The Romantic Egoist: Fitzgerald's View on Identity and Culture

by

Tara Bender

English 690

Dr. Mark Harris

Dr. Stephen Bell

Dr. Michael Davis

1 April 2015

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"Who am I?" is a question that not only each individual asks himself or herself at various points in the process of maturation from childhood to adulthood, but also society itself as it changes and grows. The questions individuals in society ask, such as "How do I want to be remembered? And "What difference can I make?" often provide the answers that shape society. During the 1920s, Americans were asking themselves these defining questions. They had just participated in the Great War of civilized society, which destroyed their previously held belief, built around a false sense of security, that war could be prevented if the world was civilized. Human beings, through technological and social advances, were supposed to have evolved beyond the senseless killing of their fellow human beings, yet bodies were strewn all over the European landscape and the blood shed by twenty million soldiers was not easily forgotten. The hollowed out buildings in Europe provided a constant, although distant, reminder to 1920s American society of the not so distant past.

The chaos of the landscape was reflected in the chaos of societal change as a result of the loss of optimism. The questioning of foundational ideals, such as peace, freedom, and prosperity, which many Americans shared, led to two different reactions. Many American individuals decided to cling even more tightly to traditionally defined gender roles, where men were the protectors and wealth-earners for the family, while women were the nurturers and caretakers, in order to preserve traditional American values rather than embrace a new culture. Another category of post-World War I Americans, the majority of which represented the youth culture, sought new definitions of gender roles and recognized that the preservation of traditional values, while important, could not answer new questions being raised about what it meant to be an individual in America. Fitzgerald was influenced by both types of Americans, which enabled

him to critique American society from within through his personal experience with the exciting, fast-paced culture of 1920s New York. However, he also frequently traveled to France, where he directly observed the impacts of World War I, which enabled him to also observe the upheaval occurring in American society from an external perspective. As a developed and civilized society, American culture no longer had a clear identity, so it began to ask the questions of "Who am I?" with astonishing regularity. The transitions occurring in society as a whole were also found in individual American lives because the traditional values they once held could not provide clear directions on who they should become.

This conflict between embracing the traditional or modern is the experience Fitzgerald provides for three protagonists in his novels: Amory Blaine in *This Side of Paradise* (1920), Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), and Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Fitzgerald uses his protagonists to question how individuals within American culture should begin to re-define themselves by challenging the traditional social roles of men and women. Ethan Mordden shows in his book, *That Jazz!,* how the tension that existed between traditional definitions of gender roles and the definitions held by the developing youth culture was clearly apparent, even in small Midwestern cities, such as Middletown. True to its name, this small town was a blend of both the traditional agrarian town and the modern city. Mordden suggests in his book that because of the unique culture in Middletown, the city was representative of the changes occurring in American culture as a whole in the 1920s (48). This city was neither the haven of prostitution and alcohol consumption that defined New York City, nor was it the backwards agrarian town of Faulkner's novels. The middle ground of traditional and modern cultures that this Midwestern city reflected on a small stage is also an indication of the tension occurring between traditional and youth cultures throughout the nation. The

transformation away from traditional views that occurred in a small city in America represents the shifts occurring in American society as a whole, where "cigarette smoking was not considered unwomanly or effeminate; big families were looking less respectable…one third of the high-school graduates were heading immediately to college…clothes were more slim-lined…and fewer women were making their own; the hail-fellow lodge was losing its grip on the minds of men" (48-9). Fitzgerald recognized the tensions between the traditional views of gender roles and the developing youth culture re-defining femininity and masculinity. However, while these cultural questions are included in his novels, Fitzgerald does not provide a stable example of whether the traditional or modern definitions should be followed.

The autobiographical elements in Fitzgerald's novels portray his own experiences with the changing definition of masculinity occurring in the 1920s. These representations of his own life are indications of both a broader critique of the way American society was developing and how gender roles were being re-defined by the culture of 1920s America as well as challenging the traditional definition of masculinity. In his novels, Fitzgerald illustrates the underlying conflict that existed in American society, and attempts, in his own way, to illustrate the possible outcomes of both the traditional and modern definitions. Amory, Anthony, and Gatsby are masculine characters who are stunted in their formation of identity because of their reliance on the approval of others, whether through romantic relationships, achievement of the American dream, or success in finding a career. As a result, these men are rejected by the culture around them, which Fitzgerald presents as problematic. He argues that the development of the modern man that incorporates masculine and feminine traits is better than traditional understandings of masculinity, but acknowledges that 1920s American culture was not yet ready to accept this shifting definition. Fitzgerald creates characters that reflect the cultural struggle to redefine

gender roles, revealing the possibility of the negative consequences of clinging to traditional definitions through the immature male characters, who develop their identities based on the influence of others, and who ultimately find they have no individuality.

The masculine protagonists in Fitzgerald's novels are often influenced by traditional gender definitions and the cultural norms of the 1920s, where love is acceptable only if shared by two individuals of similar socio-economic status, wealth is achievable by anyone who pursues the American Dream ("the land of prosperity and opportunity"), and success is defined by self-sufficiency, education, and the accumulation of wealth, all of which also define the gentleman of European descent. In his novels, Fitzgerald does not offer a new definition of gender in order to address the cultural chaos, but does use the contrast between masculine and feminine characters to show that individuals can be a blend of both masculine and feminine traits. The questions Fitzgerald raises are similar to those posed by Judith Butler in her books, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) and *Undoing Gender* (2004), each of which help to frame a discussion of Fitzgerald's novels. One of the central questions of Butler's writings is "how do certain sexual practices compel the question: what is a woman, what is a man?" (xi) These questions are important to address in order to understand the way Fitzgerald re-directs an understanding of normative sexuality through his protagonists' experience of love, wealth, and success. Butler begins her argument by first establishing a commonly accepted definition of "woman" based on normative gender when she says, "one is a woman…to the extent that one functions as one within the dominant heterosexual frame...in this view, sexual hierarchy produces and consolidates gender" (Butler xi-ii). For many individuals in 1920s American culture, gender roles were strictly defined based on one's sexuality rather than on personality traits. Sexuality was defined by one's biological being rather than understood as being

constructed by one's culture, which often placed limitations on the roles of males and females based on physical attributes. However, during this time questions about gender and sexuality began to be raised, which Butler also addresses: "whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed; hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (9-10). By shifting the definition of gender from a biological emphasis to one of cultural construction, Butler is suggesting that gender is an identity that is formed by multiple influences that are partially a part of one's biological being, but that are also influenced by external cultural influences.

The idea that gender is influenced by cultural norms is one that will frame the discussion of Fitzgerald's protagonists and the way he attempts to undermine traditional definitions of gender through the actions of his characters. However, before addressing Fitzgerald's deployment of both masculine and feminine traits in his male protagonists, it is important to understand what the subversion of gender roles can look like in a cultural context. Butler argues that it is not enough to separate a biological definition of gender from a cultural one because "a feminist view argues that gender should be overthrown, eliminated, or rendered fatally ambiguous precisely because it is always a sign of subordination for women" (Butler xiii). Although Butler encourages a re-defining of gender roles, she makes very clear that "the performance of gender subversion can indicate nothing about sexuality or sexual practice. Gender can be rendered ambiguous without disturbing or reorienting normative sexuality at all. Sometimes gender ambiguity can operate precisely to contain or deflect non-normative sexual practice and thereby work to keep normative sexuality intact" (Butler xiv). In his novels, Fitzgerald encourages a redefining of gender roles, but does so separate from the sexuality of his characters, which is what Butler suggests is the most effective way to understand gender.

Although she acknowledges that shifting definitions of gender roles can at times prove to be difficult, Butler argues that the most effective method is to critically investigate the way gender roles have been established both in culture and society. Fitzgerald thus does not attempt to offer a new definition of gender in relation to sexuality or even directly discuss gender roles; however, he uses the protagonists in his novels and their interactions with other male and female characters to show that the definition of one's gender constitutes a process of self-discovery directly impacted by society and culture. Throughout his novels he attempts to question sexual normativity and uses the actions of his protagonists to encourage a change in the way feminine and masculine personality traits are perceived.

In 1920s America, many were beginning to ask what typically determined a feminine trait or a masculine trait, and why. Although at the time Fitzgerald was writing, the majority of American culture adhered to traditional gender roles based on assumed character traits, many individuals began to discuss the differences between these roles. Nathan Miller gives an example of the changing definitions of gender roles in his book, *New World Coming,* when he contrasts a flapper (who represented the revolutionary constructions of gender by youth culture) to the Gibson Girl, "the amply bosomed and rigidly corseted feminine ideal of her mother's day" (254). The traditional culture of the 1920s endorsed the role of woman as being "the bearer of children and devoted homemaker [because] she was subservient to the appetites of men and was taught to please them rather than herself" (254). However, 1920s culture began to question these rigid definitions of a common identity based on cultural assumptions of both male and female roles in society.

During this time, the traditional roles played by females were often based on the political idea that women shared a common identity. Even women who could have been labeled feminists

at the time were "assumed to exist cross-culturally, [and] often accompanie[d] the nation that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination" (Butler 6). Similar to the assumption of feminist criticism being contained to one idea about the oppression of women that Butler disapproves of, it is impossible to identify one source of the confusion over gender roles that men in 1920s America were experiencing. However, the effect of the instability of the male identity is presented as a negative impact on society by Bryce Traister in his article, "Academic Viagra: The Rise of American Masculinity Studies," where he shows through the study of the historical development of masculinity that individuals who "remain unaware of the centrality of gender in our lives only help to perpetuate gender inequality" (281). Although women during the 1920s are often the focus, the formation of male gender identity was also changing because men were trying to understand what their role was after returning from the war, and coming to the realization that society was no longer the same.

Greg Forter shows in his book, *Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism,* that the idea of a feminine and masculine binary in American culture after World War I was often indicated by the separation of public (masculine) and private (feminine) spheres. During this time of upheaval, feminine characteristics were often considered traits such as kindness, generosity, and compassion that were most often expressed by mothers and wives in the private home. However, this narrow definition began to shift toward a "wholesale revaluation of the gendered divisions of spheres" (Forter 3). Whereas before World War I, the gender roles were relatively stable, after World War I the "'civilizing' virtues of women were recast as emasculating dangers, forces that turned boys into sissies and threatened the 'feminization of American culture.'" As a result, "Men sought to expel the 'feminine' within them while

embracing as positive traits those attributes that had previously been coded ambivalently--primal male force, instinctual vitality, aggression, and bodily strength" (Forter 3). These traits were encouraged in men, while any semblance of feminine traits, especially in young adult men, was discouraged. This attempt to expel feminine traits from males is exemplified in Fitzgerald's novels, especially in the male protagonists, who often find themselves unable to fully embrace the feminine characteristics they possess, resulting in the inability of these characters to fully mature as adult men. This turn back to traditional definitions of male and female roles in society was embraced by many Americans, but some, like Fitzgerald, sought to challenge the acceptance of such definitions through his male protagonists.

The widening gap separating gender binaries is not only because of feminine traits, but is made evident by the masculine traits that were praised and encouraged among young men in 1920s American culture. Forter shows the opposition that culture had toward feminine traits in men by arguing that "what made one a man now was less that one had successfully grown up than that one was persuasively not a woman--a shift that bespoke a heightened need to police the borders between male and female identities" (3). Rather than culture shifting towards more tolerance of feminine traits, the masculine identity was being defined in stricter terms exemplified by "a move away from the term manhood, defined in opposition to boyhood, and toward the term masculinity, defined in opposition to femininity" (Forter 2). The emphasis on male figures maturing was therefore more about them avoiding potentially feminine behavior than about their maturation from boys to adults. Because of American culture's renewed adherence to strict, traditional gender roles, many men became uncertain of what their position in society was.

One of the impacts of this heightened distinction between feminine and masculine traits was the social disapproval of men mourning the losses that occurred during World War I. Forter argues that authors such as Fitzgerald use their stories to "memorialize blocked mourning [in] the most poignant and beautiful and manly response to socially induced loss" (5). As a result of this inability of men to express sadness over the loss of life, loss of values, and loss of ideals because society rejected vulnerability as a feminine trait, protagonists in Fitzgerald's novels were used as spokespersons to express the confusion and sorrow of many men returning from World War I. However, "the conflict between a residual attachment to the feminine in men and an internalized hatred of that femininity resulted in…the unleashing of melancholic aggression toward the socially vulnerable: women, effeminate men, and racial minorities. This was in part a measure of desperation" (Forter 5). 1920s American culture no longer provided a stable masculine identity, and men were unable to express their confusion over the loss of the traditional ideals. As a result, during this time period societal inequality persisted because many men were unable to accept feminine traits as positive evidence of maturation into adulthood rather than a negative effect of the war.

Although the definition of American heteromasculinity has changed over time, in the 1920s the traditionally masculine traits that were seen as praiseworthy included strength and superiority in contrast to more traditionally feminine traits of meekness and passivity. Traister presents two theories that show the influence of gender roles on the development of American masculinity: "one is rooted in a new historiography of American masculinity that locates instability at the base of all masculine identities constructed within American cultural matrices; the second is derived from Judith Butler's influential theoretical account of gender as always performative and contingent" (276). The first definition suggests that shifts in American culture

resulted in the instability of masculine identities, while the second theory argues that gender has always been an unstable concept. Both of these definitions are incorporated into Fitzgerald's use of gender in his novels because his male protagonists contain both masculine and feminine traits. Although these two definitions seem to suggest different conclusions about cultural influences on gender, both are necessary because the historical development of masculinity and the evaluation of masculinity as performance "produce a picture of American heteromasculinity that is surprisingly unchanging and fixed" (Traister 276).

Rather than accepting the feminine traits that were a part of the masculine identity, which males often associated with "a creative and sensuously vibrant responsiveness to one's inner life, one's body, and the social world (including the inner lives and bodies of others)" (Forter 9), males were encouraged to suppress these traits. Fitzgerald creates characters in his novels that represent the youth culture who were seeking to challenge the suppression of such traits and contrasts them with characters that can be defined as traditional masculine figures. The traditional definition of masculinity that Fitzgerald uses is based on the dominant male figures in 1920s America, represented by a type of male, such as the "WASP males [who] dominated the political, social, and economic affairs of this nation" (20). Although many cultural critics did not discuss the impact of masculinity on 1920s culture, Fitzgerald was ahead of his time in critiquing modern definitions of masculinity. Gender roles during 1920s America were constrained by specific definitions of masculinity "because masculinity has for so long stood as the transcendental anchor and guarantor of cultural authority and "truth," demonstrating its materiality" (Traister 281). Fitzgerald's novels thus provide a unique contrast between traditional masculinity and the developing masculinity defined by the youth culture.

The first step to analyzing the impact of changing cultural definitions of masculinity is to understand the history of American manhood, a point that Michael Kimmel illustrates in *Manhood in America*. Kimmel identifies two cultural influences on masculinity that Fitzgerald also recognized during his life time: first is the "'complete' male that Goffman describes—straight, white, middle class, native-born—the story of his great accomplishments and his nagging anxieties," while simultaneously the marginalized 'others'…against which those 'complete' men projected their fears and, in the process, constructed this prevailing definition of manhood" (6). By recognizing the tension that existed between masculine and feminine traits as well as within the definition of masculinity itself, as a cultural understanding and as a performance, Fitzgerald's protagonists are able to represent the cultural shifts taking place in the 1920s. Forter argues that literature is an important tool in evaluating the impact of the development of masculinity because "literature includes within itself an account of the social transformations to which it is a response…It's therefore by focusing on the literature itself that we can perhaps best understand the psychohistorical meaning of the crisis in white manhood as these authors experienced it, as well as the shape or form of their divergent responses to that crisis" (12). By framing literature in a historical and cultural context, Fitzgerald's novels can be analyzed as a significant contributor to the social development and understanding of masculine identities in 1920s America.

Throughout all three of his novels, Fitzgerald uses romantic relationships, pursuit of wealth as part of the American dream, and traditional understandings of success in the experiences of the male protagonists in order to show a lack of maturation in their lives. Through a cultural and historical lens, one can see that Fitzgerald does not adhere to traditionally accepted masculine and feminine traits as definers of identity, but instead embraces a fluidity of identity

that emphasizes the importance of discovering one's identity rather than about the cultural expectation of masculine actions. This inclusion of masculine characters who question their own individual identities and seek an answer to "Who am I?" is exemplified in their interaction with family members, lovers, and friends. These individuals represent, in part, the discussion occurring within 1920s American culture about what best defines the masculine and feminine.

The views Fitzgerald's protagonists hold toward women are directly related to the way they develop their masculine identities and how they understand love, which Fitzgerald portrays as a largely negative influence on the maturation of his male characters. Some critics suggest that Fitzgerald's challenge to traditional expressions of gender means both he and his male characters are homosexual; however, "both are [better understood as] romantic egoists who, in the traditional manner of romantic egotists, tend rather to regard women as success symbols or as narcissistic mirrors than as mere mistresses or wives" (Coleman 35). Fitzgerald's critique of culture was not widely popular because, as Coleman suggests, American novelists were afraid of the influence of feminine traits on the development of men: "despite the relative political and moral equality and freedom which American women have now enjoyed for almost five decades—freedom which society saw fit to deny them for twenty-two decades—the battle of the sexes, which they appear to be in terror of losing, obsesses American male writers" (34).

This inequality between men and women continued during the 1920s because many men were frightened by the influence of feminine traits on the development of culture, and were unsure of how to win a woman's love. Despite Fitzgerald's "sympathetic portrayals of young American girls in bloom" (Coleman 34), such as Daisy and Gloria, who mature, even in a small way, from the beginning of the novels to the end, Fitzgerald maintains a decidedly ambiguous attitude toward these female characters. Rather than emphasizing the role of women in his

novels, Fitzgerald focuses on the masculine perception of romantic relationships. Many of the women in the novels are considered objects to be conquered by the male protagonists. However, Fitzgerald shows that the desire for the conquest of women is often unachievable and "the hard truth which defeats and frustrates…is that a man's sense of romantic wonder may be satisfied permanently by art, patriotism, reform, religion, or work; it cannot long be satisfied by romantic love of women" (Coleman 42). At times, Fitzgerald's male protagonists see love as a hopeful goal that can be achieved, as exemplified by Gatsby, but most often romantic relationships are used to show the inability of the masculine figure to conquer the woman's heart.

Another experience that Fitzgerald's male protagonists share is their pursuit of the American dream, which is based on the ideology that anyone can gain wealth in the "land of opportunity" because of the promises of "equality, fairness, unity, and ultimately, financial and material success" (Hearne 190). However, Fitzgerald criticizes this pursuit of wealth that many individuals in the 1920s culture participated in by showing how it stunted the development of the identities of his male protagonists. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Fitzgerald did not portray the American Dream as a positive ideology in his novels, but instead used the pursuit of wealth as a way to critique how society was developing. Although Fitzgerald acknowledged the beauty of the American dream, he also acknowledged that it was flawed as one critic points out, "For Fitzgerald, the American dream is beautiful, yet grotesquely flawed and distorted. No matter what idyllic picture we paint…underneath the brightest of hues lies the stark white canvas of truth: No one is truly equal…someone is always struggling underfoot—inevitably as one rises another falls" (Hearne 191). An indication of this negative attitude toward wealth is his creation of male protagonists who are motivated and molded by the American Dream, but who ultimately fail to achieve their dreams.

During the 1920s, Americans were profoundly influenced by this ideology and perceived the American dream "as a promise of freedom—freedom from persecution and unjust hostility as well as the freedom to advance and achieve success. Part of that dream is that all, not just the privileged few, share in this promise" (Hearne 190). Yet Fitzgerald used the American Dream to critique the way society honored men who exclusively pursued profit, such as the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, and Carnegies. These families were held up as emblems of wealth and the American Dream, but who also allowed for the "excessive injustices of the Industrial Revolution—the lax regulations on sanitation, the dehumanizing living conditions, the exploitation of children" (Hearne 192). Although Fitzgerald did not suggest that the American Dream was entirely negative, he did attempt to bring to light through his novels that "below the feet of the rich lay a valley of ashes, a valley that the rich propagated and, in many cases, tyrannized for profit, [and that] this truth remains part of American character, however flawed and incongruent with our initial ideology" (Hearne 192). For the male protagonists, the American dream distracts from the development of their identity, keeping them from growing into mature adults. This lack of development of both the protagonists and American culture is one example of how the masculine figures are unable to mature because they see the pursuit of wealth as more significant than developing an individual identity.

Many critics recognize that Fitzgerald's perception of the American Dream is directly related to his own experience with the ideology. Richard White points out that "In the 1920's he [Fitzgerald] went from youthful and sudden success to expatriation, followed by decline and depression in the 1930's….Before his death in 1940, Fitzgerald even pursued the American dream of Hollywood" (155). For Fitzgerald, the pursuit of the American Dream fluctuated between a positive and negative experience. As a successful author, Fitzgerald was often faced

with society's harsh judgment, resulting in his disillusionment over his achievement of the American dream. John F. Callahan argues in *The Illusion of a Nation: Myth and History in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald* that "Fitzgerald's scrutiny of the American dream is sharp—and pointed directly at the heart of American ideology....Fitzgerald understood the duality inherent in the American dream's essential character, and his understanding is inextricably woven into [his] style and form" (189). Through the language of the story and the romantic imagery in *This Side of Paradise, Beautiful and the Damned,* and *The Great Gatsby*, "Fitzgerald offers up his critique and presents the dream for what it truly is: a mirage that entices us to keep moving forward even as we are ceaselessly borne back into the past" (Hearne 189).

For Fitzgerald, the American dream was an unachievable goal that haunted his male protagonists. Amory and Anthony never achieve this dream, and even Gatsby only holds onto it momentarily. This experience on the part of his male protagonists is not unlike Fitzgerald's personal experience. Many biographers who study Fitzgerald "encounter the man whose dreams and talent failed," suggesting that "[t]his is the more formidable and lasting Fitzgerald, the man who in moving from a model of success in the twenties to an authority on failure in the thirties, willingly and almost desperately shared his private traumas and fears with his audience in an effort to restore himself" (White 154). Fitzgerald described his personal disappointment with the pursuit of wealth that is characteristic of the American dream, by saying "the thing that lies behind all great careers, from Shakespeare's to Abraham Lincoln's, and as far back as there are books to read—the sense that life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat and that the redeeming things are not 'happiness and pleasure' but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle" (qtd. in Turnbull 112). Even though Fitzgerald recognized that the struggle for wealth was part of the American dream, he did not find that pursuit worthwhile. Rather than

envisioning the American dream as a positive influence on his male protagonists, Fitzgerald portrays the immaturity of his male protagonists as an effect of the destructiveness of wealth. This disillusionment with such a key American ideology that is directly correlated to the amount of wealth an individual has is interwoven into Fitzgerald's novels, and expresses the inability of his male characters to reach adult maturity.

Along with the pursuit of wealth by his male protagonists, Fitzgerald connects the idea of success to the rise of the youth culture developing in America in the 1920s. He makes this connection in order to show a shift in cultural definitions from success being focused on a career to success being defined as achieving the goal of self-becoming. He recognized the conflicting ideas that dominated American society after World War I, the moment at which the traditional definition of success was shifting from a Victorian influence of the importance of hard work and maturity to a modern youth culture that emphasized a laidback lifestyle and a romanticized view of the past. The definition of youth culture is provided by Lawrence Grossberg, who suggests youth culture to be a category of "chronology, ideology, experience, style, [and] attitude," (171). The influence of the youth culture can be seen in the search for identity that Amory in *This Side of Paradise*, Anthony in *The Beautiful and Damned*, and Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* experience. Fitzgerald created his characters within the context of the modern world's shifting views of gender roles, which is exemplified in the growing youth culture of the 1920s, where men with feminine traits and women with masculine traits were encouraged to be themselves rather than conform to traditional social expectations.

Other important movements were occurring within 1920s American culture, such as increased urbanization, but the unique impact of the youth culture on the 1920s was its embrace of a more liberal view of sexuality than previous generations. Kirk Curnutt identifies the

changing social view of sexuality as the reason for Fitzgerald, more than many other authors of his time, portraying the developing youth culture in his novels. After World War I, individuals in American culture were looking for answers to who they were, and Curnutt argues that "Fitzgerald would never have achieved notoriety had a mass audience not been eager for insight into how the twentieth century's first generation, its 'heirs of progress' was shaped by the emergence of modernity" (80). Fitzgerald was ahead of his time in recognizing the cultural shifts occurring and going directly to the source of these changes: the youth. Curnutt credits Fitzgerald for this portrayal of the youth culture by saying "Young people are often…an index of social change…a 'battlefield' upon which teens and adults fight for control of its meanings, investments, and powers to articulate and thereby construct its experiences, identities, practices, discourses, and social differences" (81). The shift in views on sexuality began in the 1920s and gradually gave rise to an "increasingly sexually liberal society, one that viewed sexual expression as a key component of individual happiness" (D'Emilio 127). The culture Fitzgerald found himself a part of as he was writing his novels in the 1920s was strongly influenced by this changing understanding of gender roles and sexual identities. Fitzgerald used gender identities in his novel to question traditional definitions of sexuality and also to encourage a more modern definition. Although the understanding of gender has shifted over time, the definition offered by modernity focuses on the exchange between feminine and masculine power, especially during the fin de siècle (end of the nineteenth century) that directly impacted the culture of 1920s America (Forter 299). Through the contrasts between masculine and feminine traits in the male protagonists in his novels, Fitzgerald reflects the tension that existed between 1920s traditional culture and youth culture.

All three characters reflect the tension that existed in American culture between growing up, which during the 1920s meant success based on self-sufficiency and education, and maintaining a youthful outlook on life, which was often viewed as a failure by those who clung to traditional ideals. Fitzgerald was critical of how culture was beginning to define success, and criticizes the way gender influenced a person's opportunity to be successful. One way he does this is by providing all three male protagonists with experiences during which they should grow as masculine characters; however, they continue to cling to romanticized visions of themselves as successful men, a fate which Fitzgerald shows to be problematic in the end. Fitzgerald's male protagonists experience events that are seemingly outside of their control, but through these events he reveals the negative effect that an inaccurate view of what being successful meant during 1920s America could have on one's life.

Fitzgerald raises many questions in his novels about the role of the masculine and feminine in finding one's identity, about the way social and cultural norms define an individual's personality and how wealth and success can manipulate and control one's decisions. These questions are presented in a fashion that suggests Fitzgerald did not know the answers, but wanted to challenge individuals to find them on their own. Rather than dictating the role of women or the role of men in society, Fitzgerald used multiple examples in his novels of both traditional and modern definitions of gender roles in order to argue for a combination of masculine and feminine traits as important to the development of individual identities. While many critics focus on the autobiographical elements of Fitzgerald's novels—and while those elements are connected to other themes in his novels that will be evaluated—the important consideration to make is the way the themes of love, wealth, and success are indications of a

broader cultural critique of how society was developing and how gender was defined by the culture in 1920s America.

Chapter 2: The Egotistical Personage in *This Side of Paradise*

The competing discourses that shaped the culture of 1920s America can also be found in the story of Amory Blaine in *This Side of Paradise*, who is plagued by questions of identity and what it means to be himself in the face of culture's shifting definitions of masculinity. Even though the loss of friendship and love that Amory experiences throughout his life, with the death of his father, separation from his mother, and the death of Monsignor Darcy, should cause him to develop as a character, he fails to form a stable identity as a masculine figure. Fitzgerald uses this failure of Amory to be transformed into a self-aware character from his childhood through adulthood to show the difficulty of discovering one's identity, especially in the midst of the changing culture of the 1920s. Amory is indicative of the chaos of American society because even though his early life is stable, as he grows older he finds himself without familial influences, forced to find his own way at Princeton and in New York society. Amory is a character who is torn between becoming a masculine figure who fits the traditional definition, and one who has discovered his identity as a Self in relation to the modern culture. He also represents the debilitated traditional masculine figure, and his quest for a new male identity is characteristic of post-World War I America because of his excessive reliance on other individuals in relationships, his overly sentimental view of the American Dream, and his inability to lead a successful life because of his inability to significantly mature throughout the novel.

The quest for purpose and meaning in life that Amory experiences is influenced by the way he develops his relationships with others, which can be seen through the father-son relationship he forms with Monsignor Darcy. Amory's need to form such connections influences the way he interacts with the more mature adults in his life, and dictates his dependence on their

approval, especially that of other men. Fitzgerald explicitly identifies World War I as a central turning point in this novel to indicate a shift in culture's perspective from traditional definitions of masculinity to the modern role men began to hold in society. Monsignor Darcy offers advice to Amory on how to mature into a man by presenting to him the theory of becoming a personage. This idea is one that Monsignor Darcy explains to Amory as they are discussing the key differences between a personality and a personage. Darcy defines personality as a physical attribute that "lowers the people it acts on" and often results in people rejecting "the next thing" (94) because they believe they do not need to achieve anything. For Amory, being a personality allows him to become a different person for a short period of time in order to benefit himself, but never encourages him to purse a stable identity.

Yet Darcy notices a difference in Amory that many young gentleman of his time do not exhibit, which is that he has the potential to be a personage rather than a personality. A personage is someone Darcy argues is a better person overall because "[h]e is never thought of apart from what he's done. He's a bar on which a thousand things have been hung—glittering thing[s] sometimes…but he uses those things with a cold mentality back of them" (94). A personage is someone who has won accolades of others, but does not allow them to change his identity. In contrast, a personality is someone who adapts his identity in order to fit the expectations of those around him. Through these contrasting examples, Fitzgerald provides a solution to the dilemma of American society trying to define itself. He argues that becoming a personage provides a stable identity; however, adapting one's identity to others can become problematic. Darcy observes that Amory is a personality because he creates an identity for himself based on the notion of himself as superman, who is better than those around him. However, Darcy points out that, rather than being devastated by losing the approval of others, it

is better for Amory to become a personage. Because if Amory is a personage, then negative experiences do not cause despair, but instead motivate him to do the next thing, which gives Amory the opportunity to "accomplish marvels" (93). Darcy is trying to convince Amory that even though his "philosophy of success had tumbled down upon him" (89) after his name is withdrawn from the editorial board of the *Princetonian*, that he still should move forward. Although Amory desires to be immune to the negative effects of losing some of his prestige that comes along with being a personality, he is unsure of how to become a personage because he is not sure of his own identity. Amory describes himself as "idle" (89) and believes that only through conformity to what others desire for him to be can he become someone important. As a result, Amory continues to be a personality who adopts a variety of personas in order to win the love of others, which directly influences his romantic relationships.

Amory's arduous path to discovering his Self as a masculine identity is made even more difficult by the early influences of his mother and the lack of a father-figure in his life. These relationships later hinder his efforts at forming romantic connections to the feminine characters that float through his life. Fitzgerald begins the novel by saying, "Amory Blaine inherited from his mother every trait, except the stray inexpressible few, that made him worth while" (5). As previously noted, the inheritance of feminine traits by males was a concern that 1920s American culture was obsessed with eliminating because "Men sought to expel the 'feminine' within them while embracing as positive traits those attributes that had previously been coded ambivalently--primal male force, instinctual vitality, aggression, and bodily strength" (Forter 3). This return to more traditional masculine characteristics makes it difficult for Amory to fit into the society around him because even though he "is entirely sophisticated and quite charming, [he is] delicate" (7). However, despite these traditionally feminine attributes, Amory has a sense of

himself that many young boys in his era did not have. He imagines himself as a person of worth, superior to all those around him, and he often "wondered how people could fail to notice that he was a boy marked for glory" (18). He dreams of "becoming a great half-back, or [being] rewarded by being made the youngest general in the world" (18), which were both dreams of becoming the kind of man who fulfilled the traditional masculine role as protector and hero. However, "it was always the becoming he dreamed of, never the being" (18). Amory's identity is influenced by the feminine traits that his mother encourages, and which directly impacts his perceptions of other females.

Amory's quest for acceptance from others, especially females, in his life begins early and is apparent in his interaction with his first romantic interest, Myra St. Claire. As a young teenager he attended a boarding school in Minneapolis, where he felt superior to both the other boys and his teachers. However, he receives an invitation from Myra to attend a bobbing party, and chooses to be fashionably late, not realizing the party left without him. Finding himself alone with Myra, he takes upon himself a romantic personality and "choosing his words carefully," begs Myra for her forgiveness (12). He imagines being next to a cozy fire with Myra and realizes "I can kiss her…I'll bet I can" (14). When the opportunity arises, Amory leans in and kisses Myra: "He had never kissed a girl before, and he tasted his lips curiously, as if he had munched some new fruit" (15). However, after his initial response, Amory is gripped by "sudden revulsion… [and] loathing for the whole incident. He desired to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss any one" (15). Amory takes upon himself a romantic personality, but the kiss breaks his romantic imaginings, waking him to the harsh reality that "he wanted to creep out of his body and hide somewhere safe out of sight" (15). This tension, even as a young boy, between what Amory imagines he desires and the reality of his romantic interactions with women

influences Amory's future relationships as an adult. He is unsure of his identity as a masculine figure and what his role in society should be. This uncertainty belies his apparent confidence around women, but also discourages his ability to develop a long term relationship, where someone would be able to see behind the mask of arrogance he often assumes as a personality.

Amory does not realize that his inability to fulfill the societal expectations of the traditional male role is hindering the development of his identity, but also making him dependent on others, especially the women around him, for his personality. Even though Fitzgerald provides little context for the introduction to Amory and Rosalind's relationship in the beginning of Book Two in *This Side of Paradise*, in short order it is clear that Amory relies on Rosalind as a person who can help to create a personality that he assumes as his identity. Rosalind is a charming woman who is described as "one of those girls who need never make the slightest effort to have men fall in love with them" (148). As a result, Rosalind can pick any man she desires, but "dull men are usually afraid of her cleverness" and "intellectual men are usually afraid of her beauty" (148). Even though Rosalind "is by no means a model character" (148), the narrator declares that Rosalind is "perhaps the delicious, inexpressible, once-in-a-century blend [of personality and personage]" (149). This ability of Rosalind to be both is what causes Amory to pursue her and to adopt a personality that fits who she wants him to be, but prevents him from forming his own identity as a personage. Without Rosalind, Amory is considered someone who is "sort of temperamental," (147) a boy who writes, but is also unsettled, but when accompanied by Rosalind, Amory becomes someone else.

Before Rosalind and Amory even meet, Rosalind is compared to Amory's young love Isabelle, with a "conscious, theatrical quality" and a voice that "was musical as a waterfall" (149). Amory allows Rosalind to create his identity because "all life was transmitted into terms

of their love, all experience, all desires, all ambitions, were nullified" (162). This reliance on Rosalind to establish his identity as a romantic personality is similar to the way Amory, as a child, relied on his mother Beatrice to cultivate masculine traits in him. Amory originally pictures Rosalind as "sexless, you know, swim[s] and play[s] golf" (151). But despite this first opinion of Rosalind as a female, Amory declares to Rosalind that even though "I don't want to fall in love with you," he "probably will" because he "love[s] [her] mouth" (153). His rationale for falling in love is focused on a physical attribute and the emotion evoked by the potential romance because "the critical qualities which had spoiled for each of them a dozen romances were dulled by the great wave of emotion that washed over them" (161). This focus on love and emotion hinders the development of their individual identities, ultimately preventing Amory from maturing as an adult.

Amory's overall ambivalence to his own identity and that of others is a direct result of his shallow perspective on love and relationships. In response to Rosalind asking for Amory to "say something sweet," (153) Amory declares his belief that "No, I'm romantic—a sentimental person thinks things will last—a romantic person hopes against hope that they won't" (153). Fitzgerald uses Amory's declaration of himself as a romantic to indicate that Amory's identity is unstable and dependent on an emotion that will not endure. Amory declares "She's life and hope and happiness, my whole world now" (163), which is a belief that causes him to quickly say "Rosalind, let's get married—next week" (167). Even though Amory declares himself a romantic, who does not desire the relationship to last, he allows the personality he exhibits around Rosalind to convince himself that he is truly in love with her and that their relationship can survive. However, Amory does not realize that his inability to form an identity as a masculine character, apart from Rosalind, inhibits their relationship from developing beyond a

summer romance. Because Amory is dependent on his relationship with Rosalind in order to form his identity, he is unable to become an individual. This lack of a stable identity is one aspect of Fitzgerald's criticism about the negative influence of traditional masculinity.

Amory places the hope of society's acceptance of him as a masculine figure on the love of Rosalind. However, the relationship between Rosalind and Amory develops at a fast pace, preventing any growth for him as an individual. Within a few hours of meeting her, Amory declares to Rosalind "I love you" and she immediately responds with "I love you—now" (161). However, in the moment following his original declaration, Amory questions "Oh, God, what have I done?" (161) However, this immediate regret does not lead Amory to change his actions, and in fact, he continues to kiss Rosalind, even though his question suggests dismay over his actions. After that fateful evening, "within two weeks Amory and Rosalind were deeply and passionately in love" (161). However, their love is marked by the "fear that any minute the spell would break and drop them out of this paradise of rose and flame" (162). Amory's masculine identity is entirely dependent on Rosalind because by being in a romantic relationship with her, Amory finally believes he is fulfilling societal expectations. He declares that only "for the second time in his life [he] had a complete bouleversement and was hurrying into line with his generation" (162). For Amory, falling in love is just another step forward in the expectations of society. Whether or not he truly loves Rosalind is not something Amory considers after their first moments together. His whole identity is dependent on who Rosalind is and her approval of him, declaring "She's life and hope and happiness, my whole world now" (163). This statement shows that Amory does not know who he is as a being apart from the love and affection of others. Because of his love for Rosalind, Amory finds himself also "hurrying into line with his generation" (162) by getting a job in order to, hopefully, marry Rosalind. However, he does not

enjoy his job, but when asked, states, “I loathed it as usual!” But his reaction to work quickly fades when he imagines Rosalind (162). Even as Amory loses himself in the love Rosalind has for him and the love he holds for her, the time he spends with her is “intangibly feeling, unrememberable hours” (164). Amory does not form a strong attachment to those around him, but instead relates to women like Rosalind as individuals whom he needs in order to believe he fulfills the masculine role society requires of him.

Because of Amory’s inability to establish a stable identity throughout his romantic relationships, he is easily shaken by what he does not have. This fact is evident in his reaction to Rosalind only five weeks after they first fall in love. Amory blames Rosalind for their difficulties, saying “You’ve got to be more encouraging or I can’t work or eat or sleep” (167). However, as their discussion continues and Rosalind breaks into tears, Amory’s “forced hopefulness fades as he sees her unresponsive” (167). He feels Rosalind slipping from his grasp, but rather than seeing their lack of a meaningful relationship as a result of his inability to form an identity independent from Rosalind, he blames his circumstances, since he is only “earning thirty-five dollars a week in advertising” (165). However, Rosalind recognizes that she cannot marry Amory because “the very qualities [she] loves [him] for are the ones that will always make [him] a failure” (168).

Rather than fighting against this reality, Amory acknowledges that a comparison between him and Dawson Ryder (a wealthy man who wants to marry Rosalind) will likely result in him losing Rosalind. Dawson Ryder is someone whom Rosalind respects because “he’s a good man and a strong one” (168). However, these are qualities that Amory does not possess. As Amory realizes that Rosalind will never choose to marry him, his façade of manliness and strength is ripped away to reveal a drawn face and a strained voice that hysterically cries “I can’t give you

up! I can't, that's all! I've got to have you!" (170) However, Rosalind is not moved by such exclamations and with "a hard note in her voice" says "You're being a baby now" (170). Although a simplistic declaration from a childish girl who wants to be spoiled by wealth, this statement is one that reveals the essence of Amory's character. He is still the young boy waiting for others to influence his identity as a masculine figure by telling him who he should be.

Not only does Amory's inability to form a stable identity affect his romantic relationships with the women in his life, it also directly influences his inability to achieve the American Dream of finding wealth and prosperity in "the land of opportunity." One indication of the centrality of wealth during this time was the way wealthy men became more concerned with fashion, which Fitzgerald represents in *This Side of Paradise* through the dandy figure. This concern with fashion represented a cultural shift from mostly women being concerned about their appearance to men also being concerned with clothing. This shift in gender roles featured in Fitzgerald's novels is partially influenced by his personal experience with transformed cultural expectations in America. Fitzgerald was recognized as one of the most fashionable men of his time, and was often considered a dandy figure. The male protagonists in his novels are often portrayed in a similar way and given the label of fashionable men.

Amory likewise pays attention to what he is wearing throughout the novel and often connects clothing to social status or wealth because if a man is considered fashionable that means that he has a certain amount of wealth. Even as a young boy, Amory desired to follow the fashion trends of those around him, returning to Lake Geneva with his first "long trousers, set off by a purple accordion tie and a 'Belmont' collar with the edges unassailably meeting, purple socks, and handkerchief" (18). Catherine R. Mintler defines Amory's obsession with fashion as representative of the dandy figure, which can be defined as "a Clothes-wearing Man, a man

whose trade, office, and existence consists of wearing Clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, person and purse is heroically consecrated to this one object—the wearing of clothes, wisely and well: so that, as others dress to live, he lives to dress" (104). Amory defines the fashionable male figure in a similar way during preparatory school when he creates the category of a slicker who is known for being "dressed well, was particularly neat in appearance, and derived his name from the fact that his hair was inevitably worn short, soaked in water or tonic, parted in the middle, and slicked back as the current of fashion dictated" (33).

Both of these figures represent the formation of a new type of masculinity in America based on the modern youth culture. Whereas before the 1920s, the fashion was often determined by the type of job one had, the shift to a more urban culture meant newly wealthy men had both the time and desire to buy fashionable clothes. This change in culture is one that Fitzgerald both recognized and participated in, but was critical of in his novels because fashion is another way that the formation of Amory's masculine identity is stunted. Mintler argues that "by [Fitzgerald] showcasing the dandy as one alternative means of expressing masculinity, [he] reveals how sartorial manifestations of gender and class…participate in the cultural narratives about the construction and crises of masculine identity" (108). This demonstration of the influence of the dandy figure is clear in Amory's life at the moment he decides that he has finally arrived: "As he put on his studs he realized that he was enjoying life….He had arrived, abreast of the best in his generation at Princeton….He looked at himself in the mirror….Silently he admired himself. How conveniently well he looked, and how well a dinner coat became him" (81). Amory believes that he has finally arrived as a man because he is able to go to dinner in a fashionable suit, but he does not realize that the suit is only a substitute for the lack of wealth he actually has accumulated.

Even though Amory attempts to be fashionable, he almost always observes that someone else is more fashionable than he is. During his time at St. Regis, Amory visits New York for the first time. He observes the people around him and "watched them [the Broadway crowd] in fascination. He was planning his life. He was going to live in New York, and be known at every restaurant and café, wearing a dress-suit from early evening to early morning" (30). At a young age, Amory, whether he recognizes the impossible idealism of the American dream or not, begins to form his own understanding of the wealth and fame he desired for his life. However, Amory is unable to entirely achieve the social status he desires for himself. Amory does not have the wealth that many of his friends have, which prevents him from being described as a fashionable, masculine figure. During the decades leading up to the 1920s, much of the American public was still connected to the agrarian past, although trying to move forward in re-defining the American dream. Miller shows that in the early 1920s Americans were shifting from belief in the idea that "America should be strong and stand aloof from the rest of the world. Business was good for everyone, and would be better if it were left alone" (63) to a more opportunistic culture, where individuals had more access to material possessions. The 1920s inaugurated a shift from the American dream being defined by small town perspectives regarding a lack of government interference and local businesses to a culture of "national advertising, chain stores, standard products…foreshadowing the rise of mass culture" (Miller 63). This shift resulted in women becoming more influential in family life by being the consumers of new products. Amory is consistently surrounded by individuals who have more money than he has, which makes him seem like a dependent man rather than one who could earn wealth.

Amory's lack of maturation as a person is most apparent in the concluding chapter where he observes poverty, but rather than recognizing that fate as his own, he distances himself from

the negative scene before him. At the end of the story, Amory stands outside of a theatre and observes his surroundings, recognizing the beauty of New York City, but also the struggle that existed for many individuals. He observes that "the numerous unpleasant aspects of city life without money occurred to him in threatening procession" (223). And he begins to picture the lives of the throng that are pushing past him to escape the movie theatre, from a man rushing to the subway who refuses to give up his seat for a woman, to the "rooms where these people lived—where there were tin bathtubs and gloomy hallways and verdureless, unnamable spaces in back of the buildings" (223). Detached from his surroundings, Amory thinks to himself that along with poverty "always there was the economical stuffiness of indoor winter, and the long summers" (223), but suddenly as he comes to himself Amory declares his position on money. He thinks "I detest poor people. I hate them for being poor. Poverty may have been beautiful once, but it's rotten now. It's the ugliest thing in the world. It's essentially cleaner to be corrupt and rich than it is to be innocent and poor" (224). However, Amory does not recognize that the path he is pursuing is leading him to a life of poverty because he imagines that "this problem of poverty transformed, magnified, attached to some grander, more dignified attitude might someday even be his problem; at present it roused only his profound distaste" (224). While he distances himself from the possibility that poverty will overtake him and fails to appreciate the reality of life without money, Amory acknowledges to himself that he only has "about twenty-four dollars to [his] name" (225).

In this moment, Amory fails to recognize his utter inability to achieve the American dream. Even though he has a college education and, at one point, his family had money, he has not made anything of himself. This lack of advancement toward a career is an example of Amory failing to fulfill the traditional masculine role of provider and wage earner. In a conversation

with two strangers, Amory attempts to explain away his lack of wealth by arguing that "money isn't the only stimulus that brings out the best that's in a man, even in America" (239). Amory does not subscribe to the traditional view of masculinity, where pursuing the American dream of wealth and prosperity was the central focus of a man's life. In defending his inability to pay for a cab ride, Amory talks himself into following Socialist ideals of equality and argues that uneducated people are not fit to govern themselves (242). Although this discussion may appear a progression by Amory toward becoming a personage because he finally attaches himself to a belief, he continues to hold on to the importance of being a personality, and only considers accepting Socialist ideals if it means he can become wealthy as a result. In the developing American culture of the 1920s, a new generation was forming that was "dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success" (247). However, Amory is unable to escape the fear of poverty because of his inability to form a stable masculine identity as a personage, someone who sets out goals and achieves them because of hard work and perseverance, because he has spent too much time as a personality, morphing into who others have told him to be.

Not only does Amory fail to achieve the American dream, he is also under the false belief based on traditional ideas that his success as an individual is guaranteed to him because of his masculinity; however, the inability of Amory to move forward in his life because of his continual confusion about his place in the world makes him unsuccessful in contemporary terms determined by the culture of the 1920s. During the 1920s, the cultural definition of success was shifting from one defined by the approval of others to finding one's individual identity in a world impacted by the death and violence of World War I. Rather than adopting a more contemporary view of success, Amory's view of masculinity and power is determined by his "vanity, tempered

with self-suspicion if not self-knowledge, a sense of people as automatons to his will, a desire to 'pass' as many boys as possible and get to a vague top of the world" (Fitzgerald 19). This notion of success as dominance over others, which defines one's masculinity, was not uncommon during the decades leading up to the 1920s. Oftentimes, as Greg Forter points out in "F. Scott Fitzgerald, Modernist Studies, and the Fin-de-Siècle Crisis in Masculinity," the expectation of traditional manhood was based on "the realization of an instinct for domination" (297), which reflect the traditional American definition of success.

For many males in 1920s America, success was based on having influence over other individuals, which is an example that Amory attempts to follow. Fitzgerald uses Amory's perspective on success, even as a young child, to reflect the traditional American view of masculinity, which was marked by achieving self-sufficiency, education, and wealth, modeled after the gentleman of European ancestry, which many Americans believed could only be found by working hard at a job and overcoming challenges. Amory's perspective on success and masculinity provides a contrast to the shift in culture that was occurring, whereby masculinity was beginning to be defined by the understanding that education and success could not protect society from evil. A new generation was forming that declared "all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken" (247). However, Amory is not sure how best to participate in this new culture and so clings to past expectations of success.

Amory continues with his education because that is what his understanding of culture suggests that he do. However, he has yet to discover that the definition of success is beginning to change from the traditional valuation of self-sufficiency and education toward a rejection of such traditions. Because of his inaccurate perception of cultural expectations, Amory pursues what many considered the best form of education at a private school, and then is sent East in order to

finish his education at prestigious Princeton University. The universities in the east were recognized for their ability to create men who were considered the "well-set-up, conventional, impressive type, year after year…their vague purpose set forth in a hundred circulars as 'To impart a Thorough Mental, Moral, and Physical Training as a Christian Gentleman, to fit the boy for meeting the problems of his day and generation'" (23). As a result of the fame of the schools in the East, Amory attends a preparatory school; however, this experience leads Amory to be even more "resentful of authority over him, and this, combined with a lazy indifference toward his work, exasperated every master in school" (26). Amory, even before attending university, recognizes the seeming unimportance of the traditional culture that promotes success through education because he does not believe he has the personality type for such achievements. Yet Amory, while not performing well in school, is observant of his surroundings and recognizes the type of man people admired is often well-educated. Based on Amory's definition of masculinity, he labels the successful boys around him as slickers, which are those who "gets to college and is, in a world way, successful" (34). Amory recognizes that he is not currently the masculine figure that can become successful, but does not cease trying to be more like him, which influences his decision to attend Princeton.

As he begins his time at Princeton, Amory is not under the illusion that finding his place will be easy, but his eyes and ears are filled with the beauty of his surroundings. Amory declares, "from the first he loved Princeton—its lazy beauty, its half-grasped significance, the wild moonlight revel of the rushes, the handsome, prosperous big-game crowds, and under it all the air of struggle that pervaded his class" (40), but Amory also recognizes that "breathless social system, that worship seldom named, never really admitted, of the bogey 'Big Man'" (40). Amory never declares aloud his desire to be considered the "Big Man" on campus, but this desire is a

part of his consciousness. As a result, during a time when Amory could grow as an individual, he continues to seek the approval of those around him in order to become the most popular, respected man at Princeton. He believes that success means becoming the most important, most popular, most well-liked person on campus, but he does not realize that such a definition is based on a traditional understanding, where others determine one's status, rather than a contemporary definition, where being an individual is more highly regarded. Early in his freshman year, Amory declares to his friend Kerry, "I want to be admired," and his friend's solution is, "If you want to be prominent, get out and try for something" (44). Amory is discontent with staying a "sweaty bourgeois" (43) and imagines working his way up the caste system at Princeton, but "hate[d] to get anywhere by working for it" (43). This tension between the desire for a traditional version of success, and the unwillingness to engage in the traditional process of working hard to succeed makes Amory an example of the difficulties of the modern definition of masculinity. Rather than pursuing a discovery of who he is and what his purpose in life might be, Amory uses his time at university to do as little work as possible while achieving some form of popularity. However, this lack of self-discovery negatively influences Amory later in life.

In a short period of time, Amory experiences many life changing events that should cause him to mature as a character and lead to a better understanding of himself: the engagement of Rosalind to Mr. J. Dawson, the lack of remittances he would be receiving from his job, and the sudden death of Monsignor Darcy. These events form a catalyst for Amory, where he is once again faced with the decision of moving forward in life, maturing as an adult, or allowing the past and his regret to haunt his memory. The contemporary definition of success would suggest that Amory must use this time to finally discover who he is and what his purpose in life is, or as Fitzgerald labels the last chapter, "The Egotist Becomes a Personage." However, this transition

does not come easily because Amory struggles to find the answer to what his purpose in life is and who he is as a personage. Finally asking himself "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" Amory starts looking "futilely back at the stream of his life, all its glitterings and dirty shallows" (228). He realizes at this moment that "he was still afraid—not physically afraid any more, but afraid of people and prejudice and misery and monotony," but more than anything Amory "despised his own personality—he loathed knowing that to-morrow and the thousand days after he would swell pompously at a compliment and sulk at an ill word" (228). Amory recognizes that his personality as an egotist has been harmful to others and that rather than being loved by people, he is despised by many as cruel and dishonest.

In the moments of his contemplation about life, Amory realizes that the progress and success society has been so proud of are more accurately a labyrinth, "people plunging blindly in and then rushing wildly back, shouting that they had found it…the invisible king—the élan vital—the principle of evolution…writing a book, starting a war, founding a school" (232). With these realizations in mind, Amory returns to Princeton to walk through the past and reflect on his memories. Hearing the echoing sound of the bells from Princeton, Amory contemplates his experiences and considers the future "as an endless dream...the spirit of the past brooding over a new generation….destined finally to go out into that dirty gray turmoil to follow love and pride; a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken" (247). In this moment, Amory realizes that any hope of him being considered a successful person based on the traditional interpretation is lost, and he realizes that ambitions and dreams of such things are "a poor substitute at best" (247). Not until the concluding line of the novel is Amory's transition from an egotist to a personage begun when he declares, "I know myself, but that is all" (248).

This declaration indicates the beginning of a new journey for Amory centered on self-discovery. Although not completely separated from tradition, he realizes that the path of success is about knowing himself rather than forming an identity based on those around him. This transition in Amory's life is reflective of a similar shift occurring in 1920s American culture, where success no longer meant gaining the approval of others, but instead being able to answer the question of "Who am I?" Fitzgerald does not continue Amory's story beyond this point because it was impossible for him to predict the outcome of culture and society, but also because the questioning of who one is cannot ever be complete, but only begun.

Chapter 3: The Power Struggle between Anthony and Gloria Patch

Similar to Amory Blaine in *This Side of Paradise,* Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned* appears as a character who should achieve everything he dreams because there are moments when Anthony, just like Amory, believes he is made for greatness. However, despite this belief in himself and his effortless charm, Anthony is unable to become the man he imagines. Anthony's inability to understand his identity and role as a masculine figure is another example of how the masculine protagonists in Fitzgerald's novels experience a failure of maturity in their transition from boyhood to manhood. Even though this novel begins with Anthony as a young boy just like *This Side of Paradise*, the majority of this novel tells the story of Anthony in relation to his wife Gloria, especially his fears and insecurities about his identity. As a male character, his development is intrinsically tied to hers, and their interactions reveal his failings as a masculine figure. As a result this novel is an example of an important element in Fitzgerald's novels, which is the gender roles of his characters and how they fail to develop their identities, but instead adopt personas to fit cultural expectations. Although Amory and Anthony are similar in many ways, Anthony never realizes that his identity is dependent on others' opinions, so he does not attempt to discover who he is. In the novel, *The Beautiful and Damned,* Fitzgerald raises the question of what it means to be masculine and feminine in the changing culture of 1920s America, the importance of wealth as the achievement of the American dream impacts Anthony's identity, and the inability of Anthony to recognize that success means understanding who he is.

Anthony Patch's story begins with him on a metaphorical precipice, with greatness looming before him, but nothingness also a possibility. He believes that he is "rather an exceptional young man, thoroughly sophisticated, well-adjusted to his environment, and

somewhat more significant than anyone else he knows" (5). This belief in himself, like Amory Blaine's construction of his masculine identity, centers on the influence of his family. Anthony's mother died when he was five and his father when he was eleven. As a result, Anthony's childhood involves him "living almost entirely within himself, an inarticulate boy, thoroughly un-American, and politely bewildered by his contemporaries," (8) unable to feel comfortable around his peers. Left as an orphan, Anthony becomes a romantic figure of sorts, secluded and melancholy; however, as he grows older he "finds that his inclinations tended more and more toward conviviality" (9) because he desires the approval of others. Anthony's shift from a melancholy figure to a charming one is expressed in his interactions with those around him, although internally Anthony is still searching for his identity. Anthony's development into manhood centers on his relationship with Gloria, yet ultimately he is unable to mature beyond his individual selfish desire in order to have a loving relationship.

The subversion of gender roles in *The Beautiful and Damned* represents a key component of Fitzgerald's critique of the culture of the 1920s because he gives the female character power and influence, while the male character remains passive in order to show the impact that power and domination, exerted by either person, can have on a romantic relationship. In contrast to Anthony's childhood as an orphan, Gloria is introduced to the reader as an immortal, is the embodiment of perfection, who has been sent to earth in order to experience love. She is the personification of Beauty, "who was born anew every hundred years" (24). She is considered beautiful not simply because of her physical appearance, but because "in her, soul and spirit were one—the beauty of her body was the essence of her soul. She was that unity sought for by philosophers through many centuries" (24). She is sent to earth in the guise of a society girl, who is defined as "a sort of bogus aristocrat" (26), and warned that she will be called names such as

"ragtime kid, a flapper, a jazz-baby, and a baby vamp" (26). The descriptions of American society and the insults she might receive do not interest Gloria, when she is warned about them, because her only desire is to know how she will be paid for her journey to earth, which is love will bring her. Although Gloria has purportedly been sent to earth multiple times in her past, this instance is unique because her "survival in this early-twentieth-century American landscape would seem to depend upon how effectively she enacts a cultural stereotype pivotal to the romance genre: the beautiful woman who seduces men from their self-possession, self-control, and self-esteem" (Burroughs 53). During the American culture of the 1920s, many women were still subject to limiting roles, such as the society girl who must marry a wealthy man, and Gloria is thrown into this role as well. However, rather than fulfilling her expected role as the society girl, Gloria asserts domination and power, traditionally embodied by the masculine character, in her relationship with Anthony.

Rather than allowing men to woo her and dictate the love she experiences, Gloria takes control and pursues Anthony, showing a shift from a male dominated relationship to one in which the female representative of the youth culture becomes the pursuer. This transition is Fitzgerald's way of describing how a relationship in modern American culture might develop, but also showing the possible negative outcome. On their first outing together, Gloria is the one who chooses where they go. As they enter a restaurant, she is the one who "carefully considered several locations, and rather to Anthony's annoyance paraded him circuitously to a table for two at the far side of the room" (51). Gloria believes she is beautiful and confesses to love to talk about herself, which does not cause Anthony to despise her, but rather to desire her more. Anthony desires to impress Gloria, but the only way he knows how to do so is by becoming who she expects him to be. Spending time with Gloria, Anthony realizes that "he wanted to impress

this girl whose interest seemed so tantalizingly elusive….He wanted to pose. He wanted to appear suddenly to her in novel and heroic colours. He wanted to stir her from that casualness she showed towards everything except herself" (53). This ability of Gloria to pursue and entrap men into believing she is a woman worthy of love, despite her selfishness, is both a representation of the cultural shift occurring, and an indication of the challenge men faced in knowing how best to respond to shifting gender roles. Anthony attempts to be the man Gloria wants, but as a result hides who he truly is, a selfish and frightened man. Love, for Gloria, is not an act of sacrifice, but the accumulation of lovers to be won, and Anthony, who is charming, meets her fanciful ideas of love. Even more important than the romantic relationship that develops between Anthony and Gloria is the shift in gender roles that Gloria represents. She provides a contrast to Anthony because he is the weak willed and passive figure, while Gloria adopts traditionally masculine traits of control and power. Through a precise examination of Anthony and Gloria's broken love, Fitzgerald offers an example of a modern relationship, and exposes how 1920s society encouraged such relationships to develop.

This gender role reversal for Anthony and Gloria occurs at the very beginning of their relationship and, in the end, their individual desire to be in control destroys their love. Anthony is expected to fall in love with a society girl because he has both the status and the education to win such a woman, since his grandfather is well-known and Anthony attended private schools. Anthony desires to marry someone he loves, but his view of love is self-centered and focused more on whether the girl he is in love with can make him happy, revealing his immature view of relationships. The selfish motives that Anthony brings to his relationship with Gloria often create tension between them, but because of Gloria's dominance, Anthony fails to recognize this character flaw and mature as a masculine figure. This immaturity defines Anthony and Gloria's

relationship from the beginning. Anthony begins to fall in love with Gloria, observing the "wonderfully alive expressions of her mouth, and the authentic distinction of face and form and manner" (58). Seeing Gloria as different from the other women he has observed during his life, Anthony feels "a gorgeous sentiment well into his eyes, choked him up, set his nerves a-tingle, and filled his throat with husky and vibrant emotion" (58-59). Their surroundings fade away, and "they two, it seemed to him, were alone and infinitely remote, quiet" (59). However, as they come back to reality the illusion of the love they share "snapped like a nest of threads…the eternal meaningless play and interplay and tossing and reiterating of word and phrase—all these wrenched his senses open to the suffocating pressure of life" (59). For Anthony, Gloria provides a sanctuary from the reality of the world.

However, the love Anthony has for Gloria is selfish and prevents him from seeking his individual identity apart from her. Her love, although an illusion, is one that Anthony finds himself entranced by, so throughout their relationship he chooses to believe their love is pure, unable to recognize that his relationship with her prevents his maturation. At times they both seem to experience the beauty of the illusion that they are truly in love with each other and enjoy "days of serene understanding, rising to ecstasies of proprietorship and pride" (224-5). Even though this is an illusion that lends both a glow of happiness at times, the love they experience becomes "grey…with the spur of jealous or forced separation" (225). Eventually, Gloria begins to untangle herself from the illusion of love in order to realize that "all this [contempt] was her love—the vital and feminine illusion that had directed itself toward him," (225) which indicates Gloria's role as an independent female. However, Anthony remains in the illusion of the love he has for Gloria, not recognizing that his relationship with her hinders his growth as a masculine figure, which indicates Fitzgerald's criticism of dominance in a relationship. Although Fitzgerald

was critical of the traditional romantic relationship, he also did not condone the modern relationship. This seeming contradiction can be found in the relationship between Anthony and Gloria, where Fitzgerald exemplifies the possible negative outcome of a female dominant relationship in 1920s American culture

Even though the love Anthony and Gloria have for each other is an illusion, they choose to marry anyway because Gloria's family considers it a good match, since Anthony has good family connections. However, the struggle over who is in control in their relationship which they faced when they were dating continues to exist after they are married, showing the negative effects of an imbalanced relationship. Gloria fulfills the role of a dominant leader and is the one who dictates where they go and what they do in their relationship. She does this by maintaining her hold over Anthony, even when their marriage has fallen apart and their interactions are marked by indifference. Anthony acknowledges to himself that "[h]ad he lost her he would have been a broken man, wretchedly and sentimentally absorbed in her memory for the remainder of life" (225). Anthony is unable to resist her control over his emotions because "as he saw her smile every rag of anger and hurt vanity dropped from him—as though his very moods were but the outer ripples of her own, as though emotion rose no longer in his breast unless she saw fit to pull an omnipotent controlling thread" (92). So, even though they cannot stand one another's company, Gloria still holds unearthly power over Anthony, which prevents him from leaving her.

Through this dysfunctional dynamic, Fitzgerald demonstrates how Gloria holds more influence over Anthony than many other women, who were told to follow the masculine figures in their lives, possessed during this time period. By placing Gloria in a position of power over Anthony, both in his emotions and in the structure of their relationship, Fitzgerald blurs traditional gender roles, while also denying Anthony the dominant masculine position that

according to society he should fulfill, and instead making him submissive to his wife. Catherine Burroughs, in her article on romanticism, argues that "when loving women, Fitzgerald's men often assume the posture of emotional dependents, hugging the memory of a romantic moment to their breasts like a faded nosegay, watching in horror as the beloved turns an unsentimental eye elsewhere" (52). This dependence is precisely what defines the dynamic between Anthony and Gloria as their romantic relationship disintegrates. Anthony goes from loving Gloria of his own volition to realizing her power over him in their marriage, and the story ends with Anthony recognizing his dependence on Gloria, as well as her indifference toward his actions, but him choosing to remain with her. Even though Anthony recognizes his dependence on Gloria, this moment does not initiate a change in his character. Rather than this realization causing Anthony to mature, he adopts an indifferent attitude, declaring "[i]t is left to the few to be persistently concerned with the nuances of relationships – and even this few only in certain hours especially set aside for the task" (231), showing his unwillingness to change. He believes even though men "hold out longer in the attempt to preserve the ultimate niceties of relationships" (231), in the end, the effort is too extensive for one man, so he remains dependent on Gloria. Ultimately, the demise of Anthony and Gloria's marriage is Fitzgerald's representation of how the modern view of relationships and gender roles could be problematic because of individuals failing to form their own identities, apart from a romantic relationship.

Even though Gloria appears to be independent of Anthony's influence, the interactions she has with him in public often place her in a position of submission. In one instance, Anthony attempts to gain control over Gloria's actions. One afternoon, while Anthony is drinking with friends, Gloria asserts her dominance over Anthony by commanding "We've really got to go" (161). However, while at the train station, Anthony decides to respond to Gloria's command by

refusing to give her money for tickets because "in his mind was but one idea—that Gloria was being selfish, that she was always being selfish and would continue to be unless here and now he asserted himself as her master" (162). Anthony does not realize that his actions are childish and selfish, nor does he realize that he has little power to influence Gloria's actions. The only power he has is physical, which he uses to "seize her arm," and when she "tried to pull away from him, he only tightened his grasp" (163). This physical interaction between Gloria and Anthony is representative of the greater struggle occurring in society over feminine and masculine roles. Some critics, such as Adorno and Horkheimer, argued that, even if women were treated with equality, there would still be no escape from the oppression of societal norms because "the repressed feminine of aesthetic and libidinal forces returns in the form of the engulfing, regressive lures of modern mass culture and consumer society…[making] 'masculine' rationalization and 'feminine' pleasure simply two sides of a single coin, the seamless logic of domination that constitutes modern subjectivity" (Felski 5-6). So, even though Gloria exemplifies masculine traits in her individual actions, she is still subject to the domination of traditional gender roles because of societal expectations. Likewise, Anthony is subject to the social expectations that, as the male, he must be the leader of his family, but he often finds himself subject to the commands of Gloria.

Fitzgerald does not adhere to the traditionally accepted masculine and feminine roles, but instead portrays his characters with fluid identities, that contain both masculine and feminine traits, in order to question accepted cultural norms. He captures qualities that were traditionally considered feminine, such as a concern for fashion and indifference towards a career, to portray Anthony Patch, in order to wage a broader critique of the gender roles accepted within the society of his time. In 1920s America, the majority of women were concerned with fashion,

while many men were more interested in pursuing a career; however, Anthony flouts these gender expectations. In his article, "Humanity; or, What Every Father, Mother, Boy, and Girl Should Know," Louis L. Krauss argues that the emphasis of fashion in the 1900s was problematic because "[g]owns exhibited in the department store windows throughout the country are a shocking exhibition to my mind and go a long way toward corrupting the morals of the young girls of to-day" (qtd. in D'Emilio 117). Even though the rumblings of change in the culture of the 1920s began to disrupt strict gender categories and to promote acceptable fashion choices of the day, many people were resistant to such changes. Most members of society continued to view the genders as distinctly separate; however, more and more men were becoming aware of the importance of fashion in expressing one's identity.

One way that Fitzgerald questions the cultural perception of men is through the way he dresses them in his novels, especially in his depiction of Anthony Patch as a dandy figure. Fitzgerald uses Anthony Patch to display the changing characteristics of masculinity from traditional ideals to the blurring of gender identity that dandyism promised in the way he describes Anthony's apparel. While living by himself, Anthony becomes an "exquisite dandy, amass[ing] a rather pathetic collection of silk pyjamas, brocaded dressing-gowns, and neckties too flamboyant to wear; in this secret finery he would parade before a mirror in his room or lie stretched in satin along his window-seat looking down on the yard" (9). Anthony is consistently distracted by the possibilities that exist outside his window, but he never actively pursues a career. Through Anthony's lack of action, Fitzgerald critiques those masculine figures in society who would hide behind their apparel rather than face the difficulties of life. Although Catherine Minter argues that "dandyism is not an opposite construct of masculinity," she acknowledges that the majority of society in the 1920s trivialized and stereotyped the men who often gravitated

toward extravagant sartorial displays (109). She also suggests that the dandy figure, so prevalent in Fitzgerald's novels, is on a continuum that "illustrates how perceptions of, practices of, and responses to dandiacal behavior and dress revealed and contested the limits and stresses of socially acceptable, normative forms of masculinity prescribed for upper- and middle-class, heterosexual, white men in American society" (107). Anthony's concern with fashion can be considered a traditional feminine trait, so by adopting this concern Anthony pushes against what society traditionally defined as masculine. Even though Fitzgerald does not offer long descriptions of fashion, but instead places them in short phrases, he does so in order to indicate Anthony's concern over apparel above more immediate concerns. For example, when Anthony is offered a job as a war correspondent, his first thought is of the apparel he would be wearing, seeing "himself in khaki, leaning, as all war correspondents lean, upon a heavy stick, portfolio at shoulder—trying to look like an Englishman" (169). Connecting the form of dress to an idea of Englishness, Anthony imagines himself as a traditional masculine figure, in contrast to the man he is in New York. However, Anthony's desire to appear fashionable is a façade in order to hide his failings as a successful male. Through Anthony's lack of action, Fitzgerald critiques those masculine figures in society who chose to hide behind their apparel rather than face the difficulties of life.

Fitzgerald's emphasis on displaying masculine characters who are unique and contradict traditional definitions of masculinity in the 1920s indicates a broader cultural shift that was transpiring. Bryce Traister argues that during the 1920s a crisis over American masculinity emerged, concerning whether or not the traditional masculine roles of pursuing a career and the American dream were enough. Traister argues that this crisis resulted in a new understanding of masculinity established to replace the strong masculine figure with characters that are portrayed

as “troubled, distracted, counterfeit, constructed, masked, performative, flaccid, domestic, tender, and feelingful” (284). Fitzgerald observed this trend in social views of masculinity, and created characters in his novels that reject the traditional idealism of men pursuing the American dream in order to show the transition occurring in culture. In the past, many people recognized that America provided opportunity, but in order to gain wealth from those opportunities one had to work hard. As a result, one’s identity as a hard worker became connected to one’s achievement of the American dream. However, the changing view of traditional masculinity to a modern understanding of manhood placed emphasis on the accumulation of wealth rather than the maturity of character necessary to earn money. This transition is an indication of how individuals like Anthony desired the benefits of the American dream, but were not willing to work hard in order to earn them. Anthony does not appreciate the challenge his ancestors, especially his grandfather, faced in order to earn their wealth. As an immature adult, he finds it difficult to understand the importance of money or comprehend what to do when his and Gloria’s money is gone. Anthony relies on money to help define his identity. However, after he loses his money he no longer has the ability to portray himself as a prosperous masculine figure. The loss of wealth Anthony experiences allows Fitzgerald to critique how traditionally the quest for the American dream and the quest for identity are intertwined, and to encourage a shift toward a balanced approach where wealth, while still important, does not define one’s identity.

Unlike Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch inherits wealth from his grandfather, who pursued the American Dream, starting from nothing and becoming a powerful man. Anthony recognizes the importance of his grandfather and acknowledges that he “drew as much consciousness of social security from being the grandson of Adam J. Patch as he would have had from tracing his line over the sea to the crusaders” (5). Adam J. Patch came home from the Civil War a major and

charged into Wall Street, where "amid much fuss, fume, applause and ill will he gathered to himself some seventy-five million dollars" (6). Adam Patch was able to make a comfortable life for himself through hard work and his achievement of the ideals of the American dream, where anyone could become anything they wanted. After earning his money, Adam returned to his hometown of Tarrytown, where he "became a reformer among reformers….he levelled a varied assortment of uppercuts and body-blows at liquor, literature, vice, art, patent medicines, and Sunday theatres" (6). Adam exemplifies the traditional masculine role of someone who is concerned with sharing his wealth with others and helping his community by discouraging crime. With this man as his role model, Anthony Patch has every opportunity to emulate his grandfather's actions and make a name for his self through hard work. However, Anthony, even at a young age, becomes accustomed to a lifestyle of spending money that became typical of the modern period. At twenty-four years old, Anthony finds himself in New York City, renting an apartment that is both spacious and luxurious. Anthony's "income was slightly under seven thousand a year, the interest on money inherited from his mother" (12). With this source of income, along with an allowance from his grandfather, Anthony does not have the need to pursue the American dream because he is able to live off the wealth of his family; however, he does not recognize that his dependence on others for their wealth hinders his ability to mature as a man.

Although this mindset may have been fine for Anthony as a young man, after he marries Gloria, his inability to comprehend the importance of managing money and actually participating in the American dream, rather than being a passive consumer of the hard work it took to achieve the American dream, becomes problematic. As a young man visiting his broker, Anthony observes that "[t]he big trust company building seemed to link him definitely to the great fortunes whose solidarity he respected and to assure him that he was adequately chaperoned by

the hierarchy of finance. From these hurried men he derived the same sense of safety that he had in contemplating his grandfather's money" (12-13). Anthony feels secure in the wealth he is promised and as a result never learns how to live within his means. In a moment of reflection, right before he marries Gloria, Anthony realizes that now "he would be giving her many things—clothes and jewels and friends and excitement. It seemed absurd that from now on he would pay for all her meals. It was going to cost" (125). Even though Anthony recognizes the difficulty that may lie before him, he engages in the lifestyle that both he and Gloria have always enjoyed. They dream up adventures to go on together and a house to purchase, not considering the money they will have to spend to achieve those dreams. In order to find a place to live, they decide to "just pile a couple of suit-cases in our car, the one we're going to buy…and just start out in the direction of New Haven. You see, as we get out of commuting distance from New York, the rents'll get cheaper, and as soon as we find a house we want we'll just settle down" (144). As is their custom, Anthony and Gloria see money as an endless supply of income allowing them to enjoy life and frivolously spend money, not realizing that the foundation of the idealism undergirding the American dream is hard work that can lead to wealth. Because of the lifestyle they lead, Anthony is unable to mature as a man because he never works for his money. Although Fitzgerald is critical of many aspects of the modern period, through Anthony's experience of losing wealth, Fitzgerald presents the idea that the traditional lifestyle could be beneficial at times, especially in encouraging the formation of one's identity.

One way Fitzgerald encourages a balanced approach to the American dream is through showing the consequences of a lifestyle of little work. By the end of the novel, Anthony is an alcoholic who does not have a steady income and is relying on the hope of a lost inheritance in order to survive economically because of the lifestyle he and Gloria have chosen. For Gloria and

Anthony, things are no longer blissful because "[t]here was the money question, increasingly annoying, increasingly ominous; there was the realization that liquor had become a practical necessity to their amusement….Moreover, both of them seemed vaguely weaker in fibre" (226). Rather than allowing the American dream of wealth to motivate them to do reform work, like Adam Patch did, Anthony and Gloria allow their wealth to consume them. One winter day, when they are waiting to hear about a court decision over whether Anthony will inherit his grandfather's money, Anthony and Gloria have a fight over money. Gloria enters the room after returning from the grocery store, and Anthony demands money from her. She responds by saying, "Why Anthony, you must be crazy! You know I haven't any money—except a dollar in change" (344). Suddenly realizing the seriousness of their dilemma, Gloria and Anthony run through a list of their acquaintances who may be able to loan them money. Between the two of them they have "about two and half dollars," which Gloria believes they can "get along on…we can buy lots of food with that—more than we can possibly eat" (347). However, Anthony declares, "No. I've got to have a drink" (347). Even when he and Gloria have little money in their possession, their bank accounts have been closed, and their friends are unavailable to loan them money, they continue to pursue a lifestyle of luxury.

Anthony allows himself to dream of a future where he and Gloria can be free of their debts and find happiness again, which is contained in one word: Italy. Anthony dreams of this land, and "the word had become a sort of talisman to him, a land where the intolerable anxieties of life would fall way like an old garment (359). Because the American dream is unsuccessful for him, Anthony creates a new dream in his mind of a country where his wealth will be renewed. However, he does not realize that the idealism of wealth lasting for his lifetime will likely not become a reality because of his inability to separate himself from the lifestyle to which

he has grown accustomed. Anthony's reliance on money to define his identity is a reflection of the negative consequences of the traditional American ideal; however, Anthony's reluctance to work for his wealth is also a criticism of the development of the modern man. Fitzgerald uses this transitional time period in the life of Anthony to show how American culture was questioning its ability to maintain past ideals, especially after World War I. However, Fitzgerald also presents the other side by showing the possible outcome if the ideal of working hard for the American dream was completely rejected.

In addition to problematizing the pursuit of wealth and the American dream, Fitzgerald presents the traditional idea of success by being an educated, career man as an underlying influence on how Anthony develops his identity as a masculine figure based on societal expectations. He experiences difficulty in reconciling the masculine role culture tells him to fulfill by being an educated man who provides for his family, and the development of his own unique identity. Because success is considered an important aspect of a boy maturing into a man, the fact that Anthony Patch never achieves success as an educated man is directly linked to his failure as the leader of his family. Early in the novel, Anthony is young and has many possible career paths; he has the potential to be successful, if he chooses. He is under the impression that "he would one day accomplish some quiet subtle thing that the elect would deem worthy" (5). However, he does not find the search for this accomplished action one worth pursuing and instead decides to wait "until the time came for this effort" (5). Unfortunately for Anthony's maturation as a masculine figure, his time never comes.

Even after he is married, Anthony declines to take any action toward a job or a career. He recognizes that he and Gloria have "been married a year and we've just worried around without even being efficient people of leisure" (172), which Anthony finds problematic because "we're

frequently bored and yet we won't make any effort to know anyone except the same crowd who drift around California" (172-73). Rather than taking responsibility for his lack of a career, he blames Gloria because of her ability to make "[l]eisure so subtly attractive" (173). Even though Anthony, at times, recognizes the importance of being successful, whether to make more acquaintances or to gain the respect of those around him, he never acts upon those thoughts. Gloria criticizes Anthony's inaction, during a fight with him, when she says, "Work—that means a great arranging of the desk and the lights, a great sharpening of pencils…and a tremendous consumption of tea or coffee. And that's all" (173). Anthony does not find a strong desire within himself to pursue a successful career because he is disillusioned by his surroundings. On a warm summer day Anthony internalizes this view of the world, acknowledging that "Life was no more than this summer afternoon…Intolerably unmoved they all seemed, removed from any romantic immanency of action" (175). For Anthony, inaction is more appealing than working toward a successful career.

This loss of motivation directly correlates to the shifting cultural view of manhood in 1920s America. Forter would argue the lack of a desire for success is a result of economic emasculation in the 1920s because men were no longer autonomous beings, and instead were reliant on a "monopoly capitalism that reduced men to dependents in a large bureaucratic structure" (297). However, rather than rebelliously lashing out against this bureaucratic structure, masculine figures, such as Anthony, respond with complacency. World War I led to an expansion in government power, and David J. Goldberg points out the impact of this expansion on Americans by explaining how the Wilson administration created several new federal agencies, such as the Food Administration and the Fuel Administration, in order to help the American people. However, while "many liberals, especially those connected to the journal the

New Republic, held out hope that after the war, the federal government would use its new power to promote social justice" (Goldberg 10), many individuals were discouraged from taking personal, individual action as a result.

Rather than finding his own way within the American economic system in order to achieve success, Anthony, just like many other men in his position, becomes complacent rather than choosing to fight the bureaucratic structure. Another reason for this complacency is because post-World War I society encouraged conformity. Goldberg points out that "many people became fearful of publicly expressing their views, especially because they believed that their neighbors or fellow employees might be keeping tabs on them" (11). Anthony does not ever find the courage to pursue a successful career, and instead allows himself to become an alcoholic, relying on others' goodwill to carry him through life. This lack of development as a successful male figure, although partially enabled by the individuals around him, is also a reflection of Anthony's internal debate over whether he has the capacity to be successful. He consistently doubts his ability to hold a career in writing, which can be seen at the end of the novel when he is contrasted with his friend Richard Caramel, who does not write good literature, but who has been published. Anthony goes to visit Richard at his house and observes that Richard has put his own books on his bookshelf. Although full of contempt for Richard's actions at first, on reflection, Anthony realizes that "he would have changed places with Dick unhesitatingly. He himself had tried his best to write with his tongue in cheek" (343), but Anthony is unsuccessful. Because of his unwillingness to pursue a career, when "that night Richard Caramel was hard at toil…Anthony, abominably drunk, was sprawled across the back seat of a taxi" (343). Fitzgerald uses these contrasting male figures to show that, although society was confused about whether to follow a traditional interpretation of manhood, where the man had a successful career, or a

modern definition of manhood, where the man has a clear knowledge of his identity, Anthony has failed at both. In his attempt to conform to the expectations of society, Anthony remains unsure of his identity. The anxiety that Anthony feels over whether he can be successful and who he should be as a masculine figure devolves into inaction, which can be seen as a warning by Fitzgerald that even if one is not wildly successful, pursuing some action is better than nothing.

Anthony represents the changing culture of 1920s America. Not only is he unsure of his masculine identity, but he is unsure of how to discover who he is, so he lapses into inaction. This attitude toward life influences his romantic relationships, often resulting in selfish interactions with Gloria. Anthony is placed in a submissive role with Gloria having the guiding power and influence over his decisions because he is afraid of being unable to fulfill societal expectations. He also expects to inherit a vast amount of wealth from his grandfather, so Anthony never appreciates the importance of working hard for the American dream, and instead passively waits for the wealth to be handed to him. As a result, prior to receiving his inheritance, Anthony and Gloria have a lifestyle of the wealthy, but find they are destitute at the end of the novel. This lack of hard work shows the changing attitudes in American culture of the 1920s, where traditional expectations for manhood meant working hard, to a modern preference of leisure time. As a result of Anthony's passive, consumerist attitude toward the American dream he has a misconception about the idea of success.

Despite this attitude representing a modern shift, Fitzgerald is critical of the outcome. He does not adhere to a traditional attitude, but instead encourages the development of an individual identity. Because Anthony comes from a good family and has opportunities for education, society expects that he pursue a career in order to provide for his family. Even though many of Anthony's friends have careers, he never pursues one because he is unsure of what to do.

Anthony does not know who he is as a person, and rather than maturing as an adult, he continues to adhere to what those around him tell him to be. He is easily manipulated and controlled by others because of his desire to have their approval, resulting in his inaction. All of these examples are representations of Fitzgerald's critique of 1920s American culture and the changing views of what a masculine identity entailed. Many individuals, especially males, became impotent in the face of the changing culture, and Fitzgerald used his male characters to show the negative effects that change could have.

Chapter 4: For the Love of Freedom: Gatsby's Quest for Identity

Unlike the other two novels, *The Great Gatsby* begins in the middle of the story about Jay Gatsby. Fitzgerald does not emphasize the early life of Gatsby, but instead focuses on Gatsby's love story with Daisy Buchanan, and the resulting consequences. However, similar to Amory Blaine's bildungsroman and Anthony Patch's decline from idealism to pessimism, this novel tells the story of Gatsby's inability to mature into an independent man. Just as Amory and Anthony never become mature adults, Gatsby's growth as an individual is incomplete because he is haunted by the person he had been and the dream of who he could be. Rather than being content with the social status he has achieved, Gatsby finds himself on a continuous quest for more, whether that means more love, money, or affirmation of his success from others. He is caught in a seemingly endless pursuit of acceptance because Gatsby is unsure of what his identity is as an individual, and as a result is unsure of how to meet societal expectations. In this novel, Fitzgerald critiques the traditional definition of masculinity through Gatsby's effeminate characteristics, his pursuit of the American dream as the definition of his identity, and his inability to escape from the expectations of society.

Upsetting traditional gender roles in his novels, especially in his portrayal of Gatsby, is a way for Fitzgerald to address society's questions regarding what now constitutes femininity and masculinity. Gatsby is depicted as effeminate in the way he acts; from the way he plans the details of his meetings with Daisy and their rekindled romantic relationship to his emphasis on fashion. However, Gatsby's love story culminates with him being refused by Daisy, which reflects Fitzgerald's critique of many individuals within 1920s American culture who rejected modern manhood. The disillusionment that Gatsby experiences in his relationship with Daisy is a reflection of the identity crisis many males experienced following World War I because of a

perceived loss of power as a man pursuing a woman. Tom C. Coleman argues that during this time period men were constantly searching for something because "a man's sense of romantic wonder may be satisfied permanently by art, patriotism, reform, religion, or work; it cannot long be satisfied by romantic love of women" (42). Many males within culture no longer knew what their role as a masculine figure was, especially in the context of romantic relationships. One reason for this confusion was because many women were embracing modern views of love, where they confidently embraced the traditionally masculine role of pursuing a relationship. However, these shifts in culture created confusion, and as Greg Forter in his book, *Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism* argues World War I created a complex relationship between men and women. The traditional male figure in society found a changed environment when he returned home from the war because many women had crossed from the private sphere of the home to the public sphere of the work place. As a result of this shift occurring, many men rejected modern gender roles. Forter argues that this rejection is an indication of males "yearning for 'feminine' aspects of the self that the gender binary disparaged" (9), but many men felt if they accepted feminine traits within themselves society would disapprove of them. Gatsby's character in the novel reflects the confusion American culture was experiencing over what a modern definition of masculinity looked like because there was "conflict between a residual attachment to the feminine in men and an internalized hatred of that femininity" (Forter 5). Fitzgerald recognized the tension that existed in 1920s American culture between feminine and masculine traits; however, by creating a character like Gatsby who has both, Fitzgerald encourages a balanced approach to discovering one's identity.

One way Gatsby attempts to form an identity for himself as a masculine figure is through forming a romantic relationship with the beautiful Daisy Buchanan. However, Gatsby's attempt

to fill his life with love is bound to fail because he does not understand that he is searching for answers to the questions about his identity in the love of others rather than within himself. When Gatsby first met Daisy, he wed his identity to her because even though Gatsby had his own ambitions, "What was the use of doing great things if I could have a better time telling her what I was going to do?" (150) Rather than forming his identity based on an individual process of maturation, Gatsby created his identity in order to win the love of Daisy. The night of their meeting Gatsby knew that he was in the wrong place and that "however glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penniless young man without a past…[who] had no real right to touch her hand" (149). Even though he did not belong in Daisy's world, he felt attached to her since she made him feel like a complete man because, for a short time, he had the affirmation of her love.

However, this feeling of wholeness becomes problematic for Gatsby because it prevents him from recognizing that he is an immature masculine figure. Gatsby's identity is dependent on Daisy, and his reliance on her is reflected in his unwillingness to let go of his love for her. Daisy is the object of his affections, but her inability to completely reject Tom causes Gatsby to lose part of himself that he believes is essential to his identity. Through Gatsby's obsession with Daisy, Fitzgerald critiques 1920s American culture's assumption that romantic relationships were a necessary element of becoming a mature man. Gatsby is unwilling to accept Daisy's rejection, so Nick suggests that Gatsby leave for a time, but "he wouldn't consider it. He couldn't possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope" (148). Forter labels this inability of Gatsby to accept the loss of Daisy's love as melancholia, which can be defined as "mourning crippled by a hostility toward what one has lost that prevents one from fully relinquishing it…and results in a sense of inner desolation" (17).

Gatsby does not know who he is apart from Daisy because the purposes of all of his actions since meeting her have been to win her love. He does not know how to accept that the persona of Jay Gatsby "had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice, and the long secret extravaganza was played out" (148). With this loss of love, Gatsby no longer knows who he is as a masculine figure or what his purpose is. Fitzgerald uses Gatsby's reliance on other individuals, such as Daisy, to show the problem of forming one's identity based on the affection of others, rather than as an independent individual.

In order for Gatsby to feel confident in expressing the love he feels for Daisy, he becomes a new person that he believes society, and someone like Daisy, would approve of by concealing his past with impressive material possessions. From the first moment he meets Daisy, he believes he has fallen in love, and from external appearances Daisy is in love with Gatsby as well. As Jordan Baker relates, "They were so engrossed in each other that she [Daisy] didn't see me until I was five feet away" (74). Gatsby, in his own words, describes when he first kissed Daisy: "His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God….Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower" (110-11). These first moments of love are transformative for Gatsby. His identity as a man is "forever wed" to the beauty of the feminine character of Daisy, preventing him from maturing as an independent masculine figure. Even though Gatsby is perceived as a mysterious character by his peers and wild rumors are spread about him, the only person whose opinion matters to him is Daisy.

After reuniting with her, Gatsby's need to win Daisy's approval is exemplified in his desire to show her the entirety of his house, which he views as an act of love. He persuades

Daisy to see his house because "I'd like to show her around" (89). In a moment of self-admiration, Gatsby says "My house looks well, doesn't it? See how the whole front of it catches the light" (89). The wandering tour of the house reveals the beautiful gardens, marble steps, "Marie Antoinette music-rooms and Restoration salons" (91) along with bedrooms "swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers" (91). Unable to voice the love he has for Daisy, he instead expresses his love through the exhibition of his material possessions, constantly seeking to impress Daisy because he needs her to approve of him. Gatsby's identity is influenced by the way Daisy views him, and during the entire tour of the house "He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes" (91). The presence of Daisy in his house is transformative for Gatsby and represents a moment where part of who he is has been fulfilled, only to disappear.

Nick narrates this moment, describing it as "the hour of a profound human change, and excitement was generating on the air" (95). He observes the expression on Gatsby's face as the moment of reunion with Daisy fades: "The expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness…There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion" (95). Although these moments with Daisy should encourage maturation and transformation for Gatsby because his desire for a romantic relationship with a woman has been fulfilled, he is not satisfied with the moments he shares with Daisy. Gatsby's immaturity as a male adult stems from his inability to realize that he is seeking approval for his outward appearance from others as a way of forming his identity, and that such approval is only temporary, even from Daisy. Gatsby does not

understand that his actions are based on his dependence on the perceptions of others and on his desire to fulfill their expectations, which are constantly changing, rather than a stable identity that he has chosen.

Gatsby's actions, especially in relation to fashion, are influenced by his desire for approval of his identity, not only from Daisy, but also from society. This is exemplified in his ostentatious display of throwing clothes from his closet, a seemingly careless act, but is his attempt to earn the admiration of others. In her article, "From Aesthete to Gangster," Catherine R. Mintler addresses the significance of Gatsby as a dandy figure because dandyism, especially in 1920s America, reflected the desires of "a man who feels isolated" (116). Mintler argues that Fitzgerald uses the transitions in Gatsby's apparel as indications of his changing role as a masculine figure because Gatsby goes "from wearing a leisure class-emulative yachting costume, to the 'invisible cloak' of the gentlemanly officer's uniform, to the sartorially egregious apparel of the aesthetic dandy gangster" (116). Gatsby's adoption of the dandy persona can be seen in his display of clothes when he shows off for Daisy and Nick. After recovering from showing Nick and Daisy his house, he "opened for us two hulking patent cabinets which held his massed suits and dressing-gowns and ties, and his shirts, piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high" (92). Acknowledging that he has a man in London who purchases his clothing for him, Gatsby proceeds to take out piles of shirts in an attempt to impress those around him:

> He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue. (92)

By describing Gatsby's display of clothing, Fitzgerald challenges the American norms of class status and the social elites' expectations of fashion. Although Gatsby's apparel is expressive of fashion in London, he does not follow the expectations of American society, which Mintler argues are best exemplified in Tom Buchanan's "business and recreational apparel of suits, riding clothes, and leather boots, all of which emblematize socially accepted conventions of masculinity and male dress for his class" (117). As a result, Gatsby's brightly colored and foreign clothing is a form of masculinity that is in violation of the "fashionable codes represented by this [Tom's] icon of flawless, fashionable American masculinity" (116). Gatsby does not know how to fit into the expected role of a traditional masculine figure, either in his actions toward Daisy or in his fashion choices. This tension between who Gatsby portrays himself to be on the outside and who he is as James Gatz reflects the challenges 1920s American culture was experiencing by portraying itself as fashionably forward, while uncertain of how to redefine itself in light of changing definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Along with Fitzgerald's critique of the dependence of individuals on societal expectations, he also shows the possible consequences of allowing society to define one's identity. Gatsby desires the approval of others, but his sole focus on Daisy, and the actions he takes as a result, isolates him from the rest of society. The isolation of Gatsby from the external world is most evident at the parties he throws for all of New York society to attend, where he is hidden from sight because he does not think he meets society's expectations of him as a person. At Nick's first party at Gatsby's house, the narrator provides an external perspective to Gatsby's role as a source of gossip rather than as a host. The majority of people at the party are uninvited because "People were not invited—they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door" (41). Most frequently,

individuals at the party are only loosely connected to Gatsby, and even more individuals "came and went without having met Gatsby at all" (41). Because Gatsby maintains a mysterious quality about himself, people create rumors about him as a source of knowledge about his identity. The less intimate knowledge of Gatsby that individuals have the more elaborate their stories: "Gatsby…Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once…it's more that he was a German spy during the war…You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody's looking at him. I'll bet he killed a man" (44). Even though Gatsby does not seem to notice his dependence on others, his mysterious persona as Jay Gatsby is formed because of New York society gossiping about his past. Through this example of Gatsby's reliance on others to create his identity, Fitzgerald criticizes the men in 1920s America who likewise allowed their identities to be formed based on the expectations and lies of society.

Not only do Gatsby's actions during his first meeting with Daisy, his sartorial displays, and his attempts to win the approval of society reflect an uncertainty over his role as a masculine figure, they also reveal the lack of identity he has apart from Daisy. Gatsby's entire purpose for adopting a persona is to win Daisy's love; however, the love she has to offer is unsatisfactory for him because he needs her to completely reject Tom. For Gatsby, it is not enough that he is in her presence and can hear her voice again; he also needs Daisy to erase the heartache of the past in order to make his transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby complete. Nick arrives at the conclusion that Gatsby "wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you'" (109). Not until those words are spoken can Gatsby believe they can start over, and "after she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken" (109). The obsession Gatsby has with recreating time and starting his relationship with Daisy over again from the beginning has negative consequences

because it prevents him from becoming a completely mature adult, since he cannot move beyond the past. Although Nick recognizes that the past cannot be repeated, Gatsby adamantly states, "'Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can!'" (110) Forter argues that this moment in the novel is necessary because Fitzgerald insists that "Gatsby's style of manhood cannot but be lost. And [Fitzgerald] proposes that the only acceptable, properly manly response to this loss is the manhood's aesthetic-memorial entombment of an ideal too fragile to be incarnated yet too beautiful to relinquish" (15). Unfortunately, Gatsby's dependence on Daisy's love for him as a necessary foundation of his identity results in a fateful day when he loses the hope of starting a new life with Daisy.

Gatsby's entire personhood is wrapped up in Daisy's acceptance of his love; however, through Daisy's rejection of Gatsby, Fitzgerald reveals the negative consequences of dependence on others to form one's identity. On the warmest day of the summer, Gatsby, Daisy, and Tom are found in the same room together. Tom realizes that Daisy and Gatsby know each other from before, but he is unsure of what to do with this information, and he starts to feel "the hot whips of panic. His wife…until an hour ago secure and inviolate [is] slipping precipitately from his control" (125). After a series of questions, Tom finally accusatorily asks, "'What kind of a row are you trying to cause in my house anyhow?'" (129). In Gatsby's mind, this question is the beginning of the end of Daisy's relationship with Tom, but in reality his control over the situation is slipping away. Tom adamantly declares that "Daisy loved me when she married me and she loves me now," and "what's more I love Daisy too" (131). Although Gatsby and Daisy's relationship being in the open should be a moment of relief, Gatsby pushes Daisy further, requesting that she "tell him the truth—that you never loved him—and it's all wiped out forever" (132). Suddenly, Daisy declares ""Oh, you want too much! I love you now—isn't that enough? I

can't help what's past…I did love him once—but I loved you too'" (132). In that moment, Gatsby's hopes of reliving the past are shattered and part of his identity is also lost because Daisy is slipping from his grasp, which Nick observes: "I glanced at Daisy, who was staring terrified between Gatsby and her husband…then I turned back to Gatsby—and was startled at his expression…He looked…as if he had 'killed a man'. For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way" (134). Gatsby's face reflects his fear of loss. His dream of love is taken from him, and he no longer knows who he is or what he is doing with his life because without Daisy Gatsby is no one.

The rejection that Gatsby experiences as a man who is in love with Daisy reflects Fitzgerald's critique of the relationship between Gatsby's identity and his pursuit of wealth in order to win her love, which Hearne argues is "inseparable from the American dream—the dream of equality, fairness, unity, and ultimately, financial and material success" (190). One of the main reasons Daisy rejects Gatsby's love is because of her disapproval of the new rich, and the uncouth society they represent. In the novel, Tom and Gatsby are on opposing sides, with Tom representing old money and the social elite, while Gatsby represents new money and is considered more vulgar. Both Tom and Gatsby underscore Fitzgerald's broader beliefs about society's separation between wealth and poverty that even the achievement of the American dream of wealth by Gatsby cannot overcome. Kimberley Hearne agrees with this assessment when she suggests that through "the recurrent romantic imagery, Fitzgerald offers up his critique and presents the dream for what it truly is: a mirage that entices us to keep moving forward even as we are ceaselessly borne back into the past" (189). For Fitzgerald in this novel, the American dream is not a beautiful ideal to be pursued, but an occasion for the disillusionment of Americans after World War I.

The disillusionment of the American dream is exemplified in Gatsby, who fulfills the dream by leaving his home, working for Dan Cody for ten years to earn money, but still finding he is on the outside and isolated from society. As a result, the dream cannot be described as a beautiful ideal, but as a distant and unachievable vision that, much like the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, fades in and out with the fog. Even though Gatsby appears to achieve the American dream, he is never able to overcome the class separation that exists between the old wealth and the new wealth. The majority of Fitzgerald's stories are about the struggle of the poor young man to win the hand of the rich girl because that "had always been his situation" (Donaldson 75). Fitzgerald's use of protagonists who appear to achieve the American dream, but still experience rejection in the end is his way of portraying the futility of pursuing idealistic dreams. For many people during the 1920s in America, the stories of rejection and disappointment were more realistic and more deeply felt because individuals were able to relate to the loss of hope that the characters experience. Donaldson points out that Fitzgerald's stories can be categorized in two separate ways: one tells the story of hope for the poor man seeking to win the rich girl, the other tells the story of a young man who is rejected in his attempts and subsequently is faced with disappointment (78). The protagonists in Fitzgerald's 1920s novels represent the individuals in society, especially the males, who were attempting to better themselves and their social situations, but often found those dreams unfulfilled.

Gatsby undergoes a transformation of identity by being in love with Daisy, which is exemplified by his pursuit of the American dream of earning wealth. However, in this novel, Fitzgerald provides a contrast between the wealth of Gatsby and the wealth of Tom Buchanan in order to critique the traditional idealism that Gatsby attempts to achieve, but is unable to. Hearne argues that Fitzgerald's criticism of old money can be seen in his connection of Tom to the

valley of ashes, which Hearne believes is an indication of "the excessive injustices of the Industrial Revolution—the lax regulations on sanitation, the dehumanizing living conditions, the exploitation of children—all carried out in the name of profit" (192). The valley represents the exploitation of the poor by the rich as well as the social divide between the two class structures. Tom Buchanan, as part of the upper class, contributes to the valley of ashes. The separation between classes is one that Hearne suggests is part of the American character and influences Fitzgerald's cynical view of the American dream.

In the novel, Tom represents the traditional male figure who has the power to persuade a woman to love him because of his connection to "old money," while Gatsby represents a more modern masculinity in pursuit of new methods of gaining wealth. Fitzgerald uses Gatsby to breakdown the social hierarchy, which has traditionally been dominated by the old families of the nobility and holds individuals captive in "the chain of generations" (Haeckel 143). One way he does this is by portraying the challenge Gatsby faces in forming an identity independent of societal expectations. Jay Gatsby, originally James Gatz, grew up in Minnesota the son of "unsuccessful farm people," spending the majority of his time on the shore of Lake Superior as a "clam-digger and a salmon-fisher" with little money and no hope for the future (Fitzgerald 98). Despite the unlikelihood of James Gatz becoming wealthy, he pursued his dreams, embracing a belief that he could become anyone he wanted.

Fitzgerald criticizes the American dream, not necessarily restricted to traditional or modern definitions, but as it pertains to the development of one's identity. As a whole, Fitzgerald uses his portrayal of Gatsby to critique the dependence of Americans in the 1920s on society to form their individual identities. One way he does this is by telling the story of Gatsby's early life. As a boy James Gatz does not recognize that his identity is tied to the place he grew up, and that

no matter how hard he tries to leave the past behind, it will always be a part of him. Richard Lehan argues this idea by connecting Gatsby's conception of self to the meaning of place (11). Leaving the Midwest behind him, James Gatz goes East in order to create a new identity for himself that "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself," (98) transforming into Jay Gatsby, the wealthy and mysterious man of West Egg. In order to achieve the American dream Gatsby has to reject a part of his identity, and he pursues his dream based on the idea that he can create a new identity for himself that meets what society desires because he believes that he is born for greatness, possessing "unlimited freedom of will" to do as he pleases (Bender 407). Through Gatsby hiding his past and the formation of his identity based on who society expects him to become as a masculine figure, Fitzgerald critiques the traditional idea of masculinity based on wealth. Gatsby is attempting to become the man traditional ideals recommend him to be, but he does so at the cost of developing his own identity.

Not only does Fitzgerald critique the traditional definition of masculinity, but he also critiques the modern man who attempts to use his wealth to win the approval of others. Because of his perception about the role men fulfill in society, Gatsby never allows for the possibility that Daisy would willingly choose Tom Buchanan over him, especially after Gatsby creates a new identity for himself based on his accumulation of wealth. Gatsby believes that if he suppresses and rejects the identity of the impoverished James Gatz, that means Daisy has to choose him, but he does not realize that he is destined to "perform the lover's dance" in his life-long struggle to be selected by Daisy (Bender 418). For Jay Gatsby, the pursuit of wealth is only a means to the end of causing Daisy Buchanan to return to him as they were in the past and for her to say to Tom, "I never loved you" (Fitzgerald 109). He believes that he and Daisy are wed, and that nothing can separate them. Gatsby relives this experience of identity transformation by telling

the story of when he, with one kiss with Daisy, "wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath," when their lips touched and the "incarnation was complete," (110-11) changing Gatsby from a poor Midwestern boy with no hope of wealth or love to a man whose dreams appear to be near at hand. Because Gatsby becomes wealthy, he believes that there is nothing to prevent him and Daisy from being together. However, even though the pursuit of wealth is achieved by Gatsby, his belief that wealth means acceptance from others and freedom to be himself is unsatisfied. Hearne suggests that "Americans (Fitzgerald included) tend to perceive the American dream as a promise of freedom—freedom from persecution and unjust hostility….[and] part of that dream is that all, not just the privileged few, share in this promise" (190). Gatsby, as a wealthy modern man, is still ostracized by his peers, especially Tom Buchanan, who views Gatsby as different from him.

Gatsby's identity is based on portraying himself as a wealthy man, but he is never accepted by the wealthy elite of New York society. This rejection at the hands of the social elite is most apparent in the small number of people that attend his funeral. Nick is the only one who stands by Gatsby. Within an hour of Gatsby dying, Nick calls up Daisy, "called her instinctively and without hesitation. But she and Tom had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them" (164). Tom and Daisy's decision to leave before Gatsby's funeral is an example of the destructive force of wealth for those who have too much and lose the ability to be compassionate toward others (Donaldson 85). Although Gatsby exerted time and money in winning the approval of society, but especially the love of Daisy, he is rejected by them, which Fitzgerald presents as a reason why pursuit of traditional ideals is unbeneficial. None of the wealthy New York society, who so eagerly attended Gatsby's parties, chooses to attend his funeral. The day of the funeral Nick asks the minister to wait to start the funeral, hoping for

people to come, but "nobody came" (174). So "about five o'clock our procession of three cars reached the cemetery" (174), and Gatsby is buried with only a few mourners. The culmination of this novel in the death of Gatsby reveals Fitzgerald's critique of 1920s American culture, and their clinging to traditional ideals. Gatsby's desire to be accepted by the wealthy elite is one way Fitzgerald critiques the pursuit of the American dream. Fitzgerald does not necessarily disapprove of the ideal, but is critical of one's identity being dependent on the approval of others, which is exemplified in Gatsby's rejection by society despite his numerous attempts to appear like them.

The character of Gatsby allows Fitzgerald to shift the focus of his novel from traditional interpretations of gender roles, where men pursue women and wealth is the epitome of the American dream, to a more modern definition, where men are not rejected for having both feminine and masculine traits. However, Fitzgerald's broader critique of 1920s American culture is the dependence individuals had on others in order to form their identities. Through Gatsby's obsession with Daisy, his pursuit of the American dream in order to win her love, and ultimately, his inability to become a masculine figure that is approved of by New York society, Fitzgerald argues that becoming who others suggest is problematic. By upsetting the gender roles in his novels, especially in his portrayal of Gatsby, Fitzgerald addresses society's questions regarding what constitutes femininity and masculinity. Gatsby is effeminate in the way he acts, both in his meetings with Daisy and obsession over their rekindled romantic relationship, and his fashion choices.

In his novel, Fitzgerald acknowledges the ideal aspects of the American dream, but also recognizes that it will inevitably not be realized for many individuals. Even though Gatsby appears to have achieved the American dream of wealth and popularity, in the end, he is still

rejected by those who he considered as his social equals, but who saw him as inferior. The inability of individuals to truly fulfill the American dream is apparent in the concluding lines of *The Great Gatsby*, stating "It [the dream] eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther…And one fine morning—" (180). Gatsby's dreams fade, and in the end the destructive relationship Gatsby has toward his wealth results in his demise. Fitzgerald's representation of Gatsby is his way of critiquing the way 1920s American culture was clinging to traditional ideals, and encouraged the development of one's own identity rather than reliance on others for maturing into manhood.

Conclusion

1920s American culture was in constant motion. From the lively city of New York to Midwestern towns like Middletown, America was seeking a new identity after the traumatic events of World War I. Parts of American society began to embrace the youth culture's encouragement of freedom and questioning of traditions. However, another subset of America attempted to cling to traditional ideals, where male and female roles were clearly distinct. Fitzgerald recognized these two disparate cultural responses, and throughout his novels contrasts traditional and modern definitions of gender in order to reflect the growing pains American culture was experiencing. Fitzgerald does not overtly argue for one interpretation over the other, but critiques the culture of 1920s America as a whole, and its dependence on others in order to form its identity. The masculine protagonists in his novels are often negatively affected by societal expectations of gender and class, where love is acceptable only if shared by two individuals of similar socio-economic status, wealth is possible for anyone who works hard in pursuit of the American dream, and success is based on the European definition of self-sufficiency and education. Amory, Anthony, and Gatsby all attempt to be the men society expects them to be, but fail to meet the traditional standard of masculinity. Fitzgerald encourages the youth culture's definition of gender by suggesting, through his characters, that men have both feminine and masculine traits as part of their identities. Fitzgerald shows that when the three male protagonists try to adhere to the traditional definition of masculinity, they fail in their pursuits. However, if these men accept their identities and allow themselves to mature as individual masculine characters, without being hindered by society's expectations, they have the potential to become great men.

Amory Blaine is a character who believes he has the potential to achieve the status of a personage, but he never develops an identity apart from those around him. As a young boy, Amory relies on his mother Beatrice to influence what he does, but as he becomes older, Amory shifts this reliance on another to his romantic relationships. In the most impressionable early years of college, Amory falls in love with Rosalind, a beautiful woman who most influences Amory's identity. With Rosalind, Amory's potential to become more than a dependent person is possible, but his shallow view of love and relationships hinders his development. Amory places his hope for social acceptance in the hands of Rosalind because he believes her approval makes him a better person, not realizing that the way he is dependent on women like Rosalind hinders the development of his identity. Rather than becoming an independent person as a college student, learning how to survive on his own, and becoming a personage, Amory adopts a variety of personalities in order to gain the approval of others.

This inability to form a stable identity is also connected to Amory's unsuccessful endeavors to achieve the American dream of wealth and prosperity. One expression of Amory's desire for wealth is the way he dresses as a dandy figure. This outward display of clothing is Amory's way of seeking the approval of others. As a young boy, his family had money, which is reflected in the fashionable clothing he wears as a child. For Amory, the outward appearance is what people see, and as a result influences how he chooses to define his identity. While in preparatory school, Amory defines fashionable boys with the term "the slicker," and recognizes he does not fit that idea, but attempts to become like one. Even as an adult, when Amory attends Princeton, he determines his role in society by imitating the type of apparel those in the senior class are wearing. Sartorial displays are Amory's way of presenting the masculine figure he believes society wants him to be, not recognizing that the outward appearance is less important

than the development of his identity. Just as Amory relies on the romantic relationships of the women around him to shape his identity, he also relies on fashion to hide the immaturity of his character.

The immaturity of Amory is also found in his adherence to traditional ideals of success. Rather than adopting a more contemporary view of success based on individual self-development, Amory's view of masculinity and power is determined by his vanity. Amory is not sure how best to participate in the new culture of the 1920s and so clings to past expectations of success. One example of Amory's misinterpretation of success lies in his pursuit of education. Although he does not desire to be in school and does not receive good grades, Amory chooses to go to Princeton. He believes that success means becoming the most important, most popular, most well-liked person on campus, but he does not realize that such a definition is based on a traditional definition of success, where others determine one's status, rather than a contemporary definition, where maturing into an individual is more highly regarded. As Amory goes through life, he experiences sorrow and loss of important people in his life, but none those changes cause Amory to become an individual. Amory's experience thus reflects the approach of many in 1920s American culture trying to adapt to new definitions of success.

Just like Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned* appears as a character who should achieve everything he dreams, but fails to develop his own masculine identity. As a child, Anthony is orphaned, but has a wealthy grandfather. Without any parents to influence his upbringing, Amory becomes reliant on other people for approval and acceptance. This is most apparent in the way Anthony's development as a man hinges on his relationship with Gloria, yet ultimately this relationship hinders his growth as an individual. The love Anthony and Gloria share is based on an illusion of societal expectations. Despite not being able

to stand one another's company, they decide to marry. However, Gloria is the one who holds power over Anthony, influencing his decisions and controlling Anthony's emotions. He is unable to separate himself from Gloria in order to become his own person, which represents the possible shortcomings of the modern masculine role in society. Even though Anthony no longer holds the dominant influence in a relationship that the traditional perception of masculinity would suggest, he is not a fully mature modern man because of his reliance on Gloria for his identity. Fitzgerald created his characters within the modern world of shifting views of gender in order to show how culture was beginning to shift from a masculine dominated society to one with men who have feminine qualities and women who have masculine qualities; however, he is unsure of the outcome of this transition. This uncertainty is exemplified in the relationship between Anthony and Gloria, and his dependence on her for his identity.

Unlike Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch inherits wealth from his grandfather, who pursued the American dream, starting from nothing and becoming a powerful man. However, Anthony does not have to work as hard for his wealth or pursue the American dream because he has a source of income with an allowance from his grandfather. Anthony feels secure in the wealth he is promised and as a result never learns how to live within his means, which proves problematic as he and Gloria flaunt their wealth without realizing its limitations. By the end of the novel, Anthony is an alcoholic who does not have a steady income and is relying on the hope of a lost inheritance in order to survive economically, all because of the lifestyle they have pursued. Anthony represents the negative effects of the changing cultural perceptions of what the American dream meant because the past ideals of working hard to earn wealth were shifting to the desire to spend money without working for it. As a result, the shifts occurring in the

American culture of the 1920s from a traditional one to a modern one is evidenced by Anthony's reliance on money to define his identity.

Anthony's inability to effectively pursue the American dream corresponds to his unsuccessful attempts at forming a masculine identity. He experiences a tension between the masculine roles culture tells him to fulfill and his lack of understanding about what such masculinity entails. Because a successful career is considered an important part of the traditional aspirations of a boy maturing into a man, the fact that Anthony Patch never achieves success in a career directly relates to his failure to serve as the leader of his family. Anthony prefers luxury to work, and so halfheartedly pursues a career. Rather than finding his own way within the American economic system in order to find success, Anthony, along with many other men in his position during the 1920s, becomes complacent. Although Anthony's lack of maturation into a successful male figure is partially because of his relationship with Gloria, it also reflects Anthony's internal question over whether he has the capability to become successful. Anthony's lack of masculine identity and satisfactory belief in himself keeps him from working toward a goal, and instead causes him to fall into inaction, which ultimately leads to his demise.

Similar to the stories of Amory and Anthony, the character of Jay Gatsby falls in love with a beautiful woman, and the romantic relationship he has with her influences the formation of his identity. The love Gatsby has for Daisy results in unfulfilled hopes, which Fitzgerald uses to show the futility of reliance on romantic relationships in order to create one's identity. Gatsby places the importance of his masculine identity in the hands of the woman he loves. Everything he pursues, even the American dream of wealth and status, as well as the desire to be considered successful, is centered on his desire for Daisy's love. Gatsby's immaturity as a male adult can be seen in his inability to realize that he is seeking the approval for his outward appearance from

others, especially Daisy, as a means of forming his identity. Without Daisy, Gatsby is only a shell, confused and alone, wandering aimlessly toward a moment he cannot even identify. Through this novel, Fitzgerald represents the challenge many men were facing in 1920s American culture of knowing who they were as masculine figures in pursuit of romantic relationships.

Like many men in the 1920s, Gatsby is unsure of how to fit into the expected role of a masculine figure, which is apparent in his actions toward Daisy as well as his fashion choices. Gatsby adopts a persona that he believes will cause Daisy to choose him over Tom; however, he cannot completely reject his identity as James Gatz. In a similar way, 1920s culture placed emphasis on fashion, but often did so because of uncertainty over the changing definitions of gender roles. The tension between traditional interpretations, where males and females had distinct traits, toward a modern definition, where individuals had both masculine and feminine traits was an understanding of gender that was often rejected by 1920s society. Gatsby represents the negative effects of creating an identity around traditional ideals because in his pursuit of Daisy's approval and of society, he isolates himself from others. In the end, Gatsby's pursuit of traditional ideals prevents him developing an individual identity.

Gatsby's desire for love and obsession with wealth is contrasted with Tom Buchanan's masculinity and old money. Tom is portrayed as the man who has everything, and is representative of the traditional masculine ideal. However, the contrast between Tom and Gatsby represents Fitzgerald's larger critique about the separation between the wealthy and the poor. Even though Gatsby achieves the American dream of becoming wealthy, he still cannot overcome the class barrier that causes him to be rejected by both Tom and society as a whole. Gatsby does not come from a wealthy family, and, as a result, attempts to earn money in any way

possible. Gatsby is never quite comfortable with his past as James Gatz, and never fits into the wealthy society he is surrounded by. Because of his dependence on gaining wealth in order to win Daisy and the approval of others, Gatsby never fully matures as a masculine figure. Gatsby is a warning from Fitzgerald to the 1920s American culture about the risk of clinging to traditional ideals, and the possibility of males being hindered in the process of maturing into an individual identity.

Critical studies of Fitzgerald often center on the autobiographical elements contained in his novels, or his representation of the Jazz culture developing in the 1920s; however, little study has been done on the way his masculine characters are representative of male identity crisis occurring during this time period. Through the primary male characters' failure to mature as adults, Fitzgerald represents in his novels that just as a country like the United States experiences growth pains, so do individual people. The questions of identity and acceptable gender roles in society were not unique to females, and many males felt a sense of displacement, wondering where they belonged. The text of the novels shows that Fitzgerald recognized the changing cultural norms, and through his novels he provided a critique of traditional cultural definitions of masculinity. He depicts characters that embrace many of the traditional ideals, but in doing so lose what they are chasing. In this way, Fitzgerald shows that new ways of thinking about gender identity must occur.

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