Discovering F. Scott Fitzgerald's Wise and Tragic Sense of Life

Senior Honors Thesis

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> I not only announced the birth of my young illusions in This Side of Paradise but pretty much the death of them in some of my last Post stories like "Babylon Revisited." (Turnbull 588)
>
> F. Scott Fitzgerald

F. Scott Fitzgerald's introspective letter written in 1939 confesses to a thematic change in his first decade of writing, 1920- 1931. The youthful illusions Fitzgerald alludes to in This Side of Paradise exist in both Amory Blaine, the novel's protagonist, and in Fitzgerald himself speaking through the novel's omniscient narrator. With an attitude of complete superiority, Fitzgerald patronizes Amory. As the young hero struggles to discover his identity and role in the world, Fitzgerald, speaking directly as the narrator or indirectly through other characters, critiques Amory's path toward self-realization. This condescending attitude results from Fitzgerald's belief that he has already experienced these trials and has endured to discover his role in life. Thus, Fitzgerald undercuts Amory's romantic confidence and sense of infallibility in order to profess his own self-assurance.

By 1931 and the publication of "Babylon Revisited," however, Fitzgerald's air of superiority toward his characters has disappeared. He no longer portrays himself as wiser than his protagonists; instead, as with Charlie Wales in "Babylon Revisited," he empathizes with their efforts to find meaning in their lives. The years between the writing of This Side of Paradise

and "Babylon Revisited" illustrate Fitzgerald's shift from a youthful romanticism to a tragic fatalism and point toward the conclusions Fitzgerald's life and literary career had led him to make in a 1940 letter, written only months before his death, to his daughter Scottie:

> Once one is caught up into the material world not one person in ten thousand finds the time to form...what...I might call the wise and tragic sense of life...the sense that life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat, and that the redeeming things are not "happiness and pleasure" but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle. (Turnbull 96)

This dramatic move from the confidence present throughout This Side of Paradise can be traced to Fitzgerald's shifting attitude toward the relationship between the fictional worlds he created and the one in which the author was forced to live. Fitzgerald the author realized that he could create and moralize in a controllable, fictional world, but Fitzgerald the man lacked this power; he was forced to live by the limitations life presented. Life, however, ironically serves as Fitzgerald's creative catalyst as he tries to reconcile his dreams with the world's limitations.

The life Fitzgerald depicts in his fiction mirrors the life he experiences: the life of failed social relationships, particularly between men and women. As each searches for fulfillment, completeness, and satisfaction, Fitzgerald's men and women find unending barriers to their goals. This inevitable failure generates an individual's quest for temporary fulfillment through public approval. Thus, relationships become a principle means for

Fitzgerald's characters to define themselves, but each must maintain his most fundamental relationship between his public image and his internal identity. Before an individual can hope to establish a social relationship, he must discover and know his true self.

This self must be formed and maintained according to strict guidelines; it must develop from within, not in response to external influences. This self-generation will create an individual's unique, definitive, and ultimately creative identity. For Fitzgerald, this creativity manifests itself in his writing and becomes his means for transcending life's inherent restrictions. In contrast, a self shaped by external forces becomes egotistical, imitative, and limiting, and consequently dooms an individual's ability to overcome life's limitations.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's own life epitomizes this connection between external image and internal identity since, ironically, it is Fitzgerald's external self, the part of him that desires to make enough money to marry Zelda Sayre, that unveils his creative identity as a writer. Prior to the publication of <u>This Side of Paradise</u>, Fitzgerald's attempts to write a novel had been interrupted: his withdrawal from Princeton to enlist in the army, his military service culminating in his dismissal without ever seeing action, and his accepting a job in advertising where "his plan was to succeed at a job that would allow them [Fitzgerald and Zelda] to marry as soon as possible" (<u>Grandeur</u> 96). Fitzgerald, however, soon quit this job and placed all his hope for the future

in writing a novel. Withdrawing from life and living hermetically in his parents' home, Fitzgerald ultimately produced This Side of Paradise.

The novel traces the growth and maturation of its protagonist, Amory Blaine, from an adolescent to a young man, who, not accidentally, at the novel's end is approximately the same age as Fitzgerald. The novel is not directly auto-biographical, even though numerous parallels can be drawn between Amory and Fitzgerald. In describing This Side of Paradise as "a novel about flappers written for philosophers," Fitzgerald intended the work to mirror society's fads and fashions while also carrying a message transcending these temporal trends (Grandeur 119). More accurately, This Side of Paradise can be described as a "life-novel" in which Amory cultivates his identity to become his means of support and inspiration in a world, at the best indifferent, at the worst opposed, to his development.

The opening sentence of This Side of Paradise reveals the endless difficulties in freeing the self for this growth process: "Amory Blaine inherited from his mother every trait, except the stray inexpressible few, that made him worthwhile" (Paradise 3). These inherited traits place external expectations upon Amory's character. Additionally, Mrs Blaine imposes on Amory the same education that she received: "a tutelage measured by the number of things and people one could be contemptuous of and charming about" (Paradise 4). Amory, already shaped by his lineage, thus learns to act in response to those around him. While attempting to please and

impress others before satisfying himself, Amory subjects his identity to external influences. Thus, Amory's self is not his own; it is merely a composite of external forces and expectations that create the selfish, egotistical Amory.

This subservience to external opinion leads Amory to look outside himself in order to develop his identity. He becomes an actor and performer hoping to please his audience:

> Then he would shake hands, using that slight, half-foreign bow, with all the starchy little females, and nod to the fellas who would be standing 'round, paralyzed into rigid groups for mutual protection. (Paradise 10)

Amory's role as the center of attention fosters his egotism and sense of being in control, but he fails to realize that he is the one being controlled. Since all his actions are performed specifically for his audience, his freedom is limited to those actions that will elicit the desired response from others. In reality, Amory cannot act; he is limited to reacting to his audiences' multiple expectations.

While flirting with a young girl named Myra, Amory manipulates her into kissing him. The success, however, surprisingly brings disgust rather than happiness:

> Sudden revulsion seized Amory, disgust, loathing for the whole incident. He desired frantically to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss any one; 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 sight, up in the corner of his mind.
> (Paradise 14)

This incident illustrates Fitzgerald's belief that life necessarily cheats man by denying him happiness. Amory's careful plans and ideal desires, instead of leading to satisfaction, ruin his relationship with Myra. This failure becomes magnified with the realization that all Amory's actions had to be planned with the anticipation of what Myra's response would be. Thus, he could not act freely; he had to act under the limitations imposed by Myra's potential responses. Amory, however, fails to recognize why his actions are limited or the limitations themselves.

Despite this inability to identify his problem, Amory subconsciously senses that his subservience must be avoided. The desire to leave his body for the refuge of his mind hints at the ultimate transformation that he must undergo--abandoning his egotistical image fueled by external recognition and approval for a protected, isolated, self-directed identity. Thus, Fitzgerald deliberately creates the division between Amory's public desire to kiss Myra and his private response to retreat within himself in order to show the fundamental relationship and conflict between an individual's public image and private identity. Amory must find a means of channeling his public image into a constructive influence for his internal self. Although Amory cannot interpret why he feels the way he does, Fitzgerald uses Amory's mixed desires to introduce the concept of an internally-produced self.

This identity is one of the "stray, inexpressible" qualities existing in embryonic form within Amory (Paradise 3). By looking within himself, Amory can give these inexpressible qualities a

"voice" in the form of his self-produced identity. Likewise, Fitzgerald, as an author, is giving voice to a recurring theme in his literature. Dramatizing his protagonist's search for himself announces the same quest Fitzgerald faced with his first novel:

> When he was writing This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald was struggling to discover what kind of writer he wanted to be; simultaneously, though, he was trying to establish the kind of man he was.... All too often it seemed that the two roles pulled in opposite directions: as a writer, Fitzgerald felt he needed to be detached and objective, an observer of life and experience; as a man, however, he was committed, engaged, given himself up to life, using and being used by it. (Lee 28)

Thus, tracing Amory's discovery of his true self allows Fitzgerald to do the same. While writing This Side of Paradise, and subsequently all his other works, Fitzgerald wrestles with his own ever-changing development as writer and man. Writing and living become the two forces, often acting in conflict, by which Fitzgerald taps the "stray, inexpressible" qualities within himself that blossom into his identity.

Living exposed Fitzgerald to life's complex, often unalterable social conditions dramatized in his fiction. Writing about life and about living thus became Fitzgerald's means of reconciling an individual's opposition to life and of ultimately transcending life's limitations by providing an outlet in which his creative self, his imagination, could live. His writing consequently becomes the "living" for his imagination and ensures that his creative self exists in a permanently growing state.

Not having yet discovered a means of self-realization like

Fitzgerald, Amory continues to manufacture an identity in the form of how he hopes to appear to others. He creates lists hoping to make his character concrete:

> Physically.- Amory thought that he was exceedingly handsome. He was. He fancied himself an athlete of possibilities and a supple dancer.
> Socially.- Here his condition was, perhaps, most dangerous. He granted himself personality, charm, magnetism, poise, the power of dominating all contemporary males, the gift of fascinating all women.
> Mentally.- Complete, unquestioned superiority.
> (Paradise 18)

Again, these lists only enforce Amory's egotism while contributing nothing to his identity's development. Without a self-made identity to depend on, Amory continues to need outsiders to support his public image.

On his first day at Princeton, Amory impersonates the older students so that the other freshmen will think he is an upper classman:

> By afternoon Amory realized that now the newest arrivals were taking him for an upper classman, and he tried conscientiously to look both pleasantly blasé and casually critical, which was as near as he could analyze the prevalent facial expression. (Paradise 38)

The impersonations occur after the freshman have already considered Amory an upper classman; thus, he acts older only after realizing he has an audience. This performance typifies Amory's predicament; he continuously sacrifices his personal identity for the public illusion of how others perceive him. Unknown to Amory, this act

endangers his uniqueness, for he appears to be drifting toward a career of imitating others.

Amory seems destined to develop simply by adopting the characteristics of others. After seeing a movie, Amory wishes that he could have enjoyed it like the upper classmen:

> As they pushed out, giving and receiving curious impersonal glances, Amory decided that he liked the movies, wanted to enjoy them as the row of upper classmen in front had enjoyed them, with their arms along the backs of the seats, their comments Gaelic and caustic, their attitude a mixture of critical wit and tolerant amusement. (Paradise 41)

This envy makes Amory an imitator; his own unique identity can never develop since it is smothered by his impersonations. Amory's actions simultaneously reveal Fitzgerald's attitude toward his protagonist. While imitating the upper classmen, Amory adopts their "critical wit and tolerant amusement," the same attitude that Fitzgerald adopts in his portrayal of Amory. Thus, Fitzgerald, professes his superiority to Amory: while the novel's action describes Amory's being absorbed into the indistinguishable student body, the novel as a whole professes Fitzgerald's claim to have established his unique identity among writers.

Fitzgerald introduces this threatening student body while Amory watches the traditional procession of upper class students march along University Place. The parade consists of "marching figures, white-shirted, white-trousered, [swinging] rhythmically up the street, with linked arms and heads thrown back" (Paradise 41). The marchers, "faces indistinct," have no individuality, as though

their identities never developed (Paradise 42). Fitzgerald's characterization presents the fate awaiting Amory if he continues mimicking others. One member, however, does stand out--"Allenby, the football captain"--(Paradise 42), and Amory focuses his attention on him.

Amory assumes that Allenby leads "the white platoon" because of his "aware[ness] that this year the hopes of the college [rest] on him" (Paradise 42). Fitzgerald portrays Allenby as the commander of the student body in order to establish the relationship between a leader and his followers. The upper classmen all follow because Allenby has distinguished himself from them. He, however, has done so by first becoming one of them, for Allenby, though he is leader of the college, is still a member of the student body.. Allenby's distinction has resulted simply from his being football captain. Amory, thus, falsely assumes that he also must acquire titles and awards in order to someday lead the student body that he so eagerly wants to join.

Amory fails to realize that this pursuit of external recognition holds him in the same position in which he currently exists; only by developing a unique identity will he be separate. Any titles and awards he may win will only be reflections of how others perceive him; these external labels will neither form nor reflect his own identity. Fitzgerald has deliberately established Amory as an outsider, a non-participator in the procession, to show that his self-development must originate from within. Amory, however, misinterprets the procession as something he should join

rather than avoid. He still believes that his self must be harmonious with how others perceive him. Thus, after witnessing the procession, Amory "decide[s] to be one of the gods of the [freshman] class" (Paradise 43).

Amory quickly discovers which extracurricular activities will establish him as a leader of the college:

> Amory found that writing for the Nassau Literary Magazine would get him nothing, but that being on the board of the Daily Princetonian would get any one a good deal. His vague desire to do immortal acting with the English Dramatic Association faded out when he found that the most ingenious brains and talents were concentrated upon the Triangle Club.... (Paradise 45)

His decisions clearly derive from the prestige and respect that each club will potentially bring him in the eyes of others. Amory chooses his activities through considering the amount of reward and reputation each generates and concludes not to participate in an activity if it will not sufficiently elevate him in the public eye. Amory's ambition to achieve thus derives from a desire to impress others, not from self-motivation.

Amory's choices also reflect the ongoing battle between living and writing for Fitzgerald. This early in his career living takes precedence as evidenced by Amory's choice to edit, which enables him to remain active in and dominant over the life reported in the newspaper. Amory's reluctance to write for the school's literary magazine reflects Fitzgerald's personal fears that writing will deny him the opportunity to live, his fear that his public image will dwindle if he does not remain active in life. Fitzgerald has

yet to accept that writing indeed gives life to his creative self, his imagination; this knowledge arises simultaneously with his writing's development.

Fitzgerald, however, still stresses his superiority to Amory, Unlike Amory's choice to edit for the newspaper, Fitzgerald has chosen to write a novel--a creative, literary art form. Amory's choice reflects his need for public approval; Fitzgerald, however, has turned within himself in order to write This Side of Paradise. Amory is not capable of making this choice because he lacks Fitzgerald's creative identity--an identity which has developed through activity. In contrast, inactivity appeals to Amory because he believes it does not expose him to the risks which pose the potential for failure and the destruction of his egotism and public image. Amory thus adopts a fear of the time when he must exert himself:

> 'Damn it all,' he whispered aloud.... 'Next year I work!' Yet he knew that where now the spirit of the spires and towers made him dreamily acquiescent, it would then overawe him. Where now he realized only his own inconsequence, effort would make him aware of his own impotency and insufficiency. (Paradise 54)

These fears and self-doubts freeze Amory in inactivity. This lack of self-confidence leads Amory to pursue relentlessly the titles esteemed by the public.

Fitzgerald dwells on Amory's doubt and inactivity to promote his own efforts to establish himself as a writer. Fitzgerald's efforts shine in comparison to Amory's self-pity, but he

intentionally leaves Amory unaware of his predicament because Amory himself must stumble upon the recognition of his problem. Fitzgerald has already taken the risks and chances needed to succeed; Amory must now do the same.

Amory, however, continues to strive solely for a prominent position on campus. He joins one of the University Clubs, which symbolize the classification of an individual by his exterior appearance as well as a world, controlled by fad and whim, that denies permanency:

> Men [were] kept out for wearing green hats, for being "a damn tailor's dummy," for having "too much pull in heaven," for getting drunk one night "not like a gentleman, by God," or for unfathomable secret reasons known to no one but the wielders of the black balls. (Paradise 72)

Belonging to the club inhibits Amory's chance to develop his identity free from the expectations of society. He loses all drive to grow and believes that he has reached the pinnacle of his life:

> Long afterward Amory thought of sophomore spring as the happiest time of his life. His ideas were in tune with life as he found it; he wanted no more than to drift and dream and enjoy a dozen new-found friendships through the April afternoons. (Paradise 72)

Amory inaccurately interprets that he must freeze the present in order to preserve his position and happiness. His external identity has produced his desire for a stasis maintained simply by living. He has yet to realize that the only method of preservation is

continuous activity and progression toward a desired goal.

Amory's static state threatens to desert him while life progress without him. All his achievements and titles cannot remain current forever; they will eventually fade into the past. Amory does feel some sense of fleeting time as he fears that he is wasting irretrievable opportunities: "It's just that I feel so sad these wonderful nights. I sort of feel they're never coming again, and I'm not getting all I could out of them" (Paradise 81). Amory, however, fails to see that by not being static but by being constantly, internally active he can progress at the same pace as time. Thus, his daily struggles will provide the temporary fulfillment and satisfaction in life that he can never permanently possess.

Fitzgerald dramatizes the impersonality of time--its denying man any permanence--through the tragic death of Amory's friend, Dick Humbird. When a tragic auto accident kills Dick, Amory faces death for the first time:

> The brow was cold but the face not expressionless. He looked at the shoe-laces--Dick had tied them that morning. He had tied them--and now he was this heavy white mass. All that remained of the charm and personality of the Dick Humbird he had known--oh, it was all so horrible and unaristocratic and close to earth. All tragedy has that strain of the grotesque and squalid--so useless, futile...the way animals die....
>
> (Paradise 86-7)

Dick's dead body shows Amory the world's lack of permanency. Death has negated all of Dick's accomplishments and left him the same white mass he was at birth. Amory recognizes the awesome power of

death, but he does not connect death with his own fragile position in life.

Even though Amory does not understand the implications of Dick's death, Fitzgerald intends the reader to see the meaning as it applies to Amory. Dick's sudden, tragic death demonstrates the necessity that Amory waste no time being static or complacent in life for he is not guaranteed enough years to fulfill his desires. Amory, however, fails to perceive any meaning in Dick Humbird's death; instead, he uses his present excitement to "shut it coldly away from his mind" (Paradise 87).

Rather than use this experience as an opportunity for introspection as Fitzgerald intends, Amory chooses to rest on his accomplishments and public image:

> [H]e looked at himself in the mirror, trying to find in his own face the qualities that made him see more clearly than the great crowd of people, that made him decide firmly, and able to influence and follow his own will. There was little in his life now that he would have changed.... (Paradise 89)

This self-admiration embodies the static state at which Amory has arrived. Rather than acting and doing, Amory remains content to rest on his past actions. Looking in the mirror also finally places Amory in the same position as all those he has tried to impress; he can now finally see himself as he had always hoped others would see him. Amory, however, fails to realize he has been following, not his own will, but what he believed others desired to see in him. This self-deceit represents Amory's "high point of vanity, the

crest of his young egotism" (Paradise 89).

By his own idea of success, Amory has indeed reached the pinnacle of achievement, but Fitzgerald immediately shows the reader that Amory's success is hollow and superficial. Following his self-adoration in the mirror, Amory embraces Isabelle, the romanticized, idealized young lady whom Amory believes is his one love. The embrace lasts only briefly as Isabelle, complaining that Amory's shirt stud has pricked her skin, exclaims "Ouch! Let me go!" (Paradise 90). Fitzgerald uses the broken embrace to dissolve their relationship and reveal the necessity that Amory abandon his egotism and self-delusion.

The interrupted embrace immediately leads to an argument after which Amory "became aware that he had not an ounce of real affection for Isabelle" (Paradise 91). Ending their relationship allows Fitzgerald to now speak through Isabelle and expose Amory's faults:

> Well, I thought you had a lot of self-confidence and all that; remember you told me the other day that you could do anything you wanted, or get anything you wanted?... Well, you didn't seem to feel so self-confident tonight. Maybe you're just plain conceited...because you're always talking about yourself and I used to like it; now I don't. (Paradise 92-3)

This conceit and egotism, which have been the motivation for Amory's desire to impress others, embody his obsession with cultivating his public image at the expense of his real self-development, a development that will result only when Amory begins acting from his own internal desires and reasons.

This self-designed identity must develop through activity, for only activity, as Fitzgerald has discovered through writing, gives an individual the necessary freedom to transcend life's limitations. Amory subconsciously realizes this fact when he quotes a verse from Browning's poetry:

> Each life unfulfilled, you see,
> It hangs still, patchy and scrappy;
> We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
> Starved, feasted, despaired--been happy. (Paradise 94)

Fitzgerald uses this verse to show the crossroads at which Amory has arrived. He has found his life shaped by the "patchy and scrappy" input of others to be unsatisfying. Thus, he must live life through a multitude of experiences and actions of his own choosing. Amory, however, does not fully realize the significance of the verse; he only realizes that he "was suddenly tired of thinking, thinking" (Paradise 94).

Despite this fatigue from thinking, Amory fails to realize his need to act. He does know that "[h]is philosophy of success had tumbled down upon him," but he does not know how to react to the loss (Paradise 98). Amory abandons his desire of "ever being a power in college," (Paradise 98); he no longer tries to define himself by what titles he has achieved. Through the narrator's voice, Fitzgerald, not Amory, concludes that these external labels were only smothering the emergence of his unique, potentially creative self:

> The fundamental Amory, idle, imaginative, rebellious, had been nearly snowed under. He had conformed, he had succeeded, but as his own imagination was neither satisfied nor grasped by his own success, he had listlessly, half-accidentally chucked the whole thing and become again...[t]he fundamental Amory. (Paradise 99)

Fitzgerald's commentary reveals his belief that Amory's having conformed to external desires and expectations has only delayed his development. By impeding his imagination, these public roles have denied Amory the means to escape society's limitations. He must return to his fundamental self and allow it to take shape through self-motivated actions and decisions. With this realization, Fitzgerald has returned Amory to a moldable figure. Having returned to his fundamental self, imaginative and thus rebellious against society's restrictions, Amory must now decide what shape this new form will take. Fitzgerald, however, influences the formation by introducing Amory to Monsignor Darcy, who, speaking as the voice of Fitzgerald's philosophy, initiates Amory's process of self-realization.

The meeting with Monsignor Darcy provides the foundation on which Amory's true self will now be developed. Amory admits that he has been suffocated by external influences and philosophical outlines directing his life. Darcy immediately supports Amory's return to the "fundamental Amory:" "People like us can't adopt whole theories, as you did," confesses Darcy (Paradise 103). These theories become impediments to growth and creativity. Amory has felt this repression as he admits to not being able to "do the next thing" (Paradise 103). For Amory, this "next thing" is the constant

development of his identity, a process that should continue infinitely throughout his life.

"Doing the next thing" also becomes Fitzgerald's philosophy for his own writing. As an artist, his creativity must grow continuously with the work in progress. Fitzgerald understands that his work would suffer by attempting to write under the parameters established by one dominant, guiding philosophy. Thus, Fitzgerald connects himself with Amory--through Darcy's use of the word "us"--to show that he also must free himself from society's limitations in order to write. It is this struggle, both Amory's and Fitzgerald's, to be free of society's constraints that creates the unity in This Side of Paradise:

> Amory's quickening realization that he must struggle against constricting forms of social and intellectual commitment to keep alive this process [of becoming] gives this otherwise diffuse novel its particular movement and urgency. (Sklar 37)

This process of becoming continues in all of Fitzgerald's literature and, consequently, throughout his entire life. As his protagonists struggle with their development, Fitzgerald, as writer and man, continuously changes. His writing ensures that his creativity advances his self's growth. Thus, at this period of his career, his characters' quests for identity reflect the personal growth Fitzgerald's identity has already undergone. This means of development, which Fitzgerald only realized as he reflected back on his writing, becomes the lesson that Amory must learn.

Fitzgerald uses Monsignor Darcy to teach Amory how to progress

beyond his publicly defined image to his true self, to advance from a personality to a personage:

> A personality is what you thought you were.... Personality is a physical matter almost entirely; it lowers the people it acts on.... But while a personality is active, it overrides 'the next thing.' Now a personage, on the other hand, gathers. He is never thought of apart from what he's done. He's a bar on which a thousand things have been hung--glittering things sometimes, as ours are, but he uses those things with a cold mentality back of them. (Paradise 104)

Darcy's lecture explains why Amory quickly became unsatisfied with his old self. The Amory concerned about his appearance to others is a personality, imitative and limited, "a purely physical matter" shaped and conditioned by the opinion of others. Even though he has been "active" earning awards and positions, this activity has suppressed and stifled Amory's real growth and development, his becoming and doing "the next thing". The activity of a personality proves insufficient because it necessitates achieving completion--an idea that contrasts sharply with the goal of a personage.

The personage lives in an active, growing state. He "gathers" and "uses" his achievements, the "thousand glittering things," to further develop his unique, definitive, potentially creative identity. For the personage, awards and positions are not ends; instead, they are means to continue the growth process which must occur without any overriding philosophy to inhibit its spontaneous, natural development. Darcy stresses that the absence of a stifling, guiding philosophy enables a personage always to have "a clean start" (Paradise 104), encouraging him toward "doing the next

thing."

Following the interview with Darcy, Amory has his "clean start." The clean start, however, does not ensure that Amory will continue growing to become a personage. Without conscious effort, he will return to his egotistical self. Fitzgerald dramatizes the precariousness of Amory's position through a frighteningly mysterious encounter between Amory and a stranger. The encounter occurs while Amory, significantly not in control of his actions, is being led about town by a group of friends. Amory has vowed to remain in control, but he becomes more helpless as his friends drag him from place to place. On the verge of submitting to his friends' pressures to drink, Amory spies the mysterious stranger.

The man has an odd appearance, not sickly, "but like a strong man who'd worked in a mine or done night shifts in a damp climate" (Paradise 113). He has "nervous hands that sat lightly along the cushions and moved constantly with little jerky openings and closings" (Paradise 113). Finally, his feet "were all wrong" and stuffed into "a sort of half moccasin, pointed" (Paradise 113). These oddly exaggerated characteristics all represent the continuous threat of stifling, repressive forces acting upon Amory.

These forces inhibit Amory's own imagination, and thus his own creativity. Fitzgerald illustrates this danger through "a black cloud settl[ing] over the moon" as the mysterious stranger nears Amory (Paradise 114). As an author, Fitzgerald identifies the moon with its traditional literary symbolism of the imagination, and the black clouds represent any impediment blocking the imagination's

creativity. Fitzgerald immediately explains what form Amory's "black clouds" have taken when Amory realizes that "he was not eluding but following...following" the mysterious man (Paradise 115). This following parallels Amory's willfully being led about the city by his friends and denotes the end of his imagination's growth.

Fitzgerald has already illustrated that the imagination is the key to the continuous growth of his own writing and of Amory's self; thus, Amory must protect himself from again following the wills of others. Fittingly, Amory's self provides the warning:

> Only far inside his soul a little fire leaped and cried that something was pulling him down, trying to get him inside a door and slam it behind him. After that door was slammed there would be only footfalls and white buildings in the moonlight, and perhaps he would be one of the footfalls. (Paradise 115)

This "little fire" recalls Amory's subconscious revulsion when kissing Myra. His identity, as it did then, seeks to protect him from life's threatening intrusion. These same "stray, inexpressible" qualities spark the "little fire" growing into Amory's unique identity. To escape this threatening imprisonment, Amory must nurture his "little fire" so that it can both protect and guide his developing self.

Fitzgerald offers one final warning to Amory through the character of the mysterious stranger. When Amory finally sees his face, he sees the face of Dick Humbird. Fitzgerald has the face of a dead friend return to haunt Amory to illustrate the impartiality

and unpredictability of time and fate. Dick has died early and tragically in a car accident, and Amory must be conscious that the same could happen to him. Also, Fitzgerald resurrects Dick "to exorcise the appeal...of Dick Humbird's wealth, personality, and charm" (Sklar 48), all qualities of the public personality Amory has been. Life does not promise Amory a guaranteed amount of time to develop his identity; thus, the process must be diligent and continuous.

Amory symbolically abandons the appeal of public approval when he flees the face of Dick Humbird "on a steady run for the light that showed the street at the other end" (Paradise 116). This steady run for the light stresses the necessity that Amory's self be always growing and developing under positive, constructive influences. The guiding light recalls Amory's own internal fire and marks the beginning of Amory's search to define the type of personage he will become.

To promote Amory's turn to constructive forces, Fitzgerald has Amory develop an interest in "quest" books in which "the hero set off in life armed with the best weapons...to push ahead as selfishly and blindly as possible" (Paradise 120). The formerly egotistical Amory would have embraced these stories simply for the heroes' physical accomplishments and acquisitions, but Amory, as a developing personage notices that "the heroes of the 'quest' books [have] discovered that there might be a more magnificent use for" their talents (Paradise 120). Amory's careful reading offers him his first encounter with selflessness and altruism and with a

character's desire to develop himself. These philosophies accelerate Amory's attraction to Burne Holiday, a classmate driven by his need to challenge the established institutions of Princeton.

Amory had barely known Burne before the young man had organized the revolt against the social clubs, but Burne's earnest devotion forces Amory to reevaluate the young revolutionary:

> Broad-browed and strong-chinned, with a fineness in the honest gray eyes..., Burne was a man who gave an immediate impression of bigness and security-- stubborn, that was evident, but his stubbornness wore no stolidity, and when he had talked for five minutes Amory knew that this keen enthusiasm had in it no quality of diletantism. (Paradise 122)

Amory's appreciation for Burne's internal strength and conviction introduces him to Burne's true power. He possesses the same "little fire" that Amory has sometimes felt stirring within himself, but Burne has cultivated this internal flame into a powerful force of "intense earnestness" and "great enthusiasm" (Paradise 123). Burne provides a strikingly different model than Amory's first Princeton hero, Allenby, whose public popularity created his status.

Burne's self-motivation and direction appeals to Amory while he struggles to shape his identity. Fitzgerald offers him Burne as an example of the self who has found self-guidance and direction: "Burne stood vaguely for a land Amory hoped he was drifting toward-- and it was almost time that land was in sight" (Paradise 123). Amory, however, cannot merely mimic Burne's actions or he would return to his old, externally directed self. He, therefore, must generate his own drive and motivation from the resources he

possesses.

Amory's one great resource, as well as Fitzgerald's, is his imagination. The imagination's role for Fitzgerald helps explain its similar function for Amory. Fitzgerald's imagination is the source of his writing, and consequently his unique self-identity. The imagination, however, as the one force that can keep him from living, becomes a potential source of deception. Amory's imagination has already deceived him by producing much of his egotism and disillusionment, but Fitzgerald makes clear that an unchecked imagination cannot be held responsible for its creations. Fitzgerald uses the character of Clara Page, Amory's distant cousin, to educate Amory regarding the limitless power of his imagination. Clara keenly observes that Amory is "a bound helpless slave to one thing in the world, [his] imagination" (Paradise 143). This servitude, however, does not necessitate Amory's losing control of his decision making; as Fitzgerald has discovered through writing, Amory must find a means of tempering his imagination's infinite resources into positive, constructive energy.

Fitzgerald, again through Clara's perceptive insight, shows Amory how to check his imagination. She tells Amory not to blame his imagination for his shortcomings; instead, she tells him, "[Y]ou lack judgment--the judgment to decide at once when you know your imagination will play you false" (Paradise 143). Thus, judgment becomes the instrument needed to direct and control the measureless, creative powers of Amory's imagination. This balance

between judgment and imagination parallels Fitzgerald's delicate shifts between living and writing. Along with providing inspiration, Fitzgerald's living prevents his creativity from neglecting reality. His writing must be a means of transcending life's limitations, not simply avoiding them. Like Fitzgerald, Amory must use his judgment to focus his imagination so that it may build his secure, solid, self-directed identity.

The 1920 short story "Head and Shoulders" further illustrates Fitzgerald's quest to find a balance between living and the imagination. In an act reflecting his own fear of not living, Fitzgerald forces life on Horace Tarbox, the precocious college student and protagonist of the story. Horace lives in a world of theories and suppositions. His theses on "The Syllogism as an Obsolete Scholastic Form" and "The Pragmatic Bias of the New Realists" block all awareness of world events (Short Stories 3). He lives entirely among his own imaginings, only interrupted when "some newsboy [tells] him that the war [is] over" (Short Stories 3). Even Horace's last name, Tarbox, suggests the stagnation and entrapment--a stagnation as threatening to the self as Amory's egotism--in which his ethereal theories hold him.

Fitzgerald uses life to restore the balance between Horace's self-absorbed imagination and the external forces of the real world: "[L]ife reached in, seized [Horace], handled him, stretched him, and unrolled him like a piece of Irish lace on a Saturday-afternoon bargain-counter" (Short Stories 4). He personifies life as a character consciously acting in the world to emphasize the

necessity of forcefully arousing Horace from a self-absorption so deep that he tries to change physical reality into theory: "his only reaction to a low, clear-cut rap at his study was to make him speculate as to whether any rap would have actual existence without an ear there to hear it" (Short Stories 4). Thus, life must become an active intercessor in Horace's daily experiences.

Fitzgerald embodies life in the form of Marcia Meadow, an exotic dancer in musical comedies. She contrasts with Horace in all ways; even her last name suggests the freedom and physical movement absent in Horace. Her rap on Horace's door begins an awakening process that returns Horace to being an active participator in life. This process restores a balance between Horace's imagination and the world's reality that is necessary for his growth. Just as too much imagination can be detrimental, however, too much reality can be equally destructive to a character's self. Fitzgerald faced the same paradoxical situation as he struggled to balance his living and writing; each fed the other, but each also posed the threat of consuming the other.

Thus, Fitzgerald warns that "when you [open] your door at the rap of life you let in many things," and all work against the self's organic, natural development (Short Stories 19). Life begins to be the agent shaping and forming identities. If left to its own evolution, life will categorize and mold man against his will, but if reality and the imagination work in balance, man's identity can develop. Amory must learn the same lesson as Horace: how to nurture his imagination against the world's threatening forces.

As Fitzgerald stated previously through the advice of Monsignor Darcy, Amory's rebuilding must begin with casting off the restrictive forces limiting his identity. Rosalind Connage, the young girl whom Amory has been dating, embodies these external restrictions as she consciously admits to devoting her time to perfecting her public image:

> ...you don't know what a trial it is to be--like me. I've got to keep my face like steel in the street to keep men from winking at me. If I laugh hard from a front row in the theatre, the comedian plays to me for the rest of the evening. If I drop my voice, my eyes, my handkerchief at a dance, my partner calls me up on the 'phone every day for a week. (Paradise 172)

Rosalind's cultivation of her public image recalls the egotistical Amory's plotting for public applause and thus explains why he initially desires Rosalind. Amory, however, has been too affected by Darcy's and Clara's advice to be fully satisfied with such a shallow relationship. Fitzgerald uses the dissolving of their relationship to illustrate Amory's growing identity.

Amory's development leads him to accept the transiency of their relationship. Just as he has lost his attraction for both Myra and Isabelle, Amory concludes that he will ultimately lose his affection for Rosalind: "I'm romantic--a sentimental person thinks things will last--a romantic person hopes against hope that they won't," Amory tells Rosalind (Paradise 177). This self-analysis unveils Amory's increasing self-understanding. First, he is able to define himself without relying on the opinion of others. Secondly, Fitzgerald, through Amory's statement, illustrates that the value

in their relationship has resulted from its development, and this value does not depend on the relationship's culmination.

Amory, although he speaks this admission, cannot yet fully accept it. He still hopes that their dating will develop into a permanent relationship. Fitzgerald, however, does not allow the fulfillment of Amory's and Rosalind's relationship. Their union would inevitably impede Amory's self-development by permanently subjecting him to Rosalind's external approval or disapproval. Fitzgerald, as he previously spoke through Isabelle, uses Rosalind to end the relationship. She expresses fear that the perfection their relationship has achieved will be lessened over time. She reasons that their time together has been "so like a dream" that she would "rather keep it as a beautiful memory--tucked away in [her] heart" (Paradise 194). Thus, Fitzgerald, speaking through Rosalind's confession, admits his own distrust of finding permanency in a world subjected to the impartialness of time.

Fitzgerald portrays the final weeks of Amory's and Rosalind's relationship in the dramatic mode in order to stress the characters' subjection to the uniform pace of time. The dramatic form traps Amory within the boundaries of a fixed beginning and an imminent ending. Time continues on each side of the extremes, but Amory can only act within the fixed amount allotted to his character. Time, thus, overrides all activities and denies man the ability to control his life completely.

In his 1920 short story "The Offshore Pirate," Fitzgerald dramatizes the futility in challenging time, this "foredoomed

attempt to control one's destiny" (Short Stories 89), through the two central characters: Ardita, the young debutante searching for fulfillment, and Curtis Carlyle, the imaginative young adventurer hired by Ardita's uncle to seduce her. Before meeting Carlyle, Ardita had prided herself on being a rebel living an isolated existence governed by her reliance on her own identity. "My courage is faith--faith in the eternal resilience of me--that joy'll come back, and hope and spontaneity...A sort of insistence on the value of life and the worth of transient things," Ardita confesses (Short Stories 88). This faith in her own identity is the same faith that Amory must develop. In a world beyond the individual's control, the identity becomes the only dependable resource a person can possess.

Despite this seeming independence, Ardita still yearns for the protection of and union with another:

> We're going through the black air with our arms wide...and our feet straight out behind like a dolphin's tail, and we're going to think we'll never hit the silver down there till suddenly it'll be all warm round us and full of little caressing waves. (Short Stories 88)

Ardita's speech permits Fitzgerald to comment metaphorically on man's life in a world governed by time. Man's life is a journey through the black air, a void denying man any opportunity for permanence. He, however, still quests for the "warm silver," promising companionship and protection, but this moment of safety will be brief and transient preventing man from ever finding eternal satisfaction and fulfillment.

Ardita's metaphor explains the appeal of social relationships; although they are temporary, relationships offer man the solace that he is not alone. Despite this allure, an individual cannot sacrifice his most fundamental relationship with his own identity, Ardita, however, does sacrifice her identity for the illusory oasis of a permanent union with Carlyle. Fitzgerald conveys her transformation as a switch in reliance from herself to unreliable time:

> And with the long, sunny hours Ardita's idea of the episode as incidental, madcap, a sprig of romance in a desert of reality, gradually left her. She dreaded the time when [Carlyle] would strike off southward; she dreaded all the eventualities that presented themselves to her; thoughts were suddenly troublesome and decisions odious. Had prayers found place in the pagan rituals of her soul she would have asked of life only to be unmolested for a while.... (Short Stories 89)

By desiring the stoppage of time, Ardita wishes to cease all activity. She wants to trade her thoughts and decisions for the preservation of this union even though such a decision will sacrifice activity for stagnancy and her inner self for a social relationship. Even worse, the abandonment will allow her imagination to create unchecked at the expense of reality.

Fitzgerald has already warned of the necessity of maintaining a balance between imagination and reality in "Head and Shoulders;" when out of balance, the two simply prolong an individual's disillusionment. When Ardita surrenders herself to Carlyle, she consequently surrenders reality to her imagination:

> Ardita's last sense of reality dropped away, and she abandoned her imagination to the dreamy summer scents of tropical flowers and the infinite starry spaces overhead, feeling that if she opened her eyes it would be to find herself dancing with a ghost in a land created by her own fancy. (Short Stories 91)

This treasonous act against herself betrays her firmly established identity since it is her identity that must be sacrificed to permit the union with Carlyle. Her self-reliance no longer strengthens her; it now exists as a barrier to her full immersion in her fantasy world.

Fitzgerald allows the fulfillment of Carlyle's and Ardita's union specifically to illustrate the relative brevity of its existence. He portrays their union, culminating with a kiss, as a night dream infiltrated by the emerging day:

> And then dawn slanted dynamically across the deck and flung the shadows reeling into gray corners. The dew rose and turned to golden mist, thin as a dream, enveloping them until they seemed gossamer relics of the late night, infinitely transient and already fading. For a moment sea and sky were breathless, and dawn held a pink hand over the young mouth of life--then from out of the lake came the complaint of a rowboat and the swish of oars.
> (Short Stories 94)

The abundant images of interruption--the dawn's intersecting the shadows, the dew's evaporation into mist, and the dawn's smothering the mouth of life--all announce the inherent brevity in this union. Life's strength is personified; it is an active antagonist working against man and his fulfillment. On a second level, these same images reveal Carlyle's and Ardita's desertion of their identities, leaving themselves "gossamer relics" of their previous selves,

"infinitely transient and already fading." Their union is only possible through fantasy, by abandoning reality for a dream--a theme elaborated in The Great Gatsby--that will envelop them protected from life.

This surrender to each other, however, becomes understandable; they believe it is their only means of preserving their union and halting time: "For another instant life was radiant and time a phantom and their strength eternal" (Short Stories 94). Fitzgerald, however, knows time and reality cannot be permanently avoided; they again intrude into the union in the form of a "bumping, scraping sound as the rowboat scraped alongside" (Short Stories 94). Fitzgerald uses the rowboat to restore reality, the means of checking Ardita's uncontrolled imagination.

The rowboat carries Ardita's uncle and the truth that Carlyle's character has been created specifically to dissuade Ardita from her intentions to marry. This revelation distracts Ardita only momentarily; she quickly marvels at Carlyle's creativity: "What an imagination! I want you to lie to me just as sweetly as you know how for the rest of my life" (Short Stories 96). Fitzgerald intentionally preserves Ardita's infatuation with Carlyle to illustrate the dangers of self-betrayal. She can now only be fulfilled through more lies and deceptions; her ability for self-reliance has disappeared with her abandoning her identity.

Ardita again hopes to consummate the union with a kiss, but Fitzgerald oddly describes Ardita "kiss[ing] [Carlyle] in the illustration" (Short Stories 96). This deliberately nonsensical

statement permits Fitzgerald to satirize man's futile attempts to find permanence; it can exist only in a created world, a picture in which the subjects are frozen and thus protected from life and time. As author, Fitzgerald possessed this power to create fictional worlds where his characters could triumph over the same barriers he found limiting his own life, but these impermeable worlds, in which characters could escape the ruin brought by time, do not mirror the life Fitzgerald found so attractive.

Thus, Fitzgerald rejects this world where life's limitations can be cleverly avoided to demonstrate his astute awareness of time's disruptive powers, for the kiss occurs while the air is filled with Carlyle's negroes' singing:

> Time is a thief;
> Gladness and grief
> Cling to the leaf
> As it yellows--- (Short Stories 96)

This chant contains a symbolic representation of Ardita's and Carlyle's plight. They are forced to cling desperately to a frail leaf, representing their lives, as it yellows with time. Thus, time becomes the thief stealing any chance of permanent happiness or togetherness. Fitzgerald feels this same need to cling to life as it threatens to escape him, but more living is not the solution. Ironically, turning within himself to his creative identity allows Fitzgerald to produce the art that transcends life's limitations.

Fitzgerald, however, lacks complete faith in his art's ability to endure beyond his own lifetime. He expresses his fear through

Amory's speech on the fleeting prominence of world leaders:

> People try so hard to believe in leaders now, pitifully hard. But we no sooner get a popular reformer or politician or soldier or writer or philosopher--a Roosevelt, a Tolstoi, a Wood, a Shaw, a Nietzsche, than the cross-currents of criticism wash him away. My Lord, no man can stand prominence these days. It's the surest path to obscurity. (Paradise 214)

Amory's list highlights the dominant men of ideas of Fitzgerald's time, but even these individuals and their ideas are subject to decay. Fitzgerald speaks through Amory's list to express his own fear that his ideas will suffer the same fate. Thus, living becomes even more attractive if his writing will prove to be futile.

Like Fitzgerald, Amory also investigates fiction writing, but he has great reservations about becoming an author:

> Trouble is I get distracted when I start to write stories--get afraid I'm doing it instead of living--get thinking maybe life is waiting for me in the Japanese gardens at the Ritz or at Atlantic City or on the lower East Side. (Paradise 216)

Amory's confession, by echoing Fitzgerald's personal fears regarding the delicate balance between living and writing, reveals the allure of living. If permanence cannot be found, man seemingly should abandon his identity for the immediate pleasures of life. Fitzgerald, however, outshines Amory, for he has written and published his novel despite his hesitations while Amory hides behind his skepticism.

Amory faces the same situation as Fitzgerald; he is constantly

bombarded by forces threatening his active, developing identity and must find the means, as Fitzgerald has, of repelling these threats. The fear of not living while writing thus poses a major threat to Fitzgerald: how can he dramatically portray the self-realization of his characters if his writing is confining his own growth? Fitzgerald solves the problem by making his living the source for the continuation of his creative growth process through writing. Experiencing reality births the primitive idea, but the imagination, through writing, produces the maturation and development. Thus, Fitzgerald's fictional characters develop simultaneously with the fiction's own formation and shaping. Likewise, Fitzgerald's own identity develops with his writing, and he thus balances his own struggle between his imagination (writing) and reality (living). Neither dominates, but both necessitate his living in an active, creative state.

Amory's need to live in a state of constant development and growth makes any permanent relationship a threat to his identity. His relationships with Myra, Isabelle, and Rosalind all initially proved productive as they helped form Amory's identity. Once the relationships reached a climax, however, the ties had to be dissolved to free Amory's growth. Despite these early failures, Amory again becomes involved with a young girl, Eleanor Ramilly, who threatens to consume his identity. Fitzgerald admits that Eleanor "was the last time that evil crept close to Amory under the mask of beauty" (Paradise 222). The beauty concealing Eleanor's threat takes the form of the incredible similarities between their

two identities. They seem to be twins communicating on their own mental and emotional level.

This likeness, however, poses a more dangerous threat to Amory's identity since his identity could potentially blend with Eleanor's and be lost in the absorption. Despite the uncontrollable attraction between the two, Amory must be careful to preserve his independence. Fitzgerald complicates the relationship by blurring its realities with its fantasies. Amory has difficulty sensing and accepting Eleanor's concreteness; the division between her true being and the one created by Amory's imagination is frequently ambiguous:

> When Eleanor's arm touched his he felt his hands grow cold with deadly fear lest he should lose the shadow brush with which his imagination was painting wonders of her. He watched her from the corners of his eyes as ever he did when he walked with her--she was a feast and a folly and he wished it had been his destiny to sit forever on a haystack and see life through her green eyes. His paganism soared that night and when she faded out like a gray ghost down the road, a deep singing came out of the fields and filled his way homeward.
>
> (Paradise 230)

Eleanor, like Daisy Buchanan for Jay Gatsby, often seems more real and attractive to Amory when she has been glorified in his mind. Amory's imagination, by impairing his sense of reality, violates Fitzgerald's principle that an individual must have a means of controlling his imagination. This merging of fantasy and reality serves as a warning of the potentially destructive union between Amory and Eleanor.

Amory's uncontrollable imagination threatens to return his egotism. His preoccupation with his own imagined creations forces Amory to compromise his true development for something unreal. Amory's egotism leads to his obsessive relationship with Eleanor. He vicariously experiences it in his imagination so that he can condition his real responses. This disillusionment threatens to return Amory to his self-centered egotism.

Fitzgerald's narration of the relationship's end reveals Amory's narrow escape:

> All the way back she talked haltingly about herself, and Amory's love waned slowly with the moon.... For a minute they stood there hating each other with a bitter sadness. But as Amory had loved himself in Eleanor, so now what he hated was only a mirror. (Paradise 240)

Amory's love waning with the moon symbolizes his imagination's withdrawal from dominating his development. He realizes that he had loved Eleanor as a means of vicariously loving himself; she had been a mirror for his self-adoration. His final rejection of Eleanor marks his abandonment of his "unfettered romantic will" that has too often overridden his identity (Sklar 54). This relationship embodies Fitzgerald's own enduring fear that relationships and a public identity become hindrances to the self's growth and creativity.

In "Head and Shoulders," Fitzgerald warns of the dangers of two characters becoming too dependent on each other at the expense of their own identities. Horace's and Marcia's relationship does make Horace an active participant in life, but it makes Marcia feel

"as though an unwonted responsibility [were] being forced on her" (Short Stories 13). This responsibility of freeing Horace has infringed upon her more important responsibility to preserve her identity.

The union's destructiveness exhibits itself during one of Marcia's performances. Instead of feeling her usual self-assurance, Marcia for the first time feels self-doubt:

> Unconquerable revulsion seized her. She was suddenly and horribly conscious of her audience as she had never been since her first appearance. Was that a leer on a pallid face in the front row, a droop of disgust on one young girl's mouth? these shoulders of hers--these shoulders shaking--were they hers? Were they real? Surely shoulders weren't made for this! (Short Stories 14)

This self-consciousness results from Marcia's having sacrificed her own identity for Horace's development. While her altruistic intentions are commendable, Marcia has violated her own identity by slighting it in favor of Horace. This moment of self-consciousness, however, does not deter Marcia's belief that she fills a needy gap in Horace's life. Thus, full of hope, Horace and Marcia view marriage as a means of complementing their identities.

Both Horace and Marcia enter marriage with the optimism that each can encourage the other's development. "We'll call ourselves Head and Shoulders..., and the shoulders'll have to keep shaking a little longer until the old head gets started," Marcia states optimistically (Short Stories 17). This faith stems from their steadfast faith in their identities always remaining opposites; Marcia will ensure that Horace lives, and he will help her discover

her creative imagination. Initially, this complementary relationship does exist:

> Their minds moved in different spheres. Marcia acted as practical factotum, and Horace lived either in his old world of abstract ideas or in a sort of triumphantly earthy worship and adoration of his wife.
> (Short Stories 17)

This state, however, does not account for the inevitable development of their identities. As this growth occurs, it threatens the balance in their relationship. Fitzgerald dramatizes this danger as Marcia and Horace begin to exchange identities.

When Marcia tells Horace to "do some giant swings for me and I'll chase some culture for you" (Short Stories 18), she does not fully realize the threat to their individual identities. Such a proposition, however, forces them to deny the natural growth of their identities. They betray their self-generated identities for ones ordered by external forces. This mixing of roles threatens both their union and more importantly their own selves. Deliberately adopting these qualities violates the same rules Amory has violated in his egotism. As Amory has done, Horace and Marcia now live to fulfill the expectations of others rather than themselves.

The completion of this self-betrayal occurs when Horace becomes renown for his trapeze act and Marcia for her intellectual theory. Unconsciously, each has transformed the other into a reflection of their old roles. A magazine recounts their reversal:

> It is said that the young couple have dubbed themselves Head and Shoulders, referring doubtless to the fact that Mrs. Tarbox supplies the literary and mental qualities, while the supple and agile shoulders of her husband contribute their share to the family fortunes.
> (Short Stories 24)

The return of the label "Head and Shoulders" confirms the limitations imprisoning their identities. The marriage has not led to further development; it has only produced an exchange of positions. Each is as one-sided as before their introduction.

Horace notices the irony resulting from the marriage. His response to his new status is regret for ever having responded to Marcia's knock: "About raps. Don't answer them! Let them alone--have a padded door" (Short Stories 24). This solution, however, does not guarantee the preservation of his identity or his identity's ability for self-directed growth. Having ignored the rap would have left Horace in his old fantasy world of theories and suppositions. His failed development has resulted from his inability to establish a balance between his imagination and reality.

Through Horace's comment, Fitzgerald reveals his personal fears regarding his creativity's precarious existence in the face of reality. Critic Alice Hall Petry calls "Head and Shoulders" "one of the most meaningful and revealing stories he ever wrote--even though it is doubtful that Fitzgerald recognized the fears and problems with which it deals" (Petry 21). The story embodies Fitzgerald's subconscious fear of failure, both as a writer and a man. It illustrates his personal concern that "unpredictable...

forces... might undermine all that he had worked for, all that he hoped to accomplish" (Petry 48). Thus, writing becomes Fitzgerald's means of dramatizing, and ideally exorcising, his personal fears. His literature allows him to live within life's inherent limitations and achieve the fulfillment and satisfaction normally denied man.

When Amory states that he had believed he had "regretted [his] lost youth when [he] only env[ied] the delights of losing it" (Paradise 258), Fitzgerald reveals another motivation for his writing; he can live vicariously through his characters and re-experience life. His voice is distinctly heard when Amory admits: "I don't want to repeat my innocence. I want the pleasure of losing it again" (Paradise 258). Thus, Fitzgerald's writing keeps him in a two-fold active state; it nurtures his creative identity, and it allows him to live by vicariously experiencing his characters' lives.

Fitzgerald's awakening to this relationship coincides with Amory's discovery of the personage he will become. Amory adopts the title of the "spiritually unmarried man," who contrasts with the self-serving man:

> One sort takes human nature as it finds it, uses its timidity, its weakness, and its strength for its own ends. Opposed is the man who, being spiritually unmarried, continually seeks for new systems that will control or counteract human nature. His problem is harder. It is not life that's complicated, it's the struggle to guide and control life. (Paradise 272)

The spiritually unmarried man becomes Amory's personage, the man of action:

> For Amory, the personage is one who gives away, one who creates, one who constructs. He is the figure who dreamed, as Fitzgerald said of Amory when the novel began, always of the becoming, never the being.
> (Sklar 55)

Amory's definition, however, admits Fitzgerald's own naive confidence in the power of his writing. Amory as personage and Fitzgerald as writer, no matter how well each controls himself, cannot control life. All that either possesses is the power to exist amidst its limitations.

Amory's maturation culminates with the realization that he will never be able to escape his egotistical personality but will always struggle with its existence:

> This selfishness is not only part of me. It is the most living part.
> It is by somehow transcending rather than by avoiding that selfishness that I can bring poise and balance into my life. (Paradise 280)

Amory's observation marks a landmark in his life. He has recognized the two components of his identity--the personality and the personage--and their relationship to each other. The competition between the two will exist continuously, but Amory, through activity, can remain a personage and control his innate, egotistical desires. Likewise, by writing, Fitzgerald can transform his living into the catalyst for his identity's creative,

continuous growth.

Fitzgerald highlights Amory's insights at the end of the novel with a declarative affirmation: "I know myself,...but that is all" (Paradise 282). The first person pronoun emphasize Amory's solitude--his relationship-free state--and need for a self-directed life. This small piece of knowledge that Amory admits possessing belies the lengthy, exhausting learning process he has undergone. This process supports the importance of a life full of journeys and struggles, for these events generate moments of satisfaction and accomplishment. The "that is all" phrase implies that infinitely more knowledge exists for Amory to discover in a search actively directed by his identity.

Amory's self-knowledge, however, will remain naively confident and useless until he finds his role in life. He may know himself, but Amory does not have a means of preserving his identity when facing life's challenges. Nonetheless, Amory's naive confidence reflects Fitzgerald's own hopeful self-assurance that This Side of Paradise would bring him the success he desired, the success that ultimately enabled Fitzgerald to earn enough money to marry Zelda Sayre. More importantly, Fitzgerald discovered that writing ironically advanced his life when living itself--college, the army, and his advertising job--could not. Deliberately removed from life while writing in isolation in his parents' house, Fitzgerald established his life-long role as a writer. Understandably, Fitzgerald falsely assumed that his living and writing would always be compatible; likewise, Amory assumes that his new-found identity

will exist harmoniously with the world.

Thus, Amory's uninitiated state parallels Fitzgerald's own assumptions early in his writing career. By abandoning Amory poised as a conqueror on the verge of action, Fitzgerald reveals his own belief that he had permanently reconciled the relationship between his living and writing. This conclusion to the novel, however, only illustrates that Fitzgerald, unknown to himself, shared Amory's uninitiation. Fitzgerald could not see that he had as much to learn as Amory because throughout the novel Fitzgerald had believed himself to be a role model for Amory, but just as Amory must know more than himself, Fitzgerald must, and will, know more. Fitzgerald fulfills Amory's implied vow to learn more when he discovers that living and writing are often at odds rather than in harmony, but they still can provide the means to transcend life's limitations through the creation of literature.

Following the success of This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald did not actively seek the discoveries manifested in his later literature. Instead, his living and writing naturally produced the maturation of his ideas regarding the self's struggle to succeed in a hostile world opposing its mere existence. In fact, The Great Gatsby, by picking up the themes of self-discovery and expanding them to include the self's struggle to remain active against life's opposition, can be read as a continuing development of Fitzgerald's concerns, "a process whereby Fitzgerald transformed old values and experience in the crucible of his developing art and ideas...[to reveal] new insights into old ideas" (Sklar 164-5). These new

insights culminate in the realization, and finally the acceptance, that man, no matter how well he knows himself, cannot defeat the impersonal conditions in which he must live. Thus, his self-development and creative action do not ultimately lead to the conquest of time and reality; instead, they enable him only to continue in the face of these obstacles. In "Winter Dreams" and The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald introduces the motif of pursuing a dream to dramatize the self's active search for fulfillment. The dream becomes a particularly descriptive symbol of Fitzgerald's development since This Side of Paradise; it admits that victories and fulfillments can only be permanent if they remain part of the fantasy.

"Winter Dreams," a short story written in 1922 as Fitzgerald formulated ideas that would evolve into 1925's The Great Gatsby, establishes the paradoxical requirements governing a character's pursuit of a dream. In the story, the protagonist, a young caddie named Dexter Green, meets a dynamic young girl named Judy Jones and devotes his remaining life to pursuing her. Dexter steadily transforms all his actions to fit his quest only to be devastated when the real Judy does not remain equal to the image his dreams create. Dexter initially thrusts himself into his pursuit with the radical decision to quit his job in pursuit of other goals. Fitzgerald explains this monumental decision arises from his first encounter with the dynamic Judy Jones:

> ...he had received a strong emotional shock, and his perturbation required a violent and immediate outlet.

> It is not so simple as that, either. As so frequently would be the case in the future, Dexter was unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams.
>
> (Short Stories 220)

Dexter's dream serves as the impetus to act, but Fitzgerald clearly states that the dream holds Dexter in a limiting state of servitude. The "winter dreams'" ordering Dexter's activities recall Amory's obsession with external opinion; both elicit action unproduced by the self.

Dexter's dreams distance him from his identity. For the dreams to be constructive, they must prompt Dexter toward the self-motivation that will serve as his primary impetus to act. Instead, the "winter dreams," in the form of his pursuit of Judy, steer Dexter toward an imitation of every other suitor, "the men who when he first went to college had entered from the great prep schools with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers" (Short Stories 224-5). Dexter had always believed himself superior to them, but, Fitzgerald comments, "in acknowledging to himself that he wished his children to be like them he was admitting that he was but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang" (Short Stories 225). Thus, Dexter's misguided development leads him away from himself to an unnatural existence. Alice Hall Petry observes how Dexter's chance encounter with Judy Jones:

> [leads] an otherwise intelligent, capable young man to pursue a particular image of selfhood, to assume that "glittering things" must be acquired to realize that false self, and to devote literally years pursuing the wrong path to the wrong goal. (Petry 130)

Like Amory, Dexter seeks self-definition in terms of social relationships and consequently sacrifices his true identity.

Dexter unknowingly states his dilemma when he tells Judy: "I'm nobody. My career is largely a matter of futures" (Short Stories 226). Meaning to tell Judy that he is no one rich or famous, Dexter speaks the simple truth: he is nobody because he has exchanged his identity for the role dictated by his "winter dreams." To compound the problem, he has also sacrificed his present--the opportunity to live and act daily--for the uncertain prospect of future fulfillment. Fitzgerald uses Dexter's naively profound statement to establish a requirement of the dream. It cannot smother the present days with the tantalizing promise of a complete future. Instead, the dream must elevate the present to create fulfillment and satisfaction in daily struggles and actions. As Fitzgerald established in This Side of Paradise, time's arbitrariness necessitates that each day contribute to his identity's development. Dexter's sacrifice of his present self for what he may become inhibits his identity's ability to grow constantly.

Selling out to the future also entraps Dexter in an insatiable cycle of selfish needs; the fulfillment that he experiences while kissing Judy only generates his desire for more:

> ...[S]he communicated her excitement to him, lavishly, deeply, with kisses that were not a promise but a fulfillment. They aroused in him not hunger demanding renewal but surfeit that would demand more surfeit... kisses that were like charity, creating want by holding back nothing at all. (Short Stories 226)

The fulfillment Dexter feels is false; it destroys his identity's self-generated growth while encumbering him with more needs. Instead of fulfillment that produces more action, Dexter has settled for fulfillment creating complacency and stagnation.

Fitzgerald clearly depicts Dexter's self-betrayal. He describes how "Dexter surrendered a part of himself" (Short Stories 226) through the "so much he had given of his active life to the incorrigible lips of Judy Jones" (Short Stories 228). This inactivity conflicts with Dexter's need to grow; he experiences "restlessness and dissatisfaction" as Judy becomes an "opiate rather than tonic" (Short Stories 227). Their relationship thus becomes an unnatural addiction rather than a soothing source of growth. Dexter's "winter dreams" have impeded his participation in life by replacing his reality with the unattainable promise of complete, future fulfillment. This decision imprisons Dexter in a stagnant state--"he loved her, and he would love her until the day he was too old for loving--," but the relationship can progress no further (Short Stories 233).

In Fitzgerald's eyes, Dexter has committed the most destructive mistake possible; he has aided the innumerable forces naturally working against his development by abandoning life for a fantastic dream: "He had thought that having nothing else to lose he was invulnerable at last--but he knew that he had just lost something more.... The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him" (Short Stories 235). The realization, however, comes too late. Dexter has damaged more than his relationship with Judy; he

has harmed his one irreplaceable resource, himself:

> He wanted to care, and he could not care. For he had gone away and he could never go back any more. The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.
>
> (Short Stories 235-6)

This inability to care embodies Dexter's self-inflicted suffering. The life he expected to await him in the future has been abandoned in the past. No amount of activity can restore the days lost to Dexter's winter dreams; "for with the end of his dream he could not escape his own imprisonment in time" (Sklar 159). Thus, Dexter's present has been extinguished by his successes in the past and the promises of his future. His dream, in ignoring the existence of time, has betrayed his identity; rather than furthering its development, the dream has stranded him in an uncreative existence.

This loss, however, serves as a catharsis for Dexter; "for the first time in years the tears were streaming down his face" (Short Stories 235). The tears bring the realization that he has cheated himself and must now stoically move forward: "[L]ong ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more" (Short Stories 236). Fitzgerald uses Dexter's awareness to illustrate his identity's delicacy. The possible growth and activity lost to stagnant days cannot be regained. Man does not live a cyclical life where lost

opportunities return with a second chance. His melted "winter dreams" uncover a forever-altered identity.

Dexter's epiphany illustrates Fitzgerald's private progression since Amory's affirmation ending This Side of Paradise. Knowing one's identity does not guarantee its development or preservation; knowledge only ensures that the self must continue striving and growing. Fitzgerald, as he ultimately illustrates in "Babylon Revisited," now acknowledges that failure is not only inevitable but can also contribute to the self's growth.

Fitzgerald deliberately parallels Dexter's permanent loss with the landscape's regenerative powers. The golf course, already altered from its natural state, is like Dexter, blanketed by "winter dreams" in the form of snow. Though unable to sense his own suffocation, Dexter is sensitive to the land's imprisonment:

> At these times the country gave him a feeling of profound melancholy--it offended him that the links should lie in enforced fallowness, haunted by ragged sparrows for the long season. It was dreary, too, that on the trees where the gay colors fluttered in summer there were now only the desolate sand-boxes knee-deep in crusted ice.
> (Short Stories 217)

The landscape, having already adjusted to its transformation into a golf course, consistently returns to its former state; it loses nothing in the passage of time as the arrival of Spring melts the frozen Winter: "The snow ran down into Black Bear Lake scarcely tarrying for the early golfers to brave the season.... Without elation, without an interval of moist glory, the cold was gone" (Short Stories 217). This half-recovery, back to a golf course but

never back to a natural landscape, illustrates Dexter's partial recovery. The melting snow foreshadows the purging tears that ultimately melt Dexter's "winter dreams." Dexter, however, lacks nature's regenerative powers; what he has lost is permanently gone. Fitzgerald uses the contrast between the melting landscape and the tearful Dexter to demonstrate the fragility of man's identity.

Dexter, despite his failure, represents an advancement over Amory Blaine, for he acts instead of mentally debating all the reasons he should not. Rather than rest complacently on his knowledge as Amory does at the end of This Side of Paradise, Dexter makes conscious decisions that expose him to the uncompromising world. Amory may stand triumphant and boastful at the novel's end, but Dexter endures his choices to acquire his mature insights. Consequently, his knowledge, though it results from failure, outshines Amory's uninitiation. Dexter's actions, however, are as damaging to his identity as Amory's inaction because his pursuit of Judy has led him away from his creative identity. Thus, activity is not enough to preserve the self; the activity must promote and complement the self's growth.

Dexter's self-realization foreshadows Fitzgerald's own increasing maturation ultimately unveiled in The Great Gatsby. He abandons his former romanticism--the triumphant cockiness of Amory and the defeated but wiser Dexter--to create Jay Gatsby, who, because of the impossibility of recapturing Daisy Buchanan and ultimately his former self, dies tragically without even the conciliatory discoveries realized by Dexter. These realizations are

reserved for Fitzgerald, who, under the guise of his narrator Nick Carraway, no longer lectures to his characters but instead learns from their failures.

Gatsby's failure initially appears shocking, for Jay Gatsby epitomizes the internally created identity; he "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself" (Gatsby 99). Gatsby initially represents the ideal, pure self, free from life's intrusion, but even he succumbs to life's "foul dust" (Gatsby 2). Gatsby initially, however, exudes such creative potential that he magnetically attracts the novel's narrator Nick Carraway:

> ...there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life.... [I]t was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. (Gatsby 2)

Carraway speaks this praise in retrospect; he has witnessed Gatsby's undying pursuit of a dream and must admire his passion and devotion. These traits, however, do not further Gatsby's development. Instead, they contribute to life's deserting Gatsby as time progresses leaving him fighting futilely to recreate the past.

Carraway tries to blame Gatsby's failure on the world's indifference to his dream:

> No--Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.
> (Gatsby 2)

Carraway's praise, in overlooking Gatsby's failures, presents Fitzgerald's sympathy for his protagonist, but this sympathy does not preserve Gatsby's character or save him from failure. The foul dust could feed so completely on Gatsby due to Gatsby's failure to acknowledge its existence. His unyielding attempts to restore an irretrievable past epitomize his overt disregard for reality. The magnitude of Gatsby's dream necessitates that his imagination create unchecked by reality. In fact, his dream creates a world with "a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing" (Gatsby 100). Thus, his imagination places him directly at odds with time; while trying to stop its progression, Gatsby is consumed. His failure to adjust his dream from an attempted recreation of the past to a motivational force for the future strands Gatsby, unprotected from the world, on the verge of action he never undertakes.

Fitzgerald fills Gatsby's world with representatives of this stalled activity. Life in West Egg embodies Gatsby's inability to initiate action: "[A]n evening was hurried from phase to phase toward its close, in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in sheer nervous dread of the moment itself" (Gatsby 13). This characterization parallels a crucial fault in Gatsby's dream; present opportunities to act are sacrificed for a distant, unapproachable objective. All Gatsby's decisions lead to attempts to preserve or restore the past; the future remains neglected and thus permanently out of Gatsby's reach.

Fitzgerald dramatizes Gatsby's isolation from the future through Nick's first view of Gatsby. While standing on the edge of his lawn, Nick observes Gatsby's curious actions:

> ...he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward--and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and faraway, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.
>
> (Gatsby 21-2)

Fitzgerald later reveals that the green light shined on the end of Daisy Buchanon's dock, and the gesture's significance clarifies for the reader. For Gatsby, stretching toward the green light symbolizes his reach to recapture his past relationship with Daisy.

Despite the personal significance for Gatsby, Fitzgerald intends for the distant green light to convey a second meaning to the reader. The light's permanent distance foreshadows Gatsby's inability to progress forward toward the future because his quest for the past places the future at an always-unattainable distance. Gatsby's outstretched arm personifies his division; he remains stagnant, divided between the completed events of the past and the unapproachable events of the future.

Gatsby acts limitedly in the present with only the primary hope of recreating the past. He stages his entire public appearance with the ultimate goal of luring Daisy to his house. His lavish parties and opulent lifestyle create his public image while simultaneously stifling his real identity. This repression limits

Gatsby's participation at his own parties. The hundreds of guests eat, drink, dance, and gossip, but Gatsby maintains a separation from them: "no one swooned backward on Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link" (Gatsby 50). This self-imposed isolation denies his identity the active existence needed to develop.

Gatsby's desire to preserve his former identity manifests itself in his preserving two symbols from his past. The first, "a piece of metal slung on a ribbon," he received in World War I from Montenegro "for valour extraordinary" (Gatsby 67). The second recalls his college days at Oxford: "It was a photograph of half a dozen young men in blazers loafing in an archway through which were visible a host of spires" (Gatsby 67). Both mementos preserve aspects of his former self, public images that inhibit his identity's future growth.

Gatsby desires to preserve the idea of himself in these earlier years because it was this Jay Gatsby whom Daisy Buchanan once loved. Instead of forming a new relationship in the present, Gatsby wishes to restore their former love. As Nick Carraway narrates, this obsession blurs Gatsby's sense of reality:

> He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way, as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. (Gatsby 92)

Fitzgerald intends a compound meaning in Carraway's observation. First, his observation illustrates Daisy's profound effect on Gatsby. Secondly, and more importantly, Gatsby's realization that none of his possessions are real comments on the falseness on which his life has been based. None of his possessions have ever been real because they have all been collected with the single purpose of attracting Daisy.

Gatsby, however, soon discovers that Daisy's return is not sufficient in itself; her return must restore his former sense of himself. Gatsby's dream thus exists as a never-ending cycle of desires. Fitzgerald dramatizes the insatiable quality of the dream through Gatsby's sudden realization, while staring with Daisy toward her home across the bay, that the green light no longer attracts him:

> Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one. (Gatsby 94)

The green light loses its appeal because Gatsby now possesses what it has always represented--Daisy. Seemingly, Gatsby should be one step closer to his dream; having traversed the distance between himself and the green light by attracting Daisy, he seemingly only has to recreate his former romance with her.

This next step in Gatsby's recreation, however, becomes endangered when Daisy, like the green light, loses her appeal. Nick

observes how Daisy wanes in Gatsby's eyes as though she also exists as a symbol for something else:

> ...I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness.... There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams--not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. (Gatsby 97)

Gatsby's surprise at his lack of complete happiness with Daisy demonstrates the magnitude his dream has reached. She can no longer fulfill his dream; like the green light, she has been reduced to a mere step toward a more distant goal. This goal, however, has grown uncontrollably large and consumes Gatsby. Nick observes how "it had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way" (Gatsby 97). Gatsby's loss of control of his own dream epitomizes his subservience to time; instead of directing himself toward the future, Gatsby is being led into the past.

Nick finally understands the motivation behind these actions; Gatsby attempts to recreate the past believing it will restore a lost part of himself. Fitzgerald depicts Nick's realization as a sudden clarification of Gatsby's mysterious actions:

> "I wouldn't ask too much of her," I ventured. "You can't repeat the past."
> "Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!"
> He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.
> "I'm going to fix everything just the way it was

> before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see."
> He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. (Gatsby 111)

Gatsby's statements may clarify his intentions, but they ironically create his own delusion. By working to recapture a lost part of himself, Gatsby denies himself the opportunity to grow. What he has lost has already contributed to his identity; it cannot advance him further. To proceed truly, Gatsby must realize the irretrievability of his past necessitates proceeding with his present.

Instead, Gatsby dreams of recreating the day he sacrificed, by kissing Daisy, his one opportunity to "suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder" (Gatsby 112). He laments how this kiss "wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath" and thus prevented his attaining total fulfillment (Gatsby 112). Gatsby clearly interprets this moment as the pinnacle of his life. Like Amory, he wants to preserve this highlight so that it can be relived. The kiss represents the seeming accomplishment of all his goals, but this event immediately restricts Gatsby; he knew "his mind would never romp again like the mind of God" (Gatsby 112).

Unlike Amory's naively confident desire to attack life, Gatsby shrinks from it. He interprets the kiss as a culmination rather than a commencement of new pursuits. Likewise, Fitzgerald's depiction of the scene admits his increasing acceptance of failure and unfulfillment. To echo Gatsby's thoughts, Fitzgerald depicts the kiss in language that implies decay and dissolution: "at his

lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete" (Gatsby 112). The blossoming flower image creates a sense of limited life as the flower must inevitably wilt and die. In the same manner, the kiss becomes limiting for Gatsby. He incorrectly interprets their union as an act that prevents the continual growth of his identity. The kiss, in reality, does not restrict him; the limitations result from his belief that he has chosen Daisy at the expense of himself.

This false conclusion explains his intense desire to recapture Daisy; he believes a reunion with her will restore his ability to grow and develop. In reality, the reappearance of Daisy inflicts more damage on Gatsby's character; he quickly falls to her superficial level. His obsessive desire to have Daisy renounce her love for Tom and express it for himself ultimately transforms Gatsby into what others have always thought him to be. Nick narrates this unfortunate transformation:

> Then I turned back to Gatsby--and was startled at his expression. He looked--and this is said in all contempt for the babbled slander of his garden--as if he had "killed a man." For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way. (Gatsby 135)

Gatsby's decline proves that Daisy's return has not been what is needed to regenerate his development. He needs to apply the energy and focus of his "dream" to activities with attainable goals. Instead, he struggles futilely for Daisy:

> ...he began to talk excitedly to Daisy, denying

> everything, defending his name against accusations that had not been made. But with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up, and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undespairingly, toward that lost voice across the room. (Gatsby 135)

This fruitless struggle reveals two invaluable aspects that Gatsby's dream lacks. The dream must pursue a goal worthy of being attained and able to be attained. Unfortunately, Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy fails both criteria and consequently fails to further his identity's growth.

Despite the inherent shortcomings of his dream, Gatsby refuses to abandon it; he clings steadfastly with a tenacity and devotion that Nick grows to admire. This devotion marks Fitzgerald's similar pledge to share Gatsby's burden in the battle to endure life's limitations. Fitzgerald's growing affection for Gatsby manifests itself when Nick, Fitzgerald's narrative voice, transfers his own thoughts to Gatsby, as he supposes how the unfulfilled dream leads Gatsby to reflect on its impact on his life:

> I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. (Gatsby 162)

Fitzgerald speaks through Nick's speculation to assess where Gatsby's dream has failed. Instead of liberating Gatsby for unconditional growth, the dream has restricted his identity to the

perceptions of his social relations. Gatsby has not been able to progress at a pace equal to time because he has foolishly believed he can stop its progression and return to the past. Finally, Gatsby's dream makes him an alien in the world he must inhabit. The lofty conditions the dream establishes cannot be fulfilled in Gatsby's society; its harsh realities degrade the dream as evidenced by the "blossoming flower" (Gatsby 112) becoming a "grotesque rose" (Gatsby 162).

Gatsby's failure, however, cannot simply be blamed on his dream; it must be blamed on his failure to temper the dream to the world in which he lives. The Great Gatsby's setting cannot accommodate the magnificence of Gatsby's dream. From the unsatisfying marriage between George and Myrtle Wilson in the wretched Valley of Ashes to the same dissatisfaction between Tom and Daisy Buchanan in luxurious East Egg, unfulfillment abounds in the novel's world, "a new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about..." (Gatsby 162). These ghosts personify the innumerable forces that cripple and consume dreams like Gatsby's.

Fitzgerald portrays characters, like Gatsby, who blindly challenge fate as inevitably doomed. Though unknown to them, their dreams are unattainable from the beginning. Fitzgerald, however, speaking through Nick, admits that these dreams will always exist:

> Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther....And one fine morning---

> So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (Gatsby 182)

The universality of these dreams necessitates that Fitzgerald's protagonists unavoidably experience failure, a feeling Amory certainly never anticipated as This Side of Paradise ended. This tragic fatalism marks Fitzgerald's progression since his first novel, but it does not excuse his characters, or himself, from the need to continue the self's creative development.

Nick's shift from Gatsby to a universal "we" in his final analysis of Gatsby's dream unites the struggles facing both Gatsby and Fitzgerald. Nick can serve as this bridge because in the novel he occupies two roles; he actively participates in the action, and he narrates the story to the reader. Through his narration, Nick resembles Fitzgerald, the creative writer struggling to realize his artistic identity, but through his participation in the novel's action, Nick resembles Gatsby, the individual struggling merely to survive in an inhospitable world. Thus, Fitzgerald can sympathize with Gatsby's plight; each must "run faster, stretch out [his] arms faster" in order to preserve his identity.

Nick's physical presence in Gatsby's world also marks the convergence between Fitzgerald's world and the fictional worlds he created. Fitzgerald no longer distances himself from his characters so that he can editorialize using their mistakes as he did in This Side of Paradise. In his first novel, Fitzgerald held himself up as the example Amory should emulate, but in The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald finds respect for Gatsby--not specifically his dream's

goal but the intensity and devotion with which he pursues it. This developing convergence culminates in his 1931 short story "Babylon Revisited" in which Charlie Wales' dream offers Fitzgerald an inspirational model for his own life..

The noble admiration with which Fitzgerald portrays Charlie Wales stems from the similarities between their two situations. In 1931, both Fitzgerald's life and his writing were immersed in crises. His wife Zelda had been institutionalized for mental health reasons, and Fitzgerald consequently grew fearful of losing his daughter. These personal difficulties impeded Fitzgerald's writing; he could find neither the time nor peace to dedicate fully to writing a new novel. Thus, Fitzgerald was forced to make the conclusions his life had been building toward since This Side of Paradise--living and writing were not always compatible. Whereas his writing had previously advanced his living, Fitzgerald had to face the fact that his living was impeding his writing. How to resolve this situation became Fitzgerald's concern, and he created Charlie Wales to serve as his model.

"Babylon Revisited" finally presents a character, faced with failure, able to salvage his identity and transform it into a guide for the future. Although written eleven years later, "Babylon Revisited," like This Side of Paradise, "takes shape through [its protagonist's] Charlie's deepening self-discovery" (Sklar 244). In the story, Charlie Wales returns to Paris having recovered from a mental and economic collapse to regain custody of his young daughter, Honoria. Years earlier Charlie had lived in Paris as part

of the drunken, frivolous, carefree, expatriot crowd dominating the city. After squandering his money and losing his wife, Charlie finally left Paris to reorganize his life. Having learned to control his alcoholism and having reestablished a successful business, Charlie returns to Paris to find himself a stranger: "It was not an American bar any more--he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it. It had gone back into France" (Short Stories 616). Charlie accepts his new alien status. This acceptance exemplifies his recognition that elements exist within the world that he cannot change and represents his first step toward pursuit of a tangible dream. Charlie's acceptance also reveals Fitzgerald's admission that life presents limitations that neither his living nor his writing can overcome.

Charlie, as he has accepted that the world presents unalterable circumstances, also accepts the irretrievability of his past. He reflects on his former years in Paris with wise insight: "I spoiled this city for myself. I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone" (Short Stories 618). Charlie's squandering, however, does not spark an immediate desire to return to these lost days as Gatsby's unfulfillment does. Instead, Charlie accepts the lost time with the optimism that he can always move forward. "He had larger plans" Fitzgerald notes in reference to Charlie's pursuit of his daughter (Short Stories 619). These plans motivate Charlie to work doggedly to escape the past by working toward the future.

Even when tempted with opportunities to relive his old days in Paris, Charlie deliberately avoids them:

> He passed a lighted door from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity; it was Bricktop's, where he had parted with so many hours and so much money. A few doors farther on he found another ancient rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside. Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leapt to their feet and a maitre d'hotel swooped toward him crying, "Crowd just arriving, sir!" But he withdrew quickly. (Short Stories 620)

Fitzgerald intentionally depicts these night clubs as predators of human souls to illustrate Charlie's devotion and vision. When once he would have quickly betrayed himself--as Amory did in his meeting with the stranger--for these immediate, but temporary, satisfactions, Charlie now has grander intentions which have grown from his ability to perceive his prodigal past as teacher. The years wasted have taught Charlie how to approach the future. He reflects:

> It had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering, the things, that now he would always remember--his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont.
>
> (Short Stories 620)

Thus, Charlie will make amends for his previous lifestyle. Years earlier he had squandered everything; now he will turn his emptiness into fulfillment. Significantly, Charlie reorders his life by moving forward, not by looking back.

Charlie's relationship with his daughter Honoria reflects this

maturity. He does not dwell on the years lost to his frivolity; instead, Charlie focuses on shaping Honoria's future:

> She was already an individual with a code of her own, and Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly. (Short Stories 623)

In order to realize his goal, Charlie must regain custody of Honoria, who has been living with his sister-in-law in Paris. This quest fully occupies Charlie's present while simultaneously preparing for his future. Ironically, Fitzgerald designs this pursuit to repair Charlie's past mistakes. His efforts to reclaim Honoria bring back visions of his estranged, and ultimately deceased, wife:

> Going over it again brought Helen nearer, and in the white, soft light that steals upon half sleep near morning he found himself talking to her again. She said that he was perfectly right about Honoria and that she wanted Honoria to be with him. She said she was glad he was being good and doing better. (Short Stories 628)

This redemptive vision heals the wounds that Charlie has felt since inadvertently locking his wife out in the snow years earlier. Fitzgerald skillfully designs this self-forgiveness to coincide with Charlie's re-established relationship with Honoria. By readmitting her into his life, Charlie vicariously amends his mistreatment of his wife. Thus, Charlie can symbolically repair the past; but significantly, this reparation occurs only through Charlie's active preparation for the future.

Despite his future hopes, Charlie firmly establishes himself

in the present. He recognizes that only the present will develop and reward him: "The present was the thing--work to do and someone to love" (Short Stories 628). The present coincides with Charlie's devotion to reality. Having wasted so many years on empty speculations, Charlie now roots himself in substance. "Wanting only the tangible, visible child," Charlie ignores the theoretical debate concerning's Honoria's legal guardian (Short Stories 628). This vision and determination will seemingly bring happiness and success to Charlie, but the mistakes of his past life quickly invade Charlie's dream.

Charlie's inescapable past returns to frustrate him in the form of two old friends, Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarrles. Their arrival brings disruption and chaos to Charlie's pursuit: "They were gay, they were hilarious, they were roaring with laughter. For a moment Charlie was astounded" (Short Stories 631). Fitzgerald reintroduces these characters to show that Charlie's ability to move forward from his past does not necessitate his escape from it. Instead his past lingers to cheat Charlie out of the immediate realization of his dream. Thus, Fitzgerald depicts a world always working contrary to man to deny him permanent happiness and success.

Like Fitzgerald's other protagonists, Charlie Wales must look beyond his temporary successes to redeem his life's value. For Fitzgerald certainly attributes value to life's experiences; the value, however, often lies hidden in the experiences themselves. After Lorraine's and Duncan's visit negates Charlie's present

attempt to reclaim Honoria, Fitzgerald deliberately sets Charlie in a bar, the sight of so many past disillusions and self-deceptions, to emphasize his current self-awareness:

> He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever. But he wanted his child, and nothing was much good now, beside that fact. He wasn't young any more, with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have by himself. He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone. (Short Stories 633)

This final state of mind reflects the satisfaction and knowledge Charlie has been able to extract from his uncompleted pursuit of Honoria. The struggle has taught him that time's fleeting nature demands he return soon to resume his task. His devotion has ordered his life by creating one primary goal--reclaiming Honoria. Finally, Charlie can reconcile his broken relationship with his wife. His imagining her blessing replaces years of self-doubt and self-accusation to yield satisfaction within Charlie's failure.

Within Charlie's apparent failure also exists Fitzgerald's own maturation since writing This Side of Paradise and The Great Gatsby. On the surface, Charlie has accomplished nothing; he sits alone in the bar without his daughter just as he did at the story's beginning. Similarly, Fitzgerald initially does not seem to have progressed significantly since the conclusion of The Great Gatsby six years earlier. At that novel's conclusion, Fitzgerald, although he sympathized with Gatsby and the rest of mankind as it struggled against the indifferent "tides" of life to realize its dreams, hinted at no temporary fulfillments or victories to redeem man's

struggles.

The conclusion of "Babylon Revisited," however, implies that satisfaction can be found in failure. Charlie's quest for Honoria gives his life order and purpose while simultaneously providing absolution for his past transgressions. These redemptive qualities are products of Charlie's daily struggles and consequently amend for his inability to regain custody of Honoria. In contrast, Jay Gatsby experienced none of these consolations--these temporary satisfactions--in his struggle to regain a lost part of himself; his dogged pursuit of his dream simply produced death. These different fates experienced by Gatsby and Charlie Wales do not simply reflect the differences in their characters as much as they reflect the personal growth Fitzgerald's life and writing generated in his own character.

Charlie Wales finds some value in his failure specifically because Fitzgerald also needed to discover some fragment of redemption during this period. The traumatizing events in his personal life--his wife's mental collapse and the potential that his daughter would be removed from his custody--impeded his daily living as well as his ability to write a fourth novel. Thus, Charlie's determination to return someday to regain custody of Honoria becomes Fitzgerald's own vow to endure the trials facing him. Rather than be consumed by his personal problems, Fitzgerald pledges to overcome them through daily struggles. This ability to gain inspiration from Charlie reflects the convergence that has delivered Fitzgerald to the same level as his fictional characters.

Fitzgerald's ability to empathize as well as be inspired by Charlie marks a dramatic shift from his previous narrative attitudes toward his protagonists. In This Side of Paradise, Amory Blaine neither motivated nor inspired Fitzgerald; instead it was Fitzgerald who presented himself as Amory's motivation and inspiration. Consequently, at the novel's end, when Amory stands confident and certain that the world will embrace him, he reflects Fitzgerald's own naive belief that the future holds unlimited success and happiness. Amory cannot sense the possibility of failure because Fitzgerald himself could not. Both believe they have already surpassed the possibility of failure--Amory by finally understanding the relationship between his dual role as personality and personage and Fitzgerald by discovering the relationship between his living and writing.

The five years between the publication of Fitzgerald's first novel and The Great Gatsby introduces the convergence between the author and his protagonists that finally culminated in "Babylon Revisited." Through his narrative agent Nick Carraway, Fitzgerald begins to admit to his own fallibility. By placing Nick in the same world as Jay Gatsby, Fitzgerald acknowledges that his own dreams and hopes potentially face the same fate as Gatsby's. Failure is no longer relegated to the status of an obstacle overcome in the past; failure now exists as an imminent and potentially destructive barrier in the present and future. After this admission, Fitzgerald cannot remain superior to Gatsby; he is forced to commiserate in the similarities of their fates. Consequently, Nick exists within

the same tragically fated world as Gatsby.

By 1931, the failure and defeat that Fitzgerald had sensed at the conclusion of The Great Gatsby have seemingly captured the author. His personal life and his writing career both seem destined to collapse; the unlimited promises that both Fitzgerald and Amory sensed at the conclusion of This Side of Paradise have disappeared. Consequently, Fitzgerald abandons his youthful romanticism--his faith that the future offered limitless fulfillment and satisfaction--for the acceptance that his life's redemption will be discovered within his daily struggles to live and write. Like Charlie, Fitzgerald must live in the present; the future no longer contains the infinite dreams it once held for Amory, Gatsby, and the younger Fitzgerald. Thus, Fitzgerald learns to temper his hopes to the world's limitations so that he may discover satisfaction simply in his day-to-day existence.

Fitzgerald's new philosophy does not admit to his defeat by life's limitations nor does it discredit his earlier literature. His romanticism has been replaced by a new tragic fatalism, but this tragic view of life also entails a new wisdom. Ironically, this wisdom brings Fitzgerald the achievement his youthful illusions never could. In struggling to endure the limitations he at first ignored and then dreaded, Fitzgerald created literature reflective of his era but simultaneously transcending it to endure beyond the limitations his life presented.

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