

ABSTRACT

BLITCHOK, AMY MARIE. Trauma and Gender Performance in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* and *The Last Tycoon*. (Under the direction of Anne Baker.)

This project uses biographical and historical information in conjunction with psychoanalytic and gender studies in order to show how F. Scott Fitzgerald recreates his own traumas of emasculation through his work, especially *Tender is the Night* and *The Last Tycoon*, in order to create a more appealing fictional narrative and imagined resolution to his personal tragedies. By examining biographical information in light of Fitzgerald's particular historical moment and the social forces that contributed to his personal definition of masculinity we can begin to trace the evolution of his emasculated sense of self and how that progression was reflected in his work. After uncovering the way in which Fitzgerald used *Tender is the Night* as his own therapeutic outlet for expressing his gender anxieties, I show in Chapter Three how the collision of personal, emotional and professional circumstances lead him to a very different novel, *The Last Tycoon*. The achievement of some resolution in *Tender is the Night* allowed him to move beyond the flawed and doomed hero of his earlier novels. He was no longer bound to the repetition of earlier traumas, so in his final novel he was able to create his most admirable hero and essentially complete his own idealized narrative, which was free from the gender anxieties that had plagued his life and his work.

**TRAUMA AND GENDER PERFORMANCE IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S
*TEDNER IS THE NIGHT AND THE LAST TYCOON***

by
AMY MARIE BLITCHOK

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APPROVED BY:

John Charles

James Clark

Anne Baker

Chair of Advisory Committee

BIOGRAPHY

I grew up in Lake Orion, Michigan and earned my BA in English literature from Adrian College in Adrian, MI. Under the guidance of Dr. Robin Bott I made my way to North Carolina State University in pursuit of my MA in English literature. I currently live in Cary, NC with my two dogs, Oprah and Harpo and I travel frequently to MI to visit my parents, Bill and Terry Blitchok and my two brothers, Adam and Caleb.

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Introduction

In many ways the legendary life of F. Scott Fitzgerald has succeeded in overshadowing his less glamorous work as a disciplined writer. His work itself is so highly autobiographical that it is hard to separate Fitzgerald the man from his fiction. Part of the heavy focus on the life of Fitzgerald is due to the tremendously rich collection of Fitzgerald correspondences, manuscripts and other notes available to scholars. As a result, most of the criticism available on Fitzgerald's work is purely biographical. This narrow focus is a great disservice to Fitzgerald and undermines his merit as a skilled writer and not just a symbol of his generation. It was not until recently that scholars moved away from studying Fitzgerald as merely a historical figure who happened to write a few books, and began to examine his work in light of progressive literary theories.¹ This more literary academic work focuses on the literary features of his novels, completely removing the influence of biographical elements, while taking into account the challenges to gender identity brought about by World War I. The shortage of men at home and in the workplace due to the war made it necessary and therefore more socially acceptable for women to take on traditionally masculine roles. This shift in the rigid Victorian ideals of gender produced a period where the idea of gender was constantly being challenged and renegotiated. Because it was a period of transition, the 1920s are a potent time in American history and the inevitable intersection between

¹ See for example, Susann Cokal, "Caught in the Wrong Psychoanalysis and Narrative Structure in *Tender is the Night*," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 47, no. 1 (2005): 75-100.

Tiffany Joseph, "Non-Combatant's Shell-Shock: Trauma and Gender in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*," NWSA Journal, 15 no. 3 (2003): 64-81.

Frances Kerr, "Feeling 'Half-Feminine': Modernism and the Politics of Emotion in *The Great Gatsby*," American Literature: a Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography, 68 no. 2 (1996): 405-431.

literature and current events provide a fertile target for inquiry. It is my view, however, that despite the advantages of historically contextualizing novels, this mode of investigation *by itself* does not yield the most insightful results because of the personal nature of Fitzgerald's writing.

The ideal approach to Fitzgerald's work is a combination of biographical, historical and thematic perspectives, which takes into account the combined effect of historical and personal influences. Ultimately, it is an undeniable fact that Fitzgerald's life experiences played an incalculably important role in the creation of his fiction, but what has not been achieved thus far in scholarly studies of Fitzgerald is a thorough synthesis of his life and work and how his life experiences manifested themselves in the richly psychological landscapes of his later works. By understanding the personal and historical events that shaped the author and his time, we can add a new depth to our understanding of his work and better employ the wealth of biographical records we do have in a more effective manner.

My intention is to advance the Fitzgerald discussion to the next level by tracing psychological parallels between his life and his fiction in order to show how Fitzgerald's insecurities play out in his writing. It is not enough simply to connect the dots between factual similarities that have crossed over from his life to his work. Using the principles of psychoanalysis and trauma theory we can begin to decipher a more complex and revealing understanding of the events that shaped Fitzgerald as a person and how his personality subtly worked its way into his work. He was able successfully to transpose his personal tragedies onto paper in very raw and revealing way. This is especially true in his last two novels, *Tender is the Night* (1934) and *The Love of the Last Tycoon*. (The

latter was published posthumously in 1941 in its unfinished form). His deepest fears, most influential experiences, and most painful setbacks are thinly veiled in these works. Yet these novels should not simply be read as blurring the line between fiction and autobiography. Instead, they represent a complex psychological portrait of the artist that goes beyond the egotistical, self referential perspective of his early novels. The challenge in reading his works then is to untangle the merging of autobiography and fiction and examine them separately in order to gain a better understanding of how they function together. Through the process of this investigation, the image of Fitzgerald as a deeply and repeatedly emasculated male will begin to emerge. A brief discussion of cultural history will show how Victorian ideals of masculinity influenced Fitzgerald's view of masculinity. By combining our knowledge of social influences with biographical facts and circumstances, I will to further explain the sources of this emasculation and plot out its course through Fitzgerald's life. A solid biographical background will also add credence to my assertions that his insecurities, which simultaneously arise from and exacerbate his sense of emasculation, manifest quite clearly in his work. Using biography we can trace the origins of his thematic obsession with masculinity and the emasculating powers of romantic relationships with strong females.

In addition to biographical, historical and psychoanalytic tools, I will also employ the concepts of gender and masculinity studies to aid in my discussion of masculinity and how it functions both on a sociological and individual level.² The goal here is to move

² A quick search for works directly discussing Fitzgerald and his treatment of masculinity produces few complete matches. Most of the results focus on the relationship between Fitzgerald and Hemingway. The topic of Fitzgerald and his treatment of masculinity may have been largely ignored thus far because Hemingway, with his hypermasculine reputation, presents a more obvious candidate for mode of inquiry. Bryce Traister, however, places Fitzgerald alongside Hemingway, Melville, Whitman, Thoreau and London as the "bastions of masculinist canonicity," arguing that they represent a variety of anxieties

away from accepting gender as biologically assigned and to acknowledge it as a construct which takes on multiple forms. By understanding that gender is a social construct we can begin to examine how Fitzgerald's ideas about his own masculinity were formed and then challenged throughout his life. In Chapter Two I will also use trauma theory to show how Fitzgerald recreates his own traumas of emasculation through his work in order to create a more appealing fictional narrative and imagined resolution to his personal tragedies. Although some critics have already examined *Tender is the Night* by looking at issues of masculinity at work in the novel, my approach differs in that it combines recent theoretical practices with the already well established biographical information we have on Fitzgerald in order to gain a better perspective.

After uncovering the way in which Fitzgerald used *Tender is the Night* as his own therapeutic outlet, I will show in Chapter Three how the collision of personal, emotional and professional circumstances lead him to a very different novel, *The Last Tycoon*. The achievement of some resolution in *Tender is the Night* allowed him to move beyond the flawed and doomed hero of his earlier novels. He was no longer bound to the repetition of earlier traumas, so in his final novel he was able to create his most admirable hero and essentially complete his own idealized narrative. For this reason the novel is not as obvious a vehicle for gender anxieties and should be read in light of his previous works as the final stage in the evolution in his career. The novel's unfinished status sets limits on the amount of critical analysis that can be applied. Although we have a wealth of notes on the direction Fitzgerald was planning to take with the novel, they only provide us with material for speculation. But when put within the context of Fitzgerald's life and

surrounding what it means to be a man. See Bryce Traister, "Academic Viagra: The Rise of American Masculinity Studies," *American Quarterly*, 52, no. 2 (2000): 298.

career his final manuscript is ripe with insights into his last years and the final stage in the evolution of his struggle to alleviate his anxieties concerning masculinity.

Chapter One

From a very early age F. Scott Fitzgerald was deeply aware of the destructive power of emasculation. The very circumstances of his birth laid the seed for a whole host of insecurities concerning his masculinity that would only continue to swell and multiply as he grew older. Fitzgerald was a man defined by his fears and insecurities as well as his hope and dreams. His naturally emotional and sensitive personality did not fit into the strictly dichotomous gender roles that characterized the cultural climate of his youth. He was raised in a historical moment that told him the qualities that made him unique were feminine and that what was feminine was weak and wrong. As any good writer would, he observed, absorbed and internalized how people reacted to him, especially his young peers, and he became aware of the benefits of acting in accordance with gender norms and of the consequences he would suffer if he did not take on a more masculine persona. Consequently, he found himself in a lifelong struggle to define and achieve a sense of masculinity, a struggle which would manifest thematically in all of his works.

Fitzgerald's childhood may have laid the foundation for his insecurities, but it was his adult relationships that presented the most damaging assault to his masculinity. In addition to his mutually destructive and inspiring marriage to Zelda Sayre, Fitzgerald's friendship with Ernest Hemingway was a constant source of emasculation. Their relationship is a well documented part of literary history, but what is not always at the forefront of their story is the destructive nature of their interactions. Hemingway had created a public image of hypermasculinity and it was a mythology that Fitzgerald willingly bought into. Hemingway became the model for Fitzgerald's ideal masculinity and in turn, Hemingway took advantage of Fitzgerald's hero worship, never missing an

opportunity to firmly place Fitzgerald in a feminized position. As Michael Nowlin states, “each writer defined himself alongside and against the other in terms burdened with assumptions about masculinity and artistic power, which left Fitzgerald acting as a kind of ‘feminine’ partner to the hero he worshipped.”³ Their self comparisons went beyond mere competition between writers and had implications that touched the very core of their identities. Although Fitzgerald’s struggles with masculinity may have caused personal turmoil, their influence on his work was profound. A lifetime of childhood influences and adult relationships created and exacerbated certain insecurities, which in turn culminated in a particular view of gender and a psychological depth that would characterize all of his work, especially his last two novels, *Tender is the Night* and *The Last Tycoon*.

To begin to understand Fitzgerald’s view of masculinity and how it was formed and challenged through his life we must first appreciate the cultural moment in which Fitzgerald lived. The early twentieth century was still feeling the residual effects of the Industrial Revolution, which caused a rapid change in cultural economics. Birth rights were a thing of the past. Young men who came from strong patriarchal lineage and who were expecting to inherit fortunes and imitate their fathers now had to compete with self-made men who were climbing up the socio-economic ladder of respectability. The workplace was becoming redefined. Machines could now perform many of the tasks that had been considered man’s work and men were feeling a loss of control. The formerly congenial workplace was now becoming increasingly competitive. Men responded by

³ Michael Nowlin, “‘The World’s Rarest Work’: Modernism and Masculinity in Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night*,” *College Literature* 25, no. 2 (1998): 4.

exerting more control over every part of their life, right down to their bodies, and reshaping a sense of masculinity that was defined by self discipline.⁴

As the workplace continued to change, men clung to it more tightly as a symbol of their manhood. This led to a very distinct separation of spheres for men and women. The home became feminized and was supposed to serve as a sanctuary for men from the harsh reality of being the sole breadwinner for his wife and children. The combination of the strict separation of spheres and the newly competitive nature of the workplace meant that men needed all the energy possible to succeed. Every part of their lives became heavily regulated so that temptation could be avoided. They needed all the energy possible to fight against the new attacks on masculinity by an increasingly technology based society.

The remnants of Victorian ideals that were still at work in the early twentieth century relied heavily on the idea that men and women were biologically designed to excel in different areas. The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, through his writings and publicized debates with other minds of his time, came to be associated with the idea that anatomy was destiny. Although not the first to express this idea, he was an outspoken advocate of the view that women were made to bear and rear children and serve their husbands. He separated masculine and feminine traits and aptitudes right down to the most mundane details. Even food preferences were biologically dictated. Women preferred sweets and dairy products, while men should be fueled on meat and

⁴ Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 31. Even men's sperm, which was seen as a source of energy, had to be rationed. Men came to think that even the strongest manhood would crumble in the workplace if he did not practice what became known as "spermatoc economy."

wine.⁵ These ideas of biologically distinct genders were reinforced by the separation of spheres and the increasing need to preserve a masculinity that was being attacked by the changing world of the Industrial revolution. Although Fitzgerald's parents would have been more directly influenced by these historic events and ideologies concerning gender, he was still susceptible to the continued influence of such a potent period of social and economic change.

More recent studies tell us that masculinity does not lend itself well to such strict definition or constraints. In fact the very concept of gender is problematic. According to Judith Butler, gender is merely a performative act: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."⁶ We are socialized to perform a certain gender through our actions and code ourselves as masculine or feminine through our dress and appearance. This constant performance becomes so automatic that we begin to regard it as biologically assigned and not socially constructed.⁷ But even if we accept that gender is a performative act, we are still left with the question of how the standards of masculinity are set. How do we begin to deconstruct masculinity and understand its "regulatory frame?"

As Bryce Traister asserts, "American masculinity [is] historically contingent and continually at crisis."⁸ Masculinity, then, almost defies definition, especially outside of a historical context. At its very core though, masculinity is about maintaining the dominant

⁵ Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers read Rousseau* (Albany: State University of New York, 1997), 15-19.

⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999): 33.

⁷ Greg Harris, "Compulsory Masculinity, Britain, and the Great War: The Literary-Historical Work of Pat Barker," *Critique*, 39, no. 4 (1998): 301.

⁸ Traister, 284.

power, which allows it the right to formulate norms and also creates the burden of protecting those norms. It is a gender riddled with anxieties. Masculinity is a screen against which men project their fears of “others” in order to construct a popular concept of manhood. Masculinity is a club best defined by those who are denied membership—“blue collar” workers, gay men, men of color, immigrant men, and women.⁹ Yet, if masculinity is historically contingent then its membership must be fluid and susceptible to a variety of variables. To conclude his own appraisal of modern masculinity studies, Traister states that, “To hold that all masculine genders are performative, incoherent, and anxious is to hold that incoherent and anxious gender performativity is normative; the incoherence of gender becomes its own kind of ‘regulatory fiction.’”¹⁰ Because of its destabilized and denaturalized position, masculinity becomes a malleable term vulnerable to a variety of influences.

As shown above, it is futile to try and establish a group of standards that form the of core masculinity. However, we can begin to understand Fitzgerald’s personal concept of masculinity by taking into account societal shifts that were occurring because of historical events and by referring to biographical sources. In Fitzgerald’s case, because he was also directly influenced by events and personal relationships, historically contextualizing his influences yields only partially accurate conclusions about his definition of masculinity. Although he was influenced by his parents’ model of Victorian ideals gone wrong, his identity was molded by events that occurred even before he was born, and through a complex layering of different experiences and values he arrived at his

⁹ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 6. Although the physical labor associated with “blue collar” workers may indicate masculinity in modern times, masculinity used to be more influenced by issues of class. Masculinity was part of bourgeoisie privilege.

¹⁰ Traister, 296-297.

own personal definition of masculinity. By the time he reached adulthood he came to equate masculinity with a variety of different things including: financial wealth, sexual virility, physical prowess, literary productivity and popularity among an elite set. Yet the inherently anxiety ridden nature of masculinity never allowed him to feel completely successful in all of these categories.

Fitzgerald was doomed to struggle against, and yet in some respects repeat, the model of domesticity established by his parents. The young Fitzgerald craved the security and status that wealth could provide and was especially sensitive to his father's failure to provide these things to his family. His father failed to achieve success in the newly competitive workplace, leaving his mother, in a sense, to rule both spheres. She was responsible for the education and moral guidance of her children, and her family's money provided their main source of income. It was the butting of heads between Fitzgerald's strong willed and financially secure mother and his respectable, yet demure father that would familiarize him with the concept of emasculation even if he still lacked the ability to verbalize what he was witnessing.¹¹ It is reported that Fitzgerald "whose childhood was spent moving from place to place because of his father's inability to make a living . . . could be reduced to uncontrollable terror by the news that his father had lost his job." Ultimately the repercussions of these frequent moves would not motivate Fitzgerald to live a settled life after he had become an adult and could exert more control

¹¹ Although there are few recorded instances of Fitzgerald speaking directly about his mother, she seems eerily similar to his future wife, who would become the ultimate exacerbator of his anxieties concerning his own masculinity.

over his own life.¹² Instead, Fitzgerald continued to chase a false sense of security and recreate the trauma he experienced as a child.

Despite the perceived failing of his father, from an outsider's point of view Fitzgerald *did* have access to the privileges of the rich and fashionable. Fitzgerald's maternal grandfather was an Irish immigrant who started and successfully operated a wholesale grocery business. This connection allowed him access to certain social sets in St. Paul and gave him a glimpse at what money could buy. This side of his parentage was counteracted by his father's Maryland roots. Fitzgerald's father came from a people known to exhibit good breeding, but who declined in status over the years because of bad finances.¹³ Here we see the conflict between patriarchal lineage and the self-made man, which was a symptom of the Industrial Revolution, at work in Fitzgerald. He would spend much of his life torn between yearning for the privilege of money and desiring the respectability afforded by a strong family tradition. It was a struggle he expressed in an interview later in life:

What chance have they, these men and women of my generation who come from families with some money! I'm not blaming them. What chance has a young man, unless he was to work for his living? If he were born in England there would at least be a tradition behind him and a background. Here he is born in a Middle Western town. His grandfather, perhaps, was a farm laborer. He-the third

¹² At different times throughout his life Fitzgerald lived in Paris, Hollywood, North Carolina, Maryland, Alabama and New York, just to name a few.

¹³ Arthur Mizener, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 5, 6, 5. I have chosen to cite Mizener's biography of Fitzgerald often when documenting factual events because it offers the most concise and comprehensive account of Fitzgerald's life.

generation-is brought up to be absolutely helpless. He is sent to a fine private school, near New York, and before he's through he knows everything every boy ever knew and every chorus girl in town. Then his family resolves that he must go to Yale. He goes there to raise hell. When he's through-if he gets through-he's absolutely ruined.¹⁴

Here Fitzgerald acknowledges the burden of money and its potentially destructive power. The myth of the self made man seems preferable to inheriting wealth that is not attached to any family tradition. His own personal situation left him feeling as though he were only hovering at the border of respectability and, as Mizener suggests, battling between "self-assertion and self-doubt."¹⁵

Perhaps one of the most influential events, one that would shape his entire sense of identity, occurred before Fitzgerald was even born. As he wrote later in life: "Three months before I was born my mother lost her other two children and I think I came first of all though I don't know how it worked exactly. I think I started then to be a writer."¹⁶ The death of his sisters, months before his own birth, made him an only child and the focus of his mother's attention. Consequently he came to crave, expect and even require attention. As a young child he got the attention he needed by performing in front of family and friends.¹⁷ He was so absorbed in the pursuit of attention that he later wrote to his daughter Scottie that: "I didn't know until 15 that there was anyone in the world

¹⁴ Marshall, 257.

¹⁵ Mizener, 12.

¹⁶ Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald*, (New York: Scribner, 1962), 7.

¹⁷ William A. Fahey, *F. Scott Fitzgerald and the American Dream*, (New York: Crowell, 1972), 3.

except me and it cost me plenty.”¹⁸ These small, living room solo performances fed his legendary ego and the sense of grandeur that would characterize his work; they also fueled his love of the theatre, a pursuit that he would take with him all the way to Princeton.

Fitzgerald’s love of attention evolved into a desire for popularity as he grew older. It was during his adolescent years that he began to equate popularity with masculinity. The admiration of other boys meant meeting the requirements of masculinity as defined by the collective consciousness of his peers. As a young man Fitzgerald enjoyed the privileges that went along with being a McQuillan. He was able to attend private schools beginning with St. Paul Academy. It was there that he began his desperate pursuit of popularity. He was always acutely aware of his position within the social hierarchy and always looking for opportunities to move up the ladder.¹⁹ Ironically, his efforts to achieve and increase his popularity only seemed to backfire. Not only was he neglecting his studies, he became a decidedly unlikable figure at the school. One of his classmates even wrote in the school paper: “Will someone poison Scotty or find some means to shut his mouth?”²⁰ Clearly Fitzgerald’s efforts were transparent to his peers. He was simply trying too hard.

Navigating adolescence on his way to Princeton would continue to prove a difficult road. Physically he was a slight and pretty boy whose looks made him the object of desire for young girls and the target for ridicule from his male peers. As Arthur Mizener observed: “With his yellow hair and green eyes he was almost girlishly

¹⁸ Qtd. in Fahey, 2.

¹⁹ Fahey, 25.

²⁰ Fahey, 3.

handsome.”²¹ His feminine looks were further emphasized by his mother’s fastidious mode of dressing him. Fitzgerald dressed with more elegance than his classmates and was known to have a collection of silk bowties.²² The fact that his mother was dressing him like a rich “dandy” highlighted his separateness and gave him an air of condescending pretentiousness. His own ego, largely fed by his mother would prevent him from making many friends and would compel him to win popularity by imitating more acceptable displays of masculinity.

Fitzgerald could not change his natural looks, and his materialism would stay with him his entire life, but he was observant enough to understand that he needed to conform to ideas of masculinity to some extent if he was going to be challenging it in other ways. If he could be a hero to his peers because of his physical abilities, then they would overlook his manner of dressing and generally feminine appearance. To be masculine was to excel at sports and to be able to prove ones’ self through physical feats. Fitzgerald’s size alone made this a difficult prospect. His small five feet, eight inch frame usually carried about one hundred and thirty five pounds.²³ Nonetheless, he was determined to take on an obviously visible type of masculinity that could be readily admired by his peers. Fitzgerald settled on football as an appropriate conduit through which he could achieve distinction for his physical abilities. He began obsessing with Princeton football stars and putting all his hopes into becoming a star athlete.²⁴ After he was accepted at Princeton he immediately wired to his mother to send along his football

²¹ Mizener, 23.

²² Turnbull, 13.

²³ Scott Donaldson, Hemingway Vs. Fitzgerald: The Rise and Fall of a Literary Friendship, Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press 1999: 56. In contrast, Hemingway was an even six feet tall and 190 pounds at the time the two writers met.

²⁴ Mizener, 18.

pads, but he never suited up as a college player. He simply was not good enough to play. This failure was especially painful because “he brought to Princeton for redemption all the uncertainties and defeats of his early life. To have succeeded at Princeton would have wiped them all out.”²⁵ Essentially, football was a way to overcome his insecurities by earning the validating admiration of his classmates. Success would have meant a clean slate clean after suffering through a childhood filled with emasculating events.

When his dreams of glory through football were crushed, he turned to writing and the theater as ways to earn popularity. Writing for the *Triangle*, *The Tiger*, and the *Lit* had provided Fitzgerald the opportunity to be the best at something and earn social distinction. Unfortunately these new pursuits took precedence over his studies and he spent most of his college career on academic probation. As a result he was no longer allowed to participate in extracurricular activities, including theater and the school publications and so he reverted to his old notions of grandeur through heroic physical feats of masculinity and enlisted in the army, even though he would have been entering his senior year.²⁶ Unfortunately, he was never sent overseas to see active duty: “Fitzgerald scorned the conventionally patriotic attitude; at the same time his romantic nature responded enthusiastically to the idea of the heroic individual gallantly confronting danger. He never ceased to regret the bad luck that prevented his getting overseas during the war; it was an important experience missed.”²⁷ Once again Fitzgerald was denied the chance to prove his masculinity. It is no wonder then that Fitzgerald came to idolize Hemingway and his stories of heroism in the face of battle. Fitzgerald’s stint in the army was not a complete waste though. This period provided him

²⁵ Mizener, 31.

²⁶ Matthew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald*, NY: Scribner, 1962: 79.

²⁷ Mizener, 34.

with the opportunity to write his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* and it was also during this time that he began his legendary relationship with Zelda Sayre.

If Fitzgerald had spent the first 22 years of his life trying to establish his masculinity, his marriage to Zelda marked a significant shift in the focus of his energies. From this point on he would become preoccupied with defending his masculinity. Fitzgerald's marriage was to become perhaps the most persistent and damaging challenge to his sense of identity and masculinity, but his volatile mutually destructive relationship with Zelda began innocently enough. Zelda was a Montgomery socialite who served as queen of a small world that held all the romanticism that Fitzgerald loved.²⁸ Not only was she beautiful, but she had the kind of self confidence and charm that commanded attention: "[He] was proud of the way the boys danced with her and she was so much admired. The glamour of public premium . . . gave [her] a desirability which became, indeed, indispensable to [him]."²⁹ Zelda had managed to obtain the popularity that Fitzgerald had spent a large part of his life pursuing. In many ways they were the perfect match. As Milford suggests, "They shared a beauty and youth which seemed to ally them against the more sober world before them."³⁰ The mutual attraction was instantaneous, but Zelda was not immediately ready to give up the attention she received. She had a firm grip on Fitzgerald, but she was also smart enough to constantly remind him of his

²⁸ I refer here to Matthew Bruccoli's definition of romanticism as it pertains to Fitzgerald in particular. "*Romanticism* is an open-ended term: according to authorities, it embraces such elements as primitivism, love of nature, imagination, individualism, mysticism, intuition, humanitarianism, political revolution, idealism, love of the past, escapism. The most obvious romantic quality is Fitzgerald is imaginative aspiration or illusion, the theme of all his best work. Fitzgerald believed in the individual's capacity to seek a unique destiny, although the quest is doomed in his best work." Fitzgerald's unwavering loyalty to Zelda may be best explained by his belief that their relationship, and all its tragic consequences, was a part of his destiny. *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1981), 121.

²⁹ Nancy Milford, *Zelda: A Biography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 34.

³⁰ Milford, 25.

precarious position as one suitor among many. Fitzgerald usually responded by getting jealous and drunk, which created the perfect window of opportunity for Zelda to voice her doubts about his ability to earn enough money to marry her.³¹ In the beginning this kind of recklessly passionate love may have been a source of motivation for Fitzgerald. The more she challenged his ability to provide her with not only a livable income, but one that would support her grand perception of the life she deserved, the more he was driven to prove her wrong. These accounts of their early years show that Zelda had a keen grasp of Fitzgerald's sensitive spots even before they were married. She knew exactly how to manipulate him. Later her attacks on his masculinity would become more vicious and less subtle.

It has been Zelda's misfortune to serve persistently as a scapegoat for Fitzgerald's actions. It is unfair and inaccurate to portray Zelda as merely a calculated social climber looking for a way out of Montgomery. One must remember that much of their relationship was based on the fact that they were after the very same things. From the very beginning Fitzgerald "wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people-he wanted the glittering things themselves."³² Zelda herself was one of those glittering things. A young, rebellious beauty loved and wanted by many, she knew she was a prize to be won, and she made sure Fitzgerald could actually turn their mutual vision into reality: "She wanted a largeness of life that neither of them had yet known yet and Fitzgerald respected her determination to get it; it was what he wanted too."³³

It was this common goal that kept them together in the early years despite their long distance relationship which was riddled with jealous fights, competition from other beaux

³¹ Milford, 41.

³² Mizener, 22.

³³ Mizener, 38.

and the constant disapproval of the Sayre family. It only seems natural then that Zelda would have some genuine misgivings about Fitzgerald and his ability to provide. She had big dreams and those dreams required money.

From the beginning they were a charming couple, famous for playing in public fountains and riding on top of taxis, but their extravagant, dreamlike, lifestyle exacted a high price from Fitzgerald. Despite the fact that Fitzgerald was earning a handsome salary from his writing, he had to borrow money from both Scribner's and his agent, Harold Ober. It was the beginning of financial struggles that would plague Fitzgerald for his entire life: "He was drunk with the excitement of money and at the same time outraged by his recognition of its terrible, irrational power."³⁴ His skill as a writer could not bring in money faster than they were spending it. According to his own ideas of masculinity, he was failing as a provider and therefore as a man. The fact that Zelda's final acceptance of his marriage proposal had been contingent on his financial stability also weighed heavily on him and resulted in periodic fights about money. Consequently his book about these years, *The Beautiful and Damned*, is a struggle between advocating his lifestyle and warning of its destructive power. As Mizener observes, the characters "are pitiful and silly, rather than beautiful and damned."³⁵ Fitzgerald was progressing as a writer, but he had yet to master the psychological richness that would characterize his greatest novels.

Although *The Great Gatsby* has become Fitzgerald's most well known book, its publication and the emotional toll its reception took on the author would usher in a dark time in Fitzgerald's life. He received his best reviews thus far for the book and even his

³⁴ Mizener, 46.

³⁵ Mizener, 61.

fellow writers were quick to praise his work. Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein all sent him complimentary letters, but the attention was not enough to soften the blow of poor sales.³⁶ The novel only sold 20,000 copies, which was barely enough to cover the advance.³⁷ Fitzgerald was forced to return to writing short stories, something he hated and viewed as hack work beneath a true novelist, a sentiment that was shared by others: “That he squandered his talent on commercial short stories to make the money is undeniable.”³⁸ This criticism was echoed by Hemingway who thought that by writing short stories Fitzgerald was selling out and exhibiting a lack of dedication to his art, something he would often criticize Fitzgerald of over the years.³⁹ In some respects the necessity of his short story work had a castrating affect on Fitzgerald. Although he was producing work, it was like he was constantly being held back and prevented from exercising his full power. As a result he would spend much of his life perpetually depressed about money and directly linking his inability to earn by writing novels with his worth as a man.

The financial disappointment of *The Great Gatsby* served as a catalyst for Fitzgerald’s emasculation and left him a relatively impotent writer for the next nine years. Following the publication of *The Great Gatsby* on April 10th, 1925, Fitzgerald’s earnings from the sale of movie rights and short story publications reached \$30,000. Although he was already worried about the progress of his next novel, at the very least his previous efforts had bought him some time to work without worrying about money. As it turns out though, the new novel progressed more slowly than anticipated. The initial concept was

³⁶ Turnbull, 149.

³⁷ Mizener, 61.

³⁸ Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway: A Dangerous Friendship* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994), 134.

³⁹ Donaldson, 56.

to write about the destructive influence of the expatriate lifestyle on a young American summering in the French Riviera. The plot was to revolve around a matricide. Working titles included: *Our Type*, *The World's Fair*, *The Melarky Case* and *The Boy Who Killed His Mother*.⁴⁰ Perhaps some of the delay can be chalked up to inadvertent research: Fitzgerald spent his time drinking, causing scenes and admiring the charm of Gerald and Sara Murphy, who would serve as the inspiration for the Divers. Even Zelda, his partner in crime, was critical of her husband's progress, commenting that: it "goes so slow it ought to be serialized in the Encyclopedia Britannica."⁴¹ Yet in hindsight his procrastination was productive because he was essentially living the very events that would eventually be absorbed, emotionally processed, and transformed into *Tender is the Night*: "The waste and horror of his life were to be subject of his greatest book, the book he spent nine years to live and write."⁴² At times though, it must have been hard for Fitzgerald to keep struggling when it did not appear to be a means to any end.

It is during this period that Fitzgerald's relationship with Hemingway took on an air of increasingly and viciously intentional emasculation. In hindsight their relationship was doomed from the beginning. The two men represented completely different ideologies. Hemingway despised his generation for its self-pity, sentimentalism and emotionalism. He wanted to use his writing to do away with romantic love and portray relationships where sex and desire were first and foremost. To him gender was biologically assigned, and real men and women stayed true to the ancient roles to which

⁴⁰ Bruccoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway*, 56.

⁴¹ Bruccoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway*, 63.

⁴² Fahey, 90.

they had been born.⁴³ Fitzgerald would go on to become a venerated symbol of the very generation Hemingway despised. The Jazz Age worshipped youth, romance, excess, and money. The 1920s also presented interesting challenges to gender roles. Flappers were ostentatiously playing with gender by cutting their hair and wearing traditionally masculine clothes. If Fitzgerald was the Jazz Age, then he was everything Hemingway despised.

Hemingway did not shy away from displaying his hostility and pity for Fitzgerald, whose idolization of his friend gave Hemingway all the power in the relationship. Hemingway used his control to place Fitzgerald in a feminized position and boost his own sense of masculinity. After reading *The Great Gatsby* Hemingway wrote in his journal that “no matter what Scott did, nor how he behaved, I must know it was like a sickness and be of any help I could to him and try to be a good friend”⁴⁴ This quote may seem harmless enough because it merely places Hemingway in the position of a brother figure, but this relatively benign comment does not adequately foreshadow the more vicious attacks that were to come as their relationship progressed. The fact that Hemingway would even take this position with Fitzgerald is interesting considering the fact that at the time the two men met Fitzgerald was the more successful and well established author. Hemingway had yet to publish any novel length fiction and was still six months away from the release of *In Our Time*. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, was two weeks away from the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, his second novel. Fitzgerald had already achieved literary fame and was traveling Europe in a rather luxurious manner,

⁴³ Jackson J. Benson, *Hemingway...A Writer's Art of Self Defense* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 28-29.

⁴⁴ Scott Donaldson, *Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald: The Rise and Fall of a Literary Friendship* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1999), 61.

especially when compared to Hemingway's modest living situation.⁴⁵ Hemingway must have seen Fitzgerald as a prime target to for manipulation and emasculation.

Fitzgerald's difficulties during relatively unproductive time between novels were compounded by Hemingway's persistent assaults. He was constantly asking Fitzgerald about the progress of his novel to which Fitzgerald would continually reply that he was hard at work. Based on his own personal knowledge of Fitzgerald as a person and a writer combined with the frequent updates provided by Perkins concerning Fitzgerald's latest state of nervousness, Hemingway surely knew that Fitzgerald was struggling and that the novel was merely plodding along. Yet Hemingway kept at his friend, sending him letters that may be open to interpretation as good natured tough love or patronizing competitiveness. In one exchange, Hemingway wrote: "A letter some time ago from MaxwellEEPerkins [sic] let me in on the little secret that you work eight hours every day...Well Fitz you are certainly a worker...I look forward with some eagerness to seeing the product...You dirty lousy liar to say you work (write) eight hours a day."⁴⁶

Fitzgerald tied his ability to produce novels and earn money so closely to his sense of worth as a man that it was all the more painful to admit any amount of struggle to anyone, especially Hemingway, the self proclaimed personification of masculinity. Hemingway thought that Fitzgerald was stalling because he wasn't "manly enough" to write without fearing the popular and critical reception of his work.⁴⁷

While their relationship had the potential to offer a legitimate and respected exchange of ideas, Hemingway could never accept Fitzgerald's writing process and Fitzgerald could never live up to the standard of discipline and dedication Hemingway

⁴⁵ Donaldson, 61.

⁴⁶ Brucoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway*, 98.

⁴⁷ Nowlin, 6.

had set. Hemingway presented his own philosophy on writing and a critique of Fitzgerald's fundamental problem in a letter to their mutual editor: "Work would help him, noncommercial, honest work—a paragraph at a time. But he judged a paragraph by how much money it made him and ditched his juice into that channel because he got an instant satisfaction"⁴⁸ Hemingway valued old fashioned hard work and thought that the key was simply to write and accept the fact that some of it will be good and some of it will be bad. According to Hemingway, Fitzgerald had become too obsessed with trying to write a masterpiece in order to gain favor with the critics and he made his feelings clear to Fitzgerald: "you became self conscious about it and knew you must write a Masterpiece. Nobody but Fairies ever writes . . . Masterpieces consciously"⁴⁹ Here Hemingway overtly associates Fitzgerald's desire to create a masterpiece with homosexuality. Hemingway is clearly talking down to Fitzgerald from an elevated position of normative masculinity, establishing himself as an appropriate judge and authority of masculinity.

Fitzgerald's life was further complicated by the fact that Zelda and Hemingway had an extreme dislike for one another, which is interesting considering that they were both guilty of emasculating Fitzgerald. They blamed each other for his problems. Zelda was not blinded by the hero worship that prevented her husband from sensing Hemingway's hostility and she retaliated by calling Hemingway's sexuality into question. She thought that his aggression was overacted and told him that "no one is as masculine as you pretend to be."⁵⁰ In general she regarded Hemingway as a bad

⁴⁸ Bruccoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway*, 190.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Nowlin, 5.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Benson, 164.

influence who distracted her husband and encouraged him to drink. Hemingway had similar things to say about Zelda. He thought that there were two things that prevented Fitzgerald from working -- one was Zelda and the other was alcohol --, and Hemingway was not shy about pointing out how the two were related. Zelda encouraged Fitzgerald to drink and indulge when he should be working.⁵¹ In one instance Hemingway express his assessment of Fitzgerald and his opinion of Zelda to in a letter to Maxwell Perkins:

Instead of thinking Zelda a possible good influence (what a phrase) for Scott I think 90% of all the trouble he has comes from her. Almost every bloody fool thing I have ever seen him do has been directly or indirectly Zelda inspired. I am probably wrong in this. But I often wonder if he would not have been the best writer we've ever has or likely to have if he hadn't been married to some one that would make him waste Every thing. I know no one that has ever had more talent or wasted it more. I wish to God he'd write a good book and finish it and not poop himself away on those lousy Post stories. I don't blame *Lorimer* I blame Zelda.⁵²

This is only one example, among many, of Hemingway discussing the source of Fitzgerald's problems. His forceful and angry language is worth noting. Why would he repeatedly feel compelled to write so passionately about Fitzgerald's faults? Although both Zelda and Hemingway may have been somewhat accurate in their appraisals of one another, Hemingway's attacks may reveal more about his own insecurities and need to emasculate those around him than about the source of Fitzgerald's imperfections.

⁵¹ Donaldson, 51.

⁵² Brucoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway*, 101.

Hemingway's almost desperate need to feed his own masculinity at the expense of others became even more evident after Fitzgerald's death. Hemingway would go on to write in detail about their first encounters in Paris in his book *A Moveable Feast*: "when he was drunk he would usually come to find me and, drunk, he took almost as much pleasure in interfering with my work as Zelda did interfering with his."⁵³ If Zelda had been alive, she surely would have accused Hemingway of the same type of interference. Hemingway looked down on Fitzgerald because he was incapable of controlling and dominating his wife. Hemingway further immortalized Fitzgerald's feminized position by including a scene in the novel that highlights Fitzgerald's sexual inadequacies. Fitzgerald confides in his friend that, "Zelda said that the way I was built could never make any woman happy and that was what upset her originally. She said it was a matter of measurements. I have never felt the same since she said that and I have to know truly."⁵⁴ Hemingway, being the authority on all things masculine, takes a look for himself and reassures Fitzgerald that he is perfectly normal. If this exchange actually did take place as portrayed in the novel, it was surely painful enough at the time without being permanently recorded.

The nine year period spent on the composition of *Tender is the Night*, was also the most difficult time in the Fitzgeralds' marriage. Zelda began her own personal assault on her husband. Fitzgerald was depressed about his stalled novel and drinking heavily and Zelda had begun her intensive ballet training which would eventually end in her first major psychological breakdown. These were not happy times. Zelda was sure that Scott's objections to her training were based on his jealousy over her having a career of

⁵³ Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (New York: Scribners, 2003), 184.

⁵⁴ Hemingway, 190.

her own. She lashed out at him by attacking his weakest spot, his insecurities about his masculinity. Not only did she accuse him of being an unsatisfactory lover, she also had a brief affair with a French aviator.⁵⁵ Fitzgerald was openly questioning his masculinity and becoming increasingly paranoid about how others viewed him. Zelda was bringing to the surface all the insecurities he had tried so hard to hide beneath a façade of alcohol and charm. They had spent the summer fighting “with the savageness that intimate knowledge of the weaknesses and strengths of one’s opponent makes possible.”⁵⁶ Meanwhile Zelda was slowly going crazy, and through it all Fitzgerald had still yet to finish his book.

If anything Fitzgerald’s life serves as support for the performative nature of gender. He spent an entire life trying and ultimately failing to live up to a personally constructed standard of masculinity. He observed his peers and took cues from his family history in order to construct a framework for masculinity that would bring him success in a variety of categories. Unfortunately his closest relationships made it almost impossible to achieve his own ideal. Instead of achieving success he became involved in destructive and emasculating relationships to which he remained loyal to till the end. This resulted in personal tragedy, but his struggles manifested in his works in the form of richly self aware and deeply psychological writing. Fitzgerald spent nine years determined to write a masterpiece, both obsessed and paralyzed by the idea. In the end the product of these years was a novel that would come to be regarded by critics as his greatest complete piece of work. Yet at the time of publication the reviews were less than glowing and Fitzgerald was still concerned with popularity. He could not ignore the

⁵⁵ Brucoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway*, 108.

⁵⁶ Fahey, 93.

meager sales numbers and the critics and understand that he had done something wonderful. Yes, it was flawed, but it was flawed in the very same ways he was, so that he had managed to create a perfect reflection of himself as a human being.

Chapter Two

Although *The Great Gatsby* is considered Fitzgerald's contribution to the American literary canon, it is his later novel, *Tender is the Night* that provides a penetrating look into the mind of the author. *Gatsby* may have helped to define the Jazz Age and immortalize a generation of flappers, but it is *Tender is the Night* that was truly a labor of love and an attempt to achieve something different, both professionally and artistically. The composition of *Tender is the Night* cost Fitzgerald almost ten years of painful literary labor, but in the end it is this novel, his own personal favorite, that gives the reader a glimpse of his soul.⁵⁷ The novel also marked a critical moment of transition for Fitzgerald, who started to take stock of his life. Although he had achieved relative success and fame, and he had the potential to earn a living as an author, even if it was through writing short stories, he was still not satisfied. The chase to achieve superficial goals was losing momentum and he turned inward to explore the motivations behind his preoccupation with masculinity. He was becoming more emotionally aware of the emasculating forces in his life and he used the novel to explore these forces through a fictional narrative that mirrored his own experiences.

The success of the novel also took on added importance because it would have secured his reputation as a writer and stabilized his sense of masculinity which, at that point in time, was being constantly attacked by Zelda and Hemingway. When he began writing the novel he had a grand vision that it would be his artistic masterpiece and establish him permanently in the literary world: "I want to write scenes that are frightening and inimitable. I don't want to be as intelligible to my contemporaries as Ernest who as Gertrude Stein said, is bound for the museums. I am sure I am far enough

⁵⁷ Charles Scribner III, Introduction to *Tender is the Night*, xv.

ahead to have some small immortality if I can keep well.”⁵⁸ He was feeling now, more than ever, that his window of opportunity for redemption was quickly closing. Even his editor, Maxwell Perkins had high hopes for the success of the novel. Perkins optimistically wrote to Hemingway: “I believe that Scott will be completely reinstated, if not more, by his *Tender is the Night*.”⁵⁹ There was a lot more than money and reputation at stake. In some ways Fitzgerald’s sanity was also on the line.

Although the composition and completion of the novel had therapeutic benefits for Fitzgerald, its reception only served as a catalyst for his continuing emasculation. Considering the time and emotional investment that went into *Tender is the Night* its reception was especially devastating. It is important to examine the success of the novel from an informed perspective though, taking into consideration the historical moment and the fact that Fitzgerald was not the mythic figure then that he has now become. According to Matthew Bruccoli, “People who lament the failure of *Tender is the Night* generally ignore the fact that Fitzgerald had not had a best seller since *This Side of Paradise*, and even it was not one of the top ten in 1920. Fitzgerald was a popular figure, but he was never really a popular novelist in his lifetime.”⁶⁰ The failure of *Tender is the Night*, then, is a matter of perspective, since fiscally speaking, all of his novels could be considered “failures.” The fact that *Tender is the Night* was not a lucrative endeavor was only the insult added to the injury of the harsh criticism that followed its publication.

⁵⁸ Qtd. in Nowlin, 6.

⁵⁹ Scott A. Berg, *Maxwell Perkins, Editor of Genius* (New York: Dutton, 1978), 231.

⁶⁰ Matthew Bruccoli, *The Composition of Tender is the Night, A Study of Manuscripts* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), 4.

The reviews split into two camps. On the one hand many criticized him for sticking to his usual seemingly frivolous subject matter. The country was still dealing with the affects of the stock market crash and a novel about an independently wealthy expatriate and a movie star simply did not strike a chord with readers. Critic Louis Untermeyer, one among many who expressed similar sentiments wrote: “The reviews were not only uncomplimentary but brutal; readers had tired of the depiction of a frivolous and sterile society . . . The depressed readers of the Threadbare Thirties were looking toward comfortable utopias, rather than the arid earth which Fitzgerald still insisted on exploring.”⁶¹ However, a quick look at the bestsellers of 1934 seem to contradict this idea and reveal that the public was ingesting a typical potpourri of books, none of which were particularly “proletarian” in nature.⁶² It is hard to say what prompted the public as well as critics to largely ignore the novel, but their rejection must have been felt even more harshly considering the highly biographical nature of the novel.

The second vein of reception criticism dealt with the structure of the novel. Some called it confusing. Others saw it as jumbled and lazy. It is hard to believe though that a man who was an obsessive reviser would simply patch something together for publication purposes. As Bruccoli argues: “The manuscripts clearly show that Fitzgerald neither composed *Tender is the Night* hastily nor fumbled with its form; and they show that Fitzgerald had firm control over his form.”⁶³ The layout of the novel was very deliberate and, as will be discussed later, actually reinforces its themes through its structure. In the end there is no argument that: “Fitzgerald’s most ambitious novel was a failure in its own time; and it is true that its reception hurt and puzzled Fitzgerald, and doubtlessly

⁶¹ Bruccoli, “The Composition,” 1.

⁶² Bruccoli, “The Composition,” 4.

⁶³ Bruccoli, “The Composition,” 2.

contributed to his crack-up,” but that does not necessarily mean that the criticism was deserved.⁶⁴ The complexly psychological novel was not the product of a lazy or frivolous writer; however, it would be some years before *Tender is the Night* would receive redemption. Although the novel has come to be regarded as Fitzgerald’s strongest work, the critical work concerning the novel has yet to move far beyond the initial reception criticism, which makes the need for academic inquiry all the more important.

The first step in trying to comprehend the intricate fabric of *Tender is the Night* is to unravel the biographical and fictional elements in the novel. The importance of biographical elements to a more decisive reading of Fitzgerald gains credence from psychoanalytic ideas of trauma theory. Much of trauma theory focuses on war and what it means to survive a traumatic event. From Freud we get the idea that “. . . the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind.”⁶⁵ In general terms, the experience of a disruptive or shocking event can result in lasting psychological damage, known as trauma. The field of trauma theory defines trauma more specifically by describing it as the confrontation with a painful reality, which has a desensitizing effect and produces a belated response. Trauma then is closely tied to time and involves the postponement of the absorption of an immediate reality. In essence, a psychological wound does not heal immediately and the unconscious will suffer residual effects.⁶⁶

In some cases, when events are too painful to deal with during our waking hours,

⁶⁴ Bruccoli, “The Composition,” 3.

⁶⁵ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3.

⁶⁶ Cathy Caruth, “Introduction” in *Trauma Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, 6 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995).

we integrate them into our symbolic universe.⁶⁷ One common manifestation of these traumas can be a neurotic personality with a negative sense of self: “Loss of love and failure leave behind them a permanent injury to self-regard in the form of a narcissistic scar, which in my opinion, contributes more than anything to the ‘sense of inferiority’ which is so common in neurotics.”⁶⁸ In addition to a general lack of self esteem, trauma can be evident in more tangible ways such as the repetition of the actual traumatic act. Traumatized individuals are often determined to repeat the initial destructive event.⁶⁹ For writers and artists, who are by nature in tune with the symbolic universe, this repetition is often worked out through their chosen media. By recreating the trauma in their work they are bearing witness to the fact that it occurred in the first place and also trying to find closure through fictional resolutions.⁷⁰

I would argue then that Fitzgerald uses his work, *Tender is the Night* in particular, to work through his issues concerning his own masculinity by highlighting the ways in which gender and masculinity are systematically performed and subverted in ways that can be quite devastating, especially to a male trying to operate in a heterosexual and patriarchal system. It is only through the recognition of the performative powers of gender and the reclamation of those powers that one can successfully use gender to better navigate one’s world. In *Tender is the Night*, Rosemary is able to achieve this by using her femininity to infiltrate masculine domains, while Dick continually fails to assert his

⁶⁷ Slavoj Zizek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991), 272-3).

⁶⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 14-15. See Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* for a discussion of individual trauma and *Moses and Monotheism* for his ideas on historical trauma.

⁶⁹ Cathy Caruth, “Traumatic Departures,” *Trauma and Self*, ed. Charles B Strozier and Michael Flynn, 33 (London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1996).

⁷⁰ There is a lot of work being done in the area of trauma theory and therefore there is an abundance of material from which to draw. I found Cathy Caruth’s work current and accessible. For other resources see the works of Jonathan Cohen, Robert J. Lifton, Jenny Edkins and Donald Kalsched.

masculinity because he cannot let go of the illusion that it is real.

Before examining the more nuanced melding of biography and fiction I would like to address the more blatant incorporation of biographical elements that further support my claim that this novel is a therapeutic reenactment of past traumas. As Arthur Mizener points out, Dick Diver's decline is Fitzgerald's own.⁷¹ The truth behind this statement becomes all the more apparent when we begin to find autobiographical links worked into the world of the Divers. Dick and Fitzgerald are connected from the very circumstances surrounding their births. Both men's lives were strongly influenced by the death of older siblings right before their own birth.⁷² The role of the father here in the novel is more clear than it was in Fitzgerald's own life. Biographical sketches do not imply that his father showed much paternal involvement when it came to raising Fitzgerald. The latter part of the quote may reflect wishful thinking on the part of Fitzgerald. Just a couple of pages earlier, Fitzgerald seems to say that he inherited his own talent for money mismanagement from his father: "Watching his father's struggles in poor parishes had wedded a desire for money to an essentially unacquisitive nature."⁷³ Here we see the father cast as a generous man, who chose life of hard work that would not yield great monetary rewards. This is Fitzgerald's idealization of his own family history. Although he uses some material from his own life, he rewrites the trauma as voluntarily self-inflicted, saving his own father from being a failure. The list of biographical connections goes on, but perhaps one of the most insightful moments is when Dick asks: "God, am I like the rest after all?"⁷⁴ In one simple sentence Fitzgerald

⁷¹ Mizener, 66.

⁷² Mizener, 203.

⁷³ Mizener, 201.

⁷⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 133. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

has managed to capture the very crux his fear, a fear that his personal sense of grandeur is nothing but a self created illusion. He is suddenly confronted with the idea that perhaps he was not destined for greatness and that he is nothing more than normal. It is this fear that keeps him working to both define and become his own idea of the successful male.

The idea of gender performativity has been taken up by many scholars, but I once again turn to Judith Butler and her seminal text *Gender Trouble* as a source for my discussion of Fitzgerald and his versions of masculinity and femininity. The essence of her argument is that: “acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purpose of regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.”⁷⁵ So what we take for granted as our core identity, whether it be male or female, is merely a controlled response to societal pressures to conform to a certain established norm. The political is imposed on the body. Gender becomes a constant “impersonation” of expectations. We see these ideas being subverted and parodied through such things as drag, androgyny and other alternate identities. As previously discussed in Chapter One, Fitzgerald formed a very specific sense of his masculine identity, based not solely on societal norms, but also childhood circumstances and adult relationships. Through his characters he constantly recreates and relives the traumas, which caused his own insecurities ultimately exposing gender as a performative act.

Tiffany Joseph also argues for the applicability of Butler’s ideas of performativity and Caruth’s ideas of trauma to Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night*. For her the gendering of trauma occurs within the historical context of a post World War I America. With so many men enlisted and serving overseas, not only were women taking on traditionally

⁷⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 173.

masculine roles in the household, but they were also entering the workforce in record numbers. Yet this shift did not produce a sense of female empowerment: “Although the era between the wars did produce an opportunity for gender liberation, it also produced conditions that abetted a traumatization of gender.”⁷⁶ America did not know how to respond to the active destabilization of Victorian ideals. The historical moment of the 1920s made it more readily acceptable for women to assert more masculine characteristics through, dress, behavior, and employment. Men, however, were essentially unsexed by the war: “At first, the Great War seemed the ideal opportunity for American men to reestablish their masculinity. However, instead of becoming heroes, soldiers often found themselves reduced to anonymous bodies in trenches, where life and death seemed the result of dumb luck rather than skill or bravery.”⁷⁷ While women were being afforded exceptional freedom in exploring the boundaries of their gender, men were being stripped of their identity and forced into a state of complete renovation. The absence of the familiar prompted men to express their new insecurities through hostility.

Joseph’s argument is useful in that it takes into account the destabilizing effect the war had on gender during the 1920s. However, it does not also acknowledge the already well established insecurities concerning masculinity from which Fitzgerald was suffering. It would be irresponsible to deny completely the influence of the Great War and the 1920s flapper culture on Fitzgerald, a man often credited with defining the Jazz Age, but much of Fitzgerald’s identity had already been formed. The initial destabilization of his masculinity, which made it difficult for him to achieve a popularly acceptable form of

⁷⁶ Tiffany Joseph, “‘Non-Combatant’s Shell-Shock’”: Trauma and Gender in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night*” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003): 64.

⁷⁷ Joseph, 65.

masculinity, was influenced more directly by historical and personal events that occurred prior to The Great War.

Dick's character is flawed in that his initial trauma is never identified through narrative cues. Instead, we have to look to the author to find the source of the trauma which Dick has been doomed to repeat. Fitzgerald uses Dick to work through his personal history, a technique which echoes a psychoanalytic approach:

The psychoanalyst helps the patient to re-author or re-create a self; he is a narrativist and, ultimately, a fiction writer, imposing a largely imaginary structure of understanding and explanation upon the chaos of desire and trauma, explaining an unpleasant present with a plausible past and thereby unifying a subject, creating a "whole" and healthy person. The patient is cured when s/he believes in the story.⁷⁸

Fitzgerald uses Dick and the creation of the novel to explain his own "unpleasant present." He is rewriting his history in the hopes of creating a more coherent and interpretable narrative.

Joseph's reading of the novel removes the biographical perspective in favor of a historical lens and identifies Dick's initial trauma as his participation as a non-combatant in the Great War. Dick served in the war as a psychiatrist who was responsible for curing soldiers and therefore making them eligible to return to the war. Through this role he is

⁷⁸ Susann Cokal, "Caught in the Wrong Story: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Structure in *Tender is the Night*" *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 47, no. 1 (2005): 77.

constantly faced with “a sense of helplessness in the face of other’s destruction.”⁷⁹ Joseph argues that his inability to participate in physically heroic feats of war in conjunction with the fact that he is perpetuating the further injury of emotionally scarred soldiers, combine to create his initial trauma and begins his cycle of repetition. She further supports this idea by citing Major Marvin F. Griebler who “found that non-combatants within the military suffered the highest level of psychological breakdown because the pacific nature of their jobs brought them little satisfaction.”⁸⁰ By this account, Dick’s education and relatively “safe” role in the war actually make him more susceptible to trauma. One would then assume that his continued work as a psychiatrist and his ability to cure patients would afford him plenty of opportunities to achieve a certain amount of heroism that was denied him in the war. Unfortunately, Dick is taken in by Nicole’s transference and their individual traumatic cycles merge into one in which Dick is always trying to save her and Nicole is constantly manipulating that impulse and forcing him into a father role.

While Joseph’s argument provides an interesting look at post WWI culture and gender relations, the biographical support for the argument that Fitzgerald used Dick to work through his own life traumas is more convincing. It is Dick’s profession that exposes him to the initial trauma in Joseph’s scenario. His career choice is appropriate coming from a Fitzgerald who was helpless in trying to intervene in his own wife’s mental decline. The novel reveals how Fitzgerald must have felt as he became Zelda’s caretaker.⁸¹ Fitzgerald is able cast himself as the hero in his own novel while trying to

⁷⁹ Joseph, 70.

⁸⁰ Joseph, 70.

⁸¹ Nowlin, 3.

come to some conclusions about the state of his career and how much his relationship with Zelda may have contributed to his current dissatisfaction. The fact that Dick never sees combat action is also a reflection of Fitzgerald's own experience in the army. The war ended right before he was to be shipped overseas. Instead of fighting in the trenches, Fitzgerald spent his military career in Alabama writing *This Side of Paradise* and courting Zelda Sayre. But it wasn't just that his own life provided material for his novel; the novel was an emotional reenactment of his life, even if the characters and events were fictional. This is made further apparent through the often criticized structure of the novel. The organization of episodes lends itself to a Freudian model, which does not follow a linear narrative. Instead, Freudian psychoanalysis is guided forward by associations. Susann Chokal describes the process in this way:

Despite the apparent goal of recomposing (or composing for the first time) a subject, Freudian techniques entail an initial decomposing of expected structures. Traditionally, narrative has been structured proairetically, with cause and effect building upon each other and leading to a culminating and significant end moment, but with Freud the linear organization breaks down in favor of a thematic structure that places events in a chain of association with small regard for time.⁸²

By mirroring Freud's particular narrative style through the non-linear progression of the novel and casting himself as Dick Diver, Fitzgerald is essentially performing his own psychoanalysis and using the structure of the novel to reinforce its themes.

⁸² Chokal, 74.

The main component of Fitzgerald's "psychoanalysis" is his exploration of gender. I feel somewhat uneasy discussing the idea of "acting" and "performing" gender in a novel that deals so much with acting as a profession. It is true that Fitzgerald became more active in Hollywood as a screenwriter later in his life and that his involvement in movies was prompted by his need for money while writing *Tender is the Night*, facts that provide an obvious thematic source. I do want to emphasize that although I am concerned with how the profession of acting is treated in the novel, my main objective is to recognize and examine the way it works as a trope for performing gender. There is certainly a falseness to the characters in the novel, a superficiality and malleability as a byproduct of their enjoyment of their chosen roles. But they are not just acting a certain part; they are also acting out what they believe to be the ideal form of femininity or masculinity.

By profession Rosemary Hoyt is an actress, but her role in the novel is to act as a foil and reinforce the fact that the other characters are also acting, both at life and gender. While her profession has carried over into her own life, adding drama and glamour to moments in her life, her fellow characters have been working for a lifetime to spin themselves into something grand. As readers we watch as Dick and Nicole Diver respond favorably to Rosemary's performativity. They quickly and gladly become players in her personal movie. Their participation ultimately leads them down a path of destruction as Nicole begins the search to recast Dick's role as her caregiver and father figure and Dick discovers that he has been written out of the script by both women. Perhaps it is youth or perhaps a total commitment to her role that protects Rosemary from the painful invasion of reality that strikes her fellow actors. Whatever the reason, she

manages to escape unscarred, still fresh and ready to take on her next role and conquer her next leading man.

When Rosemary first encounters the Divers in the Riviera she is mesmerized by both of them. After a fairly brief encounter on her first day at the resort she cries to her mother, Mrs. Speers: "I love him, Mother. I'm desperately in love with him-I never knew I could feel this way about anybody. And he's married and I like her too-it's just hopeless. Oh, I love him so!" Rosemary laments the hopelessness of her situation to her most beloved confidante, but her emotions are quickly manipulated with a few words from her mother: "If you're in love it ought to make you happy. You ought to laugh." These words of advice may seem like kind encouragement from a concerned mother, but Rosemary's reaction make them appear more like instructions, as if she is being coached on the appropriate feelings to act out. She instantly transforms: "Rosemary looked up and gave a beautiful little shiver of her face and laughed. Her mother always had a great influence on her" (22). Her transition between emotions seems mechanical, as if they are only being worn on the surface and there is no real inner change that has to occur in order for her outward appearance to shift substantially. Mrs. Speers is quick to put her daughter's actions in check, protecting against the danger of Rosemary breaking from her character. Because Rosemary has the freedom, money and career often associated with men, her gender must constantly be regulated by performative acts to minimize the threat she poses to the patriarchy. As long as she is consistent in her projection of the aesthetic trappings of heterosexuality and she submits her body to being sexualized by the male gaze, she can exist with an amount of freedom usually only afforded to men.

The performative nature of gender then becomes a two part concept. On the one

hand you have the immediately obvious signifiers of appearance. For example men and women shop in different clothing departments because clothes are made to be gender specific. On the other hand, you have actions or lifestyle choices that can be construed as gender specific. For instance wealth and power are often associated with men.

Rosemary is able to screen her more masculine actions and lifestyle by using her feminine appearance to her utmost advantage: “Although Rosemary may be a ‘boy’ economically, she nonetheless seems to internalize social expectations of femininity, thus depriving herself of any shot at real power beyond a sort of masculine imitation of masculinity.”⁸³ Instead of working against the patriarchal system she has found a way to work within it economically and to make it work for her through capitalizing on the appetite of the male gaze. Rosemary is subject to the same challenges all women face in the workplace because of the institutionalized structure of heterosexuality. As Adrienne Rich argues, women “learn to behave in complaisantly and ingratiatingly heterosexual manner because they discover this is their true qualification for employment, whatever the job description.”⁸⁴ While the two parts of gender identity are not mutually exclusive, Rosemary serves as an example of how isolating and manipulating one part of the equation can provide some protection in the sexualized workplace.

Rosemary’s dualistic situation is further exposed by its juxtaposition with a scene in the latter part of the novel. Dick, with the help of his friend Gausse, comes to the aid of Mary North and Caroline Sibley-Biers, after they are arrested for picking up girls while wearing sailors’ uniforms. North and Sibley-Biers claim it was just for fun, but the other girls involved caused enough of a scene for the two ladies to be carried off to jail.

⁸³ Joseph, 77.

⁸⁴ Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs* 5 no. 4 (1980): 642.

What is interesting is Gausse's response to the whole situation: "I have never seen women like this sort of women. I have known many great courtesans of the world, and for them I have much respect often, but women like these women I have never seen before" (306). The seeming contradiction between the ladies' biological gender and their performative gender throws the Frenchman off balance: "by dressing as men, they have upset his understanding of women, an understanding that can encompass prostitution, but not cross-dressing or homosexuality."⁸⁵ As long as women can be viewed in a heterosexual context Gausse is comfortable with them, but the reality that "gender identity can be donned as easily as a sailor suit" poses a serious threat to man's ability to dominate and control women's sexuality.⁸⁶ The ladies' manipulation of gender signifiers is more offensive than Rosemary's lifestyle because the ladies represent an alternative not only to gender role, but to heterosexuality.

The masculine freedom afforded Rosemary because of her clever ability to control gender is constantly on display in her interactions with the Divers. Her idolatry of Dick extends to Nicole and makes the female relationship equally based on admiration. As Dick's wife, Nicole inevitably has a large role in the perfect execution of their performance of the ideal heterosexual couple. Someone as charming and personable as Dick needs a perfect wife to complement his personality. Together they both operate in a manner that elevates the other. Throughout the novel Nicole and Rosemary share several shopping trips, which only served to heighten Rosemary's admiration for her rival: "She looked at Nicole in a new way, estimating her attractions. Certainly she was the most attractive woman Rosemary had ever met..." (54). The younger girl does not possess

⁸⁵ Joseph, 75.

⁸⁶ Joseph, 75.

many of the jealous emotions one would expect from a woman after another woman's husband. Part of this may be due to her relative freedom. She does not have to rely on any man for financial or emotional support, so her relationships do not have the same fatalistic urgency and dependency that occurs when power is so unequally distributed.

A more accurate explanation is that Rosemary is not so much in love with Dick himself as with her perception of him. He is the personification of heterosexuality. He represents a desirable image, an image that is irrevocably tied to his role as the doting husband. His marriage has emasculating consequences though and in order to stabilize his personal sense of masculinity he turns to Rosemary. She in turn dotes on the Divers. Her love of the Divers as an attractive couple is made even more apparent when she and Nicole part after one of their shopping sprees: "It was more difficult than she thought and her whole self protested as Nicole drove away" (56). Had the story taken place outside of the confines of compulsory heterosexuality, perhaps Rosemary would have been equally drawn to both Divers. Her notions of romantic love, however, cause her relationship with Dick to escalate to a sexually intimate level. Rosemary even goes so far as to verbalize her love for both the Divers: "I'm in love with you and Nicole. Actually that's my secret-I can't even talk about you to anybody because I don't want people to know how wonderful you are. Honestly-I love you and Nicole-I do" (63). Here Rosemary demonstrates a sense of self awareness that continues to evade Dick throughout the entire novel. Although Rosemary may not be able to see the social mechanisms at work that serve to limit her feelings of attraction to the male half of the Diver couple, we can see her struggling to define the boundaries between her love of the people and her love of their image as the ultimate performers of reproductive heterosexuality.

Rosemary's control of surface level emotional expression is a true benefit to and requirement of any actress, but it may also be a defense strategy to help her survive as a woman in the world of business. Rosemary is acutely aware of the role she must play as an intruder in a man's world: "If her person was property she could exercise whatever advantage was inherent in its ownership" (23). She is perfectly aware of the fact that her gender makes her a commodity and she is more than willing to use that knowledge to her advantage. Yet the uses of her skills extend far beyond the realm of business and permeate her entire life. While she may have to pander to her male colleagues she has a certain amount of freedom not available to most females. As her mother astutely notes: "You were brought up to work-not especially to marry" (40). She goes on to encourage her daughter's affair with Dick, a married man: "Now you have found you first nut to crack and it's a good nut-go ahead and put whatever happens down to experience. Wound yourself or him-whatever happens it can't spoil you because economically you're a boy, not a girl" (40). Mrs. Speers' advice reinforces Rosemary's philosophy that everything is temporary and fleeting. Any pain inflicted from a failed relationship could reasonably be left behind at the set, the location of the scene. Her money and career allow her to travel from experience to experience.

Rosemary's freedom, just like the rest of her life, is merely an illusion though. Her upbringing could almost be described as a systematic brainwashing. She shows no resistance to the constant instruction she receives on how to act and feel according to each and every situation she encounters. In fact, it is comforting to her. In this way Dick comes to replace her mother as a source of guidance: "Like most women she liked to be told how she should feel, and she liked Dick's telling her which things were ludicrous

and which things were sad” (58). This quote demonstrates how Rosemary has internalized ideas that govern femininity. By no means is Rosemary a radical feminist. She is susceptible to the same societal pressures that govern gender identity.

Even everyday encounters possess a manufactured quality and she describes them in terms of acting. When Rosemary meets with and is ogled by a young Hollywood producer she is able to dismiss his offensive behavior and move on to the next scene: “He desired her and, so far as her virginal emotions went, she contemplated a surrender with equanimity. Yet she knew she would forget him half an hour after she left him-like an actor kissed in a picture” (24). In her mind the producer is transformed into just another actor, which means his behavior is a mere illusion, something that would never fully affect her because it truly exists outside her reality. He is performing his part as the sexually aggressive male and she knows how she is expected to respond. And despite the fact that she feels no passion for the producer, she will finish the scene accordingly and move on. Unfortunately the fact that she must constantly perform both in her career and her life has created an emotional gap that keeps her at a safe distance from reality.

Dick Diver, as the director who turns actor, is never able to identify and compartmentalize his sense of self and his projected self. His imagination helps him to orchestrate great parties where everyone is expected to give a performance. His guests are all specially cast in order to achieve Dick’s desired effect: “I want to give a really *bad* party. I mean it. I want to give a party where there’s a brawl and seductions and people going home with their feelings hurt and women passed out in the cabinet de toilette. You wait and see” (27). These are not exactly the sentiments of a gracious host. He uses people to help boost his sense of self worth. As Nowlin points out, “Dick finds it

easier to be an entertainer: he prefers giving people back a flattering idea of themselves, and in exchange receiving their love and devotion.”⁸⁷ He does not care that people are only in love with his conjured, performative self because he lacks the capacity for a real identity. In turn, Rosemary is easily swept up in his imaginary world, intuitively aware of his intentions as she thinks to herself: “On such a stage some memorable thing was sure to happen” (29). They are united by a common vision of not only this particular party, but the idea that all moments should be lived to their utmost dramatic potential.

Dick and Rosemary find reassurance in their clearly defined roles. When Rosemary is confronted with people who do not share an admiration for Dick’s personal plays she seeks the comfort of his direction. Their momentary separation at an acquaintance’s house leaves her alone and looking for her next line: “Rosemary suddenly discovered herself to be an insincere little person, living all in the upper registers of her throat and wishing the director would come” (72). She is paralyzed by the unfamiliarity of her situation. Her state is further eroded by the comments of some fellow visitors who observe Dick’s presence: “‘Oh, they give a good show,’ said one of them, in a deep rich voice. ‘Practically the best show in Paris-I’d be the last on to deny that’” (72). Obviously the Divers performative façade is more transparent than they are willing to acknowledge.

Surprisingly enough though, Dick’s denial leads him to be hypocritical about the actual profession of acting. He refuses to acknowledge that his life since Nicole and his transformation from a respectable young doctor to young playboy has transformed him from a person to an image. This internal conflict causes him to react rather harshly to the news that Rosemary has set up a screen test for him: “‘I don’t want a test,’ said Dick

⁸⁷ Nowlin, 1.

firmly; then, seeing the situation as a whole, he continued lightly, ‘Rosemary, I’m disappointed. The pictures make a fine career for a woman-but my God, they can’t photograph me. I’m an old scientist all wrapped up in his private life’” (70). He is able to catch himself before he says anything too offensive to his young mistress, but his next comment is perhaps one of the most revealing lines of the novel: “‘The strongest guard is placed at the gateway to nothing’ he said. ‘Maybe because the condition of emptiness is too shameful to be divulged’” (70). While this may be a sharp criticism of Rosemary and all actors, it seems more like a self assessment or an expression of his own deepest fear. His domesticated life has robbed him of the confidence and sense of identity provided by his work and now that he has become the beautiful husband and orchestrator of great moments he fears the emptiness that lies behind these gestures. Dick further reveals this fear when he thinks to himself: “So rigidly did he sometimes guard his exposed self-consciousness that frequently he defeated his own purposes; as an actor who underplays a part...” (92). His efforts to hide his ugly truths only confirm the fact that there is actually something worth hiding, even if it is a lack of substance.

Rosemary is much more accepting of the frivolity of their actions and does not harbor the same fears that Dick associates with acting. She even confronts him with this fact: “Rosemary stood up and leaned down and said her most sincere thing to him: ‘Oh, we’re such actors-you and I’” (105). The conviction behind her observation stems from the fact that everything else she could ever say would merely be something she feels obligated to recite as part of her role. The one truth that she will ever know is that they are both actors, and that knowledge protects her. Although Dick is constantly making his age and maturity an issue in their relationship, it is his lack of self awareness that is a

catalyst for his destruction. As Joseph suggests, “Dick sees her as naïve and immature, but by the end of the novel, Rosemary is more intact, more aware, and less damaged than he is.”⁸⁸ Dick struggles throughout the novel to reconcile his performative self with a real sense of self. Where Rosemary is able to use performance to her advantage, Dick is paralyzed by social expectations: “Not even exploiting the performative insulates Dick from trauma. Eventually, all that seems left in *Tender is the Night* is performance, and recognizing it as such only robs Dick of his illusions of authenticity.”⁸⁹ Rosemary is able to find comfort and strength in the idea that they are actors on a large stage, while Dick is unnerved by the uncertainty that entails. It is one thing for him to be performing, but if everyone around him is being equally performative, he is suddenly confronted with the manufactured nature of his entire reality.

The realization that his reality is not completely under his creative control, but is also influenced by others’ performances comes later that night. When Rosemary and Dick are finally able to slip away into the garden for a private moment their tête-à-tête is initially awkward. Dick himself describes it as a “struggle with an unrehearsed scene and unfamiliar word” (38). Apparently they are not good at improvising. For some reason reality weighs heavily and Dick reacts a bit venomously, accusing Rosemary’s mother of the very coaching that was made apparent earlier in the chapter: “You don’t know what you want. You go and ask your mother what you want” (38). He is frustrated by his own inability to capitalize on this moment and also disappointed by her inability to rescue him. The simultaneous collapse of their performances is a rude reminder of the true nature of their relationship. Rosemary tries to save the scene with a bit of flattery, but

⁸⁸ Joseph, 76.

⁸⁹ Joseph, 79.

she is left to her daydreams of what could have been. The next day as she dozes the possibilities of that moment allow her to imagine how the scene should have ended “but with the kiss itself blurred as a kiss in pictures” (39). Her ideal kiss does not have any of the permanence of reality. There is no potential for the creation of a memory.

Everything fades in and out, just as a well designed camera shot would.

Later on in the story Rosemary has the chance to test the strength of her feminine performance by acting out a seduction scene. She shamelessly throws herself at Dick, hoping that her careless vulnerability will tap into his need to protect and guide her. Perhaps her desire is motivated by what the movies never show. She wants to act out the scene as far as she has seen it played and then rely on him to fill in the blanks left by her inexperience: “She was calling on things she had read, seen, dreamed through a decade of convent hours. Suddenly she knew too that it was one of her greatest roles and she flung herself into it more passionately” (64). In her mind, she is playing her female part in perfect accord with what society would expect, based both on what her mother and her movie roles have taught her. In turn, Dick is expected to know his part by heart just as well.

Ultimately, they both fail at their roles because in trying to be the ideal picture of masculinity, Dick ends up becoming a stand in father figure and the relationship transforms from romantic to incestuous. The insecurities concerning Fitzgerald’s masculinity that stemmed from his own traumas ran so deep that he cannot even imagine a successful end to his own traumatic cycle, even in a fictional world. Dick is the ultimate loser in this love triangle. Through him, Nicole is able to repeat and actively work towards healing from the traumatic molestation suffered by her own father:

“Through Dick’s embodiment of the paternal/protective father/lover position, Dick and Nicole reenact the incestuous relationship that instigated Nicole’s illness.”⁹⁰ In turn, Dick sacrifices his own career in order to take care of Nicole. Surely Fitzgerald must have been experiencing some of the same feelings as he watched his own wife battle with insanity. The fictional marriage of the book ultimately has an emasculating affect on Dick, and he turns to Rosemary as a new solution. This attempt to repair the psychological damage inflicted by his marriage at Rosemary’s expense fails because he does not succeed in dictating the affair in a distinctly different direction from the original traumatic relationship. Instead, he repeats the cycle and once again falls into the father role.

The paternal relationship between Dick and Rosemary is apparent in both the way she perceives him and the way he treats her. He persistently makes snide comments about her age and maturity level: “She’s an infant” and “There’s a persistent aroma of the nursery” (167). As much as he desires her, he cannot help but feel superior to her simply based on age. Of course these comments are made long before the fallout of their relationship and Dick’s eventual revelation that his presence in her life was a superficial and passing occurrence. In turn, we once again see Rosemary showing a more self aware appraisal of the situation when she tells Dick: “You and Mother are the only two people in the world I care about” (219). She is not afraid to acknowledge his role in her life as a parental figure. At times she even has difficulty differentiating between parental love and romantic/sexual love. Just a few sentences later she emphasizes this point by adding, “I feel as if I’d quarreled with Mother” (219). Because Dick is a man she responds to his body in a sexual manner. She knows that he desires her and that she should desire him,

⁹⁰ Joseph, 67.

yet she cannot help but emotionally elevate him to a father role. Oddly enough this fact makes her all the more attractive because it offers Dick the opportunity to repeat the cycle of his marriage to Nicole.

The fact that Rosemary is another chapter in Dick's repetitious traumatic cycle is further emphasized by the similarities between his two love interests. To begin with, both Rosemary and Nicole lack a father. Mr. Speers is mysteriously absent. No mention is made of him and his lack of presence in Rosemary's life leaves a space for Dick to occupy. We know more of Nicole's father, but he too has abandoned his daughter, essentially handing her over to the care of Dr. Diver. There is also a large age gap between Dick and both women. As the narrator informs us early on in Dick and Nicole's courtship, "He was older enough than Nicole to take pleasure in her youthful vanities and delights" (137). Part of Nicole's attractiveness is not just her youthful appearance, but her youthful actions and interests. Dick also uses similar language when describing both women, although he takes on a more affectionate and less insulting tone with Nicole. He describes her smile as "a moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world" (134). Perhaps Dick is more harshly critical of Rosemary's childishness because he recognizes it as a destructive attraction that he cannot resist.

In the end, Dick's attempt to achieve a traditional masculine role is a continual failure. His propensity towards the paternal is toxic to all aspects of his life including his career: "Dick's desire to perform the 'world's rarest work' [psychiatry] has uncannily left him performing the world's most common – namely, mothering."⁹¹ This adds an additional dimension of psychosis to an already incestuous relationship. In addition his exposure as the "Father-imposter" causes him to become "as 'feminized' a subject as any

⁹¹ Nowlin, 6.

of his patients.”⁹² Here Nowlin characterizes sickness and weakness as feminine qualities. Although he showed much promise as a young psychiatrist, Dick’s lack of self awareness causes him to be swept up in the momentum of Nicole’s traumatic cycle and results in a role reversal where he essentially becomes the patient.

Ironically, Nicole is the one to abandon Dick. His emasculation makes him a feminized male who is no longer capable of playing her father figure and is therefore no longer useful. His role is taken over by the picture of hypermasculinity, Tommy Barban, a career soldier who is “everything Dick is not.”⁹³ While Dick played a non-combatant’s role in the war, Tommy has made a life of fighting in wars. He is a soldier for hire who defines his masculinity through physical acts of violence. When Tommy is asked if he is headed home after he leaves the Riviera he replies, “Home? I have no home. I am going to war” (30). By definition Tommy’s masculinity is a performative gesture, but he nonetheless “provides an illustration of what happens when gender codes and expectations are actually fulfilled.”⁹⁴ He is able to carry off the performance in a convincing manner, which makes him an ideal candidate for Dick’s replacement. By the time Nicole leaves Dick her psychosis appears to be more under control, but she certainly cannot be considered a success: “she is not cured, has not worked out the original neurosis, but simply switched doctors, under the pretext that the new man is a more forceful father figure than the man she has used up.”⁹⁵ Dick was unable to cure Nicole and has paid the ultimate price for his failure. Not only has his career been ruined, but he has lost all sense of his performative self and is now caught up in his own traumatic cycle

⁹² Nowlin, 1.

⁹³ Joseph, 73.

⁹⁴ Joseph, 73.

⁹⁵ Joseph, 67.

of playing father/mother to women.

Within the narrative of the novel, there are no comforting resolutions. We are forced to watch as one man is systematically unraveled and left without any real indication that he will triumph. The performative nature of gender is exposed, but never overcome. Even Rosemary, who escapes the story perhaps the most unscathed, must remain a slave to her performative role. The only person to really benefit from the telling of the Divers' story is Fitzgerald. While Joseph argues that "Dick's trauma is the social made personal, the trauma of failing to live up to a socially dictated gender ideal," I would argue instead that his trauma is actually Fitzgerald's personal made fictional. His personal narrative has been rewritten and the factors that fed into his personal demise have been identified and his actions justified. Whether he has reconstructed the past in an accurate manner does not really matter. The object is not to find the truth, but to create a truth that is acceptable, something that can be dealt with. The real impact of *Tender is the Night* is made more apparent in Fitzgerald's next novel where we see him able to move past the constant recycling of tragically doomed heroes towards a more palatable hero who acts as a symbol for his conquering of his personal tragedies. He is finally able to write a satisfactory end to his story.

Chapter 3

The period between *Tender is the Night* and *The Last Tycoon* was the darkest Fitzgerald had ever faced. *Tender is the Night* was supposed to secure his immortality but it turned out to be a critical failure that left him emotionally bankrupt. His sprint towards the finish line had still left him in last place and now he was spent. Depressed and frequently intoxicated, Fitzgerald fled to Hendersonville, North Carolina where he lived in a cheap hotel and tried to analyze what had brought him to this low point.⁹⁶ For three years he went from one small town to the next and his life began to “imitate the desolate trajectory he’d projected for Dick Diver”⁹⁷ (Callahan 9). Oddly enough it was Hollywood, the site of two previous failed attempts at staking a claim in the movie industry that offered him a chance at a future. He emerged from his period of self-imposed exile with a new found wisdom. *Tender is the Night* had provided him with a sense of release, and now he had accepted responsibility and was able to view his own life with a healthy sense of detachment. Fitzgerald had grown up and decided to go on: “Fitzgerald had once written ‘There are no second acts in American lives’. But he had gone to Hollywood to prove himself wrong.”⁹⁸ Fitzgerald never became the great screenwriter or industry magnate he had visions of becoming, but his time in Hollywood did provide him with a renewed sense of purpose even in the face of his looming death. Most obviously Hollywood provided him with the backdrop and thematic focus for his last novel. It was also where he met Sheila Graham, who would be his companion in his final years and aid in the final evolution away from the fatally flawed and emasculated

⁹⁶ Thomas J. Stavola, *Scott Fitzgerald: Crisis in American Identity* (London: Vision Press, 1980), 69.

⁹⁷ John F. Callahan, “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Evolving American Dream: The ‘Pursuit of Happiness’ in *Gatsby*, *Tender is the Night* and *The Last Tycoon*,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 42, no. 3 (1996): 9.

⁹⁸ Stavola, 69.

characters of his earlier novels, to the fully developed, admirable and masculine Monroe Stahr.

I would argue that it is fruitful to examine *The Last Tycoon* and its hero using the same theoretical framework of gender performativity and trauma theory that was applied to *Tender is the Night* in the previous chapter. *The Last Tycoon's* unfinished state has left it even more open to biographical readings than Fitzgerald's other work due to its unfinished state. By the end of *Tender is the Night* the reader is not left with the sense that Fitzgerald has worked through his cycle of trauma enough for it to come to a complete end. He was obviously working through his personal traumas by creating a fictional narrative, but the novel lacks a sense of closure. Dick Diver is aware of gender performativity but he has yet to master it in a way that is advantageous to him. If we are to read *The Last Tycoon*, as a continuation of Fitzgerald's fictional/personal narrative though, it is here that we find a resolution through the creation of a truly admirable and masculine hero. *The Last Tycoon* is not nearly as rich with gender anxieties as the previous novel because by the time Fitzgerald wrote his last novel he had resolved many of his anxieties. The writing of *Tender*, combined with Fitzgerald's personal breakdown and the removal of emasculating relationships, empowered him to write his own final chapter and finally put to death his own traumatic cycle.

The Fitzgerald of Hollywood was much different than the young man of the 1920s who came to exemplify the Jazz Age generation. Many of the emasculating forces in his life had been removed. His relationship with Hemingway, which had been one of the most influential of his life, had become strained past the point of repair. Their rift had been years in the making and was often mediated by their joint editor, Maxwell Perkins.

The final ending of their relationship came after Hemingway included a less than flattering portrayal of Fitzgerald in his story, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. Fitzgerald asked to be taken out of the story, but his request was denied. From that point on, both writers continued to show interest in the other's work, but their comments were filtered through Perkins and not directly stated to one another.⁹⁹ Although Fitzgerald still admired his great old friend, he no longer had the confidence to compete with him in face to face confrontations. He even went so far as to avoid him when they were both invited to a cocktail party at Dorothy Parker's house. Fitzgerald was "on the wagon and nervous, he was intimidated by Hemingway."¹⁰⁰ Their mutual respect was still present, but Fitzgerald simply did not feel compelled to compete with Hemingway in the same way he had before. Hemingway had won. He had created a personal mythology of hypermasculinity, which had quickly become his public persona, and Fitzgerald provided the perfect contrast of emasculation. It was a role that Fitzgerald had come to terms with and in doing so he robbed the role of its power to emasculate him further.

Fitzgerald's relationship with the other emasculating force in his life had also changed dramatically by the time he left for Hollywood. Zelda's illness had progressed to the point where she spent much of her time in asylums or in the care of her mother and sisters. Although Fitzgerald visited her often and was even able to organize a few last vacations for the two of them, their interactions were limited by her treatment and by his work. From April 1939 to December 1940, when Fitzgerald died, their only communication was through letters. These letters from their final years are still filled

⁹⁹ Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway: A Dangerous Friendship* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994), 195-197.

¹⁰⁰ Bruccoli, 197.

with devotion and free of bitterness. As Jackson Bryer finds in his own analysis of their correspondence, “Their final letters present to us two mature individuals who dealt with later losses far better and more wisely than they had dealt with their early success; that they did so makes them not only tragic, but heroic.”¹⁰¹ Years and distance had given them both perspective on their life together and the desperate passion that had fueled their marriage had now become tamed and domesticated. Fitzgerald never abandoned his wife, but his faithfulness was now to the memory of Zelda and he was no longer subject to her emasculating powers.

The void left by the relative absence of Hemingway and Zelda from his life left room for someone new to stake a claim. In the summer of 1937 Fitzgerald met Sheila Graham, a young gossip columnist who would replace Zelda as Fitzgerald’s companion and become arguably the only positive female influence in his life. If the composition of *Tender is the Night* and his breakdown directly following its publication allowed him to acquire an emotionally mature perspective on his life, it was Sheila’s presence in his later years that allowed him to translate his newly found maturity into his most heroically masculine character, Monroe Stahr. She became a key component to his motivation: “She made a stable world for him and, as much as it was possible for him to do so, made him want to live.”¹⁰² During their relationship Fitzgerald’s identity was free from the constant attacks suffered during the earlier years of his marriage to Zelda, a fact which finally allowed him to write the fictional end to his personal narrative.

¹⁰¹ Jackson R. Bryer, ed. *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002), 269.

¹⁰² Mizener, 103.

There was one other significant change in Fitzgerald's Hollywood period: he stopped drinking. This was a particularly significant change considering the role alcohol had played in Fitzgerald's life. For Fitzgerald, alcohol added a particular glamour to the mundane, but his desire for the glamorous was in direct contradiction to the Victorian ideal that preached temperance in all things, especially alcohol. In his own mind, his inability to control his alcoholism showed a lack of manly self-discipline. Alcohol became Fitzgerald's most debilitating medium for self destruction. It was an enemy he was finally able to conquer in the last years of his life, but not without certain consequences.

His almost instant early success had resulted in a life marked by a steady decline leaving his final years filled with failing health and a noticeable personality shift, which some closest to him attributed to his newly found sobriety. Although Fitzgerald had gone on the wagon many times before in an effort to concentrate on his work, his final years saw a more committed attempt at sobriety which created a Fitzgerald whose personality only hinted at the former life of the party famous for his drinking escapades. Edmund Wilson, who had known Fitzgerald since their Princeton days and who would go on to edit the first version of *The Last Tycoon*, commented that Fitzgerald now seemed "like a polite stranger."¹⁰³ The attention seeker who relished his own shock value was now a meek middle-aged man, who was hesitant even to enter the offices of his fellow colleagues. Anita Loos, a screenwriter who had known Fitzgerald in the 1920s at the height of his career and who was visited by him often in Hollywood commented that: "Scott had that embarrassing humility of the reformed alcoholic. It was an embarrassing

¹⁰³ Mizener, 101.

humility. It convinced me that you should never sober up a chronic drunk.”¹⁰⁴ As destructive a force as alcohol had been in his life, he appeared meek and introverted without it. Sobriety did not agree with him and people treated him like he was ill.¹⁰⁵ Although his personality appeared altered, the relative regulation of his alcoholism and the removal of emasculating forces in his life left his creative powers at their most potent level.

Although Fitzgerald was at the height of his potential in some ways, he was not able to demonstrate that in his screenwriting. He worked a handful of scripts but never received the recognition he was seeking and his third attempt at conquering Hollywood ended in failure and embarrassment. The end came when he was asked to go to Dartmouth’s Winter Carnival to do research for a script: “Fitzgerald made such a drunken spectacle of himself there that [he was] fired on the spot.”¹⁰⁶ One of his rare relapses ended up being deadly to his movie career. Needless to say, his contract was not renewed and he went back to his old writing habit of using money from short story sales to help support himself while he was working on his novel, *The Last Tycoon*.

The Last Tycoon has not come close to generating the same amount of varied criticism as Fitzgerald’s other novels. Of course it is hard to analyze an unfinished novel with any amount of fairness to the author. Fitzgerald meticulously revised his work, so we can only speculate about the final product would have looked like. The fragment of the novel we are left with does offer a look at the final autobiographical chapter in Fitzgerald’s life and insight into how his anxieties regarding masculinity had evolved

¹⁰⁴ Aaron Latham, *Crazy Sundays: F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Latham, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Mizener, 104.

since *Tender is the Night*. The novel's hero, Monroe Stahr, is a creative composite of the author and the real life Hollywood mogul, Irving Thalberg.¹⁰⁷ At the age of 26 Irving Thalberg was already working as the head of production at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and was considered the "boy wonder" of Hollywood. Fitzgerald had few encounters with Thalberg and was even fired by the movie executive, but their first interaction left a profound impression on the author. Years later, after Thalberg's own death, Fitzgerald wrote: "Thalberg has always fascinated me. His peculiar charm, his extraordinary good looks, his bountiful success, the tragic end of his great adventure."¹⁰⁸ In addition to an attractive personality and appearance, Thalberg was admirable because he was able to handle early success and sustain a career until the very end. His premature death meant that he never fell from the height of his success, which only served to solidify his legendary reputation. Despite their limited interactions, Fitzgerald admired Thalberg enough to use his career trajectory as a model for Fitzgerald's most complete hero: "Though the private experience of Monroe Stahr... is Fitzgerald's, his Hollywood career is Thalberg's."¹⁰⁹ Stahr is not Fitzgerald, but he is the man Fitzgerald wished to be. Fitzgerald himself once wrote that, "There never was a good biography of a good novelist. He's too many people if he is any good."¹¹⁰ This may be true, but Stahr's character does serve as a testimony to the emotional mechanisms operating within Fitzgerald during his final years.

¹⁰⁷ See Matthew Bruccoli's preface to *The Last Tycoon* (viii) for Fitzgerald's notes on his first meeting with Thalberg. These notes would later be written into the novel.

¹⁰⁸ Matthew Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1981), 462.

¹⁰⁹ Mizener, 100.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Callahan, 3.

In addition, Fitzgerald modeled the novel's leading lady on his new love, Sheila Graham. Although his relationship with Sheila is not nearly as well documented as his famous marriage to Zelda, one does not have to look far to find insights into their relationship: "The best account there will ever be of how Fitzgerald felt about Sheila Graham is the story of Stahr and Kathleen in *The Last Tycoon*. Every step towards his emotional involvement with her is described with great exactness, only the external circumstances being changed—and then only when it is necessary to make them fit Stahr's situation."¹¹¹ The novel also chronicles Fitzgerald's feelings of guilt brought on by his new relationship with Sheila. He was faced with the fundamental problem that comes with second love:

If one is destined to love some one, then the act of doing so expresses his fundamental inner truth, his profoundest self, the continuity to which all changes can be subordinated. When love is seen this way, there is no second love—either the first or the second must have only seemed to be love—because a second love would mean that the lover had a fluid or split core.¹¹²

Although Zelda probably suspected that her husband was involved with someone in Hollywood, there is no evidence that it was something they openly discussed. Nonetheless, Fitzgerald had to try and reconcile for himself how his new love could be a reflection on his marriage. If second love is possible, then was the first love a false type of performance? The prospect of multiple loves further destabilized Fitzgerald's sense of

¹¹¹ Mizener, 102.

¹¹² Mitchell Breitwieser, "Jazz Fractures: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Epochal Representation," American Literary History 12, no. 3 (2000): 373.

reality while reinforcing the idea that reality is a fiction which we create. Stahr also explores these issues of guilt after his sexual encounter with Kathleen, which disturbs one of the basic components of Stahr's self conception: "his loyalty to his desire for his wife" but the internal struggle this causes does "not turn out to be a premonition of subjective decay of the kind Fitzgerald describes in "The Crack-Up" and depicted in *Tender is the Night*."¹¹³ Stahr is not condemned for loving again and his new relationship is not portrayed as a betrayal of the first.

Although I argue that Stahr represents the final evolution of Fitzgerald's heroes, who up until his last novel, never fully realize their masculinity, other critics read Stahr as a reworking of the character that began as Jay Gatsby. John F. Callahan argues that both literary heroes embody the potential for polarity involved in the pursuit of the American dream. The extremes of "Success and failure, illusion and disillusion, dream and nightmare" all operate hand in hand.¹¹⁴ Stahr is destroyed by his obsessive pursuit of happiness, while Gatsby has already been destroyed before his obsessive quest even begins. The corrupt nature of Gatsby's business and the unhealthy motivations that drive him forward doom him from the start. Stahr is motivated by an artistic need to create and so despite his self-destructive ways, he is spared Gatsby's fate: "The machine and the life he helped to create are bound to destroy him in the end. But-at least as Fitzgerald had planned it-he goes down whole."¹¹⁵ Stahr is representative of Fitzgerald's more evolved outlook on life: "Fitzgerald, at the end of his life, came to embrace "the sense that life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat, and that the redeeming things are

¹¹³ Breitwieser, 375.

¹¹⁴ Callahan, 1.

¹¹⁵ Stephen Vincent Benet, "The Last Tycoon." *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work*, ed. Alfred Kazin (New York: The World Publishing company, 1951), 131.

not 'happiness and pleasure' but deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle."¹¹⁶

Fitzgerald was content to revel in the wisdom that his experiences had given him and he allowed Stahr the same luxury, sparing him the downfall suffered by Gatsby.

Joss Marsh also argues for a reading of "The Great Gatsby" in light of "The Last Tycoon." While the main characters of each novel, both Stahr and Gatsby, share mythic characteristics of wealth, power and charm, Stahr represents a final evolution of Gatsby's character. Stahr is Fitzgerald's embodiment of ideal masculinity, and therefore Stahr is also the ultimate hero. "Fitzgerald was a lifelong hero-worshipper, but he was not able to create an unflawed hero until he himself was in his forties."¹¹⁷ While Gatsby's motivation for success is his desire to win over Daisy, Stahr is passionate about his work because he believes that he is contributing something to the world. Gatsby shows us that you only have one chance and that attempting to relive the past can only end in disaster while Stahr "confirms the suspicion that the phenomenon and experience of the movies facilitate the illusion that we can recreate history and realize dreams."¹¹⁸ Where Gatsby fails to recapture Daisy, Stahr succeeds in once again finding his first love by falling for a woman who strongly resembles his first wife, Minna. Stahr's first encounter with his new love, Kathleen, is quite shocking to his senses:

Smiling faintly at him from not four feet away was the face of his dead wife, identical even to the expression. Across four feet of moonlight the eyes he knew looked back at him, a curl blew a little on a familiar fore head, the smile lingered changed a little

¹¹⁶ Benet, 131.

¹¹⁷ Bruccoli, "Preface to *The Last Tycoon*," xvi.

¹¹⁸ Callahan, 7.

according to pattern, the lips parted-the same. An awful fear went over him and he wanted to cry aloud.¹¹⁹

Stahr is perfectly content in to remain committed to his work and the memory of his dead wife, but life hands him an opportunity to love again. Once again, Stahr is afforded a hope that Gatsby is denied.

While it is useful to compare and contrast Gatsby and Stahr, especially considering their similar ambitions, it seems like mere intellectual exercise to isolate his characters and examine them out of chronological order. Considering the highly autobiographical nature of Fitzgerald's work it is most fruitful to study the evolution of Amory Blaine to Anthony Patch to Jay Gatsby to Dick Diver and finally to Monroe Stahr because the transformations from one character to the next reflect Fitzgerald's own personal development. The insecurities that stimulate Dick's performative nature are not present by the time we meet Monroe Stahr, which is a significant considering the fact that Fitzgerald had been struggling against emasculation for most of his life.

Perhaps Fitzgerald was not able to overcome his insecurities concerning his own masculinity, but like many other things in his life, he came to understand them and how they operated in his life. That understanding allowed him to become the man he always wanted to be, even if it was only ever fully realized through his fiction. Monroe Stahr has the social grace and popularity that Fitzgerald sought so desperately during his childhood and his years at Princeton: "He darted in and out of the role of 'one of the boys' with dexterity-but on the whole I should say he wasn't one of them. But he knew

¹¹⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (New York: Scribner, 1993), 26. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

how to shut up, how to draw into the background, how to listen” (15). The reader is made aware that Stahr is superior to the people he works with, but part of his talent lies in his accessibility. He lacks an air of arrogance and so he is able to blend in perfectly with any crowd. Fitzgerald also added in his notes for the novel that: “how popular he was with men from the beginning in a free and easy way. There was never anything priggish or self-superiority in his casual conversation that make men uneasy in the company of other men [sic]” (140). Stahr has an amount of grace and social talent that Fitzgerald only possessed when drinking.

Fitzgerald also gives Stahr some of his own feminine features, but spares Stahr the ridicule he suffered. Cecilia offers us this description of Stahr after he hands her a ring:

I had been thinking how oddly its bulk contrasted with his fingers, which were delicate and slender like the rest of his body, and like his slender face with the arched eyebrows and the dark curly hair. He looked spiritual at times but he was a fighter-somebody out of his past knew him when he was one of a gang of kids in the Bronx, and gave me a description of how he walked always at the head of his gang, this rather frail boy, occasionally throwing a command backward out of the corner of his mouth (15-16).

Despite Stahr’s slight and slender build he is still a leader. He has Fitzgerald’s looks with that added touch of masculine toughness that always evaded the author. Fitzgerald

rewrites himself as a successful business man who is actively contributing to the artistic world and also as a former gang member.

We get another glance at Stahr's leadership abilities after many of the studios lots are upset by a small earthquake. Stahr goes outside to assess the damage and as he walks the streets handing out orders everyone takes a momentary break from the chaos to show him their respect: "every second one glancing at him speaking Hello Monroe . . . Monroe . . . Hello Mr. Stahr . . . wet night Mr. Stahr . . . Monroe . . . Stahr . . . Stahr . . . Stahr . . . he was still their man, the last of princes. And their greeting was a sort of low cheer as they went by" (27). Part of their admiration comes from the reality of his present greatness, but he is respected all the more because he stuck with the studio and its employees through the hard times as well. They owe him their respect as well as their loyalty.

Finally, Stahr has the kind of relationship with women that Fitzgerald wished to have. Both author and character "seek to integrate love of a woman with accomplishment in the world."¹²⁰ They want to be able to have love and success without having to compromise one for the other. Both Fitzgerald and Dick Diver fail to meet this ideal because they merge with their wives in a way that robs them of their sense of self. Although they both seem to subscribe to the notion of an essential core identity, their actions reveal a much more malleable self which is susceptible to the influence of others, especially those they appear to love most. As Fitzgerald writes in *Tender is the Night*: "somehow Dick and Nicole had become one and equal, not opposite and complementary;

¹²⁰ Callahan, 2.

she was Dick too, the drought in the marrow of his bones.”¹²¹ Dick even signs notes with the signature “Dicole.”¹²² The Divers’ marriage is an example of the destruction that can be caused by mutual dependency. The point of a relationship is not to dominate each other either though. A balance of intimacy and independence must be found and through that balance both individuals will be allowed to flourish: “Both Fitzgerald and Stahr are men whose creative powers flow more richly into the world when they are involved in a satisfying, intimate relationship with a woman.”¹²³ Fitzgerald’s masculinity was restored through his relationship with Sheila Graham, not because she was weak and submissive, but because she gave him the support with which to stabilize his volatile world. In the same way, Stahr’s life is grounded by his relationship with Kathleen. Although by the end of the rough draft of the novel, Kathleen has married someone else and their relationship appears doomed, its end has come because of bad timing and circumstances, not because either of them possess the fatalistically self-destructive characteristic of Fitzgerald’s other characters.

Although Fitzgerald was able to expose the performative nature of gender through his later works, he did not use his awareness to directly challenge the heteronormative model that helps regulate gender roles. Just as Rosemary is able to use her knowledge of gender in order to survive in a male dominated world without actually advocating feminist ideals, Fitzgerald also merely uses his knowledge to better function within the constructs of society without challenging its foundation. As we see in *The Last Tycoon*, Fitzgerald achieves resolution to his own gender anxieties by creating Monroe Stahr, a

¹²¹ Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, 27.

¹²² Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, 103.

¹²³ Callahan, 10.

distinctly masculine hero who is immune to the same forces of emasculation which plagued the author. Ultimately Fitzgerald's idea of masculinity is limited to the white, middle class, heterosexual male. So while his work demonstrates a certain amount of awareness, it is in no way progressive, because his privileged position prevents him from further imagining the implications of socially constructed genders. For Fitzgerald, the ultimate solution to the destabilization of gender is not to rethink the way society is structured, but simply to perform gender more convincingly, or rather to better internalize notions of gender so that the performance seems more natural and less self-conscious. So while Fitzgerald is able to reach a personal resolution, he does not offer a visionary answer to the problem of gender that has any repercussions for society as a whole.

Of course one cannot finish *The Last Tycoon* without feeling disappointed that it was never completed. Both of the Fitzgeralds seemed doomed from the start to spend their youth and vitality early and die young, but it would have been interesting to see if this novel truly would have heralded a new era in Fitzgerald's career. Despite the novel's unfinished form, some have declared it the best work he ever did. One critic wrote: "Had Fitzgerald been permitted to finish the book, I think there is no doubt that it would have added a major character and a major novel to American fiction. It shows the full powers of its author, at their height and at their best."¹²⁴ A man who had just recently been at his very worst, depressed and living in motels in rural mountain towns, was now showing more promise than ever.¹²⁵ He had been stripped of the emotional baggage that

¹²⁴ Benet, 131.

¹²⁵ See *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception* (New York: Burt Franklin & Co, 1978). Many tribute articles published after Fitzgerald's death speculate that *The Last Tycoon* was his strongest work to date. Ray Gould, one writer among many others who lauded the novel, wrote, "It is a distinct tragedy we lost him at such an early age and especially a profound tragedy to lose him during the writing of this unfinished

had been the subject of his earlier works. The emasculating powers in his life had been removed and the loss of self had provided him the opportunity to recreate a new self. Perhaps the one comfort that can come from his death is the knowledge that in his final novel he was able to end his personal cycle of trauma and cast himself as the ideal picture of masculinity and his own fictional hero in his last novel.

novel, for it is his greatest effort” (379). The tragedy of Fitzgerald’s life is not that he died young, but that he died before he had reached his full potential.

Conclusion

Fitzgerald's death during the writing of *The Last Tycoon* almost seems like an inevitable ending to the reality that was constantly running parallel to a fictional alternative. The emotional conquering of his lifelong challenges with identity and masculinity was coupled with a physical conclusion to his life. It seems all the more appropriate that his final world was Hollywood, a place known for its glamour, wealth and beauty. The man who is remembered more for his tumultuous life of excess than his body of work spent his last years in the town that is still constantly taking the idea of excess to new heights. In terms of wealth and fame, he certainly did not go out on top. However, he did manage to bow out at the peak of his artistic talent, a fact that lends his story a sort of tragic dignity and aligns perfectly with his own ideas of romantic destiny.

For an outsider there is much to lament when it comes to the life of F. Scott Fitzgerald. If only he would have been able to control his drinking. If only he would have lived long enough to truly exercise his full potential. If only he would have been better with his money so he did not have to spend so much time working on short stories. The list is endless. But if the comprehensive synthesis of his life and works shows us anything, it is that he was a product of a very specific mixture of people and events. If you were to take out one ingredient the result would be unrecognizable when compared to the original. Fitzgerald was his art and his art was his life. You cannot extract one from the other. As the critic Lionel Trilling wrote, Fitzgerald "was perhaps the last notable writer to affirm the Romantic fantasy, descended from the Renaissance, of personal ambition or heroism, of life committed to, or thrown away for, some ideal of the

self.”¹²⁶ He would have died without his art and in the end the pursuit of his art was the death of him. It is a realization full of tragedy, but it also means that ultimately the performative became reality.

Fitzgerald’s artistic commitment to his work may have guaranteed an early and tragic end to his life and solidified his legendary reputation, but hopefully this paper has helped to contextualize the man and his work so that we can move beyond the myth and better appreciate Fitzgerald’s work. Fortunately, the increasingly popular field of masculinity studies offers scholars a fresh way of looking at the canon, particularly the American literary canon. By acknowledging that masculinity is open to an infinite number of definitions and that it is a socially constructed and not a biologically assigned characteristic, we allow for a whole new area of inquiry. Instead of using feminist or gynocentric readings to further literary critique we can return to the classic male novelists and deconstruct their ideas and representations of masculinity.¹²⁷ By understanding the ways in which masculinity is formed and protected, we can better appreciate issues of racism, sexism and classism. The focus can now shift from the oppressed back to the oppressors with out further privileging the dominant majority.

Furthermore, by using masculinity studies in conjunction with other established approaches to literature I was able to develop a methodology whose implications for applicability are infinite. Through using psychoanalysis, and the principles of gender studies to examine biographical and historical information I was able to achieve an intimate and in depth portrait of Fitzgerald. Acknowledging the intersections among all

¹²⁶ Quoted in Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, 122.

¹²⁷ The term gynocentrism comes from Elaine Showalter who defines it as critiques of woman authored texts by women readers as opposed to feminist readings which offer analysis of women’s roles in male created works. See “Towards a Feminist Poetics,” *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

these different modes of inquiry would yield similar results for other authors. For example, applying trauma theory to Hemingway's biographical material and then tracing his personal evolution and how his insecurities concerning masculinity manifested in his work would be one fruitful line of exploration. There have been biographers who have written about Hemingway's hypermasculinity and scholars who have examined masculinity in his works, but using by the same methodology I applied to Fitzgerald, we could begin to deconstruct the connections between life, history and art. The same is true for any male authors in the American literary canon since anxieties concerning masculinity seem to be especially prevalent in American culture.

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