

CHAPTER III

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

III.1. Scott Fitzgerald and his personal life

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born on September 24, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota, the only son of an upper - middle class, Catholic family. He was the only product of the union of an unsuccessful businessman and a wealthy Irish immigrant's daughter. His father was a kindly southerner of vaguely aristocratic lineage who never quite managed to succeed in business, moving his family first to Buffalo, New York, then to Syracuse and back again to Buffalo, returning finally in 1908 to St. Paul without having made much money.

The young Scott grew up in the kind of environment that has been characterized as "shabby gentell". His family had the traditions of the upper classes but not the financial security to support those traditions, and while he associated with the children of the rich, he was aware that he was never wholly a part

of their society. Perhaps this is the basis of his lifelong devotion to both material and social success; even as a boy he was driven more than most children to try to establish himself by athletics, personal popularity, and ultimately literary expression. By 1910, in his second year at the St. Paul Academy, he was publishing fiction in the school magazine, an activity he was to continue at prep school and Princeton. He was always to be fascinated by the very rich, and most of his stories concern their action.

He returned to the east to prep at the Newman Academy, a Catholic school in New Jersey in 1911. Here, Fitzgerald tried desperately hard to distinguish himself at athletics but found he was better suited to achieving success in literary endeavors, publishing three stories in the Newman News. He also went on excursions to New York City to see musical comedies and developed an interest in drama soon led to writing plays of his own. His dramatic efforts were rewarded during the two summers before he went to Princeton, when he saw his plays successfully produced by a local drama club.

While Fitzgerald's literary efforts brought him to recognition he so much desired, his extracurricular activities ruined his grades, and in the winter of 1915 he withdrew temporarily from Princeton on the partial pretext of ill health. At this time his romance with a flighty socially girl named Ginerva King had begun to disintegrate, and he entered a difficult period of life. He returned to Princeton in 1916 and his junior year was marked by the termination of the romance and a shift in his literary interests toward more serious writing, particularly poetry.

By the time of his senior year the war had captured his imagination, and so he left Princeton for an army commission as a second lieutenant in November, 1917. Fitzgerald was sent to Alabama and there he began his first novel, originally titled The Romantic Egoist, and met Zelda Sayre. She was lovely, daring, and completely undisciplined, the darling of a wealthy Alabama family. Fitzgerald wanted to marry her immediately, but though she loved him she was unwilling to marry anyone who could not support her. Therefore,

after his discharge in February of 1919 Fitzgerald set out to earn his bride as a writer in New York City.

He decided to return to St. Paul, immuring himself in his room to rework the novel he had written in his army days. When Scribner's accepted the novel for publication in September of 1919, Fitzgerald's success was immediate and spectacular. Magazines began buying his short stories as fast as he could produce them, and in November Zelda consented to be his wife. They were married in April of 1921, and by then he released The Side of Paradise to be his second printing. It was all a fairy tale come true; he had achieved almost instant financial success and won the girl. He became the "golden boy" of American letters, the gifted young genius whose writings typified the new era in American history known as the "Roaring Twenties".

Fitzgerald moved to into a luxury apartment in New York City after Scribner published a collection of his short stories titled Flappers and Philosophers. April of 1922 marked the publication of Fitzgerald's second novel , The Beautiful and Damned which detailed

the tragio dissipation of a young man and woman. Meanwhile he and Zelda had taken a brief trip to Europa, and Zelda had given birth to their daughter "Scottie" shortly after they returned. The sales of the book, which was more thoughtful in content than the first novel, proved disappointing to Fitzgerald, who had borrowed money to maintain his lavish standard of living, and despite a second collection of short stories titled Tales of the Jazz Age, he was having trouble meeting expenses. In October of 1922 he and Zelda moved to Great Neck, Long Island, a community that was alive with riotous parties. Here, Fitzgerald began his third and finest novel The Great Gatsby in 1925. The novel was skillfully written, For financial support he was depending on the success of his play The Vegetable, or From President to Postman.

In the intervening nine years Fitzgerald went into a state of literary aclipse, writing short stories and Hollywood scenarios, and witnessing the skyrocketing career of his friend Ernest Hamingway. He lived

sometimes in Europe and other times in America, and his already chronic dependence on alcohol increased. Fitzgerald came to be popularly regarded as a literary has been whose career had ended with the twenties.

With the added expense, and Scottie's private schooling, Fitzgerald's financial obligations increased. He continued writing stories, but it was not until 1934 that Tender Is the Night was published. The public reaction to the new novel disappointed its author, who had been working at it off and on for some seven years.

Under financial pressure, Fitzgerald returned to Hollywood in 1937 for his third try at writing movie scripts. His salary there enabled him to keep Zelda and him pay some of the large personal debt he had accumulated. While in Hollywood he met a twenty - eight - year - old British girl named Sheila Graham, who had risen from the London slums to become a Hollywood newspaper correspondent. She helped him fight his alcoholism and seems to have given him a good deal of support in his last years.

Throughout his career, he had battled chronic

alcoholism, and this strain had slowed his work and dulled his enjoyment of life to a great extent. The pressure of overwork, plus his troubles with liquor, led to heart attack, and ultimately to a second, fatal one in December, 1940. Zelda lived on as invalid and was burned to death in a sanitarium fire in 1947.

At the time, Fitzgerald had been working on a novel about Hollywood people, The Last Tycoon, and living with a movie gossip columnist, Sheilah Graham. A Roman Catholic by birth, the author felt the moral impossibility of divorcing the incurably ill Zelda, and this worry could easily have contributed to his premature death at the age of 44.

When he was died, he was an almost forgotten figure. When the Modern Library dropped The Great Gatsby from its lists in 1939, not one of his books remained in print. Then a few critical and appreciative essay began to appear, and in 1945 Edmund Wilson edited The Crack - Up, a collection of autobiographical essays, excerpts from Fitzgerald's notebooks, letters, and critical commentary by other writers. In more recent

years his reputation has been growing steadily, especially in the last decade. Earlier there had been a tendency to identify his works with the period they characterized, whereas today, with the advantage of a more distant perspective have come to recognize that Fitzgerald used the materials of his environment to create literary works which have earned a permanent place in American literature.

However, he is now considered indispensable in American literature courses in colleges and universities across the country, for he played an undeniable role in the development of the novel.

III.2. Scott Fitzgerald, his idea and his thought

Scott Fitzgerald is considered by others as a representative figure of the age. It means that most of his works dealing with the real condition at the time he wrote his works. Floyd said that one of the features of the works of Scott Fitzgerald is an awareness of the American historical tradition. Floyd added that the excellence of his works is the brilliance to portrait

the American society, especially in the 1920's.

Scott Fitzgerald had an imaginative sense of the experience of the 1920's, was indeed a writer so closely related to his contemporary time. His works reveals about the quality of his time, the movement of attitude and feeling in it. Whatever he was writing about and whatever his other interests in it, he was always aware of what it suggested about his time.

The advantage of such his imaginative grasp of life is that it can look at a time and a place and see past the normative statistical formulas. He was a man who experienced the idea, felt it a new and as if no one had ever experienced before, and felt it therefore wholly in terms of the world he lived in. By doing so, he displayed, unintentionally, and as the result of an incident that made his experience representative, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the American sensibility. For Scott Fitzgerald it was the 1920's, the period aroused his sense of life as no other could; it gave him images of youth and success; it provided situations of social and moral complexity and

centrality. It was a time favourable to the arts in America.

All this has led many readers to take it for granted that Fitzgerald is the most completely representative writer of America in the 1920's. No writer contains within himself the entire life of his time.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS