Chapter - 3

The Beautiful and Damned - A novel of Moral Commentary on Certain aspects of post war American Society
The Beautiful and Damned, which was published on March 3, 1922, was Fitzgerald's second and least successful novel, is an ambitious attempt to explore the social and personal pressures that contribute to the disintegration of the human person. The Principal victims of these corrosive forces in the novel, Anthony and Gloria Patch are two of the usual Fitzgerald "beautiful people" – young, wealthy and incredibly self-indulgent. The Beautiful and Damned covers eight years in the life of Anthony Patch, the hero, "one of those many with the tastes and weaknesses of an artist with no actual creative inspiration. The novel shows "how he and his beautiful young wife are wrecked on the shoals of dissipation"(1).

Fitzgerald in his first novel, supposed that the thing to do was to discover a meaning in life, while in his second novel i.e., The Beautiful and Damned, he made much of tragedy and the meaninglessness of life. In the novel Fitzgerald has an analogue for the moral and cultural delimitation of America and all of western civilization – while he was writing the novel, Fitzgerald perceived that "the greatest, gaudiest spree in history" initiated by Americans after world war I, would eventually precipitate the" death struggle of the old America"(2). The brash, lumbering but indomitable America, quick with ingenuous faith in the illimitability of her potential.

Fitzgerald contended that foreboding of the inevitable catastrophe colored his stories of this period with "a touch of disaster". Despite his obvious identification with the fatal ebullience of his youthful protagonists, he conceded to his artistic perception. The "lovely young creatures in his novels went to ruin and his millionaires were as beautiful and damned as Hardy's Peasants"(3).
Fitzgerald's choice of title *The Beautiful and Damned,* is a deliberate perversion of the platonic concept of the beautiful and good. In Plato particularly in his Symposium(4) beauty embraces redemption, for the counterpart of the beautiful is the good and a complete perception of reality may be attained only by a complete synthesis of both forms. Similarly, the pursuit of happiness is motivated by love or desire – for the beautiful and good. But Fitzgerald's title announces polarity, not synthesis. *The Beautiful and Damned* presents a grotesque distortion of a philosophical statement that directs the human person toward transcendence of the purely physical to the ultimate spiritual good.

The plot of *The Beautiful and Damned is simple.* It focuses upon the moral decline of Anthony Patch, who, at the age of twenty-five, directs his energies toward the attainment of his grandfather's fortune and the wooing of the beautiful siren, Gloria Gilbert. Anthony is a personable dilettante, an "exquisite dandy," who managed to graduate from Harvard with the reputation of being "a rather romantic figure, a scholar, a recluse, a tower of erudition." True to his name, Anthony is a patchwork of conflicting attitudes and unresolved aspirations. For a time he dallies, unsuccessfully, with various aesthetic pursuits. Finally, deciding upon writing as his medium of expression, he composes "some ghastly Italian sonnets, supposedly the rumination of a thirteenth - century monk on the joys of the contemplative life."
Returning to America because of his grand father’s apparently terminal illness, Anthony is thwarted in his expectations of gaining the family money when the “perpetually convalescent old man” once again recovers. Anthony settles in a luxurious New York apartment in which he enjoys an indolent, narcissistic existence on income inherited from his mother. It is at this point that the “inestimable Gloria” comes into his life. Gloria Gilbert, “the most celebrated and sought-after young beauty in the country”. A lovely girl of the “most highhanded selfishness,” Gloria decides to marry Anthony because she imagines that he will be content to play the “temporarily passionate lover” to her role of “permanent mistress.”

The responsibilities of marriage are incomprehensive to Gloria, but she is, nonetheless, Anthony’s “radiant woman,” one whose unexcelled beauty is enhanced for him by her arrogant and triumphant self-assurance. Utterly engrossed in the worship of her own beauty, this “golden girl” demands that her marriage be a “live, lovely glamorous performance,” in which she plays the stellar role.

The narrative follows the couple’s haphazard, increasingly frustrated search for happiness from the “radiant hour” of their marriage until the “breathless idyll” begins to fade. Because Anthony and Gloria are compatible in their joint desire for graceful idleness, they are able to ignore, for a time, their essential differences. Until they begin to live beyond Anthony’s income, they are sustained by romantic illusions of eternal love and beauty. Sentimentality masquerades as tenderness for these two misguided creatures, grandiose fantasies as accomplishment.
The couple purchase an old gray house in the country. Their dream is that here Anthony will write a history of the middle ages, and Gloria will be pampered by “some angelic servant still in a shadowy hinterland.” Beguiled by illusion, the “passion of their pretense creates the actuality.” But, eventually, the insubstantiality of their dreams expresses itself in the “eternal monotone: What then? Oh, what’ll we do then?”

A life of purposeless, monotonous ease degenerates into a ceaseless round of bacchanalian parties. Their hopes of an even more glorious future evanesc, however, on the fateful night when Grandfather Adam Patch, ardent supporter of prohibition, interrupts them when they are on a drunken spree. Adam Patch disinherits his grandson; Anthony and Gloria, having spent most of their money, are reduced to poverty. Unable to cope with unaccustomed deprivation, the couple’s moral and physical disintegration is inexorably swift. Their attempts at reconciliation with the implacable old man are futile. When Adam Patch dies, shortly after the disastrous episode, he leaves his money to charity and reform societies. His confidant and secretary, Edward Shuttle-worth, is executor of his estate and heir to a million dollars.

Anthony and Gloria contest the will. After a few years of expensive, demoralizing legal battles, which further erode their relationship, the court rules in their favour, granting them thirty million dollars. But their greed and egotism have exacted a fearful retribution. Gloria’s beauty fades prematurely; Anthony suffers a complete mental collapse.
The rate of his unhappy protagonists dramatizes the moral lesson of Fitzgerald's epigraph: "The victor belongs to the spoils." Yet, although Fitzgerald the moralist condemns their turpitude, Fitzgerald the romantic idealist mourns for beauty so recklessly squandered, so irrevocably lost. He rationalizes that "these two were marked as guilty chiefly by the freshness and fullness of their desire" for happiness.

Actually, Anthony and Gloria are damned because their perception of happiness is distorted; they mistake the illusory for the real good. Because Anthony and Gloria live in a fictive world, we can best understand the meaning of their lives by considering fully the actions through which they are defined. In The Beautiful and Damned Fitzgerald's treatment of these types is absorbed into the action, which is a way of saying that his characters are what they do. It is more appropriate to absorb these figures into a consideration of plot and theme rather than to present them through the conventional form of characterization based on motive and interpersonal relationships.

Anthony Patch, richly endowed in every way like Amory Blaine of This Side of Paradise and sure of inheriting his grandfather's millions, lets out to prove that it is possible for an American to be "gracefully idle". He is fully aware that this life of leisure is possible only by possessing great wealth, yet he justifies it with his philosophy of life's meaninglessness. Anthony is capable of making money and hates his grandfather Adam Patch, who is a financial wizard turned social reformer. He represents the Victorian views and virtues against which youth is revolt, as he seeks to suppress 'liquor, literature, vice, art, patent medicines and Sunday theatres'\(^{(5)}\).
Anthony's dilemma is precisely Fitzgerald's own, who is armoured of money yet contemptuous of those, who make it. His wife Gloria Gilbert is equally dedicated to a life of gracious ease and the proposition that life is meaningless. She has triumphed over the disadvantages of a mid-western background to become the celebrated flapper 'coast to coast' Glories of Kansas city. She is chiefly concerned with her own youth and beauty and the ultimate tragedy for her is the discovery of a premature wrinkle. Though they seemed to be rightly matched, yet their marriage deteriorates rapidly due to the search of imperfections by each in the other. They live riotously expand themselves recklessly and spend lavishly in frantic pursuit of happiness. The story reaches to the climax, when grandfather patch, unexpectedly visits during one of their wild parties. He is so much raged by their drunken excesses that cuts Anthony out of his will, hence precipitating Anthony's moral decline and plugging him into object poverty and alcoholism. Though Anthony successfully contests the will, he suffers a complete mental collapse. At the end of the novel, they are barely recognizable still in their early thirties, in the broken man and faded woman.

And the greatest travesty of all is the travesty of love. Pitiful indeed if Fitzgerald intended The Beautiful and Damned to be a tale of young but genuine love destroyed by external forces over which the participants have no control. Whether he realized it or not, Fitzgerald wrote a moral tale, an exemplum using Anthony and Gloria as types of persons who engage in the motions of love without understanding its implications. Anthony and Gloria
unite in a marriage that must ultimately fail because each brings to the relationship a consummate narcissism. Theirs is a "love" that moves toward the aggrandizement of the self instead of the happiness of the other. And it is this debasement of love that underlies the basic themes of the novel.

Anthony despises his grandfather because Adam Patch represents the old American tradition of hard work and moral righteousness that Anthony has rejected. Adam, shrewd, hard-bitten, having acquired seventy-five million dollars on the stock market, consecrates the "remainder of his life to the moral regeneration of the world." A wizened, sclerotic old man, Patch gives himself "furiously to every indignation of the age." Adams' fanaticism derives from a failure of love. It is the will to power rather than the will to love that motivates Adam Patch's reforms.

Conversely, Anthony seeks fulfillment in spurious ideals based on carefully nurtured illusions. His love for refined physical pleasures distorts his perception of happiness. Finding his female counterpart in Gloria, who concurs with Anthony's premise that life is meaningless without self-gratification, he lusts for money to satisfy his desire to be "gracefully idle." United only in their pursuit of titillating experiences, they squander their financial and emotional resources until, completely debilitated, they find themselves trapped in a meaningless way of life. This lack of purpose is first apparent in Anthony, for Gloria continues "to weave about her immeasurable illusions, immeasurable distances, immeasurable light." Her mission in life is to give luster as her name suggests. Anthony, on the other hand, soon perceives himself as a "futile mediocrity," a little man with "copy book ambitions".
Anthony Patch had no record of achievement, without courage, without strength to be satisfied with truth when it was given him. He was a pretentious fool, making careers out of cocktails and meanwhile regretting, weakly and secretly, the collapse of an insufficient and wretched idealism.

Gloria, who is her sole center of existence, represents the ultimate debasement of love. Her "inordinate egotism" is, in the end, a form of self-hatred, for she seeks to compensate for the hollowness of her inner self by adulating her perishable physical beauty. "She wanted to exist only as a conscious flower, prolonging and preserving itself." Fitzgerald conceived Gloria as the incarnation of beauty, the "society girl," a type of "bogus aristocracy."

Women, for Gloria, fall into one of two categories: clean and unclean. Uncleaness, by Gloria's definition, indicates a variety of deficiencies in the female person: "a lack of pride, a slackness in fibre, and, most of all, the unmistakable aura of promiscuity." It is almost impossible, concludes Gloria, for a woman "to go downhill without a... cunning, dirty sort of animality." At the end of the novel. Gloria's beauty is tarnished. Judged by another woman, as she (Gloria) has appraised so many others of her sex, Gloria is described as "sort of dyed and unclean...."

Gloria's "soul and spirit were one - the beauty of her body was the essence of her soul. "The deterioration of one militates the sullying of the other. "To preserve the integrity of her first gift (her beauty) she had looked no more for love:" Gloria's mortal physical self has become the supreme good of her life.
Such a perversion of the platonic concept of beauty must be reflected in a similar perversion of art, for art is valid only when it is seen in the broader contexts of the beautiful, the good, the true. In a world in which the desired good is conceived as power, money, egotism – art is conceived as serving a correspondingly debased purpose.

Richard Caramel, an enthusiastic, ambitious writer of meager artistic talent, experiences an instant success with his first novel, The Demon Lover, described as a highly original work. The title of his book recalls its lofty source in Coleridge's poem, Kubla Khan. Richard's "overwritten piece of sustained description" stands in sorry contrast with those exquisite lines charged with the magical power of Coleridge's poetic vision.

Richard, having "swallowed" his favorite writers "whole, one after another, ideas, technique, and characters," continues to write prolifically, producing syntheses of ill-conceived generalities. In a discussion with Anthony on art, Richard argues feebly for the role of the artist as inspired interpreter of vital experiential experiences. Anthony easily convinces Richard that art, meaningless in itself, assumes meaning only insofar as it succeeds in interpreting an otherwise meaningless world. The artist, concludes Anthony, writes because it is his "mode of living".

In the world of The Beautiful and Damned, art serves a purely pragmatic purpose, adopting itself to the current enthusiasms until it becomes saccharine and palatable to the public taste – a bon bon, a caramel. Richard Caramel, a "natural born fetish - worshipper," contributes to the debasement of art until his name becomes a "byword of contempt."
Art ceases to be art when it fails to achieve its highest good, which is truth. On that level, truth is beauty. In the meaningless world of *The Beautiful and Damned*, art, truth, and beauty are vanquished. Once again, “the victor belongs to the spoils.”

Maury Noble, who had been considered at Harvard “the most unique figure in his class, the most brilliant, the most original – smart, quiet, and among the saved,” is cast by Fitzgerald as the intellectual voice of the novel. But years of dissipation have undermined Maury’s nobility of spirit and dulled his perception of truth.

After a drunken carousal that horrifies even Gloria with its bestiality, she runs away from the contaminated atmosphere of her home. Concerned about Gloria’s safety, Anthony and his friends follow her. The group gathers at the railroad station, at which the inebriated Maury delivers a pretentious rambling discourse on religion, literature, and philosophy.

It is difficult to determine how seriously Fitzgerald intended us to take Maury’s mélange of derivative, half-digested ideas. Fitzgerald believed that he had strengthened the philosophical burden of Maury’s harangue by interpolating some of his own current interests and reflections.

The chapter is called “Symposium.” Strategically positioned in the climactic part of the novel, it is presumably its “philosophical” heart. The title refers us once again to Plato’s Symposium, reminding us that the backdrop for Fitzgerald’s pitiful creatures is the wisdom of the ages.
The platonic symposium, a convivial drinking party intended to stimulate the free exchange of ideas, is far removed from the seriocomic monologue declaimed by Maury Noble, a "shadowy and fantastic gargoyle" sitting on the roof of a shed in a railroad station under the "sardonic constellations." Maury asserts that in a purposeless universe the only wisdom is cynicism; beauty has no affinity with truth; humanity "tragic and predestined" is engaged in a "grotesque and bewildered fight with nature.

The organization of Plato's Symposium is a dialectic toward transcendence. Fitzgerald's book works the other way. In The Beautiful and Damned, the organization is a retrogressive movement toward nihilism. The chapter headings of the last section of the novel, A Matter of Civilization, A Matter of Aesthetics, and, finally, No Matter, indicate that humanity's search for wisdom, truth, beauty, is futile. The final end of the quest is "no matter." An interesting play on words. In a colloquial sense, "no matter" suggests that nothing really counts. Interpreted on a spiritual level, however, the phrase implies "no substance." The end of life and love in The Beautiful and Damned is nothingness.

Eschatological language – which is uttered in the very title – suggests human, not divine, paradoxes. Fitzgerald's characters are damned, and the measure of their damnation is their separateness from person to person and the degrading purposes that art, love, and beauty serve.
The Beautiful and Damned has two themes one, continued with the revolt of youth and the other with the meaninglessness of life. Almost all the characters in the novel, including the hero and heroine, represent sophisticated Philosophy of the meaninglessness of life and are the embodiments of revolt too. It is a novel of selected incidents. The theme of the novel is failure, but with unintentional appropriateness and it is also a failure as a literary experiment, but at the same time it is a carefully planned piece of literary experiment. The theme in The Beautiful and Damned is not just an extension and classification of the theme in This Side of Paradise. The two themes of the novel, one concerned with the revolt of youth and the other with the meaninglessness of life, both developed side by side but never quite merging into a unified view.

According to one reviewer "the parable ends with a glorious ironical punch, Gloria is punished by the mere loss of youth and beauty, Anthony by the utter fatuity of wealth"(7).

From the point of view of literary form, The Beautiful and Damned is probably the weaker of Fitzgerald's novels. It sprawls awkwardly over some four hundred pages and reads as if Fitzgerald, with his life long admiration of the sturdy courage with which Theodore Dreiser had handled his socially important themes. In a letter to Thomas Wolfe much later in his life, Fitzgerald was to recommend the attractions of what he called "the novel of selected incidents". Fitzgerald had not yet learned precisely how to exploit fully his own strength. After the popular triumph of his first novel, he was apparently attempting to impress the literary world with the fact that he was a serious writer and his way
of doing this was to write a novel showing as little respect for purity of aesthetic form as the most serious writer in America. *The Beautiful and Damned* is Fitzgerald's agonizing portrayal of the 'romantic' ideology of the notorious jazz Age in American Culture. In the novel, romanticism as an ideology is subverted to portray the fragmented nature of a unified consciousness. The gentle romanticism of *The Beautiful and Damned* is reduced to the level of the physical rather than the transcendental. The dialectic between appearance and reality is related to the two principal characters of the novel i.e., Anthony Patch and Gloria Gilbert. In the novel, Fitzgerald depicts two aspects of romantic character portrayal: Anthony is the romantic suffer, and the romantic rebel. Anthony Patch calls himself a romantic. He does suffer, and he does rebel. But his suffering and rebellion do not redeem him. In *The Beautiful and Damned*, beauty is damned because it has no other dimension beyond the sensate and the existential. The disembodied fragments of a wasted existence echo the devastation and consequence collapse of a society marked by moral, social and spiritual decay.

The state of youth during twenties, which played a decisive role in accelerating social change in the decade, is the most serious concern of Fitzgerald in *The Beautiful and Damned*. Anthony Patch has a romantic conception of life, but as the novel progresses, this attitude of the hero is nullified by the pressure of social change. Unlike Amory in *This Side of Paradise*, who preoccupies himself with discovering a meaning of life in the turmoil of life, Anthony Patch justifies his way of life, his doing nothing by his philosophy of meaninglessness of life. Anthony's grandfather, Adam J. Patch, personifies Victorian values but the hero rejects everything that the old man represents.
Fitzgerald has used the dramatic device of the objective correlative to render the state of mind of the young in the years of social change. In one of the memorable scenes in the novel, Anthony observes the Carnival of New York city to reveal the underlying hollowness of the glamorous city life.

The soft rush of taxis by him, and laughter as hoarse as a crow's incessant - and loud, with the rumble of subways underneath - and over all, the revolutions of light, the growing and receding of in glittering bars and circles and monstrous grotesque figures out amazingly on the sky (515).

The modern city, symbolizing the pleasure principle whereby everything is enjoyed at a hurried pace, becomes a nightmare for the sensitive individual. Anthony considers that it is "technically excellent but not convincing". Losing his faith in the social order, Anthony feels a sense of emptiness. "He was empty, it seemed, empty as an old bottle". In its extremity this consciousness of void takes him to the perils of subversion. "Half a block way, sounded a rumble of drums and should he lean from his window he would see the train, like an angry eagle, breaking the dark curve at the corner."

The carnival atmosphere and amorous attitude in the novel become an index of fear, lassitude and emptiness. As William A. Fahey has rightly observed. "Beneath all the concern with pleasure then, with having a good time and not giving a damn there is considerable amount of fear in the book". For instance, Anthony is beset by fear on the wedding eve: "From the night into his
high - walled room there came, persistently, that evanescent and dissolving sound... the noise of a woman's laughter... It had reached a high point, tensed and stifled, almost the quality of a scream - then it ceased and left behind it a silence empty and menacing as the greater silence overhead.” This Psychological fear surfaces most strikingly in an episode when one of Amory's friends tries to fondle his wife. Gloria recognizes in Joe Hull a horrible picture of the destructive potential of their lives. Fitzgerald seems to suggest that Joe Hall is an archism personified. “In another instant it seemed that some intangible force would shatter her out of existence... It was Hull she saw, Hull turn deliberately and still slightly swaying, moving back and off, as it absorbed into the incomprehensible light that had given him dimension.” Realizing the meaninglessness of his life, Anthony Compares himself with an elevator man who is a “Pathetic figure - shut into that close little stage in the smoked coloured window walls.”

Fitzgerald also records the state of the arts in the years of social change. He shows how art has lost its real meaning in the materialist age and has become prevented. Maury Noble and Richard Caramel, who represent the artist figures living in a materialist age, make vulgar compromise with the principles of art. Dick Caramel sets out to start “new prose movement, a sort of renaissance and ends up making a great fortune by writing trash for the movies, Maury Noble who represents the intellectual voice in the novel, articulates his powered ideas in the symposium scene. He believes that in a purposeless universe the only
wisdom is cynicism; beauty has no affinity with truth. Observing this debasement of art, William A. Fahey aptly comments: “Man of mind in such a society is at best a conveyer of sardonic paradoxes, at best cynical exploiter of them”.

There is no doubt that Keats was one of the most important influences, both in theme and style, on Fitzgerald’s writing, and that Keats’s Presence can be seen and felt throughout Fitzgerald’s fiction. His novel which most shows the Keatsian influence is *The Beautiful and Damned*. Fitzgerald originally intended to call it *The Beautiful Lady without Mercy* after Keats’s *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and there is a scene in the novel where a world-weary knight enters a monastery and is lured to his death at the sight of a beautiful girl passing under his window. Although Anthony tells this story tongue-in-cheek, it is strangely an appropriate tale for him because he also suffers from world-weariness; becomes a kind of dandy, contemptuous of his more ambitious friends; and is eventually defeated by ‘time’ when he makes the pursuit of youth and beauty (personified by Gloria) an end in itself. “She was a sun, radiating, growing, gathering light and storing it then... Pouring it forth in a glance... to that part of him that cherished all beauty and illusion. Anthony is damned (as the title suggests) by his desire to attain an immutable beauty. This theme immediately brings to mind *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to a Nightingale* Like the lovers on the urn, Anthony feels "young now... and more triumphant than death." In his ode Keats told us that melancholy "dwell...
beauty – beauty that must die.” Like wallace stevens, keats felt that death was the mother of beauty, and what was beautiful became poignant as it wasted in the vault of time, Anthony and Gloria share this sentiment. “There is no beauty without poignancy and there is no poignancy without the feeling that its going, men, names, books, houses – bound for dust – mortal” “Even Gloria’s beauty needed wild emotions, needed poignancy, needed death, says Anthony later on repeating Gloria’s words. In the Ode on a Grecian Urn, Keats maintains that beauty and truth exist in the realm of art, beyond time. In both Ode to a Nightingale and Ode on a Melancholy, he tells us that wine can help us escape the pain of youth.

Fitzgerald made specific use of both these ideas on The Beautiful and Damned and as Anthony grows older, we are told in obvious Keatsian imagery and language that after “those things (of beauty faded) .... there was wine.”

“The fruit of youth or of the grape, the transitory magic of the brief passage from darkness to darkness the old illusion that truth and beauty were in some way entwined.”

Anthony and Gloria live in a world of illusions that Lamia builds for her lover, the world of ideals that the moon erected for Endymion, the world of order ruled over by Hyperion, the realm beyond time symbolized by Keat’s nightingale, Grecian Urn, and Baiæ’s isle. The lovers on the Urn are “forever panting, and forever young. At the end of The Beautiful and Damned, Anthony
a wreck of a man, longs for Italy and "the romance of the blue canals in Venice, of the golden green hills of Fiesole after rain, and of women... who were always beautiful and always young". Quite literally Anthony longs to be a part of that "foster child of silence and slow time." He and Gloria realize that the movement gives beauty its meaning, and yet they desire to live as if they were beyond time, like the eternal lovers on the urn. This is the romantic flight from reality, the desire for a world beyond time, an ideal world where the laws of nature do not apply.

The Beautiful and Damned was a carefully planned piece of literary composition. After a false start that produced May Day, one of his finest stories. Fitzgerald settled down and wrote the novel from start to finish. He sought advise about the novel from his friend Edmund Wilson and from Maxwell Perkins, his editor at Scribners and he took their suggestions seriously, revising and polishing throughout. The narrative was serialized in Metropolitan Magazine beginning in September 1921, then published in book from in the spring of 1922. The Beautiful and Damned reads much more like a conventional novel than does "This Side of paradise". The narrative is coherent; the characters are consistent; and themes are carefully articulated throughout: That does not make The Beautiful and Damned the better book: it lacks the verve and energy of This Side of Paradise, but it makes up for its deficiencies by providing readers with a blue print for character types and moral questions that would preoccupy Fitzgerald for the rest of his writing career. The novel also contains unconventional writing, but Fitzgerald seems here to have been looking back at
his first novel and trying to imitate himself. He borrowed techniques which had been praised in the first novel, but which, on their second outing seem artificial and in a little sale. The best example is *A Flash – Back in Paradise*, a section in Book one, chapter-1 in which Gloria Gilbert, the heroine, is introduced as one of the speakers in an odd supernatural event which is rendered as a drama script. Gloria, we learn, is to be born on earth where she will be known as a ‘ragtime kid’ a ‘flapper’ a ‘jazz-baby’ and a ‘baby vamp’. This section of drama dialogue and others in the chapters that follow, seem to be obvious efforts by Fitzgerald to repeat himself and perhaps to give the book some kind of current appeal.

*The Beautiful and Damned* is set almost entirely in New York City and its environs; much of the action, in fact occurs on the grid of central Manhattan, up and down Fifth Avenue, then as now the center of American acquisitiveness. New York of course is also the cultural capital of the nation, with its great museums and libraries and concert halls, but none of this seems to interest the protagonists, Anthony and Gloria. For them, the allurements are hotels, bars, cabarets, moria theaters and retail stores. A major theme stands out in both *This Side of paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned* has to do with the matter of vocation. What does one do with one’s life? What can give meaning and purpose to one’s hours and days? This question was much on Fitzgerald’s mind while he was writing the first novel and he continued to ruminate about it in *The Beautiful and Damned*. The comments about vocation that he makes in the first novel are carried forward into the second, providing a link between the two and a central theme that illuminates many other questions in the two books.
Anthony, also drifting, is a paler and less attractive version of Amory. He has lived for so long with the assumption that he will one day be rich that he has failed to develop any purpose for himself—other than a vague desire to write. The question of what he is to do, what his vocation is to be, comes up repeatedly in *The Beautiful and Damned* one sees it as early as the first page of the narrative, where Fitzgerald tells us of Anthony, “He considered that he would one day accomplish some quiet 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 immortality.” The ironic and mocking tone of the sentence, though, alerts us to the fact that Fitzgerald has little confidence in Anthony’s ability to identify that “quiet subtle thing” that he can and will do.

The question of Anthony’s future vocation becomes a leitmotif in *The Beautiful and Damned*, a question that is periodically taken up, considered, and put down unresolved. “Now that you are here you ought to do something,” his grandfather tells him, “accomplish something. But Anthony vacillates and can offer only murmured comments about his intention to write a book on the Middle Ages. This bothers Anthony, to be sure: “If I am essentially weak, he thinks,” I need work to do, work to do”. But no plan materializes, and he spends his time in idleness and drinking,” making carriers out of cocktails” as Fitzgerald puts it. Even Gloria gets in on the questioning. “What do you do with yourself?” She asks him in one of their early scenes, and he can only answer” “I do nothing. After their marriage he continues the pretense of working on his book, but she
sees through his subterfuges. "Work!" She scoffs, "Oh, you said bird!" you bluff! Work – that means a great arranging of the desk and the lights, a great sharpening of pencils" – but little else.

Fitzgerald, with his prep-school and Princeton background, must have known many men of this type – men who were waiting for inheritances. They had attended the proper schools, had found mates and married, and had settled back into the protection of family money, waiting for it to descend upon them. Fitzgerald must have been able to observe carefully the ways in which prospective wealth influenced character and sense of purpose in these men. Some of the most memorable characters in his early stories, in fact, are of this type: Philip Dean, the rich boy early in May Day who refuses to lend money to Gordon Sterret; Knowleton Whitney, the prospective heir in Myra Meets His Family, and percy Washington, the scion of the family in The Diamond as Big as the Ritz. In all of those characters, the anticipation of money has produced a curious enervation and an insensitivity to the needs and desires of others. These characters please only themselves, wait for their money and drift. The American educational system bears much of the blame for the predicaments of these protagonists. The colleges fail to teach the students usable skills – Or, more important for them, a sense of social duty and purpose. Fitzgerald seems to believe that colleges, which cater to the elite American society, need to instill a version of noblesse oblige in their charges. Graduates need some notion of how inherited wealth might be deployed to make society better, or at least to free the
possessor to develop artistically or intellectually. Perhaps the major problem in the case of Anthony patch is that his sense of the ultimate futility of effort. In his frustration with religion, with education, and with romance too. He fails at all and at last he concludes that no system or arrangement of beliefs will give order and purpose to his life. In The Beautiful and Damned the themes of futility and absurdity are more strongly stated, probably because Fitzgerald was Dreiser, and Joseph Conrad during the period in which he wrote the book. Gloria is allowed to state the moral. “There is only one lesson to be learned from life” she says “What is that?” asks Anthony’s friend Maury Noble “That there is no lesson to be learned from life,” She answers.

The Beautiful and Damned, for its part, is an astute study of the effects of alcohol on personality and character. Idle and without aim, Anthony slips into a rhythm of drinking that blunts his will and clouds his judgment. Both he and Gloria come to rely on drink for stimulation and destruction, like many alcoholics they learn to arrange their days and weeks around the consumption of spirits. “Liquor had become a practical necessity to their amusement,” and the consequences of their dependency are grave. Fitzgerald is especially good at charting the progress of their imbibing -- from merely social drinking to frequent weekend brings to a final cycle of drunkenness and inanition. The ceremonies of preparation, procurement, consumption, and inebriation are charted with great exactitude. Self absorption is yet another problem owned by Anthony Patch. He and Gloria are self absorbed in different way; with no purpose other than to wait
for Adam Patch's study, just as Anthony is hers. They fed on each other - physically and emotionally - but the relationship has no way to replenish itself. By the end of the narrative each character has drained and exhausted the other, and they have slipped into silly quarreling and empty discussions of emotion. No circle of friends or family sustains them. "No one cares about us but ourselves, Anthony," observes Gloria to her bored husband.

This Side of Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned can be read as preliminary statements in the Fitzgerald Canon, early novels in which the author introduces his major themes and his most memorable character types. But these two novels are also considerable achievements in themselves, searching examinations of the importance of vocation in American life, where ease and riches have always been the material of our dreams, without a calling, Fitzgerald tells us, we risk deterioration and ruin. Alcohol and idle pleasure cannot sustain us, nor can wealth. We must have purpose and vocation to give direction and consequence to what we do.

After the great success of the first novel This Side of Paradise, he attained all that made his heart beat high - fame, authorship, money, certainly, and the girl - he should write a book called The Flight of the Rocket later he renamed it The Beautiful Lady without Mercy, and finally The Beautiful and Damned. Concerned not with the bright joys of attainment but with the musty and claustrophobic smell of failure and decay? Why could not he rest content with the good the gods provided? One answer lies, of course, in the
“Circumstantial events” of Fitzgerald is personal life and it is indeed unquestionable that much of Zelda went into the novel, as so much of Fitzgerald’s life went into everything he wrote.” She frequently pointed out Scott’s indebtedness to her; in a review of The Beautiful and Damned she had said, ”Mr. Fitzgerald. I believe that is how he spells his name – seems to believe that plagiarism begins at home.” Scott did not deny it” (9) ... Zelda criticized the novel, and was effective in persuading Fitzgerald to make changes, such as the deletion of the concluding paragraphs of the serial publication of the book “(10).

If in This Side of Paradise the hero is a quester after the meaning of life, the hero and the “beauty” of The Beautiful and Damned are examples of the meaninglessness of life. And is both cases, Fitzgerald’s exploration is inextricably interwoven with his particular and personal American materials. The subjects and even some of the attitudes change, but the essential materials do not when writing The Beautiful and Damned, the “meaninglessness” that an ironical – pessimistic view finds in life, leading to the “decay of character”, is something Fitzgerald modishly picked up in his aspiring attempt to be “in” on thing. Yet the fusion of his personal life and his literary and social milieu does not have a merely fortuitous connection with his materials and themes. He is one of those many with the tastes and weaknesses of an artist but with one actual creative inspiration. How the hero and his beautiful wife are wrecked on the shoals of dissipation is told in the story” (11). Anthony Patch, the romantic egotist is hardly the avatar of Amory Blaine, the personage: his career is not the one promised by the materials and life - story introduced in This Side of Paradise.
Two cultured contemporary readers, Paul Rosenfeld and Edmund Wilson, disagreed about The Beautiful and Damned. Although they saw many of the short comings in the novel, Wilson, with his constant, lovely penetration, arrived at this conclusion.

There is a profounder truth in The Beautiful and Damned than the author perhaps intended to convey: the hero and heroin are strange creatures without purposes or method, who give themselves up to wild debaucheries and do not, from beginning to end, perform a single serious act: but you somehow get the impression that, inspite of their madness, they are the most rational people in the book. Whether they touch the common life, the institutions of men are made to appear a contemptible farce of the futile and the absurd; the world of finance, the army, and finally, the world of business are successively and casually exposed as completely without dignity or point. The inference is that, in such a civilization, the sanest and most creditable thing is to forget organized society and live for the Jazz of the moment. And it is not altogether a personal confusion which has produced the confusion of such a book. It may be that we must not expect too much intellectual balance of young men who write books in the year 1921. We must remember that their environment and their chief source of stimulation have been the wars, the society, and the commerce of the Age of confusion itself.¹²
The books irony exists where irony usually exists in modern American fiction. Precisely in the gap between the metaphor and the actuality, the expectation of redemption and the nature of society. Wilson hints at in his closing lines: the book's irony is a rejection of its characters and materials, not a celebration of them.

But the world of his subject matter is still too much within Fitzgerald himself for him to see it sustainedly against the universe. Its values obtain too strongly over him, and for that reason he cannot set them against those of high civilization, and calmly judge them so. Hence, wanting philosophy, and a little overeager like the rest of America to arrive without having really sweated. He falls victim to the favorite delusions of the society of which he is a part, tends to indulge it in its dreams of grandeur, and misses the fine flower of pathos. He seems to set out writing under the compulsion of vague feeling, and when his wonderfully revelatory passages appear, they come rather like volcanic islands thrown to the surface of a sea of fantasy. By every law The Beautiful and Damned should have been a tragedy, the 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 tells the reader he had won out\(^{(13)}\).

At the end of the novel, after Gloria and Anthony have won the money, dependence on which has debased then and ruined their physical appearances and conditions, their youth, cleanliness, and beauty are all gone. One at last sees
Gloria and Anthony through the eyes of a handsome young couple, newly in love, and a reminder of what Anthony and Gloria have once been and will never be again. Commenting on Gloria, the “Pretty girl in yellow” says “I can’t stand her, you know. She seems sort of dyed and unclean”. And 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.

The irony of the victory, a statement that Fitzgerald, with his quick dramatic sense, immediately activated in a fitting shift in point of view to that of the young couple.

The 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.

“That’s him” he said pointing to a bundled figure seated in a wheel chair near the rail. “That’s Anthony patch first time he’s been on deck.”

The Beautiful and Damned is entirely about personalities, with no doomed personage or questing new man or moral commentator to lend value to the actions of the personalities. It is the only such a novel Fitzgerald wrote and it is
his dullest, largely because the action is unrelieved by the moral contrast created by the characters who provide commentary, in history, action, or overt judgment, upon his irresponsible personalities and their values. The rocket ride is down trip only, for the characters are introduced at the peak of their potential and decline steadily in their vision and attractiveness. All the commentary is provided only by those who participate in and stand out in no way from the drift and pointlessness and irresponsibility of the lives commented upon. There is no interest in the characters as there is, say, in the characters of Mailer or Below when they are pushed out of a context of manners and into the imperatives of a self which attempts to create new manners rather than imitate the surrounding ones. Gloria, Maury and Anthony are in decay, but they are not decayed heroes. They are neither tragic nor agonized. They are merely slobs.

Fitzgerald details his view of the ironical interrelationships of money, beauty, joy and betrayal in America that Fitzgerald's novel fails. In order to make meaningful the damnation of the beautiful, Fitzgerald should have introduced some contrast between the betraying force and the beauty lover. With his heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. But in this novel beauty and the love of it are figured in a couple which is both personification of its essence and its betrayer. Fitzgerald had made Anthony and Gloria too much the "twins". The Beautiful and Damned follows too closely Fitzgerald's sense of identification with his newly won Zelda, and in the composite character of the "twins". Anthony - Gloria is the golden girl only, without even the unsuccessfully dramatized differences between Amory and his succession of golden girls. Fitzgerald gains control over and artistic distance from the
materials he is buried in up to his ears, he will know beautifully well what to do with the merged identities that destroy the differences between the boys and the girls. But in this early novel, there is as yet no controlling differentiation between any of the actors. Which means that the very world the actors inhabit is only an extension of their lives.

The Beautiful and Damned is Fitzgerald's last act of apprenticeship as a novelist as he mores closer to a full moral awareness of his materials. It is not in significant that in this book even those values or at least postures in which Fitzgerald concurs are unexceptionably associated with a world in which there are no alternatives to human failure. Most significant, those postures were associated with identification with the aristocracy of an older, more homogeneous America. The Beautiful and Damned was a sign that Fitzgerald had come to the end of the mere chronicling of his materials and was forced by those materials to a growing awareness of his theme. He would be able to control both his materials and his attitudes in order to weld them into a coherent theme. The essential fault of the novel is that the density of the imagination not yet ripened by experience. Fitzgerald's materials led to the manic elations and depressions. The Beautiful and Damned is an act of consolidation rather than discovery. Certainly, it is a more controlled, less self-indulgent novel. But perhaps that fact only indicates that for some subjects -- most probably for the subject of the young man finding himself -- excitement is worth at least as much as control. Despite its significance in the development of Fitzgerald's main themes. The Beautiful and Damned is the least successful of all his books in general energy and in the growth of Fitzgerald's phrases and rhythms of evocation.
It was an absolutely necessary book, for only from the consolidation of both aspects of his materials, the anticipation as well as the failure, and from the artistic control the consolidation gave him could he move forward to his high creations.

Wilson's Bookman essay praised the novel as "The Beautiful and Damned", imperfect though it marks an advance over "This Side of Paradise. The style is more nearly mature and the subject more solidly unified and there are scenes that are more convincing than any in his previous fiction\(^{14}\). According to one reviewer the novel is a "document ...... of distraught and abandoned but intensely living youth"\(^{15}\).

In The Beautiful and Damned, Fitzgerald adopted the attitude of what Edmund Wilson called the "ironical pessimistic school of fiction. Although the book is technically "great advance than This Side of Paradise, yet it makes a much less sharply defined impression became Fitzgerald's irk some insistence on the "meaninglessness of it all" invalidates its themes, and makes nonsense of the tragedy. The Beautiful and Damned is a better novel as it is orderly, the material divided into three books and nine chapters. Fitzgerald maintains a consistent tone and point of view and the prose narrative and dialogue is used for the most part. The story too is moderately interesting. All the more, the book depicts the perceptive concern for the divided nature of the attraction between a man and a woman.
At any rate, the plot comes close to turning into Victorian melodrama with an ironic and moralistic ending. The novel is extensively full of autobiographical material. Particularly, the middle and final sections of the book are full of author's own experiences, though we find more imagination and less reliance upon biography.

Fitzgerald wrote this second novel purely in the spirit of reform. First, he is a reformer of reformers. He is neither a Byran, a Shelly, nor Jean Jacques Rousean, but his agitation and lack of poise show him to belong to the same type, a type representing peculiarity arrested mental development.

The Beautiful and Damned is a sort of latter day vanity fair as it is a moral commentary on certain aspects of postwar American society. Many of the values that was innocently glamorized by him in the first novel and his early short stories has lost their luster. This second novel, his longest and least successful book is quite different because Fitzgerald had begun to form a fresh picture of life in America. The novel is an artistic failure as the pervading atmosphere of disintegration and death is far in excess of the situation and that is the fundamental weakness of the book.

This is probably the weakest of Fitzgerald's novels from the point of view of literary form, it awkwardly sprawls over some four hundred pages and reads as if Fitzgerald was to imitate Dreiser notorious faults of form as well with lifeless admiration of the sturdy courage with which Theodre Dreiser has handled his socially important themes.
Despite all its weaknesses or faults, this novel is a solid achievement in many respects. It defines the painful experience of an individual at odds with the prevailing mores of time and place; and more important it exhibits those social mores in something approaching in fullness of life. From one point of view, this is not so much a novel, as an irresponsible social document veracious in its way but often untruthful as photographs are often untruthful and with about the same relation to the scope and significance of life that is possessed by a society drawn in the films.

Of course, The Beautiful and Damned is another picture of a society by modernism. Yet, the book is very much alive. It's secret vitality dwells in the shrewd complete and quite unequalled picture it renders of the life of the day and the manners and customs of a class. In short, a really amazing picture of time is present in this novel and it represents no mean achievement in itself.

The Beautiful and Damned to one critic was a tragedy, the tragedy of a poor spirited, worthless badly educated and over sophisticated man, and of his wife, a selfish, spoiled irresolute girl of great beauty of face and none of the soul

*The novel ends with Anthony's pathetic 'Victory'.* Great tears stood in his eyes, and his voice was trembling as he whispered to himself. *I showed them. It was a hard fight but I didn't give up and I came through.*


4) Plato - The Symposium.


6) Letters, P.328

7) H.M. Boynton, Flashlight and Flame The Independent and the Weekly Review CVIII (April 22,1922) P. 397.

8) John Keats - La Belle Dame Sans Merci

9) The review Turnbull refers to is “Friend Husband’s Latest”, (Tribune, New York April 2, 1922). P.11

10) Metropolitan Magazine. The Original Paragraphs appeared in it LV (March 1922) P.113


13) F. Scott Fitzgerald, ed. Alfred Kazin (Scribners, New York, 1951) P.76.

14) Ibid. Pages 61-62


16) Dance of the Midges. The Literary Digest. LXXIV (July 15, 1922) P.53.