Chapter VII

THE AESTHETIC VISION OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

One of the innumerable myths obstructing the proper evaluation of Fitzgerald's art, till recently, was that he was a 'natural' genius but a 'mediocre' and an erratic talent, that he wrote intuitively and instinctively anything that stirred his imagination. A large number of The Saturday Evening Post stories, the incredible artistic gap between This Side of Paradise and The Great Gatsby, separated only by a period of five years, and the comparative failure of Tender Is The Night were the various factors that put even his most favourable critics on the defensive about his art. The frivolous and the glamorous aspect of his personality dominated so much the critics' minds that even the undeniable artistic greatness of The Great Gatsby was attributed just to a chance-hit. Even a perceptive critic like Mizener refers to his "intuitive way of working", implying thereby that there was not much conscious effort on his part to find a suitable form for his imaginative vision. But a brief survey of Fitzgerald's constant and persistent efforts to achieve the artistic excellence by learning the techniques from various celebrated craftsmen will easily establish that he was a thoroughly conscious and careful artist. The supreme and admirable artistry of The Great Gatsby was not merely accidental as has been claimed by

1 Mizener, Far Side, p. 184.
certain hostile critics, but the result of a gradual and steady development of his artistic vision. No doubt, subject for him was always more important which, he thought, would find itself a suitable form. He explained this point in a letter to his daughter: "... what you have felt and thought will, by itself, invent a new style, so that when people talk about style they are always a little astonished at the newness of it, because they think it is only style that they are talking about, when what they are talking about is the attempt to express a new idea with such force that it will have the originality of the thought." He did not revel in experimenting with styles or techniques for their own sake, for he always felt that in a great work of art, "the thing you have to say and the way of saying it blend as one matter—-as indissolubly as if they were conceived together." The "acceptable form" in which he wanted "to preach at people" was not a sudden discovery; it was the product of his constant efforts at finding out new models and new forms. But his aesthetic sense cannot be imagined in isolation; it has always to be means, not an end in itself. Commenting the celebrated style of Fitzgerald, Lewis observes:

The style is of course not to be identified apart from the subject ... and it is another mark of Fitzgerald's stature that his style is not intended to call attention to itself, but illuminate the action or character or thought that it is standing for. His words are never in love with themselves. But along with his directness,

2 Fitzgerald, Letters, p. 11.
his strength and his accuracy, there are always qualities of melody and brightness; so that Fitzgerald's prose not only lights up its object, it also makes us conscious of the shadows that lie around it. (3)

Different styles which Fitzgerald adopted in his novels correspond to his intellectual and artistic vision at particular points; they also reflect the gradual development of his understanding of the central motif of his novels, its complexity and its destructive possibility with the sensitive and intelligent individuals in the changing milieu. The artistic failures and achievements are thus integral to his gradually developing imagination and artistic conscience.

The startling success of This Side of Paradise made Fitzgerald a national celebrity, but this was not the achievement he got simply as a heavenly bliss or as a "lucky historical accident" but through his persistent efforts and hard-boiled literary apprenticeship of nine or ten years. The young Fitzgerald, who published his first short story in 1909 when he was only thirteen, is known to have published sixteen short stories, ten poems, five book reviews, and a number of light comic pieces in the Princeton Tiger till 1918. During this period of apprenticeship, he is also credited with writing, directing and acting in three full-length plays, and also writing the books for two and the lyrics for three Triangle shows. Ignoring such a long

4 See Piper, Portrait, p. 27.
apprenticeship period, the young man of twenty-two who wrote *This Side of Paradise*, was acclaimed as a 'natural genius' who had sprung up suddenly to be the darling of the younger generation and was, therefore, easily mythicised. Fitzgerald too, romantic and immature as he was, accepted the role of the crazy and erratic young man which went a long way in damaging his reputation. The unprecedented and tremendous success of *This Side of Paradise* was mainly because of its faithful portrayal of the urges and aspirations, and consequent disillusionment, of the youth of the post-war era. Fitzgerald started writing the first version of the novel, then titled as *The Romantic Egotist*, in 1917, when he was hardly twenty, and as such was not mature enough to appreciate the subtleties of technique. With Compton Mackenzie and H.G. Wells as his idols at the time, and *Sinister Street* (1913-14) and *The New Machiavelli* (1911) as his examples of the best novels of the times, he naturally went to write his first book in the tradition of the discursive novel, or what James Miller calls 'saturation' novel. Steeped in the tradition of Wells, he enthusiastically wrote to Edmund Wilson: "I think that *The New Machiavelli* is the greatest English novel of the century." Critics regarded *This Side of Paradise* as an American version of Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street*, and they embarrassed him by finding many parallels in the two novels; even Amory Blaine, they thought, was an American

prototype of Michael Fane. Though there is little justification for this judgement, it is certain that he was greatly influenced by the novelists preaching the theory of 'documentation' or 'discursive' novels. "Mackenzie was", opines Miller, "a prime example of the documentary novelist. And Sinister Street, the most saturated of the saturation novels, was the closest model for This Side of Paradise." Fitzgerald himself admitted the influence of Mackenzie, Wells and Tarkington in a letter to Miss Frances Newman, but he resented the comparisons and parallels that she had drawn in her review between the two books, and candidly wrote: "While it astonished me that so few critics mentioned the influence of Sinister Street on This Side of Paradise, I feel sure that it was much more in intention than in literal fact." Conceding that his own life resembled that of Michael Fane, he frankly owned that when he had started writing This Side of Paradise, his "literary taste was so unformed that Youth's Encounter was still my 'perfect book.' My book quite naturally shows the influence to a marked degree. However, I resent your details." He also explained to her, in the same letter, how he derived characters and incidents not from Sinister Street, as contended by Miss Newman, but from his own precisely observed experience. Wilson also referred to

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6 Miller, His Art and His Technique, p. 21.
7 Fitzgerald, Letters, p. 468.
8 Ibid., p. 469.
Mackenzie's influence:

It (This Side of Paradise) has almost every fault and deficiency that a novel can possibly have. It is not only highly imitative but it imitates an inferior model. Fitzgerald, when he wrote the book, was drunk with Compton Mackenzie, and it sounds like an American attempt to rewrite Sinister Street. (9)

It was mainly in form that he was influenced by his models, and consequently This Side of Paradise is a sort of 'quest' novel, a loosely-constructed novel on the pattern of the 'saturation' or the episodic novel. Various incidents and episodes in the novel, largely held together by the central character, Amory Blaine, do not seem indispensable. There is no use in charging Fitzgerald that he wrote an autobiographical novel, which he admittedly did. His intense imagination could penetrate under­neath the surfaces, and, with the aesthetic detachment, derive conclusions which acquired wider meaning and transcended the narrow experiences of an individual. He had the unique capa­bility of experiencing certain emotions, and then stand apart and apply them with "satiric detachment" to the general human experience. Mizener suggests that at its best, Fitzgerald's "mind apprehended things simultaneously with a participant's vividness of feeling and an intelligent stranger's acuteness of observation." This double vision, effectively rendered in This Side of Paradise, made it a successful novel of the

9 Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald", in Critical Essays, p. 80.
10 Mizener, Far Side, p. xxi.
undergraduate life of the young Americans of the post-war era. Admittedly the book has less objectivity than his other novels, because he was not yet mature enough to view his material with complete aesthetic detachment, as he would do in *The Great Gatsby*. While counselling Miss Frances Turnbull about a sketch drawn by her, Fitzgerald asserted that the intimate and emotional involvement of the writer at the beginning of one's career was essential. But even at this stage of his career, he had the capability of regarding his emotions quite objectively; while he marvelled at describing the wonderful romantic escapades of the post-war era, he did not advocate loose morals or the uninhibited freedom, as was contended by certain critics. "In Fitzgerald's book", remarks Mizener, "there is the constant interplay of an ingrained moral sense which, for all the charm and poignancy he finds in the life he portrays, places and evaluates it."

Various episodes, letters, poems, etc. in *This Side of Paradise* may not be centrally controlled by the thematic idea of the American dream, but they are not altogether irrelevant. The book is divided into two parts; each part has been further subdivided under various titles. The two main parts are divided by the 'Interlude' which covers a period of about two years and serves the purpose of conveniently eliminating the details of

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the War where Amory had gone leaving the Princeton. The divi-
sion of the book in two parts also serves a distinctive purpose. 
In the first part, "The Romantic Egotist", Amory's background, 
his egocentric personality and his ambitions are clearly 
brought out. In the second part, "The Education of a Personage", 
Amory, after the War, faces a society which is quite different 
from what he had imagined during his school and college days, 
and learns the bitter truth about the fickle-minded debutantes 
and the wicked power of money. These encounters with life also 
help in his gradual shedding of the masks and his transition 
from a personality to a personage. Fitzgerald, at this stage, 
lacked the quality of "pruning and shaping" which he would 
marvellously exhibit in The Great Gatsby. Various short stories 
and poems which he had written earlier and were included in the 
novel infuriated certain critics who charged that they made the 
novel disjointed and a jumble of unconnected fictional pieces. 
One of the critics who otherwise found the novel "astonishing" 
and "refreshing", called it "The collected works of F. Scott 
Fitzgerald" because of various earlier pieces finding place in 
the novel. "Following in general technique", the critic adds, 
"what we might call the Impressionistic Novel shadowed forth 
in James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and to a 
lesser degree in Pio Baroja's Caesar or Nothing, and with an 
acquisitive eye on Sinister Street and The Research Magnificent-- 
but without the obesity of the one or the pomposity of the other--
Mr Fitzgerald has recorded with a good deal of felicity and a
disarming frankness the adventures and developments of a curi-
13 ous and fortunate American Youth." Riddel also calls the
14 novel "a fictionalized diary", and feels that "This Side of
Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned are novels which embar-
rass even the devotees of Fitzgerald. They are indeed flawed
in every conceivable way." Though all the episodes described
in the novel are relevant to his education and final disillus-
sionment, they do not form a single whole; they seem indepen-
dent incidents, not necessarily related to the plot. In a
letter to Wilson, Fitzgerald himself referred to an earlier ver-
sion of the novel as "a prose, modernistic Childe Harold" and
described it as "the picaresque ramble of one Stephen Palms from
the San Francisco fire thru school, Princeton, to the end...." Al-
though Amory Blaine is a considerable improvement over Stephen
Palms of the earlier versions, the essential character of the
novel remains the same. It is not surprising, therefore, to
note that one reviewer failed to find a beginning, middle and
17 an end in the conventional sense of the terms in the novel.

13 R.V.A.S., "This Side of Paradise", in The Man and His
Work, p. 49.
14 Riddel, "F. Scott Fitzgerald, the Jamesian Inheritance
and the Morality of Fiction", 336.
15 Ibid., 335.
16 Fitzgerald, Letters, p. 323.
17 See Miller, His Art and His Technique, p. 24.
While admitting that the novel is loosely constructed in the tradition of 'saturation' novels, it is unfair to suggest that it has no central theme. The most pungent criticism of the novel came from Wilson:

... Amory Blaine, the hero of This Side of Paradise, had a very poor chance of coherence: Fitzgerald did endow him, to be sure, with a certain emotional life ... but he was ... a wavering quantity in a phantasmagoria of incident that had no dominating intention to endow it with unity and force. In short, one of the chief weaknesses of This Side of Paradise is 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 story itself, furthermore, is very immaturity imagined: it is always just verging on the ludicrous. (18)

A remarkable change that Fitzgerald made while revising The Romantic Egotist was that he changed the first-person narration to third-person, but still it is Amory Blaine's point of view that largely emerges from the novel. But Fitzgerald intrudes at many places in the narrative, either directly or by placing the scenes dramatically in which case we get author's point of view about those incidents. The scene of Amory-Rosalind first meeting, otherwise presented dramatically, contains author's stage-directions, asides and his long comments on the character of Rosalind. At certain places we feel that the character that has been earlier built up is not sustained till the end, and immediately a sudden shift in the outlook of a character is introduced which lacks coherence. Rosalind,

18 Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald", in Critical Essays, p. 81.
throughout the episode, emerges before the reader as a selfish, irresponsible and pleasure-seeking debutante who can easily sacrifice true love for the sake of money, but once she has unashamedly rejected Amory for his not being rich, she seems to be filled with remorse, and her two sentences and Fitzgerald's asides mar the otherwise well-developed character:

Rosalind: Oh, God, I want to die! (After a moment she rises and with her eyes closed feels her way to the door. Then she turns and looks once more at the room. Here they had sat and dreamed; that tray she had so often filled with matches for him; that shade that they had discreetly lowered one long Sunday afternoon. Misty-eyed she stands and remembers; she speaks aloud) Oh, Amory, what have I done to you? (And deep under aching sadness that will pass in time, Rosalind feels that she has lost something, she knows not what, she knows not why). (19)

She has been shown earlier to be a superficial girl, incapable of feeling 'the aching sadness' which Fitzgerald seems to superimpose in the end. At many places, Fitzgerald combines Amory's point of view with his own to heighten the effect or suit his convenience. When Amory is deprived of all his money, and is left poor, Fitzgerald observes: "Never before in his life had Amory considered poor people. He thought cynically how completely he was lacking in all human sympathy. O. Henry had found in these people romance, pathos, love, hate--Amory saw only coarseness, physical filth, and stupidity." Then follows a two-page question-answer analysis of Amory with himself about

20 Ibid., p. 276.
his situation in the stream-of-consciousness technique. But at places Fitzgerald is embarrassingly naive in directly interfering in the narrative; instead of dramatically representing the character and allowing the reader to infer himself, he states the character mathematically:

Amory's point of view, though dangerous, was not far from the true one. If his reactions to his environment could be tabulated the chart would have appeared like this, beginning with his earliest years:

1. The Fundamental Amory.
2. Amory plus Beatrice.
3. Amory plus Beatrice plus Minneapolis

Then St. Regis's had pulled him to pieces and started him over again:

4. Amory plus St. Regis's.
5. Amory plus St. Regis's plus Princeton.

Even while granting authorial omniscience to Fitzgerald, we cannot justify his direct intrusion in the first person in telling the story, as happens in the Amory-Sleaner episode. His comments like, "I see I am starting wrong. Let me begin again", or "Yet was Amory capable of love now?.... I suppose that was why they turned to Brooke, and Swinburne, and Shelley", reveal the artistic immaturity of Fitzgerald at this stage of his career. He had yet to learn to present his material more consistently, keeping himself apart from the action, the task he would exquisitely accomplish in The Great Gatsby. Miller,

21 Ibid., p. 108.
22 Ibid., p. 239.
23 Ibid., p. 248.
pointing out to the five reading lists of Amory Blaine in *This Side of Paradise*, observes that it "is possible to trace Amory's intellectual development through these book-lists.... In a minimum of narration, these lists indicate the several stages in Amory's intellectual growth and suggest the influences that are forming his personality. But, like many of Fitzgerald's technical devices, the reading list has a quality of enumeration which suggests documentation." The device would be more admirably used in the form of letters in *The Beautiful and Damned* and *Tender Is The Night* to suggest, in the most concentrated style, the development of the mind or a situation over a long period.

Fitzgerald was a bad-speller throughout his life and could hardly observe the ordinary rules of grammar. Pointing out to the various mistakes even in the published text of *This Side of Paradise*, Wilson said that it "is one of the most illiterate books of any merit ever published.... Not only is it ornamented with bogus ideas and faked literary references, but it is full of literary words tossed about with the most reckless inaccuracy." Alluding to his problems with spellings and grammar, Wescott observed: "Aside from his literary talent--literary genius, self-taught--I think Fitzgerald must have been the

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24 Miller, *His Art and His Technique*, p. 42.
25 Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald", in *Critical Essays*, p. 81.
worst educated man in the world." Mizener, while conceding that Fitzgerald's spellings and grammar were equally erratic, points out that it "was not, of course, simply that he was impervious to the mechanics of the English language, though he was that; it was also that he wrote under the guidance of his delicate sense of the pitch and tone of English sentences. This sense is the secret of his marvellously evocative prose, and compared to it a deficiency in the text book mechanics of the language is insignificant." Wescott also grants that Fitzgerald's "phrasing was almost always animated and charming; his diction excellent. He wrote very little in slang or what I call baby talk: the pitfall of many who specialized in American contemporaneity after him", and for that reason he thinks that "he had the best narrative gift of the century." Because of its emotional appeal, evocative prose and sensuous images, even Wilson qualified his bitter attack on This Side of Paradise and said: "I have said that This Side of Paradise commits almost every sin that a novel can possibly commit but it does not commit the unpardonable sin: it does not fail to live. The whole preposterous farrago is animated with life." He also observes that Fitzgerald's mishandling of the words, "his malapropisms of the

27 Mizener, Far Side, p. 113.
29 Ibid., p. 121.
most disconcerting kind", and his illiteracies, all occur because "Scott Fitzgerald plays the language entirely by ear. But his instrument, for all that, is no mean one. He has an instinct for graceful and vivid prose that some of his more pretentious fellows might envy." He was the master of the English language in this sense, and knew the words which could exactly evoke the emotions he wanted to convey. "In spite of its faults", concludes Miller, "perhaps in part because of them, This Side of Paradise, continues to appeal. In its very immaturity lies its charm; it is an honest and sincere book by youth about youth containing the emotions, ranging from ecstasy to despair, of the immature which the mature can neither easily recall nor evoke."

The Beautiful and Damned is a major technical and artistic advance over This Side of Paradise, and reveals the maturing aesthetic vision of Fitzgerald. Though in no way comparable to the artistry of The Great Gatsby, it is a definite improvement over This Side of Paradise. Despite its having been characterised as the dullest novel of Fitzgerald, its comparative stylistic achievements reveal how Fitzgerald was susceptible to the changing aesthetic and artistic considerations and how easily he outgrew his own immaturities. Within a period of two years, written in the flush of the success of This Side of Paradise,  

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30 Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald", in Critical Essays, p. 81.  
31 Miller, His Art and His Technique, p. 44.
he gave up his idolatory worship of Wells and Mackenzie and left the 'episodic' or 'documentation' novel with his models, and ventured to write The Beautiful and Damned in a well-planned way with a complex and ambitious plot. It is not a combination of loosely constructed anecdotes held by the personality of the hero, as This Side of Paradise essentially is, but the events and incidents are related to the proper development of the central line of action around a well-knit plot. All the incidents in the novel, more or less, are related to the central idea and are structurally relevant to the theme. Fitzgerald had been rebuked, publicly and privately, both by his friends and reviewers, for the lack of form of This Side of Paradise, and, therefore, he was conscious of the form while writing The Beautiful and Damned. "I'm taking your advice", he wrote to Shane Leslie, "and writing very slowly and paying much attention to form. Sometimes I think that this new novel has nothing much else but form." But this is an exaggeration of what we actually find in The Beautiful and Damned, and his initial anxiety for form might have been ignored when he actually came to write the novel, because after writing it, he realized that it had been written much too hastily and in the midst of too many distractions. The whole manuscript needed a thorough revision before it appeared in book form. It was twice as long as This Side of Paradise and much more intricate and ambitious in structure and theme. But where that first novel had taken shape

over a period of three years, and most of it had been revised at least three different times. The Beautiful and Damned had been written in six months and revised in less than three. (33)

Most of the inconsistencies in the novel are the result of the haste with which it was written and the lack of disciplined hard work that could have given it a fine and coherent structure. Fitzgerald himself, referring to the general charge of the reviewers, admitted to Bishop that he had devoted more attention to the details of the book than to the "general scheme" of the novel. This statement is central to all the inconsistencies in the novel which were the result of his readiness to sacrifice the general pattern of the novel for the sake of some smart scene or dialogue or idea, relevant or irrelevant to the thematic centre of the book. Most of the critics have referred to the "wavering and inconsistent" attitude of Fitzgerald towards his material. "The worst effect of this mixed purpose," observes Mizener, "was the way it muddled the characters of Anthony and Gloria. Fitzgerald never made up his mind whether he wanted to stand apart from them and treat them satirically or enter into their experience with sympathy and understanding." Troy also refers to the lack of consistency when he observes that "The Beautiful and Damned is a more frayed

33 Piper, Portrait, p. 86.
34 See Fitzgerald, Letters, p. 353.
35 Mizener, Far Side, pp. 153-54.
and pretentious museum-piece, and the muddiest in conception of all the longer books." Even the ironical ending, vital to the understanding of the intentions of Fitzgerald, has been regarded by certain critics as inapt. "Perhaps the reader", remarks Miller, "is supposed to see irony in Anthony's pitifully defiant claim of triumph. In any case, Fitzgerald's theme does not emerge clearly.... Fitzgerald's apparently mixed purposes and ambiguous sympathies in the novel render impossible a clear development of the theme."

We find Fitzgerald extensively using irony in *The Beautiful and Damned*, the apparent influence of Mencken and George Jean Nathan, the two idols of Fitzgerald during the period. The novel opens with the direct statement about irony: "In 1913, when Anthony Patch was twenty five, two years were already gone since irony, the Holy Ghost of this later day, had, theoretically at least, descended upon him. Irony was the final polish of the shoe, the ultimate dab of the clothes brush, a sort of intellectual 'there!'" The irony with which Fitzgerald treats various professions, classes and characters in the novel, becomes the vehicle of his disapproval of the post-war American society. Irony itself seems to be a character of the novel when in the end, under the subtitle of "Together with

37 Miller, *His Art and His Technique*, p. 69.
38 Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 3.
the Sparrows", he remarks: "That exquisite heavenly irony which has tabulated the demise of so many generations of sparrows doubtless records the subtlest verbal inflections of the passengers of such ships as The Berengaria. And doubtless it was listening when the young man in the plaid cap crossed the deck quickly and spoke to the pretty girl in yellow." Technically, its use has been made crudely, for instead of believing in the reader to infer, whether directly or ironically, the writer specifically steps forth and talks directly about the 'irony' in an inartistic way. Wilson's judgement about the technique was very severe:

Since writing This Side of Paradise—on the inspiration of Wells and Mackenzie—Fitzgerald has become acquainted with a different school of fiction: the ironical-pessimistic ... since his advent in the literary world, he has discovered that another genre has recently come into favor: the kind which makes much of the tragedy and what Mencken has called "the meaninglessness of life." Fitzgerald had imagined, hitherto, that the thing to do in a novel was to bring out a meaning in life; but he now set bravely about it to contrive a shattering tragedy that should be, also, a hundred-percent meaningless. As a result of this determination, the first version of The Beautiful and Damned culminated in an orgy of horror for which the reader was imperfectly prepared. Fitzgerald destroyed his characters with a succession of catastrophes so arbitrary that, beside them, the perversities of Hardy seemed the working of natural laws. (40)

Though Mizener admits that there are many defects of the earlier novel in The Beautiful and Damned, he rightly characterises this

39 Ibid., p. 447.
40 Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald", in Critical Essays, p. 83.
criticism as unfair, because "there is more than the fashionable Fitzgerald in it; there is also the novel he would have written straight had he not made his advent into the literary world." But notwithstanding Mizener's qualified defence, Fitzgerald was not able to project his point of view consistently and clearly. He still felt fascinated by the smart and fashionable ideas and, even while disapproving of them, gave them undue significance and coloured them so gaudily and gloriously that even his best intentions came to be doubted. This is what happens when he makes his characters in The Beautiful and Damned talk and philosophise about the meaninglessness of life, so severely indicted by Wilson. We agree with Miller that by "representing the moral disintegration of those who believe that life is meaningless, Fitzgerald does not support their philosophy", but it cannot be denied that the reader generally feels fascinated by the cynical attitude of the characters discussing the philosophy of the meaninglessness because of the charm that accompanies their aphorisms and platitudes, which is the precise reason why critics have charged Fitzgerald with supporting the fashionable theory current in those days. The chief cause of his glorifying such characters was his inability, at this stage of his career, to dissociate himself from his characters which greatly hindered their

41 Mizener, Far Side, p. 154.
42 Miller, His Art and His Technique, p. 69.
objective development. Whatever be the factors, it is certain that he had not yet developed the aesthetic detachment with his material; the romantic Fitzgerald and the spoiled priest in him, both could not always stand apart and judge the things, as would happen in *The Great Gatsby* in the two characters of Gatsby and Nick Carraway. This explains, in *The Beautiful and Damned*, all the confusion, his mixed sympathies and blurred judgements about Anthony and Gloria and their attitudes.

In *The Beautiful and Damned* the author's direct intrusion in the narrative is less than in *This Side of Paradise*, and though he adopts the traditional omniscient approach, he presents most of the action through the points of view of Anthony and Gloria, and their reactions are generally dramatically presented. Poetry, in abundance in *This Side of Paradise*, is missing here and letters also are fewer. Both of these factors reveal that Fitzgerald had, to a large extent, learnt to integrate ideas in the narrative itself. In the end, to convey the total disintegration of Anthony and Gloria objectively, the point of view is cleverly shifted; a young man and his wife, representing what the leading characters were at the time of their marriage, as detached observers, talk about Anthony and Gloria as they appear to them. The objective assessment of the physical, moral and spiritual disintegration of the leading characters by two disinterested persons convinces the reader more than if the writer had taken it up through direct
narration or even from the point of view of the characters themselves.

But Fitzgerald had not yet learnt the technique of pruning his material of all the superfluities which, howsoever captivating, definitely hinder the proper development of the plot. "A Flash-Back in Paradise", an imaginary conversation between Beauty and The Voice, with stage directions, is an intriguing and embarrassing device used by Fitzgerald for foreshadowing the characteristic qualities of Gloria's beauty. "Although the episode", observes Miller, "might astonish the reader with the 'cuteness' and eccentricity of the imagination of the author, the scene seems to conflict with the novel's generally serious purpose and realistic tone." 

Similarly Maury Noble's monologue about his sophisticated disillusion and cynicism, running into seven long pages, is a tiresome exercise, included just to give vent to some brilliant contemporary ideas. Mizener's observations in this regard seem quite convincing and apt:

At the time he wrote The Beautiful and Damned, he had mastered the quality but not the reason of his moral judgment of his experience; had he not muddled his book with smartness, he might, even at this stage in his career, have written a definitive novel of sentiment. His attempt to make The Beautiful and Damned a kind of American Madame Bovary defeated him; he could not yet, as he could when he got to The Great Gatsby, separate his sympathy from his judgment, because he could not really define his judgment. 

43 Miller, His Art and His Technique, p. 76.
44 Mizener, Far Side, p. 156.
But despite certain defects, *The Beautiful and Damned* is technically a definite improvement over *This Side of Paradise*, and is a major step in the gradual development of Fitzgerald as an artist.

*The Great Gatsby* is usually regarded as the finest creation of Fitzgerald. While Mizener calls it "a leap" for Fitzgerald, Eliot described it as "the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James." The artistic excellence of *The Great Gatsby*, however, was not a literary accident in an otherwise wayward performance of Fitzgerald, as contended by certain critics, but the result of the author’s conscious awareness of the novel as an art form. This was the culmination of his rapid development as an artist which Miller has traced 'from saturation to selection' technique. He had written to Maxwell Perkins, after *The Beautiful and Damned*: "I want to write something new—something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately patterned." It was due to this conscious anxiety about his art that he discarded his old models, Wells, Mackenzie and even Mencken, and revealed his new-found enthusiasm for and allegiance to the opposite group of James Joyce, Willa Cather and most important of all, Joseph Conrad. Fitzgerald was always aware of the new literary trends and was eager to shift his loyalty and attitude to achieve "something

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45 T.S. Eliot, one of "Three Letters about *The Great Gatsby*", in Crack-Up, p. 310.

46 Quoted in Mizener, *Far Side*, p. 134.
extraordinary and beautiful." While other influences also worked upon him between *The Beautiful and Damned* and *The Great Gatsby*, as is clear from some of his letters and essays, Joseph Conrad was the most immediate and inspiring model for the mature craftsmanship that is revealed in *The Great Gatsby*. In August 1922, he wrote to Wilson that he wanted "some new way of using the great Conradian vitality...." Though written under the influence of the contemporary literary trends, Fitzgerald was not satisfied with his art in his first two novels, and as such wanted to imbibe the conceptions of the great masters. Wilson also had castigated him in his article about his two novels and had observed that "he has been given imagination without intellectual control of it; he has been given the desire for beauty without an aesthetic ideal...." The "intellectual control" and the "aesthetic ideal" that Fitzgerald achieved in *The Great Gatsby*, after the above article was written, are an amazing indication how far a critic's admonition can goad a creative writer to excel in his art. In one of his letters to Perkins, he made his intentions quite clear: "...in my new novel I'm thrown directly on purely creative work.... So I tread slowly and carefully and at times in considerable distress. This book will be a consciously artistic achievement and must depend on

48 Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald", in *Critical Essays*, p. 80.
that as the first books did not." He told Baldwin, after he had written *The Great Gatsby*, that it was "quite different from the other two in that it is an attempt at form and refrains carefully from trying to 'hit anything off'", and indirectly admitted the influence of Conrad and others upon his new novel when he insisted that "the writer, if he has any aspirations towards art, should try to convey the 'feel' of his scenes, places and people directly—as Conrad does, as a few Americans (notably Willa Cather) are already trying to do." But this was entirely a new discovery for Fitzgerald as compared to the documentation and episodic technique in *This Side of Paradise* and sprawling form of *The Beautiful and Damned*. Long also attributes this new discovery to the tradition of Joseph Conrad, and even draws many parallels between *The Great Gatsby* and the various novels of Conrad. Fitzgerald himself acknowledged his debt to Conrad while prefacing the Modern Library edition of *The Great Gatsby*: "Now that this book is being reissued, the author would like to say that never before did one try to keep his artistic conscience as pure as during the ten months put into doing it.... I had just re-read Conrad's preface to

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Tracing the influence of Conrad on The Great Gatsby, Miller concludes: "In a comprehensive sense, Fitzgerald was indebted to Conrad for a new approach to his craft, for his high 'aspirations toward art', the difficult art of 'magic suggestiveness'. He was indebted to Conrad also for more specific elements: for the use of style or language to reflect theme; for the use of the modified first person narration; and for the use of deliberate 'confusion' by the reordering of the chronology of events."

The most powerful influence of Conrad, however, can be seen in the point of view he adopted in The Great Gatsby. Discarding the traditional omniscient technique, he presented his story of Gatsby in a series of scenes, filtered through the conscience and imagination of a sensitive and sympathetic narrator, Nick Carraway, thus effacing himself completely from the narrative. As his "aspirations toward art" had grown very high by the time he came to write The Great Gatsby, as is evident from his book-reviews and other articles he wrote during the period, he aimed at following the Conradian precept of evoking the 'feel' of his "scenes, places and people directly."

The introduction of the narrator also helped him in objectifying his material and allowed him "to keep clearly separated the..."

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53 Miller, *His Art and His Technique*, p. 94.
for the first time in his career the two sides of his nature, the middle-western Trimalchio and the spoiled priest who disapproved of but grudgingly admired him.  

Nick relates the story of Gatsby in a series of scenes, conveying the information faithfully to the reader, most of it directly but partly as he feels or understands it. The scenes have been so cleverly arranged that on most of the occasions he himself is present, and thus the reader never has a chance to doubt the authenticity of what he says. Pointing out the artistic significance of the narrator, Miller observes:

By giving Nick logical connections with the people he is observing, by always making his presence or absence at the events probable, not accidental, and by allowing him several natural sources of information which he may use freely, Fitzgerald achieves a realism impossible to an 'omniscient' author or even to a limited third-person point of view: through Nick Carraway, Fitzgerald places the reader in direct touch with the action, eliminating himself, as author, entirely. (55)

Moreover, Nick, with his moral outlook, his mature and well-balanced understanding, his insight into human nature, his simultaneous attraction and repulsion for the things happening on East Egg and West Egg, his relationship with Tom and Daisy, and his neighbourly relations with Gatsby, is the most appropriate person to objectively convey to the reader the significance of the events leading to Gatsby's murder. Mizener feels that "Nick Carraway, Fitzgerald's narrator, is,  

54 Mizener, Far Side, p. 185.  
55 Miller, His Art and His Technique, p. 111.
for the book's structure, the most important character. Quite apart from his power to concentrate the story and its theme into a few crucial scenes and thus increase its impact, a great deal of the book's color and subtlety comes from the constant play of Nick's judgment and feelings over the events."

This ambivalence in his attitude mainly springs from the conflict of his fascination for the Eastern glamour and his deep-rooted Western morality. But ultimately his judgement prevails. He is not simply a narrator of the events, but also one of the important characters who undergoes an education as the events unfold themselves, and, therefore, becomes an integral part of the whole drama. In the very first sentence of the book we learn about the premises of his objectivity and unbiased open-mindedness. His father had advised him: "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." As a consequence of this deep-seated advice, Nick is "inclined to reserve all judgments" about persons and events. But he also admits that this tendency in him "has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on." Only such a narrator of the events could be relied upon for the faithful

58 Ibid., p. 2.
communication of the incidents and their implications. As an objective observer, despite his disapproval of Gatsby "from beginning to end", Nick gradually develops sympathy for him and ultimately identifies himself with his cause. It is Nick's simultaneous admiration and repulsion for Gatsby which gives the novel much of its irony.

The story has not been told in a chronological order, and though it covers a period of more than five years, the incidents are confined to the summer of 1922. In addition to the direct representation of the events as they unfold themselves, Nick conveys the earlier part of the story faithfully, as he learns it from the various characters. Gatsby's earlier history, related at various stages in fragments, creates a sense of mystery about him, and the various rumours about him significantly add to the mysterious element. The use of the narrator along with the technique of 'flash-back' at important stages, lends the novel the charm of suspense and mystery and also invests it with the sense of verisimilitude. The technique, of course, has its limitations, because Nick is barred from certain important knowledge about Gatsby for which he has to depend upon Gatsby himself, Jordan Baker and Wolfsheim, and certain other links he has to provide through his fertile imagination. Edith Wharton pointed out to Fitzgerald that "to make Gatsby really Great, you ought to have given us his early
career ... instead of a short resume of it." Mencken also criticised the incomplete treatment of Gatsby when he charged that "Fitzgerald seems to be more interested in maintaining its suspense than in getting under the skins of its people." But Fitzgerald deliberately avoided the detailed description as we learn from his letter to Jamieson: "It might interest you to know that a story of mine, called 'Absolution', in my book All the Sad Young Man was intended to be a picture of his early life, but that I cut it because I preferred to preserve the sense of mystery." Referring to Bishop's "full, discerning and helpful" criticism about The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald admitted to him: "Also you are right about Gatsby being blurred and patchy. I never at any one time saw him clear myself—for he started as one man I knew and then changed into myself—the amalgam was never complete in my mind." But we agree with Miller's opinion that the "blurring of Gatsby, if it is a defect, is also a virtue, in that it renders his fantastic illusion more believable."

59 Edith Wharton, One of "Three Letters about The Great Gatsby", in Crack-Up, p. 309.
61 Fitzgerald, Letters, p. 509.
62 Ibid., p. 358.
63 Miller, His Art and His Technique, p. 116.
The Great Gatsby is so compact that not even a single word seems irrelevant. Unlike his first two novels, there are no superfluities here just for the sake of smartness. A two-page list of the names of the persons who attended the fabulous parties of Gatsby at first may seem irrelevant but it serves a very useful purpose. With the minimum of details and maximum precision it conveys the impression of the continuous round of parties at Gatsby's to the "casual moths" who enjoy his hospitality without in any way responding to the sensitive feelings of the man. The list also satirises the post-war hedonistic spirit and careless and casual attitude of the vast multitude of people who cared little about propriety or moderation.

Though the lively and lucid prose style of Fitzgerald gave abundant charm to his first two novels, he, for the first time, realised the full effect of his poetic talent in The Great Gatsby. The imagery, symbolism and the most subtle and delicate use of the words lend it the peculiar charm, and the whole book seems to be written in poetic-prose. It is the evocative language and the appropriate use of words which enrich it with the universal meaning, rhythm and vibrating emotions. Every scene is vividly created, and the appropriate feelings are evoked not through the detailed descriptions but through "magic suggestiveness." The sordid and barren atmosphere of the post-war era, the gloomy and wretched condition of
the poorer classes and the purposelessness of the human affairs, are vividly portrayed in a few lines describing the land between West Egg and New York:

This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of ash-gray men, who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-gray men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight. (64)

Mizener suggests that "The Great Gatsby is a fable, marked at every important point by the folklore qualities of fables and charged with meaning by a style that is, despite the sharpness of its realistic detail, alive with poetic force." East Egg and West Egg, the two suburbs where the drama of Gatsby is enacted, are symbolic of the geographical as well as spiritual contrast of the East and the West of American civilisation which Fitzgerald has suggested and developed in The Great Gatsby:

"East Egg and the East represent the strength, intolerance, dishonesty, and seductive attractiveness of established wealth; West Egg and the West represent the romantic idealism, crudity, and naive power of the *nouveau riche*. Both are corrupt, though in a different way." Similarly through the image of the large

64 Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, p. 23.
eyes of Eckleburg on the billboard, Fitzgerald deftly provides symbolically the semi-religious and moral meaning to the drama of Gatsby by presenting the omniscient deity silently watching and brooding over the vain and foolish actions of man in the waste land of the 1920's. The symbolic meaning is clearly indicated when Wilson, bereaved by the death of his wife, stares out of the window at the eyes and says: "God sees everything." Piper suggests that the technique of "combining the elements of literal dialogue and carefully timed images" remained one of Fitzgerald's most useful stylistic devices: "The high art of which it was capable can only be seen in the climatic scene toward the close of The Great Gatsby in which Nick Carraway takes leave of Gatsby for the last time. Here ... Fitzgerald has fleshed out the bare bones of dialogues and imagery with rhythm, assonance, rhyme, recurring symbols, and many other subtle poetic effects." What Fitzgerald wrote to his daughter about "The Grecian Urn" for its being "unbearably beautiful with every syllable as inevitable as the notes in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony", is equally true of The Great Gatsby. For the first time Fitzgerald made dramatic use of the colour, flower and metallic imagery, and patterned it intricately with the texture of the novel, which further enriched it with the poetic 'concentration' and turned it into almost unrhymed poetry. One critic

67 Piper, Portrait, p. 35.
68 Fitzgerald, Letters, p. 88.
has found the flower-imagery used at twenty-three places and the metal-imagery used at twelve places in The Great Gatsby, and though he feels that most of these images of different colours of flowers and precious and glittering metals "embody the author's romantic preoccupation; yet some of them are used ironically rather than romantically." The whole book vibrates with rhythmic beauty and Perosa even attributes the richness of its theme to the fine structure of the book: "... it might be said that the very structure of the book—rhythmic and dramatic, perfectly balanced and rounded-off—is responsible for its thematic richness, its amplitude of meaning, and its aesthetic achievement."

For Fitzgerald the period between The Great Gatsby and Tender Is the Night was very tense and strenuous, both personally and professionally. Intense personal sufferings, innumerable as they were, shook his self-confidence and shattered his artistic conscience to the extent that he started fearing that he was petering out. Any other man with lesser will-power would have abandoned himself to the gusty winds of dissipation and scepticism, but Fitzgerald's moral sense, his assertion of "the necessity to struggle" even in the face of "the inevitability of failure", asserted itself again, and this

70 Perosa, The Art of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 60.
time he produced one of the most moving novels in American literature. His silence of nine years between *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night* was regarded by the critics and his literary friends as unreasonably long, and he came to be regarded as a finished writer—"He's through" was the general comment. But one of the many causes that hindered his writing another novel was that after *The Great Gatsby*, he had become too ambitious and wanted to produce the greatest novel, far greater than *The Great Gatsby*, to deserve to be regarded as the greatest writer of America, an ambition he had set for himself right from the college days. He wanted to write a novel that should serve as a "model for the age that Joyce and Stein are searching for, that Conrad didn't find", and his this ambition to outdo the greatest fictional masters of the world was not a foolish self-indulgence. Even a cursory study of his artistic achievements, the maturity of his vision and his gradually developing artistic conscience would reveal that, step by step, he ascended the ladder of artistic excellence and after *The Great Gatsby*, his desire to excel the great masters was not unimaginable. Even professional frustrations and personal crises had not lowered his artistic standards and the promise that radiated from him after *The Great Gatsby* had not died out, as contended by the critics.

The intellectual and artistic tensions of the period

preceding Tender Is The Night had evidently strained his nerves and after giving up six projects conceived from time to time when he finally went to write Tender Is The Night in 1932, the conditions were hardly favourable to his earlier boast of out-doing the great fictional masters of the world. Even as the Scribner's were making preparations for publishing the novel, he was involved in a very intimate correspondence with Max Perkins for delaying the publication as he wanted to give final touches to the novel, but he did not succeed. Tender Is The Night, thus, despite its haunting emotional appeal and exquisite and evocative prose, does not have those final touches of the author which could have made it, like The Great Gatsby, a masterpiece in American literature, and most probably the controversy that now surrounds its structural pattern, which is primarily responsible for discounting its admirable literary merits, would never have developed. Fitzgerald, who had always been the severest critic of his own art, was fully aware of certain faults in his execution. In one of his letters he wrote: "I did not manage, I think in retrospect, to give Dick the cohesion I aimed at...." But his letter to Perkins agonisingly describes the mental condition in which he wrote the novel, at least a part of it:

It has become increasingly plain to me that the very excellent organization of a long book or the finest perceptions and judgment in time of revision do not go well

72 See Sklar, Laocoön, p. 250.
with liquor.... I would give anything if I hadn't had to write part III of Tender Is The Night entirely on stimulant. If I had one more crack at it cold sober I believe it might have made a great difference. (73)

Whether he could have really accomplished his true conception or not in favourable circumstances is only a matter of conjecture, but as it stands, the whole structural pattern, not only part III which Piper calls "the clumsiest writing", was ruthlessly criticised, and critics pointed out to the various flaws, ranging from the organisation of the various books on the basis of the different angles projected by the author to the cohesion and the credibility given to the moral disintegration of the hero, Dick Diver.

Book I opens with Rosemary's point of view, and it well serves the purpose of the author who wants to project Diver and his external qualities objectively, as seen by an innocent and young outsider. Rosemary has been presented as a naive and immature romantic girl who is instantly fascinated by the charm and glamour that Dick represents. She is, however, ignorant and lacks the maturity in her perspective to gauge the depth of the inherent contradictions of Dick's world. Fitzgerald wants to make it clear that Rosemary's unqualified admiration for Dick is the result of her own inexperience and childish infatuation, and that we should understand the limitations of her perspective. But her point of view significantly serves the purpose of the

73 Fitzgerald, Letters, pp. 259-60.
author who wants the reader to infer that the people enjoy the fantastic and utopian world of Dick Diver without realising the heavy cost, in terms of physical, emotional and spiritual energy, that Dick has to bear for creating it. The next book is a flash-back which describes the earlier history of Dick Diver and his wooing and marrying Nicole. They are marvellously conceived and effectively written but whereas the meticulous details and the exquisite scenes provide lyrical quality to the book, these two books, especially the first one, have been regarded by the critics as unduly long—unproportionate to the length devoted to the third one dealing with the moral and spiritual disintegration of Dick Diver. Piper who finds many loose threads and episodes in the novel not linked effectively to the main narrative part of the story, like the one of Hannan and the governess, attributes the chief faults of the book to Fitzgerald's integrating two different stories into one while writing *Tender Is The Night*, and his constant changes in the original plan. Critics also charge that the main reason of the incoherence in *Tender Is The Night* is that it was never written as an independent novel. They feel Fitzgerald hastily assembled certain material salvaged out of the earlier versions of the novel that had been planned and partly written under different titles. But Brucoli, another perceptive critic of Fitzgerald, has, through his painstaking researches, refuted these

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74 See Piper, *Portrait*, p. 222.
charges, though he admits that the novel evolved through three versions and eighteen stages:

... before writing *Tender Is The Night*, in 1932, he prepared a complete holograph draft with only few departures from his plan. This draft is a careful piece of work and gives the lie to assertions that Fitzgerald hastily assembled *Tender Is The Night* from the earlier drafts; only about a third of the holograph draft draws upon salvaged material, and this material was thoroughly revised or rewritten. It is also demonstrable that the published form of *Tender Is The Night* does not present an abridgement of a much longer work. The layers of revision in type-scripts, proof, and serial form present an impressive view of Fitzgerald's high standards of craftsmanship and show how he refined his style. (75)

The structural plan of the novel must have agitated the mind of Fitzgerald too as, in 1933, he revised his earlier opinion about the novel and wrote to Perkins: "Its great fault is that the true beginning—the young psychiatrist in Switzerland—is tucked away in the middle of the book. If pages 161-212 were taken from their present place and put at the start, the improvement in appeal would be enormous." At almost the same time he noted the revised plan in his notebook, dividing the novel into five books instead of three. The new version of the novel according to the revised plan was brought out by the Scribner's, rearranged and edited by Malcolm Cowley,


77 See Malcolm Cowley, "Introduction", *Tender*, p. xii.
which is now popularly known as the 1951 edition. Fitzgerald's revised plan, perhaps, was an answer to the earlier criticism of the novel that it was broken into two parts after Rosemary's departure, and that the beginning of the novel violated the rules of expectancy and did not prepare us for the following chapters or books. John Chamberlain, a representative critic holding this view, pointed out: "In the critical terminology of Kenneth Burke, Mr Fitzgerald has violated a 'categorical expectancy.' He has caused the arrows of attention to point toward Rosemary. Then, like a broken field runner reversing his field, he shifts suddenly and those who have been chasing him fall figuratively on their noses as Mr Fitzgerald is off on a new tack." Though Cowley, in his introduction to the new version, advocates that the new version has an edge over the earlier one, he also realises that the beginning of the first edition is definitely more effective, and this effectiveness is considerably lost when the novel opens with the case-history. While, Cowley writes, Fitzgerald "sacrificed a brilliant beginning and all the element of mystery ... there is no escaping the judgment that he ended with a better constructed and more effective novel." Certainty of focus, a symmetry rarely found in long psychological novels and the beginning preparing us for

79 Cowley, "Introduction", Tender, pp. xiv-xv.
the end, are some of the outstanding merits suggested by Cowley in favour of the revised version. But he also realises that it cannot be called perfect. Piper, however, disagrees with Cowley about the comparative merits of the revised version and concludes that Fitzgerald's opinion about the structural plan in 1938 was motivated more by economic and practical considerations than by the detached aesthetic judgements and feels that the original version was far more effective in providing the tragic dimensions to the hero, Dick Diver. Sklar too does not grant the claims of Cowley, and we tend to agree with him that rearrangement is no substitute for revision:

Into the novel which occupied nine years of his life, Fitzgerald poured a profusion of themes and images, poured all the passion of his social discontent and his historical understanding.... Through the carelessness of his publisher it was—and still is—a novel of incongruous and distracting imperfections; misspellings, repetitions, wrong words; but through Fitzgerald's own lack of artistic detachment it is also a novel of imperfect form, a novel whose dramatic structure is continually broken by the author's effort to insert a wider social perspective that he felt he had not fully made clear. It was this flaw in the novel's form that led Fitzgerald to plan a structural revision. But when the revised version was posthumously prepared and published it lost the dramatic energy of the novel without gaining the formal clarity that only a textual revision could have attained. (82)

Suggesting that in the original version Fitzgerald had meant to use "the youthful but sophisticated consciousness of Rosemary"

80 See Ibid., pp. xv-xvii.
82 Sklar, Laocoön, p. 291.
in Conradian terms, the technique he had so remarkably succeeded with in *The Great Gatsby*, Miller also opines that Cowley's version loses much in providing a suitable point of view:

The defect of the novel, perhaps, lay not in the opening, but in the subsequent passages. Rosemary Hoyt, instead of continuing to function in a significant way (like Nick Carraway) in the technique and theme, appears to loom large in the action—and then fades away. The difficulty with Rosemary runs too deep to be evaded by a mere reshuffling of narrative blocks. Putting events back in their chronological order sacrifices far more in lucidity. And it does nothing to dispel the sense of wastefulness we feel in Fitzgerald's technical use of one of his most fully drawn young innocents. (33)

Whatever be the fault in the manipulation of the point of view, the most controversial technical aspect of the novel, we cannot deny that *Tender Is The Night* is one of the most moving novels in American literature. It is certainly not properly focussed and centrally directed like *The Great Gatsby*, but its complex texture has a haunting emotional impact on the mind. In the opinion of Mizener the "book's defects are insignificant compared to its sustained richness of texture, its sureness of language, the depth and penetration of its understanding—not merely of a small class of people, as so many reviewers thought, but of the bases of all human disaster. With all its faults, it is Fitzgerald's finest and most serious novel." The gloomy and dark shadows that are cast over the pages of the novel hardly leave a ray of hope for redemption

83 Miller, *His Art and His Technique*, p. 135.
and successfully convey the intended meaning of the writer. In *Tender Is The Night* Fitzgerald "created a work of fiction rare in American literature, a novel uniting romantic beauty and also historical and social depth; and he proved by his creation that his art, and his identity as an artist, could survive the death of the society which had nurtured and sustained him." The rich and abounding imagery and symbolism appropriately woven into the fabric provide the intended complexity to the general theme and atmosphere of the novel. Fitzgerald called *Tender Is The Night* his "Testament of Faith", and to give vent to his profound reflections more fully, he, instead of using the "dramatic" form of *The Great Gatsby*, adopted the "psychological" form for this novel. Making the distinction between the two explicit, he wrote to Bishop that "*Gatsby* was shooting at something like *Henry Esmond* while this *Tender Is The Night* was shooting at something like *Vanity Fair*. The dramatic novel has canons quite different from the philosophical, now called psychological, novel. One is a kind of *tour de force* and the other a confession of faith. It would be like comparing a sonnet sequence with an epic." For the first time we find Fitzgerald using the device of foreshadowing—using Abe North symbolically to stand for the ultimate fall Dick is to meet. This device is also effective in

giving universal significance to the tragic fate of Dick Diver. We also find Fitzgerald once again making an effective use of the method of reporting through the letters of Nicole and the brief but very touching last chapter of the novel. But the musical rhythm and the emotional depth of the novel are chiefly the result of the sombre tone of Fitzgerald's poetic prose which is the key factor in providing the haunting emotional appeal to *Tender Is The Night.* As compared to the brilliant and golden imagery and language of *The Great Gatsby,* the general tone of *Tender Is The Night* is, appropriate to the theme of dissipation and disintegration, gloomy and deeply moving which, in fact, rings true to Keats' *Ode* from which it gets its title.

Fitzgerald's artistic maturity, the result of his growing and gradually developing aesthetic and intellectual conceptions, seems to have brought his artistry to its consummation in *The Last Tycoon.* It is an unpolished fragment, and any student of Fitzgerald can well assume that it would have passed through rigorous revisions, pruning and reshaping, and the various inconsistencies naturally cropping up in the first draft would have been largely eliminated. It would, therefore, be perhaps untenable to stake high claims for Fitzgerald's art on the basis of this unfinished novel. But the fragment is of such a remarkable accomplishment and interest that almost every critic, barring a few sceptics who would not grant their unqualified praise on the basis of an unfinished novel, acclaims it as the promise of one of
the greatest novels in American literature, and possibly the
best ever written on Hollywood. It is all the more amazing to
find the excellent craftsmanship, the subtlety of his vision
and the broader canvas of his ideas and imagination, filtered
through his artistic conscience and poured onto the pages of
The Last Tycoon, when we realise that it was planned and writ-
ten during the period when Fitzgerald was passing through a
crisis of self-confidence and was faced with the literary and
critical death. It was a period of his decline, his post-
Crack-Up period, but the unfinished pages of The Last Tycoon
are a testimony to the fact that Fitzgerald fought bravely with
a heroic determination. Even when he was confronted with the
worst problems of his personal and literary world, he was
concentrating on one of the profoundest books of American
literature, and was very near to achieving his ambition of
being one of the greatest writers when the death struck a cruel
blow. He had developed a highly creative, aesthetic and objec-
tive vision about his own art, and his maturity is revealed in
his thought-provoking letters he wrote during the period he was
preoccupied with The Last Tycoon. In one of his letters to
his daughter, he wrote: "Anyhow I am alive again ... with all
its strains and necessities and humiliations and struggles....
I am not a great man but sometimes I think the impersonal and
objective quality of my talent and the sacrifices of it, in
pieces, to preserve its essential value has some sort of epic
Struggling against heavy odds, he was trying to drive away his literary death which was the greatest mental agony to him, as he wrote to Perkins: "But to die, so completely and unjustly after having given so much! Even now there is little published in American fiction that doesn't slightly bear my stamp—in a small way I was an original."

It would be highly unjustified to subject the 'unfinished' pages of *The Last Tycoon* to the strictest critical analysis and judgement and to base on them our assessment of Fitzgerald's distinctive style and artistry, but the broader intentions of the author can be easily discerned from the fragmented novel, Fitzgerald's notes and letters. We find him going back to the dramatic form of *The Great Gatsby* as in one of the outlines of the novel he wrote: "If one book could ever be 'like' another, I should say it is more like *The Great Gatsby* than any other of my books." Instead of adopting the method of analytical and reflective narration, he once again opts to present his material dramatically, through the arrangement of various scenes presented through the eyes of a narrator, the technique he adopted in *The Great Gatsby*. In a letter to his wife, he made his intentions quite clear: "It is a constructed novel like *Gatsby*, with passages of poetic prose when it fits the action,

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88 Ibid., p. 283.
89 Fitzgerald, *Tycoon*, p. 141.
but no ruminations or side-shows like _Tender_. Everything must contribute to the dramatic movement." In his nostalgic attachment to his past, he perhaps, like Gatsby, wanted to repeat the past, the brilliant period of _The Great Gatsby_, but like his hero, he too failed and died before he could accomplish his task. Although his aesthetic ideal was once again Conrad and his model was _The Great Gatsby_, his plans for _The Last Tycoon_ were far more ambitious. The cultural and social background upon which the novel is projected is far wider than that of _The Great Gatsby_. Its hero, Monroe Stahr, is not presented in flashes like Gatsby, but is actually shown in action, dominating everything and everyone, and he has been more fully drawn than either Gatsby or Dick Diver. In sharp contrast to Dick Diver, he is fully committed to the world that he commands. "ACTION IS CHARACTER", Fitzgerald wrote in his notes to the novel and kept it always in mind while writing _The Last Tycoon_. Instead of simply describing the qualities and powers of Stahr, Fitzgerald, in fact, shows him acting with a subtle sense in the different dramatic situations and thus demonstrates his physical and mental faculties, his artistic and humane nature, his emotional and spiritual cravings and also his weaknesses.

_Cecilia Brady may not be as detached a narrator as Nick Carraway is because she herself is in love with Stahr, but she_

Fitzgerald, _Letters_, p. 128.
is not sentimental, and as such her perspective is largely free from the bias of romantic exaggeration. As she is of the movies and is still out of them, her narration can be taken as quite authentic and free from the prejudices that go with the movie-world. The Conradian device that he has used in manipulating his point of view is expressly stated by him in his notes: "... by making Cecilia, at the moment of her telling the story, an intelligent and observant woman, I shall grant myself the privilege, as Conrad did, of letting her imagine the actions of the characters. Thus, I hope to get the verisimilitude of all events that happen to my characters." But in the draft, there are apparent inconsistencies and unresolved problems in telling the story through her point of view. However, we can safely presume that they would have been removed in the final stages of revision. There are some awkward and embarrassing shifts in the technique like the one where Cecilia says: "This is Cecilia taking up the narrative in person." This recurs two or three times in the narrative, and, embarrassing as it is, it can easily be guessed that in the final revision, Fitzgerald would have eliminated all such awkward touches.

The artistic awareness of Fitzgerald, growing steadily,

91 Fitzgerald, Tycoon, pp. 139-40.
92 Ibid., p. 79.
went even beyond the perfection of *The Great Gatsby*. While in order to make Gatsby's fate symbolise the death of the American dream, he expressly evokes the image of the Dutch sailors, the pioneers, in *The Last Tycoon*, he makes this historical perspective sharper by his suggestive style, relating the death of the heroic vision in modern America to America's past represented by two of its greatest individuals, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln. In the opening chapter we find Manny Schwartz, a one-time-hero of Hollywood, but now completely ruined and unable to sustain his heroic posture in the altered conditions of Hollywood, committing suicide at the Hermitage of Andrew Jackson. In a later chapter, a clearer suggestion of the estrangement between the American past and the present is brought out by invoking the era of Abraham Lincoln. Prince Agge, a visitor, is taken round the studio, and he is startled to find an extra dressed as Lincoln. It is indeed frightening to see the glory of the American past fading, and the debasement of the heroic vision and the cultural heritage is deplorable. The grandeur of the American past, where heroism was possible, has degenerated into a sterile and meaningless pursuit of the material wealth which has created an unbridgeable gulf between the past and the present. It is the mature craftsmanship of Fitzgerald that, by juxtaposing two simple events in the novel, he has bestowed an historical and cultural meaning upon the story of his protagonist.
A close look at the notes of *The Last Tycoon* will instantly reveal how conscious of his craft Fitzgerald had grown by the time he came to write his last novel. An elaborate outline of the story, a final diagram containing the division of the novel into nine chapters and each of it further subdivided into various parts, detailed outlines of the various characters and scenes, and constant warning for avoiding certain pitfalls, are the revealing factors of the creative process of the author. At the top of the notes to the very first chapter, the dissatisfied author reminds himself: "Rewrite from mood. Has become stilted with rewriting. Don't look at previous draft. Rewrite from mood." This is just one of the many warnings he gives himself in his notes, and they show how careful and conscious he was of each scene and character and the ultimate effect it would have on the thematic and artistic richness of the novel. "Throughout the book", reflects Mizener, "there is the quiet, powerful prose of Fitzgerald's last period. There are no costume-jewelry comparisons or appeals to feelings outside the context of the narrative such as occasionally marred his earlier work." In spite of the fact that none of its chapters or scenes can be called finished, it vibrates with life and passion, and is a great accomplishment. "The best scenes" writes Piper, "have a

93 Ibid., p. 134.
coolness of tone, a controlled detachment, a precision of language, a rippling spontaneity, unlike anything he had written before. Such craftsmanship could only result from the most rigorous self-criticism. His superb accomplishment in craftsmanship was the result of a long and difficult journey that started with *This Side of Paradise*. But it would be unjustified to mark the end of that journey with *The Great Gatsby*, as some critics tend to do. *Tender Is The Night* may not be as satisfying artistically as *The Great Gatsby*. *The Last Tycoon*, however, is the promise of a superb artistic achievement. His growing artistic awareness, his widening aesthetic and intellectual conceptions and his dissatisfaction with anything but perfect, contributed to the mature aesthetic vision of Fitzgerald and lent a unique distinction to his style.

Realising the profundity and universality of his imaginative vision, Gertrude Stein prophesied in 1933: "Fitzgerald will be read when many of his well-known contemporaries are forgotten." Her prophecy seems to have come true, and Fitzgerald has considerably gained in stature during the last twenty years. But the prejudiced and derisive attitude still prevails with certain hostile critics who fail to find anything significant in his fiction. A peculiar example of this

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approach in Fitzgerald criticism is the opinion of Professor Perry Miller who found the whole business of the Fitzgerald revival "baffling." According to him Fitzgerald dealt with only "a limited, even silly, segment of American experience," and the way Fitzgerald treated it was "cheap, tawdry and his­trionic." An attempt has been made in the present study to examine the quality of his creative corpus, and we find that both his material and its artistic treatment, when examined apart from his biography, exhibit his superb artistic sensibility. He was not preoccupied with a frivolous segment of American society, as is contended by such critics, but was deeply involved in the predicament of a sensitive individual aspiring to realise his dream and fashion his life on the ideals of the American dream. In the moral and spiritual waste land of the post-war era Fitzgerald examined the fundamental questions faced by an American in the cultural context of America. Fitzgerald was probably the first great writer to depict the predicament of the individual in American society in the historical and cultural context of America during the post-war years. The dilemma of the sensitive and conscientious individual has considerably increased since then, and he is more confused and bewildered now than ever before. Alienation and rootlessness have eroded his faith in human values, and the resulting frustration has generated in him hatred for the

97 Quoted in Piper, Portrait, p. 290.
organised society, its institutions and its spurious code. He has gone a step further, and, rejecting the society outright, has deliberately attempted to overthrow every moral code. His contempt and anger are visible not only in his contemptuous indifference to the society but in his deliberately breaking away from it. The hippy-cult is the visible manifestation of this growing frustration and discontent. The increasing psychological problems of modern man, his mental strains and tensions, are the inevitable result of his preoccupation with the matter. The American society today can be on the one hand described as the most affluent society in the world, but on the other the most restless one. The recent trends reveal that affluence has simply added to the magnitude of the problems and Americans, therefore, seem to be desperately striving to divert their neurotic minds to some spiritual ideal. The large following that Eastern mystics, whether fake or genuine, have established in America is, among others, an evidence of the American individuals' groping in the dark. Unable to sustain the mounting pressures of the bewildering modern civilisation, they are susceptible to any influence that assures them a ray of hope in today's world of confusion and hopelessness. A man throwing away and distributing the inherited millions in the streets of a metropolitan city may be an isolated example, but this is a pointer to the things yet to come. It is, therefore, imperative for man, in order
to survive the ignoble destiny of total devastation, to find some ethical basis for his existence, and strike a balance between the materialistic advancements and spiritual anchor. The ideal concept that can still meet the modern aspirations to a large extent, and at the same time provide a moral meaning to man's pursuits, is the original concept of the American dream. Realising the potential significance of the Dream in providing a moral and spiritual meaning to man's life and actions, Fitzgerald was agonised to find the American society of the post-war era drifting away from it at an alarming pace, leaving a few individuals, who still believed in it, to disintegrate and die tragically. Seen in proper perspective, Fitzgerald's imaginative vision, as projected through his novels, deals significantly with the modern sensibility of man and his predicament in the modern civilisation. He is one of those great writers who, at significant points in the national history, raise fundamental questions of profound and universal significance.