PSYCHOLOGICAL MOTIVES IN FITZGERALD'S SHORT STORIES

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Abstract:
This article tells brief about the biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald and psychological motives of his works. F. Scott Fitzgerald is best known as the creator of the flapper in fiction, a chronicler of youth and wealth in the 1920's. His first novel, This Side of Paradise (1920), was influential among college students and was informative to their parents. During the 1920's, popular magazines wanted Fitzgerald-type stories and asked for them by name. His main achievement was in the realm of the serious novel and the short story, something quite apart from his public reputation as Poet Laureate of the Jazz Age. Among those authors admittedly influenced by Fitzgerald are J. D. Salinger and John O'Hara.

Keywords: Psychological motives, short stories, a novel, realm, depiction, Jazz Age, a play.

Introduction:

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born September 24, 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S. and passed away in December 21, 1940 in Hollywood, California. He is an American short-story writer and novelist, famous for his depictions of the Jazz Age (the 1920s), his most brilliant novel being The Great Gatsby (1925).

F. Scott Fitzgerald was educated at St. Paul Academy and at the Newman School in Hackensack, New Jersey. While attending Princeton University he wrote for the Princeton Tiger and Nassau Literary Magazine. He left Princeton without a degree, joined the army, and was stationed near Montgomery, Alabama, where he met Zelda Sayre. In 1920, they were married in New York City before moving to Westport, Connecticut. Their only child Frances Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1921. In the mid-1920 the Fitzgeralds traveled extensively between the United States and Europe, meeting Ernest Hemingway in Paris in 1925. The decade of the 1930's was a bleak one for the Fitzgeralds; Zelda had several emotional breakdowns and Scott sank into alcoholism. They lived variously in Montgomery and on the Turnbull estate outside Baltimore. Fitzgerald went to Hollywood for the second time in 1931. After that they lived for a time in Asheville. North Carolina, where Zelda was hospitalized and where Fitzgerald wrote the Crack-up essays for Esquire. In 1937, Fitzgerald met Sheila Graham while he was living in Hollywood and writing under contract to MGM. He began writing The Last Tycoon in 1939 and died, before it was completed, on December 21, 1940, at the age of forty-four.

Main part:

F. Scott Fitzgerald was a professional writer who was also a literary artist. In practical terms this meant that he had to support himself by writing short stories for popular magazines in order to get sufficient income ahead, according to him, to write decent books. Indeed most of the money that Fitzgerald earned by writing before he went to Hollywood in 1937 was earned by selling stories to magazines. In his twenty-year career as a writer he published 164 magazine stories; an additional ten stories have never been published. All but eight of the stories that originally appeared in magazines are now available in hardcover editions.

As one would expect of a body of 164 stories written in a twenty-year period mainly for popular consumption, the quality of the stories is uneven. At the bottom of this collection are at least a dozen

stories, most of them written for Esquire during the last years of his life, which have few redeeming qualities; at the top of the list are at least a dozen stories which, by new critical standards rank high among the best of American short stories. One should not, however, be led to believe that these, as well as the hundred or more "potboilers" in the middle, do not serve a useful role in his development as an artist. Fitzgerald in the 1920's was considered the best writer of quality magazine fiction in America. And his stories brought the highest prices paid by slick magazines; the Saturday Evening Post, for example, paid him four thousand dollars per story even during the Depression. Dorothy Parker has commented that Fitzgerald could write a bad story, but that he could not write badly. Thus each story, no matter how weak, has the recognizable Fitzgerald touch--that sparkling prose which Fitzgerald called "the something extra" that most popular short stories lacked. Fitzgerald also learned at the beginning of his career that he could use the popular magazines as a workshop for his novels, experimenting in them with themes and techniques which he would later incorporate into his novels. An understanding of a Fitzgerald story should take into account this workshop function of the story as well as its artistic merits.

Fitzgerald's career as a writer of magazine fiction breaks logically into three periods: 1919-1924, years during which he shopped around for markets and published stories in most of the important periodicals of the times; 1925-1933, the central period characterized by a close association with the Saturday Evening Post--a relationship which almost precluded his publication of stories in other magazines; and 1934-1940, a period beginning with the publication of his first Esquire story and continuing through a subsequent relationship with that magazine which lasted until his death. During the first of these periods, Fitzgerald published thirty-two stories in ten different commercial magazines, two novels (This Side of Paradise and The Beautiful and Damned, 1922), two short-story collections (Flappers and Philosophers, and Tales of the Jazz Age), and one book-length play (The Vegetable). In the second period, during which The Great Gatsby (1925) and a third short-story collection (All the Sad Young Men) appeared, he enjoyed the popular reputation he had built with readers of the Saturday Evening Post and published forty-seven of the fifty-eight stories which appeared during this nine-year period ion that magazine; the remaining eleven stories were scattered throughout five different magazines. In the final period. Fitzgerald lost the large Saturday Evening Post audience and gained the Esquire audience, which was smaller and quite different. Of the forty-four Fitzgerald stories to appear between 1934 and his death, twenty-eight appeared in Esquire, In addition to Tender Is the Night (1934), which was completed and delivered before Fitzgerald's relationship with Esquire began, Fitzgerald published his final short-story collection (Taps at Reveille); he also drafted The Last Tycoon during the Esquire years, twelve stories, nine of which have appeared in Esquire, have been published since his death.

Usually, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote stories with traditional beginnings, middles, and ends, although in the last years of his career he wrote short, experimental pieces for Esquire. His best stories are tightly structured works; and even his weakest commercial stories have a recognizable Fitzgerald touch, which he called the "something extra" he gave popular magazine readers.

Four novels, four short-story collections, and a play make up the nine F. Scott Fitzgerald books published in his lifetime. They were issued in uniform editions by Scribner's with a British edition of each. His short stories were widely anthologized in the 1920's and 1930's in such collections as The Best Short Stories of 1922, Cream of the Jug, and The Best Short Stories of 1931. The Vegetable: Or, From President to Postman (1923) was produced at the Apollo Theatre in Atlantic City, and, while Fitzgerald was under contract to MGM, he collaborated on such film scripts as Three Comrades, Infidelity, Madame Curie, and Gone with the Wind. There have been numerous posthumous collections of his letters, essays, notebooks, stories, and novels; and since his death

there have been various stage and screen adaptations of his work, including film versions of The Great Gatsby and Tender Is the Night.

Conclusion:

After reviewing the biography and career of F. Scott Fitzgerald one can say that Fitzgerald was the only son of an unsuccessful, aristocratic father and an energetic, provincial mother. Half the time he thought of himself as the heir of his father's tradition, which included the author of "The Star-Spangled Banner", Francis Scott Key, after whom he was named, and half the time as "straight 1850 potato-famine Irish." As a result he had typically ambivalent American feelings about American life, which seemed to him at once vulgar and dazzlingly promising.

Growing up in St. Paul, Fitzgerald glorified the rich, many of whom emerged from the Gilded Age with their fortunes. They seemed to possess a sophistication, beauty and splendor not found in his Midwestern home. But he also retained a faith in the American promise, which effectively was being defended during the Progressive Era of his youth, that every man, including Fitzgerald himself, had a chance to improve his standing. Thus, Fitzgerald believed in both central facets of the American Dream represented respectively by the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. He was certain that with his talent and ambition coupled with the American promise of a fair opportunity, he could enjoy the social éclat of the elite who win the competition. America emerged from World War I ready to cast aside international responsibilities and turn-of-the century progressive ideals in favor of self-focused materialism. Fitzgerald, the chronicler of his age, reflected the attitudes of his times. As the Twenties approached, Fitzgerald was ready to put his past behind him. His parents and their Midwest bourgeois background, his failures at Princeton, and his lost opportunity for combat were all to be erased. He intended to take full advantage of America's promise of a new beginning. With romantic enthusiasm, he was ready to pursue his destined glories. He had nearly within his grasp the girl who fulfilled his romantic ideals. In his vision, they would drink in all of the glamour and fabulous pleasures afforded those blessed with beauty, youth and talent. He envisioned that the long-time outsider would be welcomed, with Zelda by his side, into the Eastern aristocracy of the wealthy. He anticipated a world of grace, sophistication and nobility. Both the author and his country were entering a decade in which they would reap enormous success and wealth. But they encountered a sense of spiritual loss and ultimately were disillusioned. The riches proved to be chimerical. By the end of the decade they disappeared as suddenly and unexpectedly as they arrived. Fitzgerald would come to appreciate more quickly than his country that his longsought for glory was hollow and that the moral supremacy of the Eastern aristocracy was fraudulent. His romantic notions would be crushed and replaced with a harsher realism. America arrived at the threshold of the 1920s with a renewed belief in its destiny to amass great fortune. Similarly, Fitzgerald approached the decade grasping to his idealized faith in the American Dream. By the end of the decade, America would have to confront the dangerous implications of unfettered capitalism. Like an exploding star, Fitzgerald's brilliant éclat was followed by a struggle to remain aglow. His romantic ideals were crushed and he struggled to be true to his art amidst feelings of disillusion. As America's economy, stock market and concomitant sense of invulnerability continued to climb through the 1920s, cracks, albeit hard to discern, were beginning to appear. The financially sophisticated understood the market's fragility and escaped in time to realize their gains. Fitzgerald, like some of his contemporary authors, similarly appreciated the shallow, ignoble social structure on which America's faith in itself had come to rest. Like the stockbrokers who withdrew from the market, Fitzgerald and other artists fled to Europe; but, unlike the rare, successful brokers who entered the 1930s with their wealth intact, Fitzgerald entered the post-Jazz Age broken by his high

wire act of a life and the merciless realities of a society willing to take the best from others while preserving itself. The October 1929 stock market crash not only ignited the Great Depression, which continued until the onset of another global war, but it signaled a radical change in social attitudes. The pattern of the pendulum continued, this time swinging the emphasis away from America's pure capitalist creed that endorsed enormous rewards to the select and back toward a commitment to equality of opportunity. Perversely, as such opportunities dwindled and jobs became horribly scarce, