

Chapter 6th
CONCLUSIONS

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America is neither dream, nor reality. It is a hyperreality. It is a hyperreality because it is utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved. Everything here is real pragmatic and yet it is all the stuff of dreams too... the perfect simulacrum – that of the immanence and material transcription of all values.

- Jean Baudrillard

The values expressed by a writer of fiction are inferred from the attitudes toward time to be found in his work. These attitudes are shaped partly by literary genre as well as by themes. Fitzgerald preferred the form of the novel and story thought that his own best work was done within it. He was more productive, however, in the novel. It is likely that in the stories “he built better than he knew.” These novels provide formal illustration of his conception of time. They present life in a sequence of moments, disjointed, accentuating high and low points with moods of ecstasy and poignant nostalgia produced under the pressure of it. The effect of wholeness emerges from such fragmentation is repeated in the characters. The characters from the novel as well as of represent facets of a single hero or heroine for they are essentially remarkably similar.

As a writer of fiction, Fitzgerald provides a view of personal wholeness. This motive of desiring to realize the ideal makes his mode of expression resemble imaginative activity which shares the

same motive, dreaming and magic. The fictional world of Fitzgerald is glamorous which resembles the dream world. His characters are often explicitly and consciously involved in their own visions of the ideal. His imagery frequently is drawn from the realms of magic and dream. These characters are generally quite fundamental one moreover, since the imagined with fulfillments shared by nearly all human beings which are the victims of the hallucinated satisfaction of the deep need for achievement. For love, it is easy to observe a character experiencing the illusions of dream and to participate in that experience. Such participation is likewise encouraged by the very process of reading. These are shaping real time to coincide with fictional time structures the reader's experience to coincide with the character's.

However, it is not to be inferred that Fitzgerald's work is mere escapist entertainment. Throughout his career, he was at pains to show that the joy and exhilaration of glamour which is purchased through a juggling of accounts that are reconciled. That is because magical thinking close it comes to the essential, ideal truth of the imagination that the romantic aims is always a distortion to some degree of external reality. Fitzgerald continuously holds this tension in focus. Thus, his technique is partly a casting of the glamour. It exerts upon reality the spell of illusion. At the same time it is partly a stripping away veils of customarily surround as the world in commonly accepted views, which contain false and damaging notions of reality. The object of enchantment is exposed as a tawdry thing at last. Such exposure in Fitzgerald never denigrates the nobility of the effort to

achieve that object. Disenchantment for him never raises the question of the fundamental value of life. He always believed in that. In spite of all the disillusionment he records, experience itself never comes to seem essentially trivial or absurd. Nor is man pictured as an unworthy creature. Fitzgerald gives shape to feelings that everyone shares to some extent, especially the hopes and fears associated with the concept of time and the sense of participation in destiny. Fitzgerald evinces a confirmation of own identity and of the truth of his own experience. There is a kind of doom is recognized in the defeat of Gatsby, Diver, and Stahr and their counterparts in the short stories. It is nevertheless not a spiritual death. The character of Gatsby may appear inarticulate, even ludicrous but the strength of the narrative sanction reserved for his essential worth affirms his magical celebration of the joy of love and life and the sense of ecstasy it induces.

The story of America has been the story of success. American democracy is promising life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. It is based on the idea of man's continuous striving for political, social and moral perfection. The search for individual values and for the realization of potentialities, for self-reliance and individuality, for a sense of personal identity in a free society – is taken to be the motivating force of the American people. As Thomas Wolfe writes, “to everyman his chance, to everyman the right to live, the right to work, to be himself, to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him – this seeker is the promise of America.” Wealth–success–affluence–this is the American dream.

This American dream has inspired, shaped and sustained the nation. The favourite story the Americans never tire of hearing is the rags-to-riches is the story of the self-made man. The interaction of the principal dynamics of idealism, opportunity and endeavour seem to constitute the magic formula for success, wealth and power. The endless accretions gradually appear to be the ultimate answer to the question of American destiny. Henry Adams' perception of a "law of acceleration" driving American society relentlessly in to modernity is confirmed with the far-reaching socio-economic transformations taking place during the early decades of twentieth century. The charting a fundamental pattern in human relationships, social and economic order, the steady accumulation of wealth; a pattern of growth of population, of industrial power, of business corporations; the rapid development of transport and communication system bringing with it consumer value and ideals. Even changing the city skylines seem like unequivocal inscriptions of abundance, progress, prosperity and power. One version or another of the Progressivist vision of society has served as the basis of American life of polity.

A critique of the spiritual poverty of consumerism, the alienation and anomie of urban life, cultural disintegration, social fragmentation and the loss of central nourishing values – the malaise of a society led by the "fastidious refinement of genteel culture and the predatory opportunism of commercialized men. The tone and atmosphere implicit in the greatest poems of the period, such as *Mauberley* (1920) and *The Waste Land* (1923), also informs the novels of the time. F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels were among the first to

convey the dream and disillusionment as well as rebelliousness of the “Jazz Age”. It’s rejection of the established standards of conduct and the so-called Lost Generation’s seemingly reckless insistence on defining itself in accordance with its own desires and values.

In Fitzgerald’s sketch of the twenties, that dream of limitless possibility empowers only a handful who manipulates the nation’s resources to suit their selfish aspirations and reduce the American Dream to shoddy materialism of cars, clothes and parties. Evolving out of the context that is often been described as the “gaudiest spree in history.” Fitzgerald’s strongest work focuses upon the fundamental disproportion between tawdry and transient excitements. The tragic consequences of limitless desire and the moral and historical importance that in one way or another attaches to them.

The Great Gatsby, published in 1925 speaks directly about love and existential freedom. It inhabits a different world, with barriers between men and women, Protestants, Catholics and Jews, rich and poor, capital and labour, educated and half-literate. It was a more defined and morally harder world. Daisy Fay Buchanan never appeals to the transcending authority of love or Jay Gatsby to that of equality. Social judgment matters more. Daisy knows that life has many things more permanent than love and Gatsby knows that equality is only a political virtue.

The Great Gatsby uses much contemporary historical material. The choice of place and subject was itself a statement. In 1924, H.L. Mencken, the most influential American critic, identified the life of

post-war New York City as one of the new subjects of the novel. That life was moneyed. It is vulgar, noisy, chaotic and immoral. Hence more interesting than anything is served by the literature of gentility. He was fascinated by the same New York crowds that provide the background for Fitzgerald. He too understood their figurative meaning. The new kind of American novel captures the moment and understands a new experience in American history. The replacement of public conscience by modern subjectivity is also noteworthy. As Mencken put his advice to writers, the New York scene-democracy in its current incarnation – “Ought to be far more attractive to novelists than it is.”

The Great Gatsby is a recollection of events that took place in the summer of 1922. Jay Gatsby began life as Jimmy Gatz has move steadily upward in an offbeat version of making it in America. He has been a farm boy, student and fisherman; steward and mate for the rich and mindless Dan Cody. Gatsby has loved and lost Daisy. He understands that in order to get her back he needs a good deal of money. He is a successful but as a bootlegger and possibly as a swindler. We enter the story in its last stage, along with the narrator, Nick Carraway. A number of lives become swiftly entangled: “Gatsby with Daisy Fay Buchanan; her husband Tom with Myrtle Wilson; Nick with Daisy’s friend, Jordan Baker.

Things look simple at the beginning. Nick Carraway, like Gatsby himself wants to change his life through success. It is a grand American motif. However, getting to where you want to go is not at all simple: Jordan cheats at golf, Myrtle leads a double life. Nick

quickly understands that the glittering social world he has come to conquer is built on ambiguities. Nick does not expect the entire texture of lives and human relationships to be affected. These characters are more than the sum of their own experiences. They constitute America itself as it moves into the Jazz Age.

The Great Gatsby is about American issues. The world of Gatsby is a version of the new social world which is feared by the tradition of America. It is a world of broken relationships; a world of money and success rather than of social responsibility. It is a world in which individuals are all too free to determine their moral destinies. Daisy warns Nick about the way this world is when she says, “I think everything’s terrible anyhow”. Because she believes that, she is free to act any way she wants.

One issue of the novel is loyalty to love and another is loyalty to friendship. Nick himself exemplifies loyalty to people and ideas. On the other hand Daisy and Tom have freed themselves from troublesome conscience – and from even more troublesome self – awareness. They will be loyal neither to idea nor person. But their characters have not been chosen arbitrarily by Fitzgerald. Americans had long been advised of the perilous subjectivity of their lives. The strong tradition of social philosophy in America, its Public Philosophy was known for concern with day-to-day issues. There were the lectures and writings focused on the American scene. In these works are thoughtful accounts of the good life. There was Walter Lippman’s account of the American Dream and there were deliberations about the way that Americans think or refuse to think and about the

implications of the dream. These works called the nation to account for the way it made and spent money, about its class relationships, about the state of American national character. Here is how Josiah Royce described the basic subject of public philosophy just before Fitzgerald went to Princeton.

Gatsby has the capacity for the pursuit of happiness. He believes in his dream and in Daisy as its object. Except for Nick Carraway and poor George Wilson he is the only figure in the novel to have a passion for belief and to care deeply about someone else. He may be wrong about the kind of happiness that is possible and about the woman who represents that happiness. Gatsby has committed himself to the dream. Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy against impossible odds is perhaps the final form of the American will bring a new life from destiny.

Of course, Gatsby is imperfect. In spite of his idealism, his idea of the good life is merely to be the acquisition of money, things, property. Money, after all, has been only a means to express otherwise inchoate ideas.

This Side of Paradise haunted the decade like a song, popular but perfect. It hung over an entire youth movement like a banner. But a book which college boys really read is a rare thing. It is usually praised for qualities that pin it closely to an exact moment in American life. Its publication is always considered to be the event that ushered in the Jazz Age.

Today the novel's young libertines, both male and female, would not shock a school girl. Amory Blaine turns out to be a conspicuous moralist who takes the responsibility of kissing very seriously and disapproves of affairs with chorus girls. At the end of the story, he is ennobled by an act of self-sacrifice in an Atlantic City hotel bedroom that no one would admire more than a Victorian mother. It is probably better to take for granted the usefulness of *This Side of Paradise* for social historians and to admire from the distance of another age the obviously wholesome morality of the hero. Fitzgerald is really showing us how a young American of his generation discovers what sort of figure he wants to cut, what modes of conduct, he wants to imitate.

The novel is very uneven and full of solemn attempts at abstract thought on literature, war and socialism. It has vitality and freshness only in moments and these are always moments of feeling.

This Side of Paradise is both a novel of youthful disappointment and disillusionment and of youthful longing and hope. The sense of promise and the sense of loss, the capacity of wonder and the belief that life is a cheat, these feelings exist side by side in this novel. These compete with one another, become contradictory, and tear the novel in two. Fitzgerald is described Amory's states of mind, and Amory moves back and forth between contradictory positions in a world that does not exist.

There is no sense of place in *This Side of Paradise*. There is a heightened sense of feeling – the mood of youth under moonlight –

but not the descriptive detail to anchor this feeling and make it real and convincing. Fitzgerald learned how to find an objective correlative for emotion in *The Great Gatsby* and it is perhaps for this reason that the critics have not hitherto seen that *The Great Gatsby* has almost all of the elements of *This Side of Paradise*.

The themes in *This Side of Paradise* with Fitzgerald are the power of the imagination, the possibilities of youth, the tragedy of misguided commitment and the destructive nature of time. Even the last page of *This Side of Paradise* – the discussion of the past rolling over the present – parallels in idea and phrasing the last page of *The Great Gatsby*. Gatsby is not so formally a part of his generation as is Amory. Despite his “Oxford days” he is not a part of any graduating class or any fixed social group. Gatsby’s tragedy steams from his trying to buy back and fruits of youth, from his belief that five years have made no difference in his relationship with Daisy. The five years have made all the difference.

Daisy gave her youth to Tom Buchanan, and the Daisy that Gatsby tries to win back is a changed woman – hardened and grown morally callous. Amory will have no such illusions about an older Rosalind. He tells that he will not try to buy back time and what Amory knows, Gatsby to his eventual sorrow.

Although, Amory and Gatsby end with different states of mind, the germ of *The Great Gatsby* is in *This Side of Paradise*. Both novels are about spent and misspent youth. It is about the loss of possibility

and the end of expectation and about the regret and pain of such loss – and both put the emphasis on the desire to relive the past.

Fitzgerald began in his acute awareness of a current American style of young life and in his complete willingness to use his own experience as if it were typical. The charm of his novels is simply the charm of shared vanity and enthusiasm for oneself as an exceptional person. Fitzgerald often persuades that he was the one sensitive person there – on the country club porch or in a New York street – the first time something happened, or at the very height of the season. And when this ability to exploit his life began to succeed beyond his dreams, the only next step he could think of was to use it harder.

