, like popularity, charm and success," against "the more lasting moral values"¹² which Brooks charges him with ignoring.

At first, as we have seen in "Sentiment and the Use of Rouge," Fitzgerald tests the efficacy of the old, conventional morality as a guide to modern life. As he finds it less and less relative to the needs of the individual in a bewilderingly complex society, he examines the values which have supplanted them and finds them equally irrelevant, unsatisfying and indeed more detrimental to individual and society than the old. After studying other public truths, the values that inform education, religion and psychology, and even trying to define an aristocracy of the spirit, he realizes that the answer to the quest for moral order is the adoption of a private and personal code of "character," composed of "hardness," stoicism, struggle and a sense of

responsibility--along with, paradoxically, a romantic readiness, imagination that can transform reality, and a "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life." But because finally the latter cancels out everything else, because Fitzgerald finds it impossible to be at once stoical and romantic, the end is despair, disillusion and the cessation of struggle.

"Benediction," "Dalrymple Goes Wrong," "The Four Fists" and "Hot and Cold Blood" are among Fitzgerald's early efforts to examine the morality of individual behavior. In "Benediction," he raises the question in terms of sex: shall Lois, the flapper, reject moral laxity, as represented by a planned assignation, in favor of the code her brother Keith, a monk, offers in its stead--self-sacrifice, dedication to abstract "goodness," faith in God? Through Keith's insistent lectures, the idealized picture of monastery life, the conflict within Lois between faith and disbelief and its symbolic embodiment in the candle on the altar, the story leads up to Lois' renunciation of the new morality. But Fitzgerald is not at all sure about the ultimate satisfactions to be derived from faith and good works. At the end, Lois, although apparently chastened and subdued by her spiritual crisis in the chapel, tears up the telegram cancelling her tryst. It would seem that for all the heavy moralizing of his monk, neither Fitzgerald nor his heroine has been convinced. The ending, however, is less serious than the rest of the story; it functions as a mechanical

reversal, inexplicable in terms of characterization (we are given no clue to the resurgence of Lois' doubts), unconvincing in relation to the carefully architected plot and manifestly serious theme.

Fitzgerald treats the problem of individual ethics ironically in "Dalrymple Goes Wrong." Bryan Dalrymple learns about personal morality by observing business ethics. He exploits his new knowledge to secure an advantageous position in society, even though it means "cutting corners--rejecting the old childhood principles that success came from faithfulness to duty, that evil was necessarily punished or virtue necessarily rewarded--that honest poverty was happier than corrupt riches."

"The Four Fists" is a straightforward morality tale which Fitzgerald regarded as "a plant, a moral tale" that "utterly lacks vitality."¹³ Unlike his other morality stories, it raises no questions and expresses no doubts about the validity of the old, solid virtues. The hero, Samuel, is a symbolic figure incorporating common human frailties. During his lifetime, he receives four physical blows directed against his brashness, snobbishness, selfishness and immorality. At the end of each of the story's four sections, Fitzgerald interpolates a sermon on the moral significance of the physical blow in which each section culminates. The situations are pat and predictable, the characterization weak and unimpressive. More important, the development of theme is over-simplified and trivial.

Similarly, in "Hot and Cold Blood," the obvious lesson, that generosity and prudence are the only proper moral guideposts, that following the golden mean should be the major standard for personal conduct, is inartistically developed. Kenneth Eble correctly dismisses the story: "Fitzgerald never wrote a worse scene or created a falser situation than the one in 'Hot and Cold Blood' in which the hero refuses to give up his street car seat for a woman who turns out to be his pregnant wife."¹⁴

Of the four stories cited above (and "The Lees of Happiness" might be included), only "Dalrymple Goes Wrong" is entirely satisfying, suggesting that Fitzgerald is on safer ground when he approaches the problem of morality ironically and humorously, eschewing both the heavy-handed moralizing of "The Four Fists" and the superficial coyness of "Hot and Cold Blood" and the ending of "Benediction."

In the apprentice "The Debutante," and throughout his later work, Fitzgerald sees a source of the erosion of personal standards in the example set by the generation immediately preceding his own. He finds the grandparents of his generation firmer, stronger, more self-reliant than their vacillating, self-deluding children. Both the debutante's and Josephine Perry's parents are platitudinous, fluttering and ineffectual, unable to understand and unwilling to confront the new currents in society that have led young people to daring, iconoclastic social relationships. At least adults raised in the nineteenth century according

to the traditions of the genteel age had standards which enabled them to act forcefully. The parents of the new generation are bewildered, lost in the uncertainty and nervousness of post-war America, too timid even to face their loss. Marjorie, in "No Flowers," respects her grandmother "of the gilded age as being less insulated from realities than her mother of the golden age"; she appreciates the "new consciousness of noblesse oblige in this tin age of struggle that her mother would not have understood."

Forrest Winslow ("A Freeze-Out") too deplores his parents' moral ambiguities. Their morality is pragmatic, ritualistic, empty, forever following the herd. His father, at first unalterably opposed to admitting the parvenu Rikker family to his exclusive social club, reverses his position, not because of a latent democratic instinct but solely as a measure of "good business."

"As a matter of fact, they got by. The club has got rather mixed anyhow in the last five years--a good many queer people in it. And, after all, in a club you don't have to know anybody you don't want to. The other people on the committee felt the same way."

"I see," said Forrest dryly. "Then you didn't argue against the Rikkers?"

"Well, no. The thing is I do a lot of business with Walter Hannan, and it happened yesterday I was obliged to ask him rather a difficult favor."

"So you traded with him." To both father and son, the word "traded" sounded like traitor.

"Not exactly. The matter wasn't mentioned."

"I understand," Forrest said. But he did not understand, and some old childhood faith in his father died at that moment.

Forrest then measures his parents' fluctuating standards against those of his grandmother and finds them wanting:

Old Mrs. Forrest was entirely solid; with convictions based on a way of life that had worked for eighty-four years. She was a character in the city; she remembered the Sioux war and she had been in Stillwater the day the James brothers shot up the main street. Her own children were dead and she looked on these remoter descendants from a distance, oblivious of the forces that had formed them. She understood that the Civil War and the opening up of the West were forces, while the free-silver movement and the World War had reached her only as news. But she knew that her father, killed at Cold Harbor, and her husband, the merchant, were larger in scale than her son or her grandson. People who tried to explain contemporary phenomena to her seemed, to her, to be talking against the evidence of their own senses. Yet she was not atrophied; last summer she had traveled over half of Europe with only a maid.

Forrest's father and mother were something else again. They had been in the susceptible middle thirties when the cocktail party and its concomitants arrived in 1921. They were divided people, leaning forward and backward. Issues that presented no difficulty to Mrs. Forrest caused them painful heat and agitation.

In his disenchantment with his parents' values, he feels "something precious...being frayed away, his youthful companionship with his father and his love and trust for his mother." His parents recognize but are unable to combat the erosion of their own principles:

His mother sat helplessly, knowing that what he said was true. She and her husband and all their friends had no principles. They were good or bad according to their natures; often they struck attitudes remembered from the past, but they were never sure as her father or her grandfather had been sure. Confusedly she supposed it was something about religion. But how could you get principles just by wishing for them?

In a moving little sketch, "The Death of my Father,"

Fitzgerald sees in his own father traces of the old early-American standards Grandmother Winslow affirms.¹⁵ Edward Fitzgerald was neither authoritative nor impressive; he came from "tired old stock with very little left of vitality and mental energy" but his son attests that "he managed to raise a little for me." His father lived with the grace and gentility now so rudely assaulted by the new generation. Fitzgerald says that his father was "my only moral guide." When he was a child, he did not understand why other younger men did not offer his father the respect to which Fitzgerald believed he was entitled. "But I know now. There was new young peasant stock coming up every ten years and he was of the generation of the colonies and the revolution."

Like Dick Diver in Tender Is the Night, Fitzgerald mourns in the death of his father the further decline of that spiritual aristocracy of which America was once proud.

Deploring the end of an era, he turns his attention directly to contemporary society, searching for something in the present to replace the outworn values of the past. What he sees appalls and affronts him. In "What a Handsome Pair," he suggests that what passes for a successful marriage, being a "handsome pair," with charm, good looks and athletic prowess, may not provide the abiding values, may, in fact, lead the married couple to live for their audience rather than themselves. By cultivating purely superficial attributes, his characters forget that marriage

involves the whole person, feeling as well as façade. (A subsidiary theme is the likelihood that two people drawn together by similar interests may compete rather than complement each other and thus destroy their marriage and even themselves.)

Although in "The Hotel Child" Fitzgerald suggests that the fading, spineless and sycophantic European minor nobility has lost its values by playing up to nouveau riche Americans, the latter are equally unimpressive. Lacking transmitted culture and refinement, they do not know how to use their wealth gracefully and purposefully. Very much like Daisy Miller's family in the Henry James story, the Schwartz family is rich but rootless, seeking an amorphous "culture" and acceptance by a dissolute European aristocracy for whom they represent figures out of low comedy:

In all events, the Schwartzes were going home. For three years they had lived in hotels --in Paris, Florence, St. Raphael, Como, Vichy, La Baule, Lucerne, Baden-Baden and Biarritz. Everywhere there had been schools--always new schools--and both children spoke in perfect French and scrawny fragments of Italian. Fifi had grown from a large-featured child of fourteen to a beauty; John had grown into something rather dismal and lost. Both of them played bridge, and somewhere Fifi had picked up tap dancing. Mrs. Schwartz felt that it was all somehow unsatisfactory, but she did not know why.

"The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" and "The World's Fair" examine contemporary values more searchingly: the twelve men of Fish, living amid a wasteland, represent barren human life, life without either religion or the capacity for wonder.¹⁶

"There remained in them none of the vital quality of illusion...the men of Fish were beyond all religion."

Fitzgerald describes the gradual corruption of values in America from Hades, John Ungar's home, where the people worship only riches, to the final enunciation in Braddock Washington's credo: "Cruelty doesn't exist where self-preservation is involved."

In "World's Fair," Fitzgerald traces the dislocation of values in contemporary life, particularly as it manifests itself in sexual aberration. Spiritual rootlessness is the core of dissolution; the characters cannot find a mainstay either in love or sex and so they drift, stimulated sporadically by a new face or a new--and often aberrant--sexual interest. Francis remarks to Dinah and Seth Piper: "You'll both be tired of me soon...I hear you get tired of everybody." And Dinah replies, "No, it's just that you have quarrels or you go to new places and then you like the people that you see most of--don't you think?"

Francis is repelled by his encounter with two Lesbians, preferring even "Hollywood's bizarre variations on the normal...George Collins on the phone ordering twelve beautiful girls for dinner, none over nineteen," to the more sophisticated brand of corruption he finds in Paris. Yet even Francis' judgments are questionable. Because in spite of their obvious corruption, he regards Dinah and Seth as "perfect," Francis' reliability as central intelligence is dubious. The fragment (originally written as a section of

a larger work of fiction--"Our Type"--intended as a novel, but abandoned) concerns not only the dissolution around him, but the deterioration of Francis himself--a corruptible young man whose values reside in the superficial charm of the Pipers.

Charm is itself an important value in Fitzgerald's fiction, not only in the Pipers who are early variations of Dick and Nicole Diver (Tender Is the Night), but in "Magnetism" and "A New Leaf," where the heroes effortlessly attract women to them and fail to realize that charm must be responsible for its influence on others:

"You drew people right up close to you and held them there, not able to move either way...You can't control charm. It's simply got to be used. You've got to keep your hand in if you have it, and go through life attaching people to you that you don't want" ("Magnetism").

In several stories, "On Schedule," "Diagnosis," "Flight and Pursuit," and "Between Three and Four," Fitzgerald briefly looks to education and psychology to provide new values. But he merely picks up and then discards the theories of disciplined education (developed much more effectively in his letters to his daughter than in "On Schedule") and psychoanalysis ("Diagnosis") as substitutes for his heroes' eroded values.

Fitzgerald also explores the idea of aristocracy--is it a natural quality, residing in the spirit of a rare human being, or is it a carefully-nurtured facade, the patina of wealth and social advantages? Is aristocracy the life that only great wealth allows or is it one that is equally

accessible to the sensitive individual? In "The Offshore Pirate," Curtis Carlyle, the imposter-outsider, learns to think of aristocracy as the beauty that inevitably accompanies riches: "'I've always wanted to be rich--and to buy all this beauty.'" In short, he wanted all those things which he was beginning to lump under the general head of aristocracy, an aristocracy which it seemed almost any money could buy except money as he was making it." Curtis' conception of aristocracy has not always depended on money; once he believed that "the sweat and mud [of the infantry]" seemed "one of those ineffable symbols of aristocracy that were forever eluding him." Curtis Carlyle's tale of lost illusions parallels Fitzgerald's exploration of the meaning of natural aristocracy. The conflict within him between rival claims--aristocracy of the spirit versus aristocracy of wealth--is omnipresent throughout the stories. In his disillusion, he seeks to replace the values common to his society with a completely personal ethical standard; he ultimately exchanges moribund social values for a personal brand of heroism--in itself an aristocracy of the spirit.

At the end of "Two Wrongs," Bill McChesney remarks of his wife, "She was a fine girl--one of the best. She had character." Although he does not strictly define "character," Fitzgerald is plainly intrigued by the subject and attaches to it a wide range of significance. When he finds conventional moral standards wanting, Fitzgerald looks to the individual to develop his own moral code. He examines

heroism as one of its mainstays, conventionally at first, in terms of battlefield bravery and later, simply as a way of facing problems of daily life.

In "Diamond Dick," "Not in the Guidebook" and "What a Handsome Pair," heroism is closely allied to romanticized notions of courage and self-sacrifice. To the hero of "Diamond Dick," war is a glamorous adventure: "Nothing quite so intense or dramatic will ever happen to our generation again." His army days are the happiest in his life. The war has provided him with an arena for the heroism he feels is unnecessary and uncalled-for in ordinary living. He had made the war his private testing-ground and passed every trial brilliantly. "It was my war in a way...."

"Not in the Guidebook" examines the nature of conventional, romantic heroism, which resides, the heroine decides, not in constant brooding and celebrating a former hour of glory, but in modesty and self-sacrifice. Battlefield bravery, yes, but ennobled because unsung. And in "What a Handsome Pair," war offers Stuart an opportunity for the grand gesture--an act of surpassing self-sacrifice unavailable under any other circumstances. "He was a warrior; for him, peace was only the interval between wars, and peace was destroying him."

In the first two stories, Fitzgerald explores but does not completely reject his boyhood illusions about the nature of personal heroism, the feeling that one needs the proper setting to evoke latent seeds of greatness. Many of Basil Duke Lee's efforts are directed to creating just such

arenas for practicing heroism (although not in pitched battle). The war is a handy proving-ground, but in "What a Handsome Pair," Fitzgerald indicates that it is an artificial one as well. It may be the solution for the ineffectual man who cannot succeed at the less spectacular opportunities offered by peace: perhaps heroism is more complex and more difficult than he had always envisioned it. The flamboyant individual action, he suggests, may be merely one kind of heroism and although a few characters in the short stories, as well as Amory Blaine in This Side of Paradise, regret that they have not actively participated in battle, most find the meaning of heroism in a totally dissimilar direction.

Fitzgerald's conception of heroism involves not only stoical, unweeping endurance, a sense of responsibility, and discipline--similar to Hemingway's "grace under pressure"--but romantic defiance as well. Ardita expresses this last quality very well in "The Offshore Pirate": "My courage is faith--faith in the eternal resilience of me--that joy'll come back, and hope and spontaneity. And I feel that till it does I've got to keep my lips shut and my chin high, and my eyes wide--not necessarily any silly smiling." Courage means being through hell, "without a whine."¹⁷

It means, too, being a professional in life as in art, living the best way one knows how for the reward only of a job well done. The moral element tied up with Fitzgerald's idea of personal courage is that struggle is necessary, even

salutary in building character and preventing the listlessness of those who have never faced the necessity of exertion.

Bernice ("Bernice Bobs Her Hair") learns that she has strength enough to carry her through her ordeal, that she is tougher, harder than she has ever realized and that the satisfactions derived from squarely facing difficulties may even be reflected in others: pragmatically, personal courage may lead to social acceptance.

Michael Curly in "The Bridal Party," sees new stature in the way Caroline and Hamilton meet adversity, "as if defying ill-luck and fate and the future," they "descended the stairway...each with a glass of champagne held defiantly on high." And Fifi Schwartz ("The Hotel Child"), rejects the "fetid and mercurial world of the weak, of the leaners together," knowing that she "would pierce the alien sky and find her own way through envy and corruption."

In "Dalrymple Goes Wrong," Fitzgerald treats the subject ironically: hardness has commercially rather than spiritually redemptive value. Hardness (which Fitzgerald associates with courage) means casting aside old illusions of morality and acting solely on the principle of self-interest; it means "cutting corners." Fitzgerald rejects, like Dalrymple, the notion that virtue will be materially rewarded in this life, but he does not cast aside the belief that virtue is its own reward, if by virtue we mean simply those principles of personal behavior described above.

Dolly Harlan, in "The Bowl," expresses perfectly Fitzgerald's regard for professionalism. In words remarkably similar to the slang phrase of the sixties, "doing your thing," Dolly speaks of his playing football: "It's my stuff, don't you understand, Vienna? People have got to do their stuff." "Doing your stuff" means fulfilling your special talent or propensity according to the quiet virtues Dolly admires in the young actress, Daisy, "courage and independence...politeness based upon realities of cooperation."

It is the devotion of the nurse ("An Alcoholic Case") to her patient out of disinterested dedication to duty: "She was going to take care of him because nobody else would, and because the best people of her profession had been interested in taking care of the cases nobody else wanted." It is the "discipline on duty" which the heroine of "I Got Shoes" learned as a child and which stage children must learn if they are to succeed: "Struggle, sacrifice and heartburns of wriggling out of the backgrounds, and in being able to stand all sorts of hardship and tough contacts that they weren't fitted or brought up for." Those who never learn are the amateurs in their work and in their lives. Pamela, in "The Last Kiss," dies without realizing that "not blowing your lines" applies to life as much as to acting, that it means doing what one must and in the best possible way, without self-aggrandizement or self-indulgence.

Shortly before his death, in a letter to his daughter,¹⁸ Fitzgerald noted that "the redeeming things are not 'happiness and pleasure' but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle." He always believed that struggle, particularly for control over oneself and against crushing social humiliation, resulted in heightened awareness, sensitivity and even vitality, and that conversely, easy and early acquisition of "happiness and pleasure" led to passivity, inertia and deadening satiety. The Kellys deteriorate quickly ("One Trip Abroad"); seeking satisfaction in wastes of money, social success, superficial charm and good looks, they never learn discipline. Because they never have to struggle, they miss the "deeper satisfactions" of which Fitzgerald writes. Struggle makes the difference between Marjorie's generation ("No Flowers") and her mother's. Marjorie lives during a nationwide depression; unlike her mother, she cannot afford the luxury of sitting passively waiting for life to come to her. She is forced to go out beyond her sheltered world and participate directly in a battle for existence; somehow, she knows she will emerge stronger from it. Life, for her, must be lived without the luxuries that decorate and cushion; there are "no flowers" available for her party, no graceful retreat into romantic evasions. She is the antithesis of Josephine Perry ("First Blood"), born into one of Chicago's first families, who "accepted the proud world into which she was born," and "only wanted to want" certain pleasures. "Actually, she

had no desire for achievement."

In "Six of One," Fitzgerald suggests that the strong and vital will realize themselves not through some fairy godfather showering riches and opportunity on them, but through hard, unremitting effort, and that America is the ultimate beneficiary of their struggle to realize themselves at all costs and against all adversity. (Even though, in the fairy tales we have described in Chapter Two, the heroes seem content to have their futures determined by the munificence of others, Fitzgerald is not suggesting that this is an acceptable way of life. It is merely a plot device without serious or suggestive overtones.)

Basil Duke Lee's stars are "ambition, struggle and glory." The central situation in each Basil story is a two-fold struggle, within Basil for mastery over himself, and between Basil and society for social acceptance. In each situation, although rebuffed and humiliated by his own fatal penchant for self-advertising loquacity and an unwillingness to temper his romantic illusions about others, Basil grows in awareness and perceptivity, particularly of his own character and motives. In illuminating moments, he sees himself clearly at stages in the long, slow and infinitely difficult process of growing up. In "The Freshest Boy," he learns that "he had erred at the outset--he had boasted, he had been considered yellow at football, he had pointed out people's mistakes to them, he had shown off his rather extraordinary fund of general information in class."

And he learns too that his misery is not unique, that life, for the bravest and most popular, indeed "for everybody, was a struggle, sometimes magnificent from a distance, but always difficult and surprisingly simple and a little sad." He discovers too, eventually, that the rewards of struggle --awareness of oneself and others, compassion and courage-- are worth the suffering inevitably accompanying it.

For Fitzgerald, character also means acting responsibly toward oneself and others and accepting the consequences of irresponsible behavior. Charlie Wales, in "Babylon Revisited," says, "I spoiled this city for myself. I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone." Charlie Wales of the depression is no longer the same young man who coasted along on the joy-ride of the "boom." The story is about his exploration of the problems of character and responsibility, particularly the power of one's past to shape and determine his future. Against a background of change and dislocation wrought by social upheaval, the story of Charlie Wales is a search for latent values residing within the individual, values that provide the courage and resiliency to re-make a squandered life. And it is all based on character; Charlie "believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything wore out."

In the old days, all the "catering to vice and waste...

on an utterly childish scale," the dissipation--"dissipate ...to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something"--was the youthful attempt to live according to a romantic dream. But somehow the emphasis was all wrong: the parties, the waste, the drinking, the attempt to acquire grace through the frenzied pursuit of the symbols of a society drunk with the headiness of speculation--the happy reassuring knowledge while it lasted that "we were a sort of royalty almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us." They tried to build permanency out of pleasure, to stop time by losing themselves in the oblivion of drink or drugs, but they conquered neither themselves nor time. Charlie is left to examine the ruin of the past, to discover what, if anything, is worth the survival. He admits, "I lost everything I wanted in the boom," and his one hope for the future is continuity of character, as if by passing on to his daughter some lesson from his past, he will thus preserve part of himself in her. "Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly." Through Honoria, he tries to redeem irresponsibility to himself, to her, and to his dead wife.

"Babylon Revisited" is not a simple morality tale. Charlie is acutely sensitive to himself and to the Peters, to their abrasive reactions to one another. He is eager to assume the responsibility for Honoria's life and for his own. But "character" does not insure happiness for Charlie Wales. In "Babylon Revisited," his most moving statement

on the subject, Fitzgerald indicates that it is strictly a mode of individual survival, that not only may character not bring Charlie happiness along with his newly-discovered values, it may even intensify his despair and corrode his hopes.

Fitzgerald goes on to ask if character may enable the individual to achieve successful relationships with others. Is living according to a personal code made up of courage, endurance, the willingness to struggle, and the recognition of responsibility the answer for the individual in his dealings with society? Obviously not, and for two reasons: first, because although Fitzgerald clearly recognizes the worth of personal values, he is fully aware that "pleasure and success" are equally attractive and even more powerful determinants of individual behavior; and second, that as Basil Duke Lee finds out ("He Thinks He's Wonderful"), "Others had wills as strong as his own and more power" and that the private and personal code may prove less effective than we expect in establishing and maintaining close relationships with other people. In a letter to the woman with whom he had recently had an affair, Fitzgerald explicitly states his belief in a code of duty: "There are emotions just as important as ours running concurrently with them-- and there is literally no standard in life other than a sense of duty....You have got to be good....But if you are not good, if you don't preserve a sense of comparative values, those qualities turn against you--and your love is a mess and your courage is a slaughter."¹⁹

Love, Sex and Marriage

Many of F. Scott Fitzgerald's short stories might attest to the accuracy of Leslie Fiedler's celebrated and simplistic charge that American writers of fiction have never depicted mature love between men and women.²⁰ It is a paradox that the writer whose fame rests in large measure on his popular "love stories" should prove, in these efforts, inadequate to the subject. In the novels after This Side of Paradise as well as in a handful of the stories ("Crazy Sunday," "One Trip Abroad," "The Rough Crossing" are good examples) Fitzgerald does question the stability of a love based solely on glamor, and he eventually envisions love as something more than Basil Duke Lee's superficial notion of romantic bliss. But in the fictional world of many of his early popular love stories, love is tied to so many social values like money, physical beauty and popularity that deeper problems of sexuality and feeling are skirted in his generally conventional treatment. Thus, while these works create the perfect ambience for romantic love plots, Fitzgerald handles the theme no more searchingly than the typical Hollywood movie of the twenties or thirties.

In "An Adolescent Marriage," Fitzgerald suggests that there is more to love than the handsome knight carrying off the languishing maiden. The hero realizes that romance is not enough to build a marriage on, that "marriage meant the complicated adjustment of two lives to each other, and that love is a small part only of the long marriage day." But

Fitzgerald quickly drops the question of emotional compatibility and places the blame for the marital break-up on poverty--on "those barren rooms in which they were so miserable together." The subliminal theme is that love blooms best in an attractive atmosphere; it must wilt or die if one has to worry about creature comforts.

"Love in the Night," too, describes the effects of poverty on young love. Val experiences the bliss of first love on a moonlit April night: "First love--this was only first love! What must love itself in its fullness, its perfection be. He did not know that what he was experiencing then, that unreal, undesirous medley of ecstasy and peace, would be unrecapturable forever." Val's happiness fades quickly with the change in his fortunes. Newly-impooverished, he is no longer an eligible member of the society that appropriates to itself romance, beauty and charm--now only distant memories for Val:

He wore cheap French clothes now instead of the rich tweeds and flannels that had been ordered with his father's from England. As for women, he knew none at all. Of the many things he had been certain about at seventeen, he had been most certain about this--that his life would be full of romance. Now after eight years he knew that it was not to be. Somehow he had never had time for love--the war, the revolution and now his poverty had conspired against his expectant heart....He saw himself growing older and more shabby, and living always more and more in the memories of his gorgeous boyhood....He was thinking these gloomy thoughts one April evening in 1922 as he walked beside the sea and watched the never-changing magic of the awakening lights. It was no longer for his benefit, that magic, but it went on, and he was somehow glad. Tomorrow he was going away on his vacation, to a cheap hotel farther down

the shore where he could bathe and rest and read;
then he would come back and work some more.

Val does not challenge his inadmissibility to the enchanted world in which love flourishes. He accepts the silver yachts, the exquisite clothes, the world of moonlight and music simply as necessary "trappings of love in the night," and like the rest of Fitzgerald's typical young outsiders, waits hopefully for his fortunes to soar and with them his prospects for re-discovering love and romance.

Despite the prominence of love as a subject of his short fiction, Fitzgerald is much more interested in marriages that have little to do with love. And he is more successful when he explores questions of privacy, freedom and responsibility in marriage than he is in depicting a simple love affair. His love stories are so taken up with lush romantic settings and convoluted plot movements that relationships between characters are skimpy and undeveloped. Too, Fitzgerald has little more to say about love than describing the unrecapturable moment when the elusive beauty and personal magnetism of a Judy Jones or a Minnie Bibble are surrendered to his heroes. Love is indeed the moment; it is as if Fitzgerald refuses to look beyond perfection. As one of the characters in "No Flowers" decides, "This was living ...this was Now....It was love for love's sake that she wanted." Love for love's sake: Fitzgerald does not easily move beyond it.

The contrast between his explicit treatment of sex in Tender Is the Night, The Last Tycoon and "World's Fair,"

and his circumspection in the short stories, suggests that in this one area, Fitzgerald was guided by the conventions of popular magazine fiction, and underplayed sex. Sex is an undercurrent, never the central problem of the stories. The Basil Duke Lee stories trace a young boy's awakening to the first stirrings of sexual interest with muted sensitivity. In "Absolution," sex is important in its denial: Father Schwarz's frustrated sexuality, goaded by the sight of Swede girls who pass by, finds its outlet in his feverish dreams of the amusement park. In "The Intimate Strangers," Fitzgerald implies that sex is the basis of "the old electrical attraction" between hero and heroine, but he avoids the problems posed by an explicit statement by making music equally as significant a part of their relationship as sex. In the conventional love stories, "The Offshore Pirate," "Love Boat," "Love in the Night," "Flight and Pursuit," sex is of the Hollywood variety: a glimpse of the loved one, instant mutual adoration--based on the physical beauty of each--consummation in a kiss, while violins or guitars serenade in the background, and then--fade-out.

One explanation for Fitzgerald's inability to treat love adequately in the stories is the immaturity of his portrayal of sex. In the later stories, neither love nor sex are even peripheral themes; Fitzgerald apparently reserved his treatment of sex for the novels except for a few brief moments in "Crazy Sunday," "Winter Dreams" and a handful of other stories. ("The World's Fair" is not an exception

since it was planned as part of a novel.) In The Last Tycoon, the relationship between Monroe Stahr and Kathleen, despite its conventional romanticism, grows into a mature love culminating naturally in sexual union which Fitzgerald describes with understated delicacy.

Fitzgerald does explore carefully a major theme related to love and sex: the problem of communication, particularly in marriage. In the stories of his middle period, from 1929 to the mid-thirties, he is noticeably conscious of the inability of people who, despite marital and familial ties, cannot reach one another. He looks beyond the isolated situation for a solution within the community. Most of the stories of this period are diffuse, poorly plotted and mechanical, but they have a great deal to say, and frequently contain multiple themes. Fitzgerald applies the old structures and techniques that come easily to him, to new and serious ideas. Thus, while these stories are less successful artistically than those that develop one theme, they are among Fitzgerald's most interesting efforts.²¹

"The Rough Crossing" is the story of Eva and Adrian Smith who leave America for Europe in a desperate effort to recover "the secret of graceful living, some real compensation for the lost, careless confidence of twenty-one." In the last few years, Eva has become painfully aware that their love is not enough for Adrian; as his interest wanders, their relationship deteriorates. Although they still manage, in the excitement of embarkation, to recapture something of

their old feeling for one another, their rapport has virtually disappeared. "...Even as he strained her against his side she knew that the moment of utter isolation had passed almost before it had begun." As soon as they board ship, "his antennae were already out, feeling over this new world."

Underneath Adrian's insatiable craving for admiration and Eva's frantic effort to blot out his incipient infidelity with drink, lies the fear of emptiness, the suspicion they share that perhaps there is really no future for them and that the past is merely a chimera. Their antics on the ship are born out of sheer desperation--filling up time to avoid facing their individual isolation. They can no longer communicate with each other and neither has been able to find a substitute for the romance and youth they have lost. Eva's hope that "the little villa in Brittany, the children learning French" might bring them closer together seems childishly simple in the loneliness of her cabin. "She repeated the words over and over to herself until they became as meaningless as the wide, white sky. The why of their being there had suddenly eluded her; she felt unmotivated, accidental, and she wanted Adrian to come back quick, all responsive and tender, to reassure her." But Adrian is busy re-living his youth with nineteen-year-old Betsy d'Amido, who informs him, "I fell in love with you the minute I saw you," possibly a parody of Adrian's and Eva's first meeting, and a suggestion of the flimsy basis of their love. As Eva

sees her husband's relationship with Betsy deepen, her last trace of control vanishes and she surrenders completely to drink. At the complete deterioration of the Smiths' marriage, the storm outside which all along has reflected their troubled relationship (like the use of the storm in "One Trip Abroad"), bursts upon the ship with a fury equal to Eva's despair.

Two days later, on a boat train to Paris, Adrian and Eva, tentatively re-united, look back on their rough crossing in disbelief, but their marriage has been profoundly shaken; despite their attempt to deny it, their future together looks bleak and unpromising:

"Who do you suppose those Adrian Smiths on the boat were?" he demanded. "It certainly wasn't me."

"Nor me."

"It was two other people--There are so many Smiths in this world."

The problems raised in "The Rough Crossing" are not resolved, but Fitzgerald continues to explore them in a number of other stories. Nicole and Nelson Kelly's marriage ("One Trip Abroad") had been "a love match...and it could stand a great deal. She and Nelson had passed lonely youths, and now they wanted the taste and smell of the living world; for the present they were finding it in each other." Fitzgerald suggests here, as in "The Rough Crossing," that something may be seriously wrong with the basis of their relationship; the Kellys, like the Smiths, are diminished through marriage. When they try to escape their problems by going out into the world, they invariably select the one

kind of activity that further isolates them from each other and ultimately wrecks their marriage.

Fitzgerald locates the source of the Kellys' deterioration in their flimsy values: the emphasis has all along been misplaced. Neither separation from others nor absorption in leisure-class activities lends the stamina life requires. Only work, discipline and duty make survival and growth possible, for an individual and a marriage. Love is distinctly not enough for the Kellys, any more than for the Smiths. And significantly, Fitzgerald tentatively suggests that the blissful "first love" he formerly celebrated is unequal to the demands of marriage.

"What a Handsome Pair" is a variation on themes of marital compatibility and marital values, but it bogs down hopelessly under the weight of diverging themes: the nature of sportsmanship, the meaning of heroism, and the bases of male-female attraction. "Two Wrongs" blames the dissolution of a marriage on the egotism of the husband, his susceptibility to the appeal of arrogant British nobility, and his accompanying irresponsibility toward his wife. Although ostensibly about a marriage, it is primarily a story of one man's character rather than the relationship between husband and wife.

Near the end of "The Intimate Strangers," Sara thinks about her marriage, "trying to accept the fact that a part of Killian and a part of herself would always be strangers." After an attempt to find a basis for communication in

marriage, Fitzgerald implies (in "Image on the Heart" and "Design in Plaster" as well) that there are regions within the individual that should remain inviolate even from his mate, that nothing destroys a marriage so much as the attempt by one member to enter completely into the other's private, personal world. It is sufficient, Fitzgerald indicates, that we retain the ability to communicate perfectly on even one level, as Killian and Sara do through their music. Sara struggles to draw closer to Killian than music and even sex allow, but he is unwilling to surrender to her the part of himself he regards as having died with his first wife. Sara complains, "I've admired his bottle-green hunting coat and played minstrel show with him at parties, but we just don't communicate." When she sees him at the grave of his first wife, she realizes that their own marriage can last only if she ceases her efforts to absorb him completely and allows him the freedom he--and by implication everyone--needs for maturity and the growth of responsibility.

Thus, in "Image on the Heart," Tom marries Tudy without ever discovering the seriousness of her attachment to a handsome young French lieutenant who has been pursuing her. When she offers to call off the marriage because of Tom's jealousy, he realizes he must make a decision that will affect their future together. "He had to decide now not upon what was the truth, for that he would never know for certain, but upon the question as to whether he could now and forever put the matter out of his mind, or whether it would haunt their marriage like a ghost." He accepts the

fact that there are "images on her heart" that he will never discover, that their happiness depends on his not trying to know more than she is willing to reveal. At intervals, they may "come out of their separate selves" and be "cheerful together," but for the sake of their marriage, she must preserve the "unfathomable thoughts" that lie "in that obscure pool in the bottom of every woman's heart."

Martin, in "Design in Plaster," although separated from his wife, Mary, remains jealous of her friendships with others. Forced to remain at home, his broken leg in a cast, Martin anticipates Mary's daily visits. But his jealousy is self-destructive; it leads him to fantasize Mary's love for another man and goads him into self-pity and despair. He quarrels with her and later, after she leaves, pulls himself out of bed and goes to her apartment in order to confront her with the other man whom, ironically, Mary has just refused to see. Martin stumbles and falls in front of her door, re-injuring his leg. And when Joris, Mary's admirer, comes to comfort her on her return from the hospital where Martin must remain, she now agrees to see him. She is bitter toward Martin and her marriage, resenting his contrived attempts to absorb her completely, to deny her the personal freedom that even in marriage she must retain to preserve her dignity. She confesses to Joris, "That was it....We were to be free--only I wasn't free. Only free to sneak about behind his back."

Although Fitzgerald's question: Is it possible to preserve individual freedom in love and marriage? is important,

"Design in Plaster" is too brief and sketchy to do more than indicate his awareness of the problem. He attempted to explore the subject further in The Last Tycoon, but did not live to complete the novel.

A great danger in any marriage is the control and destruction of one partner by the other. In two early humorous stories, Fitzgerald suggests, unconsciously, I believe, that the young husbands are victims of their beautiful and insatiable wives. Roger, in "Gretchen's Forty Winks," drives himself unsparingly for success in advertising, but never stops to question its value. Clothes, style, money: they are the logical rewards of his industry; even though he wins them, Gretchen's demands are unlikely to diminish and will probably increase when she is able to indulge her taste for amusement and luxury. Roger's ambition and energy will be spent gratifying Gretchen's whims.

Horace Tarbox, an appealing young intellectual prodigy, by marrying a beautiful chorus girl, forfeits his promising academic future. To earn additional money to support them and an expected child, Horace, an accomplished gymnast, performs as an acrobat professionally, eventually becoming a star circus performer. Marcia, while at home, takes up writing and becomes a popular authoress, acclaimed even by the intellectual pundits from Horace's student days. Marcia has developed at the expense of Horace; in her love, she has absorbed his best qualities, and intellectually has superseded him.

Fitzgerald approaches the same subject seriously in "The Rich Boy," where Anson Hunter uses the women who love him to "nurse and protect that superiority he cherished in his heart." A similar theme is implicit in "A Short Trip Home," where the evil Joe Varland slowly drains the vitality out of "immaculately glowing" Ellen. Judy Jones in "Winter Dreams" demands that men surrender up part of themselves to her "direct and unprincipled personality." And Josephine Perry conducts her life along the principle of emotional cannibalism: she must make one man after another succumb completely to her, and then twist and destroy their love:

Still looking at him, she tried to think, but she could only think how unattractive and rather terrible she found him now, and try not to let him see it. There would have been no use saying the simple truth--that she could not help what she had done, that great beauty has a need, almost an obligation, of trying itself, that her ample cup of emotion had spilled over on its own accord, and it was an accident that it had destroyed him and not her. The eyes of pity might follow Anthony Harker in his journey West, but most certainly the eyes of destiny followed Josephine as she crossed the street through the falling snow to Ed Bement's car ("First Blood").

The stories, then, touch on some aspects of a major theme in Fitzgerald's fiction, emotional parasitism, explored in The Beautiful and Damned through the symbiotic relationship between Gloria and Anthony, in The Great Gatsby through the exploits of Tom and Daisy Buchanan who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together," and in Tender Is the Night, through Dick

Diver's gradual destruction by the revitalized, restored Nicole.

Vitality, Emotional Bankruptcy, Despair
and the Drift to Death

"...Of all the natural forces, vitality is the incommunicable one. In days when juice came into one as an article without duty, one tried to distribute it--but always without success; to further mix metaphors, vitality never 'takes.' You have it or you haven't it, like health or brown eyes or honor or a baritone voice" ("The Crack-Up"). Fitzgerald's fascination with youth is part of his conviction that every human being possesses from birth a specific fund of energy which he draws on as he grows older; if he fails to husband his vitality but squanders it recklessly, he will end emotionally bankrupt--bored, apathetic, unable to feel for or respond to others, incapable of hope. Fitzgerald regards vitality as the most valuable property of youth; he turns again and again in the stories to the revitalizing power of youth on his spent and bankrupt heroes who try, through association with younger people, to recapture or borrow the energy they need for their own survival. But vitality is not, as Fitzgerald makes clear, transferable, and the source of his heroes' despair is their late recognition that their accounts are overdrawn, that emotional bankruptcy is inevitable.

The forty-ish hero of "At Your Age," Tom Squires, pursues a young girl in a hopeless "battle against youth and

spring." Annie's youth represents possibility and purpose; through the new vitality Tom feels in her presence, his life takes on meaning and direction. He experiences the sense of utter emptiness without her that is characteristic of many of Fitzgerald's later heroes; unlike those who become resigned to despair, however, he tries persistently to fill up the void with energy borrowed from youth. "'Youth, by heaven--youth!' he repeated under his breath. 'I want it near me, all around me, just once before I'm too old to care.'" Temporarily, in the glow of romance, he feels a resurgence of vitality. "He woke on winter mornings with the sense of undeserved joy hovering in the room; meeting young men, he found himself matching the vigor of his mind and body against theirs. Suddenly, his life had a purpose and a background; he felt rounded and complete." Through Annie, "the warm sureties of his youth flooded back...." Inevitably, Tom is vanquished not by another, younger man, but by time and age. Although he draws strength out of the struggle--"conflict itself has a value beyond victory and defeat"--the three-month campaign for Annie is his valedictory to youth and strength.

Energy is allied to Fitzgerald's belief in discipline and duty. It is not merely spending our strength, but spending it on the wrong goals that results in emotional bankruptcy. Sally Carrol ("The Ice Palace") recognizes "energy" as "the part of me that may be useful somewhere, that'll last when I'm not beautiful anymore." Energy adds

continuity to life: if we use it to support life, part of us will remain alive even after physical death. Conversely, if we exhaust our store of vitality in meaningless activity, we have no wedge left against actual death or despair, which is death in life. In Fitzgerald's spiritual lexicon, death denotes emptiness, and fear that there may be nothing either here or beyond. The struggle for life may be lost for each of us early and irrevocably through the dissipation of our vitality.

Fitzgerald returns frequently and with variations to the same theme. Jacob ("Jacob's Ladder") tries, like Tom Squires, to recapture, through Jenny, his lost youth and vitality: "Through her eyes he had seen old colors once more; now they had faded back into the gray tapestry of the past." Even the vital heroines fear the depletion of their energy, which they try to avert by losing themselves in sensation. Boredom is the ogre; their search for excitement and amusement is intense and, by attempting to shock their elders, frequently outrageous. Myra explains it ("Myra Meets His Family"): "Drifting into romance is easy when you're eighteen ...but after five years of it, your capacity for it simply burns out." Noel, in "Presumption," tells Juan, "I've kissed too many people. I'll have nothing left if I keep kissing people." Rags Martin-Jones sees life as "stupid. Nothing ever happens," and looks for meaning in a young man's gallant gestures. Josephine Perry, Fitzgerald's youngest emotional bankrupt, has since her teens spent her

vitality avidly pursuing romantic love. In the process, she has ruthlessly exploited anyone who might, even to the slightest extent, contribute toward her success. She learns, through her inability to respond to the love she has always sought, that "one mustn't run through people" ("A Woman With a Past"). But her emotional bankruptcy is accompanied by moral obliquity; men are "not individuals, but dummies... as unreal as sticks" ("Emotional Bankruptcy"). Josephine's horror at the realization that "one cannot both spend and have," that her emotional resources are wholly and irrevocably exhausted, is the horror of staring at nothingness, at facing a depleted and hopeless existence.

Fitzgerald's characters are satiated by trivialities. It seems somewhat disproportionate today to accept promiscuous kissing as a satisfactory explanation for pervasive soul-sickness. But according to Fitzgerald's fictional conventions, kissing, late parties, too many drinks, are symptomatic of the directionless living that leads to personal disaster. Unchecked, frivolity is life-denying, part of a steady drift toward death which is really all that many of Fitzgerald's characters ever know of life.

The absence of vitality is apparent in both the style and theme of several late stories. As life slowly drains out of the characters, they seem not to care, to willingly surrender themselves up to death. The nurse in "An Alcoholic Case" recognizes the futility of combating her patient's determination to die: "He bent his great brown eyes

on her, shrewd--aloof, confused. He signaled to her, in one second, his Will to Die, and for all her training and experience she knew she could never do anything constructive with him....'It's not like anything you can beat--no matter how hard you try....You can't really help them and it's so discouraging--it's all for nothing.'

Waiting for the end, the author in "Author's House" surveys his youth, his illness, his mistakes and failures. All he has left is despair, knowing he can never dwell again in the turret of his symbolic house, that success, despite the "little while" he tasted it, has ultimately eluded him:

"I lived up here once," the author said after a moment.

"Here? For a long time?"

"No. For just a little while when I was young."

"It must have been rather cramped."

"I didn't notice it."

"Would you like to try it again?"

"No. And I couldn't if I wanted to."

He shivered slightly and closed the windows.

For the "Author's Mother," there is nothing left but death. With her "high-crowned hat," incipient cataracts, and air of hopeless bewilderment, she is a touching relic of another era. The modern world is obviously too much for her. She is proud of but cannot understand her son's success, for she associates "authors" only with Mrs. Humphry Ward, Longfellow, Edna Ferber and especially the sentimental poetesses Alice and Phoebe Cary. Uncomplaining and uncomprehending, she too retreats from life through the back door of her memories.

"The Guest in Room 19" traces the slow dying that

precedes death. Like the author's mother, the two old men seem to melt away, exhausted and dispirited, unaware that their spiritual death has preceded the physical by many days. They are themselves emblems of the death which they see reflected in the face of the guest in room nineteen.

The last three stories are very brief, developed almost wholly through spare, clipped dialogue. "An Alcoholic Case," somewhat longer, lacks the devotion to scenic detail that characterizes even Fitzgerald's most uninspired efforts. With the old rhetorical flair missing, the narrative does reflect the theme and mood of inanition and death. However, in spite of the sustained mood of despair, the precision of the dialogue and the poignancy of the themes, nothing effectively counteracts the gray lifelessness of these few late stories.

Social Criticism: The Concept of Class; Social Snobbery; Money and Power; Nostalgia and the Return to the American Past; Hollywood and the American Dream

Fitzgerald's stories, like his novels, are based, in Marius Bewley's words, on a "concept of class....What he immersed himself in was the America of his time....He ended by making an evaluation of the life and wealth he seemed to love that was deeper, more richly informed, and at least as sensitive as any ever made by James."²² Fitzgerald is not narrowly tied to describing the role of the leisure class in American life; rather, his theme is the tensions that exist between that class and the members of the socially mobile and aspiring middle class. Although many of the

stories describe the often painful, humiliating and intense efforts of middle-class heroes for acceptance by the powerful and rich, he is aware too of the lower class and the depressing lives of those who hope simply to exist, as he sees it, with bread but without grace, beauty or finer moral discriminations. He is not unsympathetic to their struggles, but they are remote from his own interests and background and seem, in any case, sordid and hopeless from the outset. He casts only a passing glance at their situation, colored by the snobbery and chauvinism that results from unfamiliarity and distance. From the vantage point of the middle class, however, Fitzgerald is able to apply the objectivity as well as the admiration of the outsider to his portraits of the very rich.

He is particularly conscious of the minutiae of class differences, and the effects of social change upon class position and attitudes. In his notebooks,²³ he describes the society of a "three-generations middle Western city before the war":

From a little distance one can perceive an order in what at the time seemed confusion. The case in point is the society of a three generation Middle Western city before the war. There were the two or three enormously rich, nationally known families--outside of them rather than below them the hierarchy began. At the top came those whose grandparents had brought something with them from the East, a vestige of money and culture; then came the families of the big self-made merchants, the "old settlers" of the sixties and seventies, American-English-Scotch, or German or Irish, looking down somewhat in the order named--upon the Irish less from religious difference--French Catholics were considered rather distinguished--

than from their taint of political corruption in the East. After this came certain well-to-do "new people"--mysterious, out of a cloudy past, possibly unsound. Like so many structures, this one did not survive the cataract of money that came tumbling down upon it with the war.

He is similarly adept at "placing" his characters, fixing them clearly in demarcated, stratified social milieus, and tying their manners and values to those of their class:

Josephine accepted the proud world into which she was born. This was easy in Chicago, which, unlike New York, was a city state, where the old families formed a caste--intellect was represented by the university professors, and there were no ramifications, save that even the Perrys had to be nice to a half dozen families even richer and more important than themselves ("First Blood");

The Charles Hemples were in-between. They were of that enormous American class who wander over Europe every summer, sneering rather pathetically and wistfully at the customs and traditions and pastimes of other countries because they have no customs or traditions or pastimes of their own. It is a class sprung yesterday from fathers and mothers who might just as well have lived two hundred years ago ("The Adjuster").

When his characters rise, through skill or luck, Fitzgerald carefully explores the problems of the newcomer in an unfamiliar and often unreceptive environment. Earl and Violet Johnson, decidedly lower class ("A Change of Class"), through a stroke of fortune--a stock tip from Mr. Jadwin, Earl's barbershop patron--stridently parade their new middle class status by acquiring the symbols, if not the confidence, of the wealthy: "colored servant, the police dog, the big machines for outdoors and the many small noisy machines for the house." Even more than their material acquisitions, they treasure their tenuous connection with the established rich:

Earl "felt he was not Mr. Jadwin's equal but a part of the structure to which Mr. Jadwin belonged." Earl and Violet are never comfortable as members of the middle class. Fitzgerald explores the social and moral inadequacies that characterize the social climber and ultimately lead him to personal unhappiness as well as financial failure:

They were short and inattentive with each other...because the world in which they moved was new and distracting. They were always rather pathetically ashamed of each other in public, though Earl still boasted of his wife's chic and she of his ability to make money. From the day when they moved into the new house, Violet adopted the manner of one following a code, a social rite, plain to herself but impossible for Earl to understand. She herself failed to understand that from their position in mid-air they were constrained merely to observe myopically and from a distance, and then try to imitate. Their friends were in the same position. They all tried to bolster up one another's lack of individuality by saying that So-and-So had a great sense of humor, or that So-and-So had a real knack of wearing clothes, but they were all made sterile and devitalized by their new environments, paying the price exacted for a passage into the middle class.

But Fitzgerald does not regard every member of the lower class as hopelessly fixed in his station. Mr. Jadwin, raised in rarefied regions of high finance, a typical product of his class, is a thirty-four year old emotional bankrupt: "The carefully brought-up children of wealthy Easterners grow old early; at thirty-four, Philip Jadwin wasn't sure he had any emotions at all." He falls in love with a poor typist in his office, and after much soul-searching, decides not to break class barriers by marrying her. Three years later, the typist leaves her insensitive, criminal husband (who, in a devious plot maneuver, runs off with Violet Johnson), returns

to Jadwin's office, and allows him to rectify his mistake by marrying her. The difference between the Johnsons and Irene, the typist, lies in the quality of their aspirations. Life to the Johnsons meant simply "washing machines, radios, electric refrigerators...." Out of the last three years they had salvaged nothing--"not love, no happy memories, only a few transient exhilarations; no new knowledge or capability--not a thing--simply a space where three years had been." Irene, however, wants love, the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood. Having missed them in her first marriage, she brings to Philip Jadwin renewed strength and vitality that will restore his drive and determination. And the moral of the story is that the working man should not aspire to wealth and position if he does not know how to use them properly.

"The Family Bus" also studies the problems of the newly rich, here through a laborer whose daughter is snubbed by his employer. He leaves the estate where he has served as caretaker, and soon makes his fortune. Meanwhile, the wealthy Henderson family who employed him has suffered financial reverses in the depression, and Dick, their son, is forced to attend the local technical high school. Behind the conventional love affair of Dick and Jannekin, the caretaker's daughter, Fitzgerald illustrates the plight of the impoverished "aristocrat," scorned and humiliated by his wealthier, but morally inferior, unrefined contemporaries.

Fitzgerald frequently dwells on social snobbery, the

weapon by which the rich and powerful seek to insulate themselves from the pretensions of the climbers. As a stated or obvious theme, Fitzgerald is opprobrious toward social snobbery, particularly when it is directed against the middle class ("Presumption," "Dice, Brass Knuckles, and Guitar," "The Jelly Bean," "I Didn't Get Over"). But he is less critical of his middle class heroes who cast slurs on their fancied inferiors. Snobbery, as an unstated or implicit theme, raises the question of whether or not Fitzgerald shares the prejudices of his heroes. It seems obvious that he does, simply on the basis of his unflattering physical descriptions of the majority of lower class characters (as noted previously, beauty, goodness or charm are redemptive qualities for every class), and the kinds of questionable activities in which they engage--Violet Johnson's infidelity and thievery; Jewel Hudson's blackmail; Jenny's sister's murder. Theirs are blatantly criminal acts, whereas the wealthier sinners in the stories commit social errors which, although unforgiveably painful to the recipients of their attacks, are not so heinous as to land the perpetrators in jail. While it is true that his lower class figures are incapable of the brutalities of the very rich--the massive barbarities of Braddock Washington and the refined cruelty of Anson Hunter, with the exception of "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" and "The Rich Boy," this theme--the inhumanity of the very rich--is less important in the stories than in the novels.

Fitzgerald's social snobbery is an unpleasant and unexpected strain in a writer as acutely sensitive as he is to social slights. The inclination to regard it as irony directed against the rich falters when we realize how completely his sympathies are engaged by the hero or heroine threatened by a descent in social status:

She had heard of people sinking out of place, out of life. Her father had once told her of a man in his class at college who had become a worker around saloons, polishing brass rails for the price of a can of beer: and she knew also that there were girls in this city with whose mothers her own mother had played as a little girl, but who were poor now and had grown common; who worked in stores and had married into the proletariat. But that such a fate should threaten her--how absurd! Why she knew everyone...had been invited everywhere; her great grand-father had been governor of one of the Southern states! ("The Popular Girl");

...This was in 1925, when the ten thousand a year that Lew had come to command did not permit an indiscriminate crossing of social frontiers. He was received by the Gunthers and held at arm's length by them, and then gradually liked for the qualities that began to show through his awkwardness. A good-looking man on his way up can put directly into action the things he learns; Lew was never again quite so impressed by the suburban houses whose children lived upon rolling platforms in the street ("More Than Just a House");

"...In convents, even in the nicest ones, there are so many common girls."

"Yes," he agreed, "I suppose there are, and I know how you feel about it. It grated on me here, at first, Lois, though I wouldn't say that to any one but you; we're rather sensitive, you and I, to things like this."

"You mean the men here?"

"Yes, some of them of course were fine, the sort of men I'd always been thrown with, but there were others...." ("Benediction").

Undoubtedly, Fitzgerald's best stories about the concept of class are those that explore the problem of the power

enjoyed by those who possess money and position and, as a corollary, of the self-made man who tries to arrogate some of it for himself. Fitzgerald decides finally that society is not open, that sudden accession to wealth does not insure social viability; it may even arouse latent prejudice against the arriviste and intensify the efforts of the very rich to keep their world a private club, safe from intrusive outsiders. In some of the stories and essays, as in the novels, Fitzgerald examines the limits, inadequacies and inhumanities inherent in the American myth of success, how big money is made and spent, the "raw power of the money that has made a plutocracy and the raw power of the self-protective conventions this plutocracy assume when they close in a united front against an intruder."²⁴ The anxiety of Fitzgerald's heroes, San Juan Chandler, Dexter Green and George O'Kelly, results from the subtle oppression of the leisure class. Dexter's success in the laundry business, Juan's machinations in the stock market, George's sudden and unexplained rise "from poverty into a position of unlimited opportunity," cannot buy their happiness and insure their social acceptability. Saddest of all is John Jackson's view of emptiness at the top, his realization as a self-made man that there exists an unbridgable chasm between aspiration and fulfillment, and that the dream of success remains only a dream, even for the man who "succeeds."

No other American writer since Henry James has taken as the arena for his fiction the world of the monied class, has

studied as intently the moral implications of getting and spending wealth, and no other writer since James has faced quite so unflinchingly as Fitzgerald does in "The Diamond As Big As the Ritz" the core of emptiness at the heart of the American dream. In many other stories, the hero faces subtle cruelties rooted in class differences that thwart his efforts and mock his aspirations.²⁵

Fitzgerald's consciousness of the distortions of contemporary society leads him back into American history and tradition in search of a simpler life, free of the class antipathies that riddle the nation. His quest for the American past parallels his heroes' forays into youth to discover where and why they have lost their capacity for romantic wonder. Like Mark Twain and William Faulkner, Fitzgerald returns to pre-Civil War America, to the spacious, pastoral, agrarian democracy where the individual did not have to fear encroachment by institutions and pressures of class. There was the opportunity to realize the most lavish excesses of the romantic imagination; if life did not fulfill his expectations, the American might still look West, and strike out beyond the frontier to make a reality out of his dream of the New World. The society for which Fitzgerald yearns is expansive; his own heroes are constricted, locked into the syndrome of success. They seek but rarely or never find fulfillment in the illusion of escape, either through blissful love that blots out the disillusion of the struggle, or in exoticism and luxury that totally absorb the

imagination and numb their critical faculties.

The theme of return to the past takes several forms: in "More Than Just a House," Lew is charmed and captivated by the Gunthers' aristocratic life and their stately mansion which he sees as the repository of old virtues. He realizes that theirs is an intangible possession, unavailable on the marketplace--the inherited past--the strongest prop against the despair of the present. The Gunthers had preserved the strength of their ancestors; through his contact with them, Lew glimpses the continuity of the American tradition. "He had come to realize recently that life was not always a progress, nor a search for new happiness, nor a going away. The Gunthers were part of him...If the memory of them became extinct, then something in himself became extinct also...." But Fitzgerald is not entirely committed to the past in this story. Although tradition must be preserved, Lew admits that living in the past is unhealthy and destructive. And, despite his recognition of the residual value of the past, he sees, paradoxically, strength and health in Wall Street:

"It's a degenerate business," he decided--
"all this hanging on to the past. I've been
wrong. Some of us are going ahead, and these
people and the roof over them are just push-overs
for time. I'll be glad to leave it for good and
get back to something fresh and new and clean
in Wall Street tomorrow."

"The End of Hate," a poor, melodramatic piece of sentiment set during the Civil War, affirms the value of the chivalry and humanity destroyed by new hatred and rivalry of the war, turning America into "a desert of hate." In "The

Last of the Belles," "Ice-Palace," and "The Bridal Party," Fitzgerald finds the old American spirit "generous, fresh and free" ("The Bridal Party"); graciousness was the rule of conduct, and "soft-voiced girls...were brought up on memories instead of money" ("The Ice-Palace"). And he associates these qualities with the ante-bellum South and the frontier West, not the desiccated East, usurped by bankers and speculators.

Fitzgerald had traced critically and satirically the growth of American big business in "The Diamond As Big As the Ritz" in 1921. In the stories of his middle period, the theme is still pervasive, but with a significant difference: his mood is kinder and more forgiving, wistful rather than scornful. He regrets missed opportunities and unrealized capacities, but he no longer harnesses his flagging energy for a full-scale attack on those who bore the responsibility for the destruction of the American dream. Nostalgia is, by this time, enough to subsist on. It is, in fact, all there is left. "Nostalgia, carried to its conclusion, leads nowhere else."²⁶ Fitzgerald's despair is, as Wright Morris has suggested, the recognition that life is absurd, that there is nothing else but the past--the old house, the green light at the end of the dock, the tinny melodies playing in the background, the gleaming yacht at rest in Cannes harbor, the sights, sounds, smells of the past. "We dip our faces into the past as into the corridor of that train homeward bound at Christmas, the air scented with

luggage, coonskin coats, and girls with snow melting in their hair....It is inexhaustible. It is the artist--not the vein of nostalgia--that gives out or cracks up."²⁷

In "Diagnosis" and "The Swimmers," Fitzgerald draws on a glorified past to reveal a paltry and uncertain present:

He looked from the window at a proud, white-pillared Acropolis that a hundred years ago had been the center of a plantation and now housed a row of stores, at the old courthouse with its outside staircase, and at the brash new courthouse being built in its front yard, and then at the youths with sideburns lounging outside the drug store. The curious juxtapositions made him feel the profound waves of change that had already washed this country--the desperate war that had rendered the plantation house obsolete, the industrialization that had spoiled the easy-going life centering around the old courthouse. And then the years yielding up eventually in this backwater those curious young products who were neither peasants, nor bourgeois, nor scamps, but a little of all three, gathered there in front of the store. After the next wave of change, would there be pigeon cotes in Wall Street, and then what, and then what? ("Diagnosis").

He is no longer interested in the depredations of the men who tamed the frontier and industrialized America. In a mist of forgiveness born out of total immersion in nostalgia, Fitzgerald temporarily forgives the old entrepreneurs and blames the failures in modern American society on the new plunderers, those who currently use their wealth solely in the exercise of power, without generosity and the ineffable grace of their ancestors (Fitzgerald sometimes sentimentalizes the robber barons): one of the plunderers lectures Henry Marston ("The Swimmers"):

"Be wise, Marston. On your side there's an obstinate prejudice; on mine there are forty million dollars. Don't fool yourself. Let me

repeat, Marston, that money is power. You were abroad so long that perhaps you're inclined to forget that fact. Money made this country, built its great and glorious cities, created its industries, covered it with an iron network of railroads. It's money that harnesses the forces of Nature, creates the machine and makes it go when money says go, and stop when money says stop."

But Henry recognizes that money and power carry the obligation of responsibility, that power must work on behalf of the deeper riches buried in the American past:

America was there...under the ugly debris of industry the rich land still pushed up, incorrigibly lavish and fertile, and...in the heart of the leaderless people the old generosities and devotions fought on, breaking out sometimes in fanaticism and excess, but indomitable and undefeated.

Blame rests with those for whom Money is God, the de-spiritualized rich who ignore their heritage: "There was even a recurrent idea in America about an education that would leave out history and the past, that should be a sort of equipment for aerial adventure, weighed down by none of the stowaways of inheritance or tradition."

As a result of his exploration of and disenchantment over the American scene, Fitzgerald sees the future of America apotheosized in the final absurdity of Hollywood. From 1927, when he describes it as "a tragic city of beautiful girls,"²⁸ to 1940, when he reports that there is "no group, however small, interesting,"²⁹ Hollywood as the citadel of decadence is a permanent theme in Fitzgerald's stories and essays. "Everywhere there is...either corruption or indifference."³⁰ In two stories written years before the

1940 letter, Fitzgerald suggests that the presence of a few genuinely talented individuals may offer some hope for those who remain to work in Hollywood. In "Magnetism," "the advent of such men as Jules Rennard in pictures" hints at the possibility of human contacts more meaningful than "the almost hysterical egotism and excitability hidden under an extremely thin veil of elaborate good-fellowship." But in "Crazy Sunday," he indicates that the emotional penalty exacted by the constant struggle between the gifted Miles Calman and the Eastern "monied men" was too harsh for Miles to survive.

Fitzgerald is appalled by the end product of wasted money and talent, the "mechanical and communal art that, whether in the hands of Hollywood merchants or Russian idealists, was capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion. It was an art in which words were subordinate to images, where personality was worn down to the inevitable low gear of collaboration" ("Handle With Care").

Fitzgerald develops his theme to the outer limits of absurdity in the Pat Hobby stories, where "the fast buck" symbolizes the truest level of aspiration. "For money he'd shoot his parents, he'd shoot his best friend" ("Produced by Pat Hobby"--unpublished, unfinished). "In the old days, he had just busted in sometimes and sold an idea, an idea good for a couple of grand because it was just the moment when they were very tired of what they were doing at present" ("A Man in the Way"). The Pat Hobby stories com-

prise a seamy history of the movie business, a "success" story of the bankrupt, shoddy and second-rate:

Distress in Hollywood is endemic and always acute. Scarcely an executive but is being gnawed at by some insoluble problem and in a democratic way he will let you in on it, with no charge. The problem, be it one of health or of production, is faced courageously and with groans at from one to five thousand a week. That's how pictures are made....

Except in great scandals like the Arbuckle case the industry protects its own--and the industry included Pat however intermittently ("Pat Hobby's Secret");

where human exploitation is a solid virtue,

Light dawned upon Pat. Here together were suckers and smackers. Here was that dearest of Hollywood dreams--the angle. If one got the right angle it meant meals at the Brown Derby, long nights with bottles and girls, a new tire for his old car. And here was an angle fairly thrusting itself at him ("The Homes of the Stars");

laziness a cardinal rule of conduct,

Pat found it pleasant--mostly waiting around as in all picture work ("Pat Hobby Does His Bit");

and genuine talent a rarity:

To those grouped together under the name "talent," the atmosphere of a studio is not unfailingly bright--one fluctuates too quickly between high hope and grave apprehension. Those few who decide things are happy in their work and sure that they are worthy of their hire--the rest live in a mist of doubt as to when their vast inadequacy will be disclosed ("Pat Hobby and Orson Welles").

Despite Fitzgerald's distaste for Hollywood, it contains the necessary social ingredients for his final study, in The Last Tycoon, of the conflict between the imaginative individual and the institutions ranged against him. Hollywood represents America's faults magnified and simplified;

it is the perfect arena for the mythic story of the self-made man, Monroe Stahr, whose talent is ultimately crushed by the group whose late accession to power Fitzgerald had all along feared and suspected: the new "money men" who wield power without responsibility, insensitive to the informing role of imagination and tradition in art and life. Hollywood is the logical termination of Fitzgerald's search for meaning and order in American life.

Many of the themes we have discussed here are merely the author's tentative projections of ideas worked out fully and systematically in the novels. A few are unique to the stories. We have stated elsewhere that Fitzgerald's are theme stories and that fewer than twenty-five of them were written as pure diversions. The most serious problem in connection with theme is his interpolation of thematic significance that does not grow out of the story. Because Fitzgerald is always intent on his message, he ends a number of stories by inserting just one more idea which may or may not be related to the preceding action. When not related, such interpolations serve to unhinge plot³¹ and prove a source of unfailing aesthetic weakness in the stories.

Fitzgerald is not notably more successful in his treatment of one set of themes than another. We have for discussion purposes grouped similar ideas, but his technique in general is to treat a number of different themes within one story, even to pack a plot with so many ideas that the most important statement or message is obscure or ambiguous.

In common with other writers of long and short fiction, Fitzgerald is most successful when theme grows directly out of plot--characters in action ("Babylon Revisited")--and when the action leads from the specific to the general ("The Rich Boy"), thus adding psychological texture to the stated or implicit theme.

Finally, in the range and importance of his themes, as well as the depth and precision of his analyses of some of them, Fitzgerald's stories and essays deserve our respectful attention: he was not a philosopher or a theoretician, to be sure, but a modern explorer of hidden regions of American life.

NOTES

¹Robert Sklar, F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Last Laocoön,
p. 4.

²Ibid.

³"The Camel's Back," "Shaggy's Morning," "The Passionate Esquimo," "The Dance," "Fate in Her Hands," "Inside the House," "Too Cute For Words," "Strange Sanctuary," "The Pusher in the Face," "The Ants At Princeton," "The Honor of the Goon," "Porcelain and Pink," "The Night at Chancellorsville," "One Interne," "In the Holidays," "The Unspeakable Egg."

⁴In "A Woman With a Past," Josephine Perry's romantic imagination distorts her values and blinds her to real happiness.

⁵John Berryman, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," Kenyon Review, VIII (Winter, 1946), 107.

⁶Edmund Wilson, ed., The Crack-Up, "Notebooks," p. 198,

⁷See Sklar, pp. 3-30 especially.

⁸Charlie, in "Diagnosis," returns home for other reasons than nostalgia. He must restore his shattered confidence and so he goes back to childhood scenes to discover in the past the causes of his present neurosis.

⁹Van Wyck Brooks, The Writer in America (New York,

1953), pp. 71-78.

¹⁰Marius Bewley, The Eccentric Design (New York, 1959), p. 260.

¹¹Lionel Trilling, "F. Scott Fitzgerald," in F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Arthur Mizener, p. 12.

¹²Henry Dan Piper, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait, p. 297.

¹³Quoted in Arthur Mizener, Introduction to Flappers and Philosophers (re-issued New York, 1959), p. 12.

¹⁴Kenneth Eble, F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 103.

¹⁵Fitzgerald's feeling for his father was mixed. He loved him but regretted his father's failure and ineffectuality in the business community.

¹⁶See Marius Bewley's comments on the religious significance of "The Diamond As Big As the Ritz" in The Eccentric Design, pp. 260-69.

¹⁷In "Presumption" and "The Bridal Party," part of the ambiguity of Fitzgerald's treatment of Juan and Michael is the result of his own distaste for whining and weakness. He seems to share in public dislike of certain aspects of Juan's behavior, and to reject Michael's blatant self-pity.

¹⁸Letter to Frances Scott Fitzgerald, October 5, 1940,

Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, pp. 95-96.

¹⁹Letter to unnamed woman, September, 1935, Letters of..., p. 530.

²⁰Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York, 1960).

²¹They are: "The Rough Crossing," "The Intimate Strangers," "Two Wrongs," "What A Handsome Pair," "Image on the Heart," "No Flowers," "New Types," "Flight and Pursuit," "Six of One," "Diagnosis," "A Freeze-Out," "A Change of Class," "A New Leaf," "Emotional Bankruptcy."

²²Bewley, p. 260.

²³The Crack-Up, "Notebooks," p. 233.

²⁴Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition, p. 162.

²⁵"Myra Meets His Family," "Two For a Cent," "Dice, Brass Knuckles, and Guitar," "The Pusher in the Face," "Presumption," "The Adolescent Marriage," "The Hotel Child," "The Rubber Check," "The Jelly Bean," "I Couldn't Get Over," and "May Day."

²⁶Wright Morris, "The Function of Nostalgia," in F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Arthur Mizener, p. 26.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Letter to Cousin Ceci, Winter, 1927, Letters of..., pp. 415-16.

²⁹Letter to Gerald and Sara Murphy, Spring, 1940, Letters of..., pp. 429-30.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹See, particularly, "The Swimmers," "Six of One," and "New Types."

CONCLUSION

FINAL EVALUATION

In the preceding pages I have endeavored to analyze and describe F. Scott Fitzgerald's short stories and essays and to suggest critical criteria by which their major elements--plot, character, rhetoric and theme--may be evaluated. The question now is simply: of what value, if any, are the stories and essays? It involves, in my judgment, two considerations--the value of this work as part of the Fitzgerald canon, i.e., its relevance to his major efforts, the novels; and its intrinsic value, its merit as literature.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, it is plain that the stories and essays served Fitzgerald as test pieces for his novels, that they embodied his experiments with character, theme and rhetoric, and that the plots functioned primarily as vehicles into which he might incorporate new fictional techniques. It is not necessary to support this contention by making a thorough study of each of the novels.¹ On the evidence adduced from the preceding discussion, it is possible to indicate briefly the connection between stories and novels and how the stories served Fitzgerald as a fictional laboratory.

Plot

The plot of This Side of Paradise is similar to that of the typical Fitzgerald story, loose and episodic. Transitions between paragraphs and sections are either omitted or clumsily interpolated. The novel is sprinkled with wholly dramatized scenes reminiscent of Fitzgerald's early experiments with one-act plays like "Shadow Laurels" and "Porcelain and Pink." Several apprentice stories have been lifted whole or in part and included in the novel: "The Spire and the Gargoyle," "The Debutante," "Babes in the Woods," and "Tarquin of Cheapside." Several plot defects we traced in the stories--mechanical, synthetic, and overly melodramatic situations--are not ascribable to the novel because Fitzgerald was not faced with the exigencies of forcing climax and conclusion into a narrow framework. Yet because he permitted himself to expand and digress at will, the result is that the novel lacks unity and cohesion.

The Beautiful and Damned, too, is over-long, and discursive in places, pausing to describe unimportant incidents in detail--a house-party, a chance meeting, a random conversation--or to interpolate, again, a dramatic section, so that other, more significant events are telescoped in order to move the action along. The plot is more sophisticated and unified than that of This Side of Paradise, although it is constructed in many ways like the "fairy-tales" we described in Chapter Two: the ending seems contrived as Anthony is rescued from the depths of penury and

alcoholism by inheriting four million dollars from his rich old uncle. The novel is a curious combination of naturalism and romance, tracing Anthony's deterioration while focusing on his retention of the "romantic readiness" which prevents him from facing reality. Again, as in the fairy tales it is his romantic imagination that saves him from utter despair by providing him with an ideal vision that survives the wreckage of his life. Paradoxically, it is the same quality that has kept him from realizing his romantic dreams.

Plot, the weakest element in the stories, is one of the major strengths of The Great Gatsby. Here, Fitzgerald succeeds in uniting a number of techniques scattered throughout the stories. Employing flashback judiciously, he moves easily from present to past and back to present, tracing the rise and fall of Jay Gatsby against the background of swift currents of change in modern American society. Like the best stories, the plot is carefully constructed around "big" scenes, particularly the three parallel and contrasting parties: in Chapter Two at Tom and Myrtle's apartment; in Chapter Three, at Gatsby's mansion, and in Chapter Six, again at Gatsby's but altered by the tense presence of Daisy Buchanan. Balancing the parties are the three flashbacks that slowly fill in the details in the life of the enigmatic hero, Gatsby: the first, in Chapter Four, Jordan's recital of Jay and Daisy's meeting in Louisville; the second in Chapter Six, the story of Gatsby's youth and Dan Cody, the pioneer debauchée, and the third, in Chapter Eight, a picture

of the dream incarnate, the young Daisy Fay with whom Gatsby had fallen in love years before. Both threads, past and present, conjoin at the end in a crescendo of violence: the automobile crash and the murder of Gatsby by Wilson. The Great Gatsby is much more carefully planned and executed than any of the stories, but there are elements common to the latter in it: multiple episodes, reliance on mood, manners and milieu, a circular movement beginning and ending with Nick Carraway, and an epilogue extending the meaning of the story beyond the lives of the participants.

Matthew Bruccoli reports the number of stories where Fitzgerald "stripped" parts for inclusion in Tender Is the Night: "Love Boat," "The Rough Crossing," "Jacob's Ladder," "A Penny Spent," "Majesty," "A New Leaf," "Crazy Sunday," "At Your Age," "A Night At the Fair," "The Swimmers," "Indecision," "One Trip Abroad."² Fitzgerald altered the original plot construction of the novel to strict chronological order, although I prefer the original version beginning with Rosemary's naive admiration for the handsome, prosperous Divers on the French Riviera beach.

The plot of Tender Is the Night is not linear, like most of the stories. The deteriorating relationship between Dick and Nicole Diver (resembling closely, as we noted, that of "One Trip Abroad" and "The Rough Crossing") forms the major action; the subordinate plots include Rosemary's growth in maturity and awareness; her affair with Dick, and the disintegration of Abe North against the background of

social disintegration. The most serious problem in Tender Is the Night is the plot which does not seem balanced, particularly the Rosemary-Dick relationship. The novel begins with their mutual attraction, quickly drops the relationship in order to trace the Dick-Nicole marriage, picks up the first love story half-way through, only to discard it, dangling and unconcluded, with one-third more of the novel to come. The Rosemary sequences after the opening pages do not relate adequately to a central situation. Characteristic of this lack of cohesiveness is the scene immediately following the consummation of their love. Rosemary and Dick verbalize their feelings for one another but too much time and action have intervened between their meetings; Fitzgerald does not create even the illusion of their sustained love. (Although in the last revised version which begins with Dick as a young man, the Rosemary-Dick relationship seems more natural than in the original version, the same imbalance becomes obvious in later chapters.) Fitzgerald wrote only one story with a multiple plot, "May Day," but a similar discrepancy--disparate episodes--is resolved in the latter by the continuity of the theme.

Brucoli notes several incidents that occur in both "One Trip Abroad" and Tender Is the Night, indicating that the former, in plot as well as theme, served a practical function: "the trip to North Africa involving the locusts and the Ouled Nails; T. F. Golding's yacht; and the use of cannon fire to break up hail-bearing clouds."³ As Brucoli

states (and his entire discussion of the relationship between the novel and the stories is invaluable), the plot strand depicting the deterioration of the hero evolved through several stories beginning with an early version of the novel (Francis Melarky version, 1925-30), through "Jacob's Ladder" (1927), "The Rough Crossing" (1929), the Kelly version (1929), "One Trip Abroad" (1930) and the Dick Diver version (1932-33).⁴

The Last Tycoon is incomplete, making it difficult to determine how effective the completed plot might have been. On the basis of the existing fragment, it seems more complex than any of the earlier novels, tracing the absorption of the movie industry into big Eastern corporations and the concomitant decline in power of the individual studio "boss," the rise of a new force, organized labor, and its effects on motion picture production; the decline of Monroe Stahr, the last tycoon, and his love affair with Kathleen; finally, the disillusion of young Cecilia Brady, daughter of Stahr's most vicious opponent. The plot of The Last Tycoon is a long remove from Fitzgerald's stories; there are no inexplicable reversals, sentimental embraces, mechanical twists and convolutions. But even in this last work, there are memorable dramatized scenes and episodes which, of themselves, are typical of those in a score of the stories.

Character

The characters are notably similar from story to novel. In This Side of Paradise, Isabelle, Rosalind and Eleanor

parallel the girls in his stories. Isabelle, the flapper, is a vital figure, "Flirt shone through her large black-brown eyes and shone through her intense physical magnetism"; Rosalind, the selfish, bored and beautiful girl who hurts and disenchants Amory; and Eleanor, the mature sympathetic young woman who fails to live as vibrantly as her two fictional predecessors. And Amory himself, the hero, is not really part of the upper class, but is admiring, aspiring and envious of their beauty, charm and wealth.

In The Beautiful and Damned, Gloria is another "golden girl"--beautiful, vain, and self-centered, feeding on Anthony's weaknesses as they both drown in self-indulgence and triviality. Anthony is a composite of all of the yearning, aspiring outsiders in the stories who, in spite of early wealth, suffer from extreme poverty and drunkenness. Fitzgerald's distance from Anthony is uneven: he is sympathetic toward Anthony's need of money, more than faintly ironic toward his toying with culture, downright disapproving of his self-indulgence. As in many stories, Fitzgerald does not achieve the proper balance and distance toward Anthony Patch that would insure credible characterization. Anthony is at times the insider--unpleasant and removed, and then the outsider--sympathetic and likeable. Fitzgerald's attitude veers acutely, with the result that Anthony Patch is an ambiguous figure, memorable chiefly through those remarkable Dreiserian scenes (imitated by Charles Jackson in The Lost Weekend) in which he falls lower and lower under

the weight of poverty and alcohol.

The presence of the narrator, Nick Carraway, makes the difference in characterization of The Great Gatsby. Nick stands both inside and apart from the action. Discounting the question of his reliability as a narrator, we note that he brings critical objectivity to the portraits of Gatsby, Jordan, Tom and Daisy. He is both attracted and repelled by the Buchanans, but here (and rarely in Fitzgerald's fiction) neither emotion so dominates the narrator that it distorts his view of them. The characters remain at the right distance throughout. Gatsby, the man with the romantic imagination, secures the money to purchase his dream of beauty through tenuous connections with the underworld. His romantic, ingenuous belief that one can recapture the past, combined with his barely suggested nefarious dealings with criminals, are filtered through Nick Carraway's critical consciousness, making Gatsby an endlessly fascinating character.

Tom, who does not receive the half-admiring, half-condemning glances Fitzgerald bestows on Hamilton in "The Bridal Party," emerges as the unquestioned modern barbarian. And Daisy is not tinged with the author's adoration of her beauty and charm; her moral deficiencies are patently clear, as well as the viciousness of her self-absorption. Characterization in The Great Gatsby moves beyond anything Fitzgerald had done up to that time in the stories, but the same patterns, here elevated by his artistry, existed in the

stories since 1920.

Characters in Tender Is the Night are composites of many types Fitzgerald created with regularity in the stories: the outsider (Dick), absorbed and destroyed by the rich; the beautiful self-centered, amoral, emotionally scarred destroyer (Nicole); the hard-working, disciplined, sympathetic heroine (Rosemary); the unfeeling, repressed, cruel representative of the very rich (Baby Warren), and around them the sycophantic group that always attaches itself to this group.

In Tender Is the Night, distance, as we discussed it in Chapter Three, is important in the development of Dick Diver. When Rosemary is employed as the central consciousness, the portrait of Dick attains the kind of complexity that objectivity lends to a subject. When the omniscient narrator resumes, he identifies excessively with Dick's deterioration and humiliation, making it frequently pitiable rather than tragic. Had Fitzgerald retained critical control over his material, evaluating Dick (as Carraway did Gatsby) rather than concentrating on his suffering, the novel might not seem to sink, as it does at intervals, into a narrative of commiseration. Tender Is the Night is nevertheless a great novel that might have been even greater had Fitzgerald thoroughly resolved the problem of narrative distance, which in turn affects success and failure in characterization.

In The Last Tycoon, although we cannot really evaluate incomplete characters, Fitzgerald seems to have understood

how intimately characterization is tied to narrative distance, for he returned to the participant-observer, Cecilia Brady; as he remarked in his notes for the novel, "She is of the movies but not in them." The discernible difference between The Last Tycoon and Fitzgerald's other work is the greater complexity of the minor characters in the former: Brimmer, the union organizer; Brady, Stahr's rival; the writers and production men. And for these people, the Pat Hobby stories served as a testing area. Fitzgerald combined into one individual traits exemplified by perhaps half-a-dozen Hollywood types in the stories. Even in Tender Is the Night, when minor characters function significantly in the action, there is less interest in them as individuals, in what directs and interests them as characters.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric, although most important to the stories, requires least discussion. The stories are literally everywhere in the novels: lines, paragraphs, scenes inserted whole from story after story into the novels. It is no wonder that there is a pleasant ring of familiarity about the stories; we have seen much of them elsewhere. Rhetoric in each novel reflects Fitzgerald's omnipresent sense of place: New York City in This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and Damned, The Great Gatsby; Hollywood in The Last Tycoon, Europe in Tender Is the Night. Then too each novel has its dances, parties, social excitement--and its background music.

The only element which functions unspectacularly in the stories that Fitzgerald perfects in the novels is symbolism. There is really no preparation in the stories preceding The Great Gatsby, as we have noted in Chapter Four, for the brilliant weaving of symbols into plot and theme of that novel: the Valley of Ashes, the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg, the green light at the end of the dock, the Rolls Royce, the lonely crowds at Gatsby's entertainments.

Fitzgerald creates his other world in each novel but unlike the stories, he is sufficiently tied to the demands of plot that he never soars so high as to make the return difficult or awkward. Milieu never assumes control over the novels as it does over many of the stories. The rhetoric of character in the novels is familiar, as is the rhetoric of theme, but as we have noted, significance in the novels develops out of the action and therefore seems less stylized according to Fitzgerald's rhetorical conventions.

Theme

Finally, the themes of Fitzgerald's novels were tried and tested, as we have demonstrated in Chapter Five, from the earliest apprentice fiction to the Pat Hobby stories; to select only a few, the rootless rich (the Blaines in This Side of Paradise, the Schwartzes in "The Hotel Child"); the romantic imagination--in scores of stories and in Amory, Anthony, Gatsby, Dick and Monroe Stahr; the Fitzgerald hero's quest for, in Amory's words, "beauty, women, spring evenings, music at sea"; the necessity for struggle, the nature of

charm (Amory's fascination by "that intense animal magnetism," Daisy's appeal for Gatsby, Dick Diver's for Rosemary); disillusion and nostalgia, a melancholy evocation of a romantic past (in every novel); problems of marriage (in all but This Side of Paradise); and through them all, a concern over poverty, American power and money, a fleeting interest in socialism (This Side of Paradise) rekindled years later (The Last Tycoon), and always the erosion of values and the failure of the Dream. Scarcely an idea in the novels was not explored in one or more of the stories and essays. The value of the latter in Fitzgerald's development of rhetorical skill and intellectual control is both indisputable and immeasurable. For Fitzgerald, the stories and essays were the original drafts of the novels; without them, the latter would be different, and perhaps much less impressive.

Turning to the second half of the question, what value, if any, do the stories and essays have in themselves, as literature?

In his moving essay and tribute to Ring Lardner, Fitzgerald honestly points his finger at his friend's deficiencies as a writer:

The point of these paragraphs is that, whatever Ring's achievement was, it fell short of the achievement he was capable of, and this because of a cynical attitude toward his work. How far back did that attitude go?--back to his youth in a Michigan village? Certainly back to his days with the Cubs. During those years, when most men of promise achieve an adult education, if only in the school of war, Ring moved in the company of a few dozen illiterates playing a boy's game. A boy's game, with no more possibilities in it than

a boy could master, a game bounded by walls which kept out novelty or danger, change or adventure. This material, the observation of it under such circumstances, was the text of Ring's schooling during the most formative period of his mind. A writer can spin on about his adventures after thirty, after forty, after fifty, but the criteria by which these adventures are weighted and valued are irrevocably settled at the age of twenty-five. However deeply Ring might cut into it, his cake had exactly the diameter of Frank Chance's diamond.

Here was his artistic problem, and it promised future trouble. So long as he wrote within that enclosure the result was magnificent: within it he heard and recorded the voice of a continent. But when, inevitably, he outgrew his interest in it, what was Ring left with?

He was left with his fine linguistic technique--and he was left rather helpless in those few acres....It was never that he was completely sold on athletic virtuosity as the be-all and end-all of problems; the trouble was that he could find nothing finer...one can imagine the confusion that Ring faced on coming out of the ball park.

He kept on recording but he no longer projected, and this accumulation, which he has taken with him to the grave, crippled his spirit in the latter years.

Ring Lardner's artistic problem was one that Fitzgerald was unwilling, after his early success, to make his own; in his short stories, Fitzgerald came "out of the ball park" again and again, refusing to be circumscribed by former success and the expectations of his public. He "projected," and the short stories and essays attest to the difficulties he faced and the failures he encountered in refusing to stay in the same place for very long. He might have spent his life turning out "Best" stories year after year as so many of his lesser contemporaries did,⁵ but he elected to put new and troublesome ideas and techniques into his fiction, and thereby to work out his difficulties partially,

unsuccessfully, or brilliantly, certainly erratically, in his craft. He did not choose the safe or popular road.

He knew, as he made clear in his penetrating analysis of the literary situation of the twenties, "How to Waste Material: A Note On My Generation," what the new forms of the short story were. His comments on Hemingway's stories were probably the most perceptive critical remarks the latter's work had received at that time (1926):

...With "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "The End of Something," "The Three-Day Blow," "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," and "Soldier's Home" you are immediately aware of something temperamentally new. In the first of these a man is backed down by a half breed Indian after committing himself to a fight. The quality of humiliation in the story is so intense that it immediately calls up every such incident in the reader's past. Without the aid of a comment or a pointing finger one knows exactly the sharp emotion of young Nick who watches the scene.

The next two stories describe an experience at the last edge of adolescence. You are constantly aware of the continual snapping of ties that is going on around Nick. In the half stewed, immature conversation before the fire you watch the awakening of that vast unrest that descends upon the emotional type at about eighteen. Again there is not a single recourse to exposition. As in "Big Two-Hearted River," a picture--sharp, nostalgic, tense--develops before your eyes. When the picture is complete a light seems to snap out, the story is over. There is no tail, no sudden change of pace at the end to throw into relief what has gone before.

Years later, he wrote to Max Perkins that he, Hemingway and Wolfe were each, in his own way, trying to "recapture the exact feel of a moment in time and space, exemplified by people rather than by things--that is, an attempt at what Wordsworth was trying to do rather than what Keats did with such magnificent ease, an attempt at a mature memory of

a deep experience."⁶

That is precisely what Fitzgerald tried to do in the way he knew best, in his own way which was neither Hemingway's nor Wolfe's. Fitzgerald was familiar with the new style but he was comfortable with the old. His way was the practice of writing lucid, graceful, evocative--and for the most part, expansive--prose, within the old formal plot traditions, to be sure, but with completely fresh resonances of feeling and theme. It is always a joy to happen unexpectedly upon a lyrical prose passage in a forgotten Fitzgerald story. That experience alone is sufficient to reward the reading. Multiply it, modestly, by one hundred, or even two hundred, and it is a measure of the pure enjoyment that may be derived out of all the two-hundred-odd items we have been discussing.

Fitzgerald's stories and essays contain so much that is worth preserving, even treasuring, that we must conclude that they are valuable not only for what they tell us about Fitzgerald's craftsmanship, but for the sheer pleasure of reading them. We may shake our heads in amazement at the gauche plots, stereotyped characters and sloppy sentimentality, but the language startles and impresses so often that we must regard this as indeed an important body of work, richly deserving our serious consideration.

Finally, as Henry Dan Piper has remarked, "Fitzgerald's reputation may ultimately rest as solidly upon his intellectual achievement as upon his inimitable prose style."⁷ The

stories, even at their tritest, explore shades and nuances of important themes that later find their way into the novels. If we look at the accretion of thematic detail as we did at the imagery, the achievement in content as well as in style is impressive. "Fitzgerald understood that his stories, for all their slickness of plot, entailed real creative effort" (Bruccoli).⁸ It is Fitzgerald's creative effort, which when directed toward rhetorical effects and significant themes, elevates his stories and essays to a permanent place in American literature.

NOTES

¹Matthew Bruccoli has studied the composition of Tender Is the Night systematically and offers indisputable evidence of the evolution of the novel from a number of earlier stories. Matthew Bruccoli, The Composition of "Tender Is the Night."

²Ibid., p. 84.

³Ibid., p. 71.

⁴Ibid., p. 66.

⁵Some of the "Best" writers were M. Struthers Burt (First Prize, O. Henry Stories of 1920); Frances Newbold Noyes; Esther Forbes; and Joseph Hergesheimer. To the modern reader, their stories seem dated and stilted; they lack the zest of even the least impressive of Fitzgerald's efforts.

⁶Letter to Maxwell Perkins, July 30, 1934, Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, pp. 250-251.

⁷Henry Dan Piper, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait, pp. 299-300.

⁸Bruccoli, p. 71.

APPENDIX I

The following are copies of typescript pages with the author's corrections from "Crazy Sunday," pages 17 and 18, and "Six of One," pages 30 and 31. The originals reside in the Rare Book and Manuscript Division, Princeton University Library.

These pages illustrate Fitzgerald's concern with rhythm and fluidity of sentences, careful selection of expressive and uncommon verbs and adjectives, and above all, pursuance of the brief but incisive impression.

For example, in line 3, page 373 (page 17 in Fitzgerald's typescript), he deletes the conventional and vague phrase, "a beautiful rosy thing standing there," in favor of the more graceful and suggestive "just a little lovelier than he had ever seen her." The important dimension Fitzgerald adds to the sentence is the eye of the admiring observer.

In the next paragraph, Fitzgerald replaces the stilted phrase, "with the young lady," by the natural, conversational "with some girl." The sentence beginning, "She was so close....," in its original form is flat and graceless. By simply changing the place of "that," and deleting the contraction "wasn't" the sentence seems balanced and harmonious.

In the following paragraph, the notable addition is the effective phrase "But she was still quivering" and the

important deletion "she suspected Miles all the time now." By revealing Stella's immediate and painful reaction to Miles' flirtation, Fitzgerald adds dramatic tension to the scene. And in the next sentence, he excises a rambling and inexpressive line--"perfectly innocently as it happened, establishing himself beside"--and substitutes only two words, "talking to"; the entire section is tighter and infinitely more readable.

"Crazy Sunday" is (justifiably) regarded as an important story; "Six of One" is not, and even Fitzgerald would have admitted that it was not one of his major efforts. But a glance at the two pages from the latter indicates that he devoted as much attention to "Six of One" as to "Crazy Sunday," and thus, by implication, that he exercised the same care over his minor as his major works.

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UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS

APPENDIX II

A number of forgotten Fitzgerald stories have considerable merit and deserve to be anthologized for a wider audience along with the dozen-or-so stories critics customarily select for short story collections. They include:

Previously collected

Dalrymple Goes Wrong
 The Jelly Bean
 O Russet Witch
 "The Sensible Thing"
 First Blood
 Majesty
 Magnetism
 An Alcoholic Case
 The Lost Decade
 Basil and Cleopatra
 Outside the Cabinet-Maker's
 One Trip Abroad
 News of Paris--Fifteen Years Ago
 Any Pat Hobby story

Uncollected

John Jackson's Arcady
 Presumption
 Jacob's Ladder
 The Bowl
 The Swimmers
 The Hotel Child
 Emotional Bankruptcy
 The Rubber Check
 No Flowers
 On An Ocean Wave
 The Last Kiss
 An Author's Mother

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Stories and Essays Listed Alphabetically

(E = Essay)

(Parenthesis around date indicates date written
if it differs greatly from date of publication.)

Absolution	1924	Captured Shadow, The	1928
Adjuster, The	1925	Change of Class, A	1931
Adolescent Marriage, The	1926	Cheerful Title	unpublished
Afternoon of An Author	1936	Count of Darkness, The	1935
An Alcoholic Case	1937	Crack-Up, The (E)	1936
Ants At Princeton, The	1936	Crazy Sunday	1932
An Author's Mother	1936	Cruise of the Rolling Junk, The (E)	1924
At Your Age	1929	Cut-Glass Bowl, The	1920
Author's House	1936	Dalrymple Goes Wrong	1920
Babes in the Woods	1917	Dance, The	1926
Babylon Revisited	1931	Day Off From Love	unpublished
Baby Party, The	1925	Dearly Beloved	unpublished
Basil and Cleopatra	1929	Death of My Father, The (E)	undated
Benediction	1920	Debt of Honor, A	1910
Bernice Bobs Her Hair	1920	Debutante, The	1917
Between Three and Four	1931	Design in Plaster	1939
Boil Some Water...	1940	Diagnosis	1932
Book of My Own, A (E)	1937	Diamond As Big As the Ritz, The	1921
Bowl, The	1928	Diamond Dick	1924
Broadcast We Almost Heard Last September (1935)	1947	Dice, Brass Knuckles and Guitar	1923
Bridal Party, The	1930	Discard (1939?)	1948
Camel's Back, The	1920		

Early Success (E)	1937	He Thinks He's Wonderful	1928
Echoes of the Jazz Age (E)	1931	High Cost of Macaroni, The (E)	unpublished
Emotional Bankruptcy	1931	Homes of the Stars, The	1940
End of Hate, The	1940	Honor of the Goon, The	1937
Family Bus, The	1933	Hot and Cold Blood	1923
Family In the Wind	1932	Hotel Child, The	1931
Fate in Her Hands	1936	How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year (E)	1924
Fiend, The	1935	How to Live on \$36,000 A Year (E)	1924
Financing Finnegan	1938	How to Waste Material... (E)	1926
First Blood	1930	Ice Palace, The	1920
Flapper's Little Brother, The (E)	1924	"I Didn't Get Over"	1936
Flight and Pursuit	1932	I Got Shoes	1933
Forging Ahead	1929	Image on the Heart	1936
Four Fists, The	1920	Imagination and a Few Mothers (E)	1923
Freeze-Out, A	1931	Indecision	1931
Freshest Boy, The	1928	I Never Thought the Day Would Come	unpublished
Full Life, A	unpublished	Inside the House	1936
Fun in An Artist's Studio	1941	In the Darkest Hour	1934
Girls Believe in Girls (E)	1930	In the Holidays	1937
Gods of the Darkness (1935)	1941	Intimate Strangers, The	1935
Gretchen's Forty Winks	1924	Jacob's Ladder	1927
Guest in Room 19, The	1937	Jelly Bean, The	1920
Handle With Care (E)	1936	Jemina (1916)	1921
Head and Shoulders	1920		
Her Last Case	1934		

John Jackson's Arcady	1924	My Old New England Farm- house on the Erie (E)	1925
Kingdom in the Dark, A	1935	Myra Meets His Family	1920
Last Kiss, The (1939-40)	1949	Mystery of the Raymond Mortgage	1909
Last of the Belles, The	1929	New Leaf, A	1931
Lees of Happiness, The	1920	News of Paris... (1940)	1947
Long Way Out, The	1937	New Types	1934
Lost Decade, The	1939	Nice Quiet Place, A	1930
Lo, the Poor Peacock unpublished		Night At Chancellors- ville, The	1935
Love Boat	1927	Night At the Fair, A	1928
Love in the Night	1925	No Flowers	1934
Luckless Santa Claus, A	1912	No Harm Trying	1940
Magnetism	1928	Not in the Guidebook	1925
Majesty	1929	Offside Play unpublished	
Making Monogamy Work (E)	1924	Offshore Pirate, The	1920
Man In the Way, A	1940	On An Ocean Wave	1941
May Day	1920	One Interne	1932
Mightier Than the Sword	1941	One of My Oldest Friends	1925
Miss Frankenstein unpublished		One Hundred False Starts (E)	1933
Mr. Icky (1916)	1921	One Trip Abroad	1930
Moment of Revolt That Comes To Every Married Man, The (E)	1924	On Schedule	1933
More Than Just a House	1933	On the Trail of Pat Hobby	1941
Most Disgraceful Thing I Ever Did, The (E)	1923	Ordeal, The	1915
My Generation (E) unpublished		O Russet Witch	1921
My Lost City (E) (1932)	1945	Our Irresponsible Rich (E)	1924

Outside the Cabinet Maker's	1928	Pusher in the Face, The	1925
Pain and the Scientist	1913	Rags Martin-Jones and the Prince of Wales	1924
Passionate Esquimo, The	1935	Reade, Substitute Right-Half	1910
Pasting It Together (E)	1936	Rescue	unpublished
Pat Hobby and Orson Welles	1940	Reunion At the Fair	unpublished
Pat Hobby Does His Bit	1940	Rich Boy, The	1926
Pat Hobby, Putative Father	1940	Ring (E)	1933
Pat Hobby's College Days	1941	Room With the Green Blinds, The	1911
Pat Hobby's Christmas Wish	1940	Rough Crossing, The	1929
Pat Hobby's Grey Days	unpublished	Rubber Check, The	1932
Pat Hobby's Hour	unpublished	Salesmanship On the Champs-Elysees (E)	1930
Pat Hobby's Preview	1940	Salute to Lucy and Elsie	unpublished
Pat Hobby's Secret	1940	Scandal Detectives, The	1928
Patriotic Short, A	1940	"Send Me In, Coach"	1936
Pearl and the Fur, The	unpublished	Sensible Thing, The	1924
Penny Spent, A	1925	Sentiment and the Use of Rouge	1917
Perfect Life, The	1929	Shadow Laurels	1915
Pierian Springs and the Last Straw	1917	Shaggy's Morning	1935
Popular Girl, The	1922	Short Autobiography, A (E)	1929
Porcelain and Pink	1920	Short Trip Home, A	1927
Presumption	1926	Six of One	1932
Princeton (E)	1927	Sleeping and Waking (E)	1934
Produced by Pat Hobby	unpublished	Smilers, The	1920

Snobbish Story, A	1930	What Became of Our Flappers and Sheiks (E)	1925
Spire and the Gargoyle, The	1917	Who's Who--and Why (E)	1920
Strange Sanctuary	1939	Winter Dreams	1922
Swimmers, The	1929	Woman From Twenty-One, The	1941
Tarquin of Cheapside (Tarquin of Cheepside	1921 1917)	Woman With a Past, A	1930
Teamed With Genius	1940	Women in the House, The	unpublished
Ten Years in the Advertis- ing Business (E)	1929	World's Fair, The (1925-32)	1948
Thank You For the Light	unpublished	Your Way and Mine	1927
That Kind of Party (1929?)	1951	Zone of Accident	1935
Third Casket, The	1924		
This Is a Magazine (E)	1920		
Three Acts of Music	1936		
Three Hours Between Planes	1941		
Too Cute For Words	1936		
Trail of the Duke, The	1913		
Trouble	1937		
Two For A Cent	1922		
Two Old-Timers	1941		
Two Wrongs	1930		
Unspeakable Egg, The	1924		
Wait Till You Have Children of Your Own (E)	1924		
What I Think and Feel at 25 (E)	1922		