CHAPTER ONE

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There have been numerous classifications by which one can sort out the characters of the fiction. A conspicuous identification for the major character is through the traditional term, ‘Protagonist.’ The Greek word ‘Agon’ means ‘suffering’. The protagonist is the one who suffers or undergoes a passion. Obviously, he is a victim whose fate illustrates a truth about the human condition. In fact the concept of the protagonist is framed in myths, which are vehicles of religious truth, history and custom. In all times and under every circumstance throughout the inhabited world the myths of man have flourished. To put it precisely, they have been the inspiration of the activities of the human body and the mind.

Joseph Campbell, after analysing an immense number of mythologies in his book The Hero with a Thousand Faces, demonstrates the wonder tale, which appears to describe the lives of great heroes, the power of Gods and Goddesses. It gives symbolic expression to the unconscious desires, fears and tensions underlying the conscious patterns of human behaviour. He states:

Mythology in other words is Psychology misread as biography, history and cosmology. The modern Psychiatrist can translate it back to its proper denotations and thus rescue for the contemporary world a rich and eloquent document of the profoundest depths of human character (256).

Again, in his exhaustive study on the subject, Campbell describes: “the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of
the formula represented in the rites of passage: Separation – initiation- return, which he calls the nuclear unit of the monomyth” (30). The individual myths usually elaborate on some of the features of monomyth. As Campbell admits, “the changes rung on the simple scale of the monomyth defy description” (246), the three stages of the hero myth are symbolically represented as the stages of the psychic growth of every protagonist.

In Perseus Myth, King Acrisius had received a prophecy that his grandson would kill him. To avert the doom, he imprisoned his only daughter, Danae. Through a window Zeus entered in the form of a shower of gold, which impregnated Danae. She gave birth to Perseus, the protagonist. But Acrisius imprisoned Danae and her baby in a chest and cast them into the sea (separation). Perseus and his mother were rescued. The hero was given magic weapons (Initiation). He slew the Gorgon Medusa and saved his mother from the attention of a dirty old man. He finally killed his grandfather and rescued the throne (Return).

The higher religions show the protagonist’s deed to be moral, bringing back regeneration for the society. Jesus Christ, Lord Krishna and Gautama Buddha took upon themselves the enactment of a human career. They symbolise that the divine being is a revelation of the omnipotent self, which dwells within us all. So, the protagonist’s deed is the salvation of the community or symbol of that salvation.

Thus the protagonists are classified into extroverted type, whose aim is action and their deeds change the face of the world; secondly, the introverted type, the culture-bringer, redeemer and saviour; the third type is the
centroverted type who seeks transformation. They become creative individuals who by moulding themselves directly mould the society. Literature brings its protagonist into imaginative action by placing them in situations in which they mould themselves. Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is an exhaustive review of the stages – Inferno, the misery of the spirit bound to the prides and actions of the flesh; Purgatorio, the process of transmitting flesh into spiritual experience; and Paradiso, the degrees of spiritual realization. In this process the protagonist is guided and influenced by his own analysis of the multitude of experiences through which he has passed, suffered with the feelings they evoked. The whole life he has encountered takes on a shape and a pattern, which helps him to analyse the motives of his character and their response to the new situations, which he creates and the significance of those situations. Homer’s protagonist Odysseus wandering for ten years after the Trojan War not only provided the material for one of the world’s greatest stories, but gave us the notion of Odyssey—in whom men’s values and dreams were epitomized in the long wandering marked by many changes of fortune.

In Shakespeare, each of his protagonists--from the king to the clown, from the most highly intellectual to the simpleton -- judges life from his own experience. *King Lear* gains a new manhood after his mental and physical torture. Thus the hero-cycle is a wonder story of the individual coming to maturity through initiation. The hero deed is that of a quest to bring to light the lost co-ordinating soul to come to full human maturity through the conditions of contemporary society. In this connection Leslie Fielder comments: "An initiation is a fall through knowledge to maturity, behind there persists the
myth of the Garden of Eden, the assumption that to know good and evil is to be done with the joy of innocence” (An End to Innocence 22).

Down the ages, the concept of the protagonist changes according to social circumstances and the author’s point of view, but the significance of the protagonist in determining the focal point of the plot is an established factor. In novels of adventure like Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders of Daniel Defoe, though they have as background an account of travels and exploits, they evoke in actuality the great themes of life, death and salvation of a man. The realistic novels of Richardson, Pamela and Clarissa describe with passionate minuteness certain aspects of the humble world in society which are only the setting wherein is enacted the destiny of a soul. Oliver Goldsmith’s The Vicar of the Wakefield represents the diverse traits of British society, but the picture is built around the figure of the protagonist--the vicar. In Henry Fielding’s Tom Jones, which was conceived as a large grouping together of parallel action bristled with theories and doctrines, the main pattern is grouped around a protagonist. In the novels of Jane Austen, Emma and Pride and Prejudice, which deal with the restricted circle of home life and a little world of country gentry--a group of human beings and their relation with one another--her vision of life is transcribed into those of her protagonist. In the novels of Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy and George Eliot though they deal with various social, moral, political and religious themes with different styles and techniques, their protagonists give unity to their plot and stories reflecting their own philosophy, and theory of life.

In the twentieth century the stream of consciousness novels of Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, the protagonist is the pivot on whom
the novels are constructed. Here it is not the exposition of a philosophy or a theory, but a gradual unraveling of the inner consciousness of the protagonist. Therefore, the history of English fiction points out in great detail to the protagonist who is purely a social creation and in some sense a prisoner of his own individuality.

But the most vital problem, that man has been confronted ever since his bow on the stage of life is to strike some relationship with the world around him. It could reconcile the contradictions within his own nature and give him a sense of harmony in a baffling universe. American literature at one level is an examination of the nature and meaning of such relationship and the individual frame of orientation that invariably forms the backdrop of that relationship. Owing to the environmental influences in the post-war period, writers seem to have a conspicuous intellectual maturity with which they began to search for the American individual. This in turn, appears to evolve into conflicts of many dimensions, one of which is the changing of the hero into a rebel and consequently a victim. They are also alienated from the society in which they live. Such a hero becomes a scapegoat and his major function is to present his own predicament. In a way, as Theodore Dreiser feels: “man is more led or pushed than he is leading or pushing” (qtd.in.F.O. Mattheissen Theodore Dreiser 188).

The American writers have tried to place the protagonist in situations where he responds with his whole vitality and his responses are unambiguous and unequivocal. It is in such irreducible moments of life that the individual is able to test the validity of his pattern of values and undergoes the Individuation
process. One of C.G. Jung’s significant contributions to literature is his theory of the individuation process:

Individuation is psychological growing up, the process of discovering those aspects of one’s self that make one an individual apart from others. It is a process of recognition, of self-awareness, understanding of one’s weaknesses and strength that takes place as one matures. The meaning and purpose of the process is that realization in all its aspects, of the personality originally hidden away in the embryonic germ plasm, the production and unfolding of the original potential wholeness (The Collected Works of C.G. Jung 110).

In the process of individuation, the protagonist tries to arrive at an identity on several levels of self, society, occupation and sex commonly vacillates between hope and despair. The conflict strengthens the ego of the protagonist and facilitates the process of identification. Moreover, individuation becomes relevant in the context of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the American characters, the tension between puritan moralism and puritan utilitarianism, the genteel tradition and the spirit of aggressive enterprise. Hence the dominant individuation leads to a heroic conception of the self as a reservoir of infinite possibilities and as a result, the ever-expanding physical frontier gets transformed into the corresponding aesthetic metaphor of the American Dream. The masters of American fiction like Mark Twain, Henry James and Saul Bellow create protagonists, who obtain education through their own analyses and submerging themselves in the complex world, eventually become aware of their own environment.
Twentieth century fiction seems to abound in protagonists who are complex in nature and their individualistic ideals have always been emphasized. No other fine tribute can be given to the American protagonist than the one by Theodore L. Gross:

The hero of American Literature is the exceptional man who seeks to realize an ideal. He may be Emerson’s American Scholar – an intellectual hero; he may be Arthur Dimmesdale – an ethical hero; he may be Ahab a religious hero; he may be the Southern Gentleman, who functions as a kind of social hero. Whatever his distinctive features and however idiosyncratic he may be, the hero pursues an ideal and in the process demonstrates certain common characteristics. Like heroes in the writing of other countries and of other times, the hero of American literature is a courageous, active, social man whose passions are more intense than those of the people whom he usually represents (The Heroic Ideal in American Literature viii).

American democracy, promising life, liberty and pursuit of happiness is based on the idea of the protagonist’s continuous striving for social and moral perfection. The protagonist’s search for individual values--the realization of potentialities, self-reliance and individuality, a sense of personal identity in a free society--is taken to be the motivating force. The interaction of the principles, viz., dynamics of idealism, opportunity and endeavour seem to constitute the magic formula for the protagonist’s wealth, success, and power. The fascination for money and the rich girl as the dream girl was the inevitable result of the romantic illusion. The individual romantic illusion, in other words,
the American dream, corrupting the innocent American and reducing him to a sinner in the hands of an indifferent external force, more often is likely to crush him to tragedy and death.

The dream as a motivating force has imbued the transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau, who thought of attaining a communion with the over soul through the stairway of nature. Hawthorne and Melville had shown the basic inconsistency of this dream and its catastrophic results. Mark Twain developed with the years a kind of skeptical disillusionment, while Henry Adams raised the elaborate construction of his education only to tell us that it had been a fruitless attempt toward unity and consistency. From Theodore Dreiser to Sinclair Lewis, from William Faulkner to Ernest Hemingway the whole tradition is an uninterrupted record of failure and frustration of big attempts wrecked by a destiny of doom.

Thus the American dream and frustrated fulfillment had been presented since the very beginning in the American experience. Unable to overcome the problems, man seems to become a rebel-victim or anti-hero. Ihab Hassan in his Radical Innocence analyses:

The problem of the anti-hero is essentially one of identity. His search is for existential fulfillment, that is, for freedom and self-definition. What he hopes to find is a position he can take within himself. Society may modulate his awareness of his situation, but only existence determines his stand. The recoil of the modern self is its way of taking a stand. The retreat weakens its involvement in the living world. It leads it in the ways of violence and alienation,
augments its sense of guilt and absurdity, and affords it no objective standard for evaluating its worth of human action (31).

Thus the crisis in the contemporary life during Twenties and the historical process moving towards the new frontiers of human selfhood are portrayed in the novels of many talented writers. To name a few, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Dos Passos may immediately come to anybody's mind. They were without deep roots, a generation deemed to have been betrayed by their elders and as a result forced to live violently in a violent age.

F.Scott Fitzgerald is a conspicuous writer to represent the group. It appears that no writer set out more determinedly to capture in fiction the despair of the twenties and its possibilities than Scott Fitzgerald. He was so readily allured by the glamour of the rich and also the dream of success. Another Minnesotan, Sinclair Lewis satirized the American vanities of the twenties in his novel Main Street, but Fitzgerald offered in his fiction an entirely different and unsatirical view of post-war modernity.

Fitzgerald is overwhelmingly praised as a creator of a disenchanted and sentimental attitude towards experience In the volume The Golden Moment: The Novels of F.Scott Fitzgerald, Milton R.Stern remarks:

As his novels show, our culture is filled with people who are driven by unspecified longings and unarticulated wistfulness into an identity – yearning mobility. Fitzgerald found that America's history of futurizing (a history which leads me to claim for liberalism the majority voice of America) was a process in which
the best was constantly being turned into the careless, selfish and brutal. Nostalgia becomes a yearning not for an actual time in the past, but for a state of hope, which has been lost through initiation into America’s wasteful and careless historical process (455).

Milton R. Stern further analyses that Fitzgerald learns a fact at his own experience both in life and fiction: “that all things fade and that the golden moment glistens lastingly only in memory” (462).

Fitzgerald’s novel anatomizes the disintegration and metamorphoses of personality and consciousness in a fragmenting western world. He is not only seen as the expression of an American experience, but also as a spoiled and dissolute child of the twenties. John F. Callahan’s *The Illusions of a Nation: Myth and History in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, has the following words to say:

Fitzgerald has been on my mind as a novelist who captured the complexity of the American idealist, the frailty of his historical and psychic awareness together with his willingness of the heart. Fitzgerald’s men express within their lives that national failure of contact between the individual and the institutional structures of his culture (viii).

Callahan elucidates that Fitzgerald’s novels show the deeply felt denunciation of historical and metahistorical evil inherent in human experience.
He continues to assert:

The meaning of Fitzgerald’s novels is that the aesthetic impulse has got to be continuous and not just a moment in opposition to the rest of life. There must be a commitment to otherness and to that harmony dependent upon connecting oneself to the world. ...To the end his compassionate imagination sought a dialectic, which could integrate history and self and change both – through the social form of the novel (215).

The French critic, Jean Bessiere comments that Fitzgerald’s novels are moral stories. Hence the criticism of reality ends in a lesson of pessimism and of humility. He argues:

Fitzgerald’s hero is often morbid; he chooses to be defeated, but asks to be recognized as the plaything of the injustice of events and of men. Suffering is his vocation and his way of protesting; through his humiliation, he intends to denounce the faults of society. By never giving himself the means of achieving victory, he likens self-destruction to a process of destruction, which he would undergo in spite of himself (Fitzgerald: La vocation de L’échec 82).

Fitzgerald’s world-view is dichotomous. He is both a romantic and moralist face to face with his own breakdown. Fitzgerald traces his drastic change from a romantic to a moralist. During his amazing early success Fitzgerald observes: “Life was something you dominated if you were any good” (The Letters 96). He further remarks that at the end of his life he embraces: "The sense that life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat and
that the redeeming things are not happiness and pleasure but the deeper satisfaction that come out of struggle” (The Letters 96).

Abraham Lincoln was Fitzgerald’s American example of his wise and tragic sense of life. Jean Bessiere aptly remarks:

Fitzgerald’s romanticism boils down to the hope of imposing his will on the world to discover or to create a reality, which can be adequate to the expectations of the individual. Victim of his society, he sees its faults, but he keeps the image of an American, where the greatness of Lincoln would be compatible with the overpowering desire for material things (Fitzgerald: La Vocation de L’echec 29-31).

Fitzgerald dramatised the dreams and illusions in his protagonists, which he felt to be at the core of America’s greatness and loss of greatness. The works of Fitzgerald, while at once being autobiographical becomes a dramatic symbol of human and cultural reality. In this context, Andrew Turnbull’s remark on Fitzgerald’s story deserves to be quoted: “The American story Fitzgerald writes is the history of all aspiration – not just the American dream but the human dream” (F. Scott Fitzgerald 307).

Fitzgerald focussed upon personal experience which was a microcosm of the experience of the nation. The contradictions he experienced and put into fiction heighten the implications of the dream for individual lives, the promise and possibilities, violations and corruption of those ideals of nationhood and personality. As Ralph Ellison phrased it: “dreamed into being, out of the chaos and darkness of the feudal past” (Invisible Man 433), Fitzgerald
embodied in his protagonists tissues and nervous system the fluid polarities of American experience--success and failure, illusion and disillusion, dream and nightmare.

Fitzgerald's romantic protagonists believed that the universe was alive and that fulfillment was a process of growth leading to a continued sense of expectation. Amory Blaine of *This side of Paradise* wondered how people could fail to notice that he was a boy marked for glory. Anthony Patch of *The Beautiful and Damned* was thrilled to remote harmonies, for he was young now as he would never be again and more triumphant than death. Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* had some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness. Dick Diver of *Tender is the Night* brings with him the illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people, illusions of a nation. Monroe Stahr of *The Last Tycoon* had flown up very high to see on the strong wings when he was young. While he was up he had looked on all the kingdoms with the kind of eyes that can stare straight into the sun. When the attitude of mind--desire for experience, quest for meaning--leads to disappointment, it becomes destructive and self-defeating. Keats' lovers Endymion and Hyperion are often destroyed this way and so are Fitzgerald's protagonists.

By such disillusionment life suddenly loses its purpose and quite unexpectedly it becomes absurd and the hero becomes the eternal wanderer alienated from society an outcast and a scapegoat, and the truth that the youth grows pale and specter-thin, and dies. Toward the end of his life, Fitzgerald acknowledged when his romanticism had been tempered by sad experience: “I
guess I am too much a moralist at heart and really want to preach at people in some acceptable form rather than to entertain them” (The Crack-Up 339).

Fitzgerald’s fiction was shaped not only by the 1920’s, but also by the grandeur, more enduring mythologies of the past. From his first novel This Side of Paradise to his unfinished The Last Tycoon, the reader is led to such larger considerations as the quest for the platonic ideal, the high romantic aspiration, the sense of moral destiny all of which underlie Fitzgerald’s distinctly American variations of man’s universal longings.

This thesis attempts to study Fitzgerald’s protagonists, and their evolution in his four completed novels and an unfinished novel. Its protagonist holds the crude, episodic structure of Fitzgerald’s novel. They picturizes the struggle between materialism and spiritualism within him. It also traces the combination of good and evil in the protagonist. Above all Fitzgerald’s fiction gives a vivid picture of the evolution of the protagonist formulating a metaphysical attitude towards the conditions of life.

The researcher has used the term ‘Evolution’ in the specific context of the protagonist, who generally starts with romantic illusion and his overall experience becomes a process of educating himself through the futile illusions of his age. While in the beginning, the protagonist has an idealised and romantic conception of his future success he later becomes highly critical of everything in general and more of himself in particular. The final outcome is the protagonist’s destruction of all the illusions, educating (evolving) him through the realisation of the futility of all faith.

This Side of Paradise is a searching, vivid portrait of an American youth, Amory Blaine, in the year preceding and following World War I. Fitzgerald presents the turbulent emotions of his generation. He declared: “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” (The Crack-Up). The novel dramatises the restless grouping of a generation: “grown up to find all faiths in man shaken” (282). Amory embodies the hopes, fears, struggles and aspirations of his generation. In this connection Robert Sklar claims:

The glorious spirit of abounding youth glows throughout this fascinating tale. We know that (Amory Blaine) is doing just what hundreds of thousands of other young men are doing in colleges all over the country (F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Last Laocoon 111).

At an early age he was encouraged by his mother Beatrice Blaine to live by a sort of aristocratic egotism. When Amory attempts to reform his life, Monsignor Darcy, his surrogate father, guides him. He urges Amory, the quester, who hovers between a personality and a personage, must shed his undesirable personality traits--his over-weaning self-concern, his insatiable ambition. Obviously, in his desire to become a personage, Amory acknowledges his consummate selfishness. By transcending that selfishness he resolves to bring poise and balance into his life. His second attempt to attach positive value to life leading to his equation of sex with evil and his inevitable conclusion that “inseparably linked with evil was beauty” (280). Amory’s distorted apprehension of the beautiful leads him to an untenable position. Again, this young iconoclast decrees that selfhood is contingent upon renunciation of “the beauty of great art, beauty of all joy, most of all the beauty of women” (280). Eventually, he concedes that the essence of beauty abstracted from its various forms in harmony. The contradiction rises from Amory’s failure to comprehend that selfhood cannot be achieved without the
harmonious balance of the disparate elements within the human being. Amory mistakenly perceives as beautiful and desirable that which, in essence, is distorted and ugly—the insipid Isabelle, the mercenary Rosalind, the half-mad Eleanor and the licentious Jill.

By the conclusion of the novel, Amory’s transformation from an egotist to a personage is complete. Amory attains wisdom to self-knowledge with which the novel ends: “I know myself, Amory cries, but that is all” (282). For Amory’s rebellious generation, Fitzgerald suggests that there is little comfort to be derived from the wisdom of their ancestors. The legacy of those wise ones consists of old cries and old creeds. Wisdom, like paradise, cannot be gained by bequest, just as life cannot be lived vicariously. Each individual must attain the wisdom that ensures selfhood by going out into “that dirty gray turmoil of life, of experience” (282). In his perceptive study of the novel, Edmund Wilson sharply comments that it is “really not about anything: its intellectual and moral content amounts to little more than a gesture—a gesture of indefinite revolt” (The Bookman LV 21-22). The novel stands at the beginning of a decade and dramatizes the restless groping of a generation. As Alfred Kazin has vouchsafed “This Side of Paradise announced the last generation” (On Native Grounds 316).

The Beautiful and Damned, Fitzgerald’s second novel is an ambitious attempt to explore the social and personal pressures that contribute to the disintegration of humanistic perspective. Andrew Hook, analysing this novel, remarks:

The Beautiful and Damned, a long novel portraying, not the glamour and glitter of the lives of the young, the beautiful and
privileged, but rather the slow draining away of youthful charm and hope into bleakness and despair (Scott Fitzgerald: The Promises of life 24).

Anthony Patch, who succeeds Amory Blaine, sees life meaningless, the beautiful are damned. The glamour he once saw is only a gauze curtain, lowered before the stage to conceal the fact that those twilight nymphs were, after all, only middle aged chorus ladies.

The novel focuses upon the moral decline of Anthony Patch, who, at the age of twenty-five, directs his energies toward the attainment of his grandfather’s fortune and the wooing of the beautiful Siren, Gloria Gilbert. John Peale Bishop in this regard, comments: “It is his uxoriousness which makes of him a pathetic adjunct to the more vivid Gloria, the thinners of his nest for life which makes him turn, more and more thirstily, toward alcohol” (New York Herald 1).

Sophisticated, he is constantly under the illusion that he is rather superior in intellect and character to the persons around him. Disillusioned, he is at the mercy of circumstances Edmund Wilson points out the same: “Fitzgerald ruined his characters wholesale with a set of catastrophes so arbitrary that beside them, the worst perversities of Hardy were like the working of natural laws” (Bookman LV 1).

Adam Patch, Anthony’s grandfather disinherits him witnessing many drunken parties. Anthony’s attempts at reconciliation with the old man proved futile. So he contests the will. After a few years of experience, demoralizing legal battles further erode his relationship with his wife Gloria. Finally, the
court gives a verdict in his favour. But his greed and egotism have exacted a fearful retribution that Anthony suffers a mental collapse and Gloria’s beauty fades prematurely. H.W. Boynton asserts in this context: "The Parable ends with a glorious ironical punch. Gloria is punished by the mere loss of youth and beauty; Anthony by the utter fatuity of wealth" (The Independent and the Weekly Review 397).

The fate of this unhappy protagonist dramatizes the moral lesson of Fitzgerald’s epigraph: “The Victor belongs to the spoils” (250). Anthony’s love for refined physical pleasures distorts his perception of happiness. Moreover, his female counterpart Gloria concurs with Anthony’s premise that life is meaningless without self-gratification. Anthony’s marriage obviously fails because it brings to the relationship a consummate narcissism.

The theme of imagined glory is dramatised in Fitzgerald’s third novel The Great Gatsby, through the experiences of Jay Gatsby, a man whose world is shaped and sustained by romantic illusions. What makes Gatsby tower over Amory Blaine is the greater magnitude of his glittering illusion and the single mindedness with which he tries to make it a reality.

Jay Gatsby, formerly James Gatz, is a farm boy from Minnesota. His objective is to reestablish his romantic association with Daisy Fay, who is now married to Tom Buchanan of East Egg. Daisy represents for Gatsby the twin ideal of eternal youth and that opulent American touch, money. Gatsby’s dream represents “a quest to recover the object of his vision, and a quest to recover the vision in its God-like imperishable form” (Sklar F.Scott Fitzgerald: The Last Laocoon 121). Therefore, the theme of Great Gatsby is the withering
of the American Dream. Gatsby, who might be thought of as a corrupt product of the world, is gradually distinguished from it, set against it and finally made a victim of its carelessness and violence. Two alternative worlds are set in contrast. On the one hand, the past is held suspended of love and dream, on the other, is the modern world of dislocated, rootless and grotesque images. This ambiguity persists into the ending where Fitzgerald recreates the American Dream: "The dream of an innocent pastoral America created by man’s capacity for wonder, and which he also sees... as a nostalgia desire for which times itself defeats" (Bradbury 89). Gatsby, the mythic embodiment of the American dream, is shown in all his immature romanticism. His deficiencies of judgement bring him to his tragic death.

Gatsby's affair with Daisy becomes the definitive circumstance of his past. Gatsby realizes the intensity of his commitment to his past only when he returns from the war to see Daisy, who is married to Tom of East Egg. As Gatsby believes in the myth of regeneration and because he misapprehends the nature of history in an entropic cosmos, he becomes a victim of his past. He tells Nick: "I’m going to fix everything just the way it was before, she’ll see" (117). It is an open acknowledgement of Gatsby's presumption of his greatness and his error. He hopes to bring back Daisy and to obliterate her marriage. In fact it is a test of his faith in the human capacity for renewal in which he can only fail. Gatsby’s dream, stretched between a golden past and a golden future, is always betrayed by a desolate present.

Fitzgerald’s fourth and most ambitious novel Tender is the Night reveals an extraordinary maturity of perception of the underlying causes of human failure. Dick Diver, the protagonist, possesses;"All the talents especially great
charm, he is in fact a Superman in possibilities, but he lacks the tensile strength of the truly great personality” (Bruccoli 78).

He is exhilarated by his power of fascinating and uncritical love until he realizes the waste and extravagance involved. Eventually Dick violates his own nature by giving himself totally to those whose admiration he woos. But at the end he is left completely sterile. Malcolm Cowley is of the view that the novel concerns “an ambitious young American who goes to Europe and is ruined by his contact with the leisure class” (Introduction Tender is the Night v).

Fitzgerald intimates that Dick’s indiscriminate yearning for love leads him to seek self-destructive relationships and that Dick is seen as a brilliant psychiatrist whose life is ruined because he falls in love with the wrong woman, Nicole Warren and his vitality is sapped by the abundance of the Warren money. D.S. Savage comments in this connection: "All his energies diverted to the emotional needs of a wife who is simultaneously a patient. When Nicole has used him to the limits she abandons the exhausted man for a lover of the Tom Buchanan caste" (Envoy V 150).

From the moment he dedicated himself to her service, Dick’s love for Nicole has been a wild submergence of soul. Even Dick’s final defeat is a spiritual act of self-negation conducted with dignity. Knowing that Nicole is securely involved with Tommy Barban, Dick tells her “I can’t do anything for you anymore. I’m trying to save myself” (301). Dick’s tender exploration of the darkness of Nicole’s soul ends in his own destruction.
The Last Tycoon, the unfinished work of Fitzgerald is about the decline of the power of the Hollywood magnate, Manroe Stahr. Fitzgerald presents him as a culture hero. He is the epitome of those qualities of leadership that are most essential of the existence and culture of a group of nation or civilization. Fitzgerald evokes the movie monarch, a man who has had everything in life except the privilege of giving himself unselfishly to another human being. Yet Stahr is endowed with the qualities of natural leadership, financial wizardry, creative insight that makes him the boy wonder of Hollywood. Success came to him at a young age and left idealisms of his youth unscarred. Although he insists upon absolute control over every facet of his studio, Stahr is still an old-fashioned paternalistic employer. Stephen Vincent Benet writes in this regard:

It is character that dominates the book, the complex, yet consistent character of Monroe Stahr, the producer, hitched to the wheels of his own preposterous chariot at once dominating and dominated, as much a part of his business as the film that runs through the Cameras and yet a living man (F.Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work 130-31).

In the middle chapters, which is the meat of the book, Stahr almost experiences a love affair with an English girl, Kathleen Moore, who reminds him of his dead wife. The illusion of Kathleen as Minna Davis, Monroe’s dead wife, is his projection of unconscious wish to be joined through love with death. Kathleen becomes for Stahr, a personal muse offering him a new life. But Stahr with a perversion of the life force relinquishes his last chance for
renewed life and happiness. James Thurber showers praises on Fitzgerald’s creative output:

It is the last work of a first-rate novelist, it shows his development, it rounds out his all too brief career; it gives us what he has done and indicates what he was going to do on the largest canvas of his life; it is filled with many excellent things as it stands (New Republic 235).

If Fitzgerald lived to complete the novel Stahr would probably have merged as his hero of mythic stature. But he is cut down at the apogee of his career. The reader does not witness in him the moral deterioration of Anthony Patch, or Dick Diver or the self-destructive romanticism of Jay Gatsby. Monroe Stahr is physically flawed and is a dying man. Only his doctors know the seriousness of his illness for the last tycoon must be as solitary in death as he has been in life.

Though left incomplete with the creation of Monroe Stahr in The Last Tycoon Fitzgerald may rightly be regarded as having had a total insight into the reality of the nightmare underlying the American Dream. The intention to end the novel with a plane crash, which destroys Stahr is in effect, a benefiting final to the saga of adolescent dreams which began with the romantic egotist Amory Blaine in This Side of Paradise.

The present study falls into five chapters. The first chapter “Introduction” provides a background for the dissertation in general and the evolution of the protagonist in Fitzgerald’s fiction in particular. The chapter shows how the hero, susceptible to legend, becomes super-historical in myth.
Every age has thousands of aspiring heroes. In classical times, heroes were God-men, in the middle ages God’s men, in the Renaissance universal man, in the eighteenth century gentleman and in the nineteenth century self-made man. The manifestations have changed so visibly that the Twentieth century has seen the protagonist as a common man. The chapter analyses the modern hero’s deed of quest bringing to light the lost co-ordinated soul. The chapter highlights the role of Fitzgerald’s protagonist coming to full maturity through the conditions of contemporary life.

The second chapter entitled “Protagonist under Psychological Stress” studies how Fitzgerald’s protagonists are tormented by the conflict between the seduction of the American dream and their belief in the value of the traditional virtues—honor, courtesy and courage. The protagonists are defined according to the psychological make-up of contrasting characteristics and to the varying environments from which they spring. This chapter deals with their relationship with individuals. It focuses on the protagonist’s visionary longings, which are left unfulfilled who deteriorate, passing through a number of predetermined stages.

The third chapter entitled “Protagonist and Society” deals with the protagonists’ quest in American society, which lacks moral values. They are all concerned with society with its impact for good or bad on the individual. Fitzgerald’s protagonists are all the chroniclers of contemporary life documenting it in detail and discovering its inherent patterns to vivify the experience of existence. A general survey of Fitzgerald’s fiction would show that the protagonist goes on a restless pilgrimage to New York, Long Island,
Europe and finally to Hollywood. His wanderings follow a pattern of alienation and involvement of withdrawal and return.

The fourth chapter “Art as Expression of Personality” analyses how Fitzgerald presents the protagonist as an image of his personal life. Again, it is commonplace observation that Fitzgerald’s life and work were so interwoven that the distinction between them quite often appears to be blurred. In fact, he imagined and created his life and lived in his own fictional protagonists. In living up to a dream, an ideal of dramatic self-hood, Fitzgerald merged both his personality and society in which he lived into artistic representations.

The fifth chapter “Summation” concludes with Fitzgerald’s protagonist’s education through his quest for selfhood. In fact, all Fitzgerald’s protagonists, from Amory Blaine to Monroe Stahr, are projections of the conflict within his own divided self. The ugly reality—the shattering of the old mores, and old modes of thought and feelings resulting in a breakdown of communication between the older and the younger generations constantly confront them.

In the foregoing chapters an attempt has been made to trace the evolution of Fitzgerald’s protagonist. During the process the evolution the heroes experience failures and self-destruction. Fitzgerald roots various failures both in the weaknesses of the individuals and in a more fundamental weakness in the American belief in unlimited possibility. In such a pursuit, the Fitzgerald’s protagonist undergoes certain emotional crises as well and that forms the nucleus of the next chapter.