Chapter IV

THE FITZGERALD HERO: THE EARLIER PHASE

The Fitzgerald hero is the chief protagonist through whom the author offers his considered judgement of the American dream as it stood in its perverted form in the post-war America. In the novels of Fitzgerald, the hero represents the traditional set of moral and spiritual values which are sharply contrasted with those of the American society in the post-war era, and his destiny sadly bespeaks the destructive changes that have brought an unbridgeable gulf between the romantic possibilities and the brutal realities of the American waste land. He is a representative figure, an archetypal character who embodies the traditional American belief in the limitless possibilities of life and sets out to shape his destiny according to his innate vision and ideals. He is peculiarly American, and is fed on the dreamy aspirations; a staunch believer in the American dream, he knows no reason why he should not direct and decide his own destiny. He has been reared on the pre-war morals and taboos, the traditional belief in the infinite promises of life in America, and also on the success-myth of Horatio Alger and other writers preaching the degenerated version of the American dream. Young and sensitive, he is almost always superior in his mental and spiritual faculties and is, therefore, certain of achieving his ideal. He is either unaware of or ignores the radical shifts in the post-war American social structure. He is almost naive in believing that through ingrained spiritual and moral force
that he possesses abundantly, he can well direct the course of the winds and turn the tide in his favour. The changed values of life in America, its moral bankruptcy and spiritual barrenness are still unknown to him. With a handful of traditional virtues and Emersonian faith in the fundamental goodness of man, he dedicates himself to the goal he aspires to achieve. Through the varied experiences he undergoes, in the vain search of his ideals and dreams, he shockingly learns of the underlying corruption and overwhelming selfishness that have overtaken the nation. He has all along tried to shape his destiny according to his imagination, but America of his imagination no longer exists. Be it an adolescent college boy, a businessman, a psychologist or a tycoon, all of them are in search of an ideal life, a life of their imagination. But all of them fail in their quest and have to pay a heavy price for their innocent belief in the American dream--either they are killed or they face even the worse problems of alienation and the loss of identity. Their sincerity and dedication prove futile as they become victims of the corrupt and base American society "dedicated to the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." This mammon-worship has blinded the society to the traditional human values, and, lost in their vast carelessness, in their greed of glittering dollars, the rich have completely betrayed the Founding Fathers who had hoped America would be another Eden and man would redeem himself through his complete devotion to the higher
goals of life. The Dream has lost its meaning, and instead has become a nightmare that destroys the young aspirants who remain unaware of the brutal change. The Fitzgerald protagonist, thus, becomes a national character whose destiny symbolises Fitzgerald's indictment of the American society in the post-war era in unequivocal terms—that in the sterile and sordid "Valley of Ashes", the Dream has no validity; rather the green light of the American dream traps the believer in the deceitful net of hopelessness and destruction. The Golden Girl, Fitzgerald's famous flapper, becomes invariably the symbol of the defeat of the hero, the colossal vitality of whose dreams is matched only by the vast irresponsibility, selfishness and carelessness of the female whom he has innocently idealised. For his credulous and innocent faith in the American dream, he has to pay a very heavy penalty before the tragic reality dawns upon him.

*This Side of Paradise* shook both the older and younger generations by its true and faithful portrayal of the feelings, aspirations and the disillusionment of the post-war Younger Generation. It proved a literary landmark, and its hero, Amory Blaine, became a typical representative of the young and adolescent persons lost in the bewildering confusion of the post-war era and its values. Geismar remarks that "*This Side of Paradise* was the generation's masculine primer ... it was hardly considered a novel when it appeared in 1920. It was a manifesto, it expressed one's innermost convictions, it was perhaps the first
'real' book one had ever read." The tremendous success of the book that almost won Byronic fame for its writer can safely be attributed to the searching account of the young mind of Amory Blaine who became a darling of the contemporary youth simply because he was a mirror in which they found their own reflection. Amory Blaine is a representative young man who has certain innate illusions in a land where every illusion, it was supposed, could be turned into reality if only one had the requisite qualities and the will. But in the changed milieu, he finds it impossible to realise his dreams because in place of man, it is now money that has become the criterion of success.

Amory is exceedingly handsome, a personable figure, and is proud that he possesses the "personality, charm, magnetism, poise, power of dominating all contemporary males, the gift of fascinating all women." Mentally too he enjoys "unquestioned superiority" over others and is, therefore, convinced that no heights are too high for him. Though Amory has "a puzzled, furtive interest in everything concerning sex," his attitude is largely conditioned by the Victorian morality and taboos respected by the American society, and the reticence and prudishness he exhibits are the sure signs of his ingrained moral outlook towards sex. He is extremely sensitive and "a harsh phrase from

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the lips of an older boy ... was liable to sweep him off his
poise into surly sensitiveness, or timid stupidity...." With
all these qualities he considers himself outstanding and consi-
derably superior to others, and always thinks of rising to the
top of the world: "Vanity, tempered with self-suspicion if not
self-knowledge, a sense of people as automatons to his will, a
desire to 'pass' as many boys as possible and get to a vague
top of the world ... with this background did Amory drift into
adolescence." Obsessed with his own romantic self, he regards
his egotism and superiority complex as quite natural, and
genuinely considers himself capable of significant achievements.
He is always self-conscious and wonders "how people could fail
to notice that he was a boy marked for glory, and when faces of
the throng turned toward him and ambiguous eyes stared into his,
he assumed the most romantic of expressions and walked on the
air cushions that lie on the asphalts of fourteen." Right from
the childhood days, Amory had indulged in day-dreaming, and in
one of his favourite imaginative flights, found himself crowned
with the glory of being made either "a great half-back" or "the
youngest general in the world." The characteristic feature of
his dreams reflected that it "was always the becoming he dreamed
of, never the being." His dreams and his passion for "becoming"

2 Fitzgerald, Paradise, p. 20.
3 Ibid., p. 21.
4 Ibid., p. 19.
cannot be called merely wishful thinking because in the cultural context of the American dream, he is convinced of his possessing the requisite merits for aspiring to achieve the highest goals. Sklar considers this particular feeling of the hero as the central motive of the novel and observes: "Amory's quickening realization that he must struggle against constricting forms of social and intellectual commitment to keep alive this process gives this otherwise diffuse novel its particular movement and urgency." A child of queer and whimsical mother and an unsuccessful father, Amory, right from the childhood, inherits certain traits which make him feel uneasy in his school. He can hardly adjust himself among his mates whom he finds utterly inferior, and when his attempts to conceal his feeling of superiority from others fail, he naturally grows to be unpopular at school. His egotism rebels even against the teachers whom he mostly finds dull and uninteresting. His ingenuity and clever "show off" in studies do not bring him the desired result because he soon finds that athletics, his chief disadvantage, is "the touchstone of power and popularity at school." He, therefore, begins to make furious and persistent efforts to excel in sports. He must excel and get to the top, and to achieve this end, he tries hard to conform to the norms as far as possible, even while it pricks his conscience. He detests the institutions

because they, according to him, encourage mediocrity and do not offer any opportunity to an extraordinary intelligent boy for sharpening his creative and intellectual faculties. But at the same time he aspires to make his way to the top and is dismayed to realize that for this he has to conform to the mediocre and fake standards of the social institutions. This conflict in what Fitzgerald calls the "fundamental Amory" and the social Amory who wishes to scale the heights of social prestige and popularity runs throughout the novel. The childish and romantic escapade with Myra is the first of such incidents which prove his fundamentally moral outlook and bring to light his inner struggle to assert it everytime he is tempted by the glamour and excitement of the moment. After boasting of his ideas and imagination, his love of excitement and innovations, and after experiencing the thrill of his first kiss, he suddenly feels disgusted: "Sudden revulsion seized Amory, disgust, loathing for the whole incident. He desired frantically to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss anyone; he became conscious of his face and hers, of their clinging hands and he wanted to creep out of his body and hide somewhere safe out of the sight, up in the corner of his mind." Some critics have thought this ambivalence irrational but it is basic to the emotional make-up of Amory. He is torn between his fundamental moral outlook and his dream of reaching the top-rung of the social ladder which he can

7 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
realise by conforming to the changed environment of the post-war America. Sklar remarks that the "hero of This Side of Paradise proceeds, not from self into society, but away from society into his own first form of self-possession." This is, however, only partly true because initially Amory goes from self to the society but returns to the self when he finds the norms of the society too abhorrent and repelling. The contention is borne out by his reply to his mother, when she enquires about his stay of two years at the school: "I enjoyed them; I adapted myself to the bourgeoisie. I became conventional." This ambivalence may not be properly appreciated if we ignore the deep-rooted Puritan and moral outlook of Fitzgerald's protagonists. Amory is a conscientious boy, raised in the moral traditions of the Mid-West, and it is this conscience that shapes his mind and imagination and prepares him to face the brutal disillusionment. No doubt, he is attracted towards the charming girls, but he never enjoys the vulgarity and impropriety of sexual relations. The social Amory may momentarily find it "fascinating to feel that any popular girl he met before eight he might possibly kiss before twelve", the fundamental Amory definitely detests this possibility because it "stood for a real moral let down."

8 Sklar, Laocoon, p. 43.
9 Fitzgerald, Paradise, p. 23.
10 Ibid., p. 66.
11 Ibid., p. 65.
Caught between the forces of good and evil, Amory certainly opts for the good even though it brings him frustration and disillusionment.

For the young Amory morality and sex are interchangeable, and he regards sex as identified with evil. He idealises girls but, in the relaxed social and sexual mores of the post-war age, finds them entirely selfish and indifferent. Isabelle is his first glimpse into the realm of true love, and she becomes for him an epitome of all his dreams. This is also his first experience in the world which is radically different from what he imagines it to be. For him, love is the union of souls merging for eternal pleasure, but his experience shocks him for he finds people simply craving pleasures of the moment. Human relations have lost the emotional meaning and become just transitory arrangements to suit the convenience of the fickle-minded young flappers. Isabelle, about sixteen, is vainly proud of her appearance and dress and regards it as an advantageous reputation to be considered a "speed". Instead of feeling abashed, she proudly smiles when Sally tells her: "He [Amory] knows you're—you're considered beautiful and all that ... and I guess he knows you've been kissed." Unknown to Amory, the "'belle' had become the 'flirt', the 'flirt' had become the 'baby vamp'. The 'belle' had five or six callers every afternoon ... and was surrounded by a dozen men in the

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Ibid., p. 68.
intermissions between dances." Isabelle, who is capable only of transient emotions, cannot respond to the true love of Amory. Proud of her beauty and charm, she only exults in exhibiting her physical magnetism and glamour. Amory too, full of adolescent confidence and vanity, learns and plays the innocent tricks to keep at the top of the show, but, in sharp contrast to the peculiarly post-war flirting attitude of Isabelle, is firmly ingrained in the traditional values, and when he feels attracted towards Isabelle, she becomes symbolic of all his future hopes. Through his correspondence with her, he sadly discovers Isabelle to be discreetly unsentimental, but he still hopes that she would be able to respond to his emotions. In quest of eternal love, he showers all his tender emotions on Isabelle, and unmindful of the masks hiding the truth, feels elated at his tremendous success. But before his love reaches the point of consummation, just one bruise on Isabelle's white neck, during a passionate kiss, is enough to enrage her to the point of dissolving the relationship. Amory is bewildered to find that a little bruise on her neck is more important to her than all the depth of his feelings and love.

Dick Humbird at Princeton acquires a symbolic significance for Amory; he represents the 'perfect' man that he wanted to be, an epitome of his desires and aspirations. To him,

13 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
Humbird looks something different from the other common lot, and he comes to regard him with veneration and awe. In America where the establishment of a classless society was one of the essential ingredients of the American dream, the rapid industrialisation towards the end of the nineteenth century gave rise to a new class of *nouveaux riches* who posed as aristocrats and unsuccessfully attempted to copy the traditional rich of the European countries. Horatio Alger's success stories fired the imagination of the young middle-class boys and, in the new industrial set-up, presented this 'aristocratic' distinction as the new form of the American dream. To the young mind of Amory Humbird seems to transcend the conditions and circumstances of the American life, a perfect 'aristocrat', loved and respected by his friends, and the chief reason of the veneration is the abounding wealth and the freedom and carelessness flowing from it. Negating the original concept of the American dream, America stood divided in classes, not on the basis of heritage but on the basis of wealth. Amory's young mind is, therefore, instinctively fascinated by the unique position Humbird enjoys, and he instantly idealises him. Amory looks upon him as "the eternal example of what the upper class tries to be", and with this perfect idol in mind, he desires to emulate him and become another Humbird himself. He is unaware of the background of the self-made 'aristocrat' who, elevated to the dizzy heights by the sudden wealth, in fact lacks the genuine aristocratic
and aesthetic tastes. Amory feels "a curious sinking sensation" when Alec tells him the shocking truth that "his Humbird's father was a grocery clerk who made a fortune in Tacoma real estate and came to New York ten years ago." Such nouveaux riches, after amassing wealth, had spuriously adopted the pose of being aristocrats and thus created an imbalance in the society. The aspiring young boys, hating their own middle-class origin, emulated them and yearned to be pseudo aristocrats. As Amory's adulatory mind considers Humbird above the limitations of time and space, he is shocked to find him killed in an automobile accident and his earthly condition upsets him completely. He is horrified to find the 'aristocrat' meeting an "unaristocratic and close to the earth" fate, and his death reminds him "of a cat that had lain horribly mangled in some alley of his childhood." The 'unaristocratic' death of Humbird, the ideal of Amory, disillusioned him of the charm of the gilded world, and he learns that youth and beauty are also transient. Fitzgerald's likening Humbird's death to that of a cat or an animal is also significant, because he thus repudiates this class-distinction simply on the basis of wealth that makes Amory idealise undeserving people. Of course, the incident has great effect on the young mind of Amory. The devil associated with Humbird after his death is particularly significant because through this

14 Ibid., p. 36.
15 Ibid., p. 96.
frightening encounter, Amory discovers that the sham sophistication of status is necessarily evil. As opposed to the status-conscious Humbird, Burne Holiday has been presented as a true American, an epitome of rugged individualism, an idealist whose intellectual honesty and sincerity attract Amory. Burne Holiday does not lead an affected life and has enormous confidence in himself as a creative human being. A nonconformist in the real sense, he, instead of caring for his personality, is a personage as defined by Monsignor Darcy. For the first time we find Amory peeping into something deeper, beyond the outer charm and magnetism of the personality. The "intense earnestness" and the enthusiasm of Burne strike "the dead chords in his heart" and he ultimately comes to stand "vaguely for a land Amory hoped he was drifting toward...." Amory, who had been fascinated by Princeton only because of the glitter and charm it offered through its various clubs and committees, realises for the first time the superficiality of their glamour. Having gauged the depth of Burne's ideas, he seems "to be climbing heights where others would be forever unable to get a foothold." But such individuals could no longer make any significant headway in the changed environment of America, and through Burne's ultimate failure Fitzgerald bemoans the death of constructive individualism, an integral component of the American dream.

16 Ibid., p. 134.
17 Ibid., p. 144.
Clara, as opposed to Isabelle, "represents for Amory an encounter with ethereal and supernatural beauty, with ideal and aesthetic perfection." She is an angel and Amory finds in her the idealised form of woman that he has long imagined, but "Amory wasn't good enough for Clara.... Her goodness was above the prosy morals of the husband-seeker, apart from the dull literature of female virtue." She had not been caught in the whirl of the materialistic values of life which had shattered the romantic visions of young persons like Amory. But her experiences have given her the maturity of mind, and she is, therefore, fully aware of Amory's egotistical imperfections and immature romantic vision. Though, realising the immaturity of Amory's professions of love for her, she refuses to marry him, he regards her as the only girl who corresponds to his dream of an ideal girl. Contrary to her detached and unselfish outlook which helps to keep her out of the general hysteria overtaking the American girls, Amory "met wives whom he had known as debutantes, and looking intently at them imagined that he found something in their faces which said: 'Oh, if I could only have gotten you'."

The War gave the final blow to an already degenerating

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20 Ibid., p. 160.
civilisation, and the hedonistic spirit that it generated crushed the hope, if any existed earlier, of the realisation of the American dream. Certain events that occurred during this interlude when the War was being fought deprived Amory of the assured income that had made him aspire for aristocracy. His mother died, and the dwindling family fortune, from speculation, extravagance, the democratic administration and the income tax, almost melted away leaving Amory poor who must now work for his living with no prospects of sudden wealth ahead. Amory, who had been through the War, once again falls a victim to the outward glitter and charm of the post-war debutante, Rosalind, who, though a celebrated beauty, is highly irresponsible; her greatest achievement is her experience of momentary sensation. She professes to Amory: "I've kissed dozens of men. I suppose I'll kiss dozens more." Highly selfish and spoiled and with the characteristic post-war disposition, she trades upon her beauty and claims a right to possess everything and everyone she comes across: "She wants what she wants when she wants it and she is prone to make everyone around her pretty miserable when she doesn't get it." She is a typical post-war flirt who "had been disappointed in man after man as individuals, but she had great faith in man as sex. Women she detested. They represented qualities that she felt and despised in herself--incipient meanness, conceit, cowardice and petty dishonesty."  

21 Ibid., p. 183.
Proud and narcissistic, concerned only with her physical charm, Rosalind is devoid of any sexual and social morals, and coldly displays her true nature in dismissing her earlier lover, Howard Gillespie. The fickle-minded flirt shamelessly declares: "I have to be won all over again every time you see me." With this background she meets Amory who, taking her usual professions of love at their face value, is entrapped once again in the whirlwind of an emotional love-affair, imagining a dreamy life with Rosalind, his bride to be. He even takes up a job in the advertising agency to get ready for the responsible married life and be able to provide for Rosalind. His life is charmed by the thrill of the emotional exuberance and he finds everything "transmitted into terms of their love, all experience, all desires, all ambitions, were nullified...." Insignificant as everything else appears, Rosalind for Amory becomes "life and hope and happiness, my whole world now." But he is too conscious of his financial position and often feels perturbed over his inability to provide her the glamorous life she is habitual to. Rosalind initially assures him: "It hurts when you reproach yourself for what you can't give me. I've got your precious self--and that's enough for me." He sincerely weaves his dreams around her and is overjoyed by her expressions of

22 Ibid., p. 194.
23 Ibid., p. 199.
24 Ibid., p. 200.
true love which always give an impression that she is vastly different from the other crazy materialistic flappers. She always assures him of her unselfish and spiritual love: "I love you, Amory, with all my heart.... I want to belong to you. I want your people to be my people. I want to have your babies." In the fleeting hours of the heavenly pleasure that he derives from his passionate love, Amory intensely feels that his love has transcended the narrow bounds of material realities and is in a way unique. In the flush of emotions, Rosalind would gratify Amory: "Amory, I belong to you. For the first time I regret all the other kisses; now I know how much a kiss can mean." But only a few weeks later, all this rhetoric becomes meaningless before the glittering wealth of Dawson Ryder, another catch, who offers her a life of superficial charm; she rejects true love for a life of false appearances. She opts for the 'background' associated with Dawson Ryder's wealth in place of sincerity and devotion that Amory's love offers. Owing to her callous selfishness, Rosalind makes a cool assessment: "Marrying you would be a failure and I never fail." She dismisses Amory because his normal means won't suffice to give her the luxurious and comfortable living she yearns so much: "I like sunshine and pretty things and

25 Ibid., p. 201.
27 Ibid., p. 208.
cheerfulness—and I dread responsibility. I don't want to think about pots and kitchens and brooms. I want to worry whether my legs will get slick and brown when I swim in the summer."

The degenerated America no longer forms the moral and spiritual anchor but has been reduced to a land where wealth can defeat anything, even the genuine and lasting human feelings. Intrinsic values and the depth of life have gone out of the land where they were likely to flower and ripen into the fruit of the American dream. In the radically changed environment no individual, from the poorer sections of the American society, could dream of rising to the top and this bitter reality dawns upon Amory:

Oh, Lord, what a pleasure it used to be to dream I might be a really great dictator or writer or religious or political leader—and now even a Leonardo da Vinci or Lorenzo de Medici couldn't be a real old-fashioned bolt in the world. Life is too huge and complex. The world is so overgrown that it can't lift its own fingers, and I was planning to be such an important figure— (29)

The complexity of life lay not in the philosophical profundity but merely in the material wealth, and any individual belonging to the poorer section of the society and aspiring to rise high would be crushed under the "vast carelessness" of the rich.

Completely dejected and utterly disgusted with his bitter experiences and the choking social system, Amory decides to spend a few days in the countryside where he suddenly comes across

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29 Ibid., pp. 228-29.
a wild and crazy beauty while she is invoking God to strike her with lightning in that stormy night. She feigns to be fearless, and proudly and haughtily declares that she does not believe either in God or immortality. Amory, who is not yet completely shorn of his romanticism, feels instantly fascinated by Eleanor's disarming frankness, unwavering will and heretical beliefs and once again falls a victim to the masked beauty: "Eleanor was, say, the last time that evil crept close to Amory under the mask of beauty, the last weird mystery that held him with wild fascination and pounded his soul to flakes." Proud and vain, a self-willed egotist, Eleanor is a mirror in which Amory finds his own earlier 'self' reflected. He is able to see through her because in every respect she reminds him of his own masks and egotism. But as his emotions usually rule over his intellect, he feels attracted towards Eleanor and they seem "nearer, not only mentally, but physically ... for they fell half into love almost from the first." Rebellious and indignant, Eleanor, daughter of a restless and bohemian mother, arrogantly boasts of her superiority: "I'm too bright for most men, and yet I have to descend to their level and let them patronize my intellect in order to get their attention." But in the same breath, she would descend from her intellectual superiority to a mere physical level: "I like clever men and good-looking men, and of

30 Ibid., p. 238.
31 Ibid., p. 248.
course, no one cares more for personality than I do." Referring to the ambivalence in Eleanor's character, Perosa reflects:

If Clara had been the daughter of light, Eleanor is at the same time the archetypal dark woman, who is the symbol in so much of American literature of the complexity of experience and of the profane eros. There is a spark of divine madness in her, and at the same time the sense of worldly materialism. Thus, Amory's worldly education is completed only after his encounter with Eleanor. (33)

Amory can now critically look through the masks, and the blasphemy of Eleanor no longer enchants him because by now his experiences have taught him that religion in dogmatic form may not be desirable, but some sort of religion, a moral outlook of life where human beings should behave humanely, is essential for a healthy development of the society as well as individuals. Eleanor, in her characteristic fashion, says: "I'll tell you there is no God, not even a definite abstract goodness; so it's all got to be worked out for the individual by the individual here in high white foreheads like mine, and you're too much the prig to admit it." But Amory is by now disillusioned of such platitudes that disinherit us of any solid base and so scolds her: "And like most intellectuals who don't find faith convenient, like Napoleon and Oscar Wilde and the rest of your type, you'll yell loudly for a priest on your death-bed." The mask of Eleanor's boldness and open defiance is thrown off in a

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32 Ibid., p. 255.
34 Fitzgerald, Paradise, p. 256.
few moments when she arrogantly attempts to dive on horseback over a mountain-cliff to prove her contempt for life and God, but at the last moment fear grips her and she flings herself sideways while the horse is killed. Amory's realisation that all she talked about and did was not a well-thought-out philosophy of life but a crazy streak in her which she had inherited from her mother, fills him with contemptuous disgust, but "as Amory had loved himself in Eleanor, so now what he hated was only a mirror. Their poses were strewn about the pale dawn like broken glass."

Disenchanted of all the romantic ideals, Amory, to ridicule the frivolous and meaningless life that he finds people living in America, gets himself discredited by a "gratuitous act." In hating Eleanor, he has broken with his narcissistic self-love and impliedly with the outer glitter and charm that have rendered American life devoid of any intrinsic pleasure. The four years of his varied experiences have been very bitter and the things "that had been the merest commonplaces of his life then, deep sleep, the sense of beauty around him, all desire, had flown away and the gaps they left were filled only with the great listlessness of his disillusion." In order to shed completely his illusions, poses and masks and to express his indignation at the shallow contemporary life, Amory self-

36 Ibid., p. 263.
sacrificingly takes upon himself the blame of Alec's immoral involvement with a flirt and faces, consequently, the humiliation as the affair is given wide publicity in the press. This completes his worldly education, and he is transformed from a personality to a personage. Penniless, he wanders on the streets of New York, and for the first time realises the tasteless and wretched lives that poor people have to lead. Poverty seems to him the greatest curse, and, in the changed American conditions, he feels that it is "essentially cleaner to be corrupt and rich than it is to be innocent and poor." The Dream of America had been transformed into the dream of money and everything represented the hollowness of the contemporary life. All the concepts and the precepts seem to him fake and the wisdom of the books meaningless: "There were no more wise men; there were no more heroes.... Amory had grown up to a thousand books, a thousand lies; he had listened eagerly to people who pretended to know, who knew nothing." Even religion had not presented to him the ideal picture of man, and had miserably failed in surviving this horrible wind of change in American life: Monsignor Darcy, "upon whom a cardinal rested, had moments of strange and horrible insecurity--inexplicable in a religion that explained even disbelief in terms of its own faith.... Amory had seen Monsignor go to the houses of stolid

37 Ibid., p. 275.
38 Ibid., p. 282.
Philistines read popular novels furiously, saturate himself in routine, to escape from the horror. Such religious priests, themselves afraid of the horrors of the modern life, could not afford any solace or comfort to the broken innocents. Disgusted with the commercial civilisation where man is valued in direct proportion to the money he possesses, Amory admits: "I'm restless. My whole generation is restless. I'm sick of a system where the richest man gets the most beautiful girl if he wants her, where the artist without an income has to sell his talents to a button manufacturer." In this mad race he finds neither any positive value attached to life nor any noble cause guiding man's actions. The glorification of man, his spiritual cravings, his ideals and dreams, all seem superfluous tags and he begins "for the first time in his life to have a strong distrust of all generalities and epigrams. They were too easy, too dangerous to the public mind." He has also been a victim of an epigram, the American dream, which has landed him in the deep abysses of total disillusionment. He is not only sorry for himself but also for the whole of the young generation which had been brought up on the creed: "Here was a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a reverie of long days and nights; destined finally to go out

39 Ibid., p. 284.
40 Ibid., p. 299.
41 Ibid., p. 235.
into that dirty gray turmoil to follow love and pride; a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.” Disinherited of his faith in the American dream and disillusioned of his dream of leading a life of his choice, Amory bemoans: “I know myself, but that is all.” With this self-knowledge that he has gained through his experience, he has also learnt the bitter truth about the shallow and immoral life that has replaced the old Dream of the Founding Fathers.

It would be wrong to say, as some critics have suggested, that Anthony Patch, the hero of The Beautiful and Damned, starts from where Amory ends. While Amory Blaine, an adolescent disillusioned quester, finds at the end of This Side of Paradise that he knows himself, Anthony Patch hardly starts with the knowledge of the self that his predecessor has attained at such a heavy cost after all his hopes of the realisation of the American dream have been shattered. Anthony Patch is a romantic dreamer who desires to lead a life of his choice in the American Eden where his ancestors had once bewailed the lapse of Adam and promised to redeem the cursed humanity. The American dream, the dream of realising an ideal life, is central to Anthony’s craving; but the irony is that the original Dream

42 Ibid., p. 304.
43 Ibid., p. 305.
has been lost in the delirium and confusion resulting from the
drift in the fundamental values of the post-war American milieu,
and for Anthony the ideal life has come to mean a life of etern­
al beauty, captivating charm and fashionable indifference.
Owing to the derangement of values and cheap tricky stories of
success that were abundantly available to the generation to
which Anthony belongs, the American dream was shorn of perse­
verance, diligence, devotion and its other essential characteris­
tics, and it became simply a go-and-catch-something device. Instead
of struggling with the odds and coming out victorious, the
young men tried to find the short-cuts. They found themselves
at the criss-cross of the materialistic society in which lately
had emerged the ugly class-distinction giving birth to the newly
rich or the pseudo aristocrats who attained an enviable position
in the society after acquiring wealth through dubious and cor­
rupt means. As Amory had failed to see through the aristocratic
pose of Humbird, most of them found themselves unable to distin­
guish between the sham aristocratic pretensions of the American
philistines and the ingrained traditional virtues associated
with aristocracy, and, in the absence of any proper training,
they wasted their talents and potentialities in the mere hope
of inheriting wealth of their fathers or grandfathers. Anthony,
fresh from the university, could not devote himself to work for
the realisation of his dream when he found his grandfather Adam
J. Patch, more familiarly known as "Cross Patch", rolling in
millions, acquired not through sweat and struggle, but by unscrupulous and ruthless plans. Adam Patch's hypocrisy, after a severe attack of sclerosis, found a convenient cloak to cover his sins and he decided "to consecrate the remainder of his life to the moral regeneration of the world." Adam Patch has been presented as a representative figure of American philistinism who, instead of generating a fire of life and yearning for something higher in his grandson, simply makes him wish to see his grandfather dead some fine morning so that he could inherit his enormous wealth and realise his dream. The realisation of the American dream, for a young man of the post-war era, had ultimately come to depend upon the money and that too inherited, not earned.

Anthony Patch, at the age of twenty-five, regards himself as "an exceptional young man, thoroughly sophisticated, well adjusted to his environment, and somewhat more significant than any one else he knows." Conscious of his higher potentialities, he considers himself not just an ordinary man but "a distinct and dynamic personality...." With his cheerful and pleasant nature and very attractive personality he thinks that "he would one day accomplish some quite subtle thing that the elect would deem worthy and, passing on, would join the dimmer stars in a nebulous, indeterminate heaven half-way between death and

44 Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned, p. 5.
immortality." He, however, does not think it essential to devote himself to the realisation of his dream, but, though presently living on seven thousand a year inherited from his mother, postulates that some golden day, he would inherit the millions of his grandfather and everything would follow eventually. He is averse to all serious and sustained efforts because he feels that any work would smack of the mundane and materialistic approach; he cannot reconcile himself to the idea that an exceptionally brilliant man like him should be tied down to the writing table or waste his extraordinary talents in ordinary struggle. Moreover, Anthony, in the cynical style which was so popular among the youth of the 1920's, subscribes to the view of the meaningfulness of life and the world. As he is not propelled by any creative purpose, he finds all thoughts and ideas meaningless. In the absence of an aesthetic ideal and in order to justify his sense of inertia, he declares the whole life meaningless. He cynically justifies his inaction when he tells Maury Noble that "it being a meaningless world, why write? The very attempt to give it purpose is purposeless." And to Dick he boasts that he is "a man knowing too much for his talent to express" and the milieu is completely unsuitable to his intellectual potentialities:

45 Ibid., p. 3.
46 Ibid., p. 24.
Say I am proud and sane and wise—an Athenian among Greeks. Well, I might fail where a lesser man would succeed. He could imitate, he could adorn, he could be enthusiastic, he could be hopefully constructive. But this hypothetical me would be too proud to imitate, too sane to be enthusiastic, too sophisticated to be Utopian, too Grecian to adorn. (47)

But soon he realises the emptiness of his justification and his days, with the usual dull and monotonous routine, oppress him with a growing lack of colour. Whenever he thinks of starting work on his book, his mind, in the absence of any creative ideal, draws sustenance from the fashionable cliches and unfounded complexes or the idea of the "meaninglessness of life", and makes it impossible for him to work. But he is not unaware of the sense of waste:

He found in himself a growing horror and loneliness.... if I am essentially weak, he thought, I need work to do, work to do. It worried him to think that he was, after all, a facile mediocrity, with neither the poise of Maury nor the enthusiasm of Dick. It seemed a tragedy to want nothing—and yet he wanted something, something. He knew in flashes what it was—some path of hope to lead him toward what he thought was an imminent and ominous old age. (48)

But he would at times imagine himself to be brilliant and magnetic, the heir of many illustrious men and would indulge in reveries of becoming a great power on the earth with the help of his grandfather's money. With his versatility, extraordinary intelligence and sophisticated tastes, he imagined, he would acquire an enviable position and lead an ideal and graceful life.

47 Ibid., p. 36.
48 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
But these dreams occupied him only when he was a little drunk and afterwards he realised that "he was a pretentious fool, making careers out of cocktails and meanwhile regretting, weakly and secretly, the collapse of an insufficient and wretched idealism." It is essential to understand the true nature of Anthony Patch because that goes to explain the intentions of Fitzgerald which have often been misunderstood. Mizener, trying to clarify the intention of the novelist, suggests that there is a "consistent effort to make Anthony the sensitive and intelligent man who, deprived of a conventional career by his refusal to compromise with a brutal and stupid world, finds his weaknesses too strong to allow him the special career he imagines for himself." But the question that should naturally be asked is: what special career does he imagine for himself? The book gives no answer.

Wilson found that

There is a moral in *The Beautiful and Damned* that the author did not perhaps intend to point. The hero and the heroine of this giddy book are creatures without method or purpose: they give themselves up to wild debaucheries and do not, from beginning to end, perform a single serious act; yet somehow you get the impression that, in spite of their fantastic behavior, Anthony and Gloria Patch are the most rational people in the book. Wherever they come in contact with institutions, with the serious life of their time, these are made to appear ridiculous, they are subjects for scorn or mirth. We see the army, finance and business successively and casually exposed as completely without point or dignity.

The inference we are led to draw is that, in such a civilization as this, the sanest and most honorable course is to escape from organized society and live for the excitement of the moment. (1)

Wilson, whom Fitzgerald described as his "intellectual conscience", in an otherwise derisive article, makes the most accurate observation about *The Beautiful and Damned*. But a careful study of the novel convinces us that Fitzgerald was fully aware of the moral reverberations that his novel embodied. Perosa rightly points out that far "from being the mouthpiece or the singer of the jazz age, Fitzgerald was its lucid accuser. He was well aware of its equivocal dangers, of its irresponsible attitudes, and he pitilessly exposed its disastrous consequences...." Reece's plea that the degeneration of Anthony Patch "is to be seen as largely the result of a fastidious and intelligent young man's failure to fit himself into a crass commercial society", is only one aspect of the problem because that alone cannot justify his meaningless drifting and dissipation, without ever trying to achieve what he wants. The argument of Gross is quite convincing that after all it "is the same brutal, stupid world without point or dignity in which Amory Blaine and Gatsby and Dick Diver and Monroe Stahr live,

51 Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald", in *Critical Essays*, pp. 84-85.
yet they manage to make moral decisions. They do so by transcending that world or by constructing their own. Such alternatives never occur to Anthony Patch." He is simply incapacitated to pursue his dreams by his indolence and idleness; his horrible irresponsibility and indecision never allow him to work for his higher goals. As has been elaborated in the beginning, Fitzgerald intended to make Anthony Patch a representative young man of the post-war era who, due to the confused values of the society, lacked the moral courage to act for the realisation of the American dream. Even with their "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life", they cynically grew up expecting to realise them without making any struggle. The enigmatic situation of Anthony has been examined by Riddel in the cultural context of the three preceding generations of America:

Anthony's heritage reflects Fitzgerald's consuming interest in the complex fate of his Americanness, his involvement with a history that becomes an inescapable labyrinth. The two generations leading back to that prototypical grandfather, Adam Patch, offer a patent distribution of physical and moral resources. The grandfather's generation, inheriting both Emerson's legacy and Adam Smith's, exploited its heritage and ravished its virgin land, then turned to Comstockery by way of expiating its guilt. Its heirs in turn--Anthony's parents--left morally disinherited, found their only raison d'être in tropisms of pleasure. The sons of this second generation, Anthony and Fitzgerald, stand at the door of a new age, with sensitivity and longing, but

54 Barry Gross, "The Dark Side of Twenty-Five: Fitzgerald and The Beautiful and Damned", Bucknell Review, 16 (December, 1968), 42. Hereafter the article cited as "The Dark Side of Twenty-Five".
without direction or purpose. Anthony Patch's means turn out to be all promise, a kind of illusory green-light pointing, as he hopes, to a future without a past (or better, with an uncorrupted past).... He is left, moreover, with little respect for the puritan zealouslyness of that old American entrepreneur, Adam, and no desire for anything but Adam's legacy. Into this fabric of materialism, economic and moral history, and myth, Fitzgerald weaves a parable of the American's and the artist's fall, and then denies him redemption. (55)

Fitzgerald examined the dilemma of an individual in the cultural context and for him the "paradox of American history is finally ... a nightmare in which possibility or 'dream' is constantly interrupted by bills demanding payment for the privilege of illusion." Diagnosing the real trouble of Anthony, Fitzgerald himself wrote to his publisher: "My new novel ... concerns the life of one Anthony Patch between his 25th and 33rd years (1913-1921). He is one of those many with the tastes and weaknesses of an artist but with no actual creative inspiration. How he and his beautiful young wife are wrecked on the shoals of dissipation is told in the story." Fitzgerald was aware of the dilemma of the young men with "sensitivity and longing" but "without direction or purpose" or "creative inspiration", who, turning uncompromising cynicals, rejecting all the conventional methods of realising the Dream in the gross and crude

56 Ibid., 340.
57 Fitzgerald, Letters, p. 145.
materialistic civilisation but at the same time unable to transcend it, dissipated themselves by pointless drifting.

Instead of finding "some path of hope", to make the matters worse, Anthony meets Gloria, a dazzling beauty and an incarnation of hard-core selfishness, careless irresponsibility and extreme egotism. She cares for nothing but her beautiful body, and Anthony discovers, in his first meeting, that Gloria is narcissistically charmed by herself; she not only talks always about herself but desires others also to talk about her. It appears that Fitzgerald blended different characteristics of all the three heroines of This Side of Paradise in order to create Gloria. She craves the outer charm and radiance like Isabelle; she is highly selfish and irresponsible like Rosalind and extremely egoistic like Eleanor. As long as she gets enough money for her dances and dinners, she doesn't mind if people "don't do anything. I don't see why they should; in fact it always astonishes me when anybody does anything." She even surpasses the fashionable indifference of Anthony and remorselessly yearns for indolent idleness, drifting from one party to another. "I want to just be lazy", she declares, "and I want some of the people around me to be doing things, because that makes me feel comfortable and safe--and I want some of them to be doing nothing at all, because they can be graceful and companionable for me." Easeful grace, pleasureful irresponsibility and glamorous show-world are the only things Gloria

58 Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned, p. 66.
understands and lives for; any talk of work and higher goals bores her. She is pleased to find Anthony corroborating her views when he says: "I do nothing for there's nothing I can do that's worth doing." He is naive enough to deceive himself by describing his purposeless drifting as graceful: "But I want to know just why it's impossible for an American to be gracefully idle—it astonishes me.... I don't understand why people think that every young man ought to go down-town and work ten hours a day for the best twenty years of his life at dull, unimaginative work; certainly not altruistic work." Gloria regards Anthony as a great genius because of his bohemian ideas and seemingly uncompromising attitude, but in fact she is not interested in him. She simply finds in him an image or rather an extension of her own personality which she wishes to perpetuate for ever. Self-absorbed and self-centred, she wants a glorious world of her own wherein she could always be young and beautiful. Even Anthony miserably fails to interest her in anything and "stir her from that casualness she shows towards everything except herself." She seeks pleasure but it must be divested of any kind of responsibility or work; it must be absolute without any cost, whatsoever. We are thus confronted with two self-absorbed romantic egotists, very much like Amory and Eleanor, with the difference that Amory, at the time he met

59 Ibid., p. 65.
Eleanor, had acquired adequate knowledge of the world to be able to see through the sham and hypocritical cynicism and pretensions of Eleanor and thus unmask her, while Anthony Patch, himself without direction or purpose, marvelling in idleness, is dazzled by the sheer physical charm of Gloria. A more responsible and serious girl might have given meaning to the endless drifting of Anthony who is otherwise a sensitive and intelligent young man, but once attracted towards her, he, like a rudderless ship, is lost in the vast ocean of purposelessness. To gratify his indolence, Anthony naturally feels convinced that "no woman he had ever met compared in any way with Gloria." Her careless irresponsibility nourishes his pointless inertia and both derive sustenance from each other.

Everything seems rosy to young Anthony, and thinking that there is the complete union of his soul with Gloria's, he feels an ecstatic sensation when he marries her. Gloria too takes the marriage as the beginning of a very promising and bright future of charm and unstinted happiness and predicts that her marriage is "going to be outstanding. It can't, shan't be the setting-- it's going to be the performance, the life, lovely, glamorous performance, and the world shall be the scenery." In her diary she aptly summarises the sensation of this "glamorous performance": "Blowing bubbles--that's what we're doing, Anthony and me. And we blew such beautiful ones

60 Ibid., p. 104.
today, and they'll explode and then we'll blow more and more, I guess—bubbles just as big and just as beautiful, until all the soap and water is used up." Bubbles may look beautiful and glamorous and the exercise of blowing them may fascinate the jazz-age hedonists but the hollow and insubstantial bubbles cannot last long. As the beautiful and the "breathless idyl" of their married life passes, Anthony finds that he is "living with a girl of tremendous nervous tension and of the most high-handed selfishness." Gloria too realises within a month that "her husband was an utter coward toward any one of a million phantasms created by his imagination." Behind the charming facade of Gloria lay her childish and embarrassing habit of gum-chewing, her choleric temper aroused on flimsy excuses and her careless irresponsibility. She must get everything as a right without, of course, calling herself upon to pay anything in return. While enjoying all the advantages of a married lady, she dreads to bear the responsibilities of a 'wife', and as such insists upon Anthony not to call her 'wife': "Don't say 'wife'. I'm your mistress. Wife's such an ugly word. Your 'permanent mistress' is so much more tangible and desirable." She hates to be a mother and bearing and rearing children is, according to her, a task assigned only to lowly women. Once

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61 Ibid., p. 147.
63 Ibid., p. 158.
when she thinks that she is pregnant, she is shocked out of all proportions and finds her house of cards collapsing before her eyes; she senses that her glamorous physical charm would fade away in the discredited act of bearing a child, and thinks it intolerable to see her exquisite body growing "ugly and shapeless" with all her freshness and radiance gone. Reminded by Anthony that after all it was a natural process and that she had not been "singled out of all the women in the world for this crowning indignity", she retorts angrily: "It isn't an indignity for them. It's their one excuse for living. It's the one thing they're good for. It is an indignity for me." However, when she finds that she is not pregnant she feels extremely overjoyed as if she had retrieved all the promises of life. Dreading the natural responsibilities of life, she thinks she can forever rule over the gay world of clubs, dinners and dances. Gloria, "the idler, caresser of her own dreams, extracting poignancy from the memorable things of life and youth", has an innate desire of dominating everyone. With this instinctive urge and her magnetic personality she had "lulled Anthony's mind to sleep. She, who seemed of all women the wisest and the finest, hung like a brilliant curtain across his doorways, shutting out the light of the sun. In those first years what

64 Ibid., pp. 203-04.
65 Ibid., p. 169.
he believed bore invariably the stamp of Gloria; he saw the sun always through the pattern of the curtain."

In the absence of anything concrete and substantial to sustain them, both of them soon become aware of the emptiness and dullness of their lives. It may be suburban gray-house or New York apartments, one or the other, the feelings of boredom and spiritual ennui haunt them. Even their costly week-end parties, though momentarily stimulating, provide no lasting relief, and they are oppressed by the drudgery of their lives. In the absence of an inner ideal of love Anthony, who once had woven his dreams of eternal love around the charming face of Gloria, grows "more restless, inclined to quicken only under the stimulus of several high-balls, faintly, almost imperceptibly, apathetic towards Gloria." Mental frustration and boredom result in daily skirmishes and haughty quarrels which in turn kill whatever love and respect are left for each other. What now holds them together is not an aura of eternal love or some deeper urges, but their faint glimmer of future hopes resting upon their inheriting the old Adam Patch's millions. But the problem of infusing some glow and colour into the dull and drab years lying ahead before they would possess the wealth always weighs heavy on them. Bored and dulled by their monotonous and tiresome activities, Anthony realises that they have

66 Ibid., p. 191.
67 Ibid., p. 192.
not even been "efficient people of leisure." But still he is actuated not by any "moral compunctions about work", but by the pragmatic consideration that "grampa may die tomorrow and he may live for ten years." Gloria, bored by his such frequent intellectual discussions, simply scoffs at the idea of work and "would never blame him for being the ineffectual idler so long as he did it sincerely, from the attitude that nothing much was worth doing." His idea of becoming a war correspondent is debated and thrown to the winds and similarly her idea of going into films is rejected by Anthony. Whenever any idea of giving direction and purpose to their lives is debated, lethargy triumphs and the idea is instantly shelved. The growing tension arising out of the dilemma of constant boredom and craving for excitement makes Anthony depressed, and at times he seems to be convinced "to have inherited only the vast tradition of human failure...."

When the dwindling income and the resultant frustration prompt Anthony to work as a salesman, the notion of subjecting himself to the demands of the commercial civilisation and becoming a part of it becomes appalling. He feels that "to succeed here the idea of success must grasp and limit his mind."

69 Ibid., p. 211.
70 Ibid., p. 218.
71 Ibid., p. 231.
The idea is, therefore, eventually given up and they are again lost in the not-so-pleasant pleasantries and revelries. But the very gray house "which had seen the flower of their love" and where, only two years ago, "they had sprawled lazily, thinking in terms of dreams, remote, languorous, content", appears to them a prison with no trace of their earlier dreamy enchantment. It actually seems as if the house had laid a horrible trap to "strike at the last roots of their stability", because at one of their regular week-end parties, old Adam Patch happens to visit them and is horrified to see his future heir and his friends lost in a wild revelry. This offends and shocks the moralist Patch who had that very morning contributed fifty thousand dollars to the cause of prohibition. Consequently he disinherits Anthony, and thus the only hope that had sustained their otherwise increasingly irregular and dissipated lives also plays a deceptive trick and shocks them rudely:

That spring, that summer, they had speculated upon future happiness—how they were to travel from summer land to summer land, returning eventually to a gorgeous estate and possible idyllic children, then entering diplomacy or politics, to accomplish, for a while, beautiful and important things, until finally as a white-haired (beautifully, silkily, white-haired) couple they were to loll about in serene glory, worshipped by the bourgeoisie of the land.... These times were to begin "when we get our money".... (74)

72 Ibid., p. 281.
73 Ibid., p. 233.
74 Ibid., p. 277.
The next morning, after the unexpected visit of the old Patch, they wake "nauseated and tired, dispirited with life, capable only of one pervasive emotion—fear." They are left panic-stricken and the castles they had been building in the air seem to have already crumbled. All their hopes "to be young and beautiful for a long time, to be gay and happy and to have money and love" are belied by time. Even love which could have given them mutual confidence and courage to face the odds of life, in the absence of any spiritual ideal, fades away: "Recriminations had displaced affection as an indulgence, almost as an entertainment." Anthony shows utter indifference to her while Gloria on her part perceives that "in spite of her adoration of him, her jealousy, her servitude, her pride, she fundamentally despised him—and her contempt blended indistinguishably with her other emotions." No wonder then that when Anthony once begs of Gloria: "Don't be cross. We've got nothing but each other, after all", she curtly answers: "We haven't even that, most of the time." Anthony vaguely becomes conscious that his spirit of inertia had killed everything he was proud of, and it had landed him nowhere; he is gripped by the sense of waste and futility and is shocked to realise that he "had been

75 Ibid., p. 278.
76 Ibid., p. 276.
77 Ibid., p. 277.
78 Ibid., p. 281.
futile in longing to drift and dream; no one drifted except to maelstroms, no one dreamed, without his dreams becoming fantastic nightmares of indecision and regret.” The American dream of a higher and graceful life, in the absence of the creative urge, vigour and diligence, essential for the achievement of the Dream, turns into a horrible nightmare for Anthony. While rejecting the philistine society, he had, for the realisation of his dream, pinned his hopes squarely on the inheritance of wealth of a philistine. During these long years of hope, despair, insecurity and frustration, Anthony Patch had “ceased to be an individual of mental adventure, of curiosity, and had become an individual of bias and prejudice, with a longing to be emotionally undisturbed.” The change had been gradual, and the anxieties and tensions of the sense of waste and insecurity preying on his mind had been accelerating the process of deterioration. Though his mind had long back started showing the signs of degeneration, it finally comes to the surface when, on the death of the old Adam Patch, the supposed moral philanthropist does not leave anything for his grandson in his will. "The driven instead of the driver", writes Gross, "he had relinquished control of his life. He has invested his whole identity in the fortune he will inherit when his grandfather dies. And when priggish Adam Patch disinherit his idle

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79 Ibid., p. 232.
80 Ibid., p. 234.
dissipated grandson, the external control and the external identity vanish." All his day-dreaming and reveries seem completely colourless, and physically and spiritually completely inert, he finds himself broken to support his exhausted ideals and dreams. Rest is a long but painful journey of this promising but ease-loving young man towards complete deterioration and degeneration. They contest the will and the lawsuit reflects the corruption and degeneration which have overtaken the American society. Desperate Anthony, in order to satisfy his craving for excitement, gets enlisted in the War and his sordid love-affair with Dorothy Raycroft is "an inevitable result of his increasing carelessness about himself." With deteriorating mental and spiritual capacities, he occasionally tries to revive his dead spirits by momentary sensations and this affair is the result of his craving for a fitful "excitement and stimulus from without" and his "inability to make definite judgements."

Released from the army, he again returns to the abyss of eternal boredom and restlessness; violent quarrels with Gloria are the only excitement left for him. As wine becomes his practical necessity for existence, they have to move to smaller and

81 Gross, "The Dark Side of Twenty-Five", 44.
82 Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned, p. 324.
83 Ibid., pp. 324-25.
ill-reputed apartments. After his friends' disapproval of his excessive drinking, he often finds himself horribly lonely, and driven by despair and aimlessness, he takes refuge in wine and the undesirable company of lowly and unworthy drunkards. He is horrified to see the emptiness of his life and even the deceptive relief of drinking seems mere self-indulgence. Owing to the phenomenal price-rise after the War, their income has almost shrunk to half of its original value with which it becomes increasingly difficult for them to manage even the essential expenses. Gloria, still proud of her physical beauty and charm, once again thinks of saving the situation by entering into films. Bloeckman, her old lover and a movie-entrepreneur, offers to help her, but his letter—that she was not young enough to act as a flapper and that she could be considered for the role of a widow—gives her the rudest shock of her life, for the youthful physical magnetism was the basis of her existence. When she is defeated even on this count, the whole world starts "melting away before her eyes." Without a spiritual and moral anchor to support the loss, Gloria finds herself in the abyss of despair and hopelessness and is certainly incapable of meeting the challenge of the new situation.

Both physically and mentally wrecked, Anthony gets addicted more and more to the curse of drinking which further adds to their financial mess and violent and senseless quarrels. Sapped of vitality and meaning, his life becomes more
and more disorderly and colourless, and his friends and acquaintances openly criticise and disapprove his all-day drinking bouts and excessive self-indulgence. He never gropes within for an answer and, in order to keep up the pretense of sticking to his philosophy,

he hated to be sober. It made him conscious of the people around him, of that air of struggle, of greedy ambition, of hope more sordid than despair, of incessant passage up or down, which in every metropolis is most in evidence through the unstable middle class. Unable to live with the rich he thought that his next choice would have been to live with the very poor. Anything was better than this cup of perspiration and tears. (84)

Seeker of superficial glamour and pleasure, Anthony realises at last that there is "nothing ... that grew stale so soon as

pleasure." Even Gloria's "soul and body shrank away from him" because of his decay and degeneration due to excessive drinking. Desperately trying to borrow some money for buying a drink, snubbed and mocked at by his closest friend, Maury Noble, Anthony gets entangled in an awkward brawl and is violently beaten by Bloeckman. Unable to pay the taxi-fare, he is insulted and mercilessly beaten by the driver who slips away with his watch which he had tried to pawn earlier. "He had not" observes Gross, "even had that minimal control over the time of his life to sell it or barter it or even throw it away. He

84 Ibid., p. 417.
85 Ibid., p. 418.
86 Ibid., p. 423.
has merely and terribly lost it." Humiliated and disgraced, reduced to a pitiable figure, he finds that his body has acquired a "stooped and flabby figure whose very sag was a document in lethargy. He was thirty-three—he looked forty."

At this crucial juncture, arrival of Dot with her demands and urges shakes him completely, and, unable to bear the tensions, he loses his already feeble mental balance. Ironically, the news that he had won the thirty-million-dollar lawsuit, the only hope and purpose of their lives, is brought by Gloria at the moment when he is unable to comprehend the ecstasy of the victory. In the end we find him an invalid, "a bundled figure seated in a wheel chair near the rail", sailing for Italy with a private physician by his side. Anthony is concerned with a series of reminiscences, much as a general might look back upon a successful campaign and analyse his victories. He was thinking of the hardships, the insufferable tribulations he had gone through. They had tried to penalize him for the mistakes of his youth. He had been exposed to ruthless misery, his very craving for romance had been punished, his friends had deserted him—even Gloria had turned against him. He had been alone, alone—facing it all. (90)

Anthony foolishly tries to justify his way of life and remembers that only "a few months before people had been urging him to give in, to submit to mediocrity, to go to work. But he had

87 Gross, "The Dark Side of Twenty-Five", 45.
88 Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned, p. 444.
89 Ibid., p. 447.
90 Ibid., pp. 448-49.
known that he was justified in his way of life—and he had stuck it out stanchly." Shorn of all his mental and physical faculties and incapacitated to lead even a normal life, not to talk of a life of his imagination, he is stupid enough to boast: "I showed them. It was a hard fight but I didn't give up and I came through."

No other novel of Fitzgerald has been so much misinterpreted and misunderstood as this one, and that too mostly because of its ending. Missing the touch of irony implicit in the hollow and empty boast of Anthony, critics have taken Anthony's self-gratifying reflections as Fitzgerald's own judgement and a proof of his approval of Anthony. Read this way, one feels with William Goldhurst that "Fitzgerald is undecided whether his hero and heroine are attractive and glamorous or pitiful and undeserving." Miller also seems to overlook Fitzgerald's strong disapproval of Anthony's self-gratification at his 'triumph' and points out to this confusion in his otherwise brilliant study of Fitzgerald's art. Rosenfeld became the representative critic who misread the conclusion: "By every law The Beautiful and Damned should have been a tragedy, the

91 Ibid., p. 449.
victims damned indeed; yet at the conclusion Fitzgerald welched, and permitted his pitiful pair to have the alleviations of some thirty millions of dollars and his hero tell the reader he had won out." However, if we properly understand the moral outlook of Fitzgerald, we would certainly feel convinced that he could not elevate the creed of meaninglessness and graceless inertia. In one of his letters, he noted that he was "too much of a moralist at heart" and really wanted "to preach at people in some acceptable form rather than to entertain them." His deep and penetrating insight had conceived of the American dream in its original and historical perspective, and he could not be expected to approve of a dreamer trying to build castles in the air not on the basis of struggle or confronting the essentials of life but merely on the strength of self-complacency, excessive self-indulgence and hopeless inertia. Fitzgerald could not ask us to share Anthony's joy in his 'triumph' in the


Dos Passos' comments on the ethical value of The Last Tycoon express Fitzgerald's general attitude: "His unique achievement, in these beginnings of a great novel, is that here for the first time he has managed to establish that unshakable moral attitude towards the world we live in and towards its temporary standards that is the basic essential of any powerful work of the imagination. A firmly anchored ethical standard is something that American writing has been struggling towards for half a century." (p. 339).
lawsuit fought on fabricated grounds and won at the cost of his total dissipation and degeneration. Perosa observes that "a touch of dramatic irony, the reversal of fortune overtakes the two characters only when their initial situation has been reversed. Anthony, sophisticated and blase at the beginning, is now an empty shell who goes to Europe with a doctor at his side. Sparkling Gloria, who used to divide people into clean and unclean, now herself appears 'sort of dyed and unclean." Though noting the touch of dramatic irony, he feels that Anthony is represented in an ambiguous light and almost praised for his refusal "to give in, to submit to mediocrity, to go to work" by Fitzgerald and this, he feels, happens because Fitzgerald seems "to falter between a desire to show the 'heroic' side of Anthony and a willingness to criticize his pointless endeavours." As has been explained earlier, Fitzgerald in fact intended to show a young, sensitive and intelligent man, a believer in the American dream, who had lost the true concept in the altered conditions of the society and got dissipated owing to his innate lethargy and lack of concerted efforts to realise the Dream. But we can appreciate the intentions of Fitzgerald only if we try to comprehend the touch of irony of which he makes a very subtle use here. "Rosenfeld's

96 Perosa, The Art of F. Scott Fitzgerald, p. 41.
97 Ibid., p. 42.
comment is", argues Stem, "a bit like accusing a pathologist of being fascinated by diseases. For one thing the thirty millions of dollars clearly are the spoils of a Pyrrhic victory, and one can read Anthony's statement of triumph only with an ironic recognition that he has lost everything except the money and the sycophants it buys and that he will forever more be lost." His analysis of the ending of the novel is quite convincing and true to Fitzgerald's intentions:

At the end of the novel, after Gloria and Anthony have won the money, dependence on which has debased them and ruined their physical appearances and conditions, their youth, cleanliness and beauty are all gone. Fitzgerald's 'trick' is so heavy-handed that one must work at missing it.... As for Anthony's self-congratulation, it is made in a wheel chair; his physical independence is gone and his mind has snapped and he is incapable of distinguishing between friends who really think he had been 'right' all along and the leeches who tell him what he obviously wants to hear. (99)

Anthony has already lost the physical energy, mental poise and spiritual hunger for the realisation of the Dream when he gets his money; he is no longer in a position to enjoy his supposed 'victory' and so the epigraph rings true: "The victor belongs to the spoils."

From the very beginning of his career, Fitzgerald, contrary to the popular belief that he was merely concerned with the frivolous vagaries of the youth, was deeply involved


99 Ibid., p. 125.
in the dilemma of the individual in the post-war American society. He examined in his novels the problem of the 'self' in the peculiar American context and interpreted the experience of the individual in the cultural stream of the American promise and its complete betrayal. For him the American dream represented a possibility and he examined the plight of the individual who, innocently believing in this cultural phenomenon, got entrapped in the nightmarish horrors of disillusionment. But it must be admitted that during the period he wrote his first two novels, he was not thoroughly able to detach his artistic sensibility from his youthful emotions and consequently his protagonist is not free from the vagueness and ambiguity that are inevitable in such cases. As his insight into the human experience had not yet been sharpened enough, his protagonists, both Amory Blaine and Anthony Patch, carry the immaturity and callowness of the writer. Moreover, at this stage of his career, he was more susceptible to the fashionable literary trends. Even though he sought to interpret the contemporary fads in terms of the historical and cultural streams of the American experience, he could not detach himself completely from the attractive but superficial romantic ideas with the result that his earlier protagonists lack the profundity and commitment that his later heroes have so abundantly. "Ripeness is all", and as if to prove his avowed gratitude to Keats, he grew significantly after The Beautiful
and Damned, and in *The Great Gatsby* his talent ripened and created one of the most perfect works of art. His later protagonists are undeniably equal to the task of his historical and cultural vision and symbolise the fate of the idealist in the peculiar American context.