The Last Tycoon is the story of Monroe Stahr, a once “nameless” man. He at the age of twenty-three, had first climbed his way to success. Fitzgerald was also twenty-three when he published his first novel. A small man, Stahr has always been a fighter. In his youth he headed a gang in the Bronx. Popular with men, he likes being with the boys; yet he is never one of them. Throughout his life he has always darted in and out of his various roles with dexterity. “If he could go from problem to problem, there was a certain rebirth of vitality with each change”. Although success has come to him, he remains uncertain and indecisive. Direct and frank by nature, he has never quite known how he “got to be Mr. Stahr.” Stahr’s search for identity follows a kind of pattern of dying and rebirth, which Fitzgerald’s use of flight and plane imagery peculiarly represents.

In *The Last Tycoon*, Fitzgerald examines his conception of the contemporary world as wasteland. The deprivation of the Hollywood wasteland is cultural. Films have become a bastardized art form, exploited by the Bradys whose interest in the “booming circus” stops at the box office.

Although the brevity of the manuscript does not allow for expansion of the motif, Fitzgerald indicates that the studied opulence of the Brady home reflects the mass-production mentality of its owner.

Cecilia comments that she selected the “processed leather room” for the conference with Monroe and the communist representative, Brimmer, because she hoped “that whatever happened would give it character and make it henceforth part of our house.” What does happen is that the usually sober Monroe becomes wretchedly drunk, attacks Brimmer, and is ignominiously knocked down by the communist. Monroe Stahr is the maimed kind of a decadent Hollywood empire.

Monroe’s unfinished house is another manifestation of opulent barrenness. The “builder’s rubble” around the roofless edifice creates an “open wound in the seascape.” Kathleen winces at the “barren glitter” of the unfinished rooms, furnished like a Hollywood set with properties – “some grass and things” – ordered by Monroe “to see how the place felt.”

The sterility of film art is underscored by the swarming in of the grunion with the tide while Monroe and Kathleen are at his

unfinished beach house. A black man collecting the teeming grunion in two pails tells Monroe that he has come so far out for the fish because he dislikes those “moving picture people.” He prefers reading Emerson and Rousseau to watching films. Films, he contends, have no cultural value because they have no philosophical direction, no social commitment. Unaware that he has “rocked an industry,” the man moves on with his rich catch of fish.

The black man’s idealism is contrasted with the box office mentality of the studio executives. An American who prefers Emersonian transcendentalism to twentieth-century materialism is inexplicable to the Hollywood pragmatists.

Like Jay Gatsby is redeemed by the steadfastness of his romantic ideal – Monroe Stahr confronts life’s complexities with a vision grander than ordinary human consciousness. Monroe imposes an Apollonian order upon his universe. Its success depends upon his sense of measured control and harmonious balance.

Fitzgerald’s first inspiration for Monroe Stahr was the brilliant producer, Irving Thalberg. Like the fictional Stahr, Thalberg was a legendary figure in Hollywood. The boy wonder who, at the age of twenty-one, was in complete command of a film studio. Fitzgerald admitted that Thalberg had always fascinated him. For three years he had thought of the producer as the prototype for his hero because Thalberg was one of the half-dozen men. Fitzgerald had known who were “built on a grand scale”.

Monroe Stahr – transcending even the legendary accomplishments of his prototype, Irving Thalberg – is presented by Fitzgerald as a culture here. He is the epitome of those qualities of leadership that are most essential to the existence and culture of a group, a nation or a civilization.

Monroe Stahr is the last of the Hollywood tycoons to be invested with such unqualified authority. Before the studio crumbles in the face of the egalitarian demands of the union bosses, the power will pass to ambitious company men “totally without conscience or creative brains.”

Monroe is cut down at the apogee of his career. Monroe Stahr is physically flawed – 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.

The fragmentation in Fitzgerald’s life is reflected in the novels – the unfinished plot, the abortive themes, the unrealized characters. And yet, there is a richness of allusion, of suggestiveness has an undeniable appeal. The characters created by Fitzgerald are wonderfully vital. Fitzgerald’s writing is at its best, its most mature, sparking, witty and graceful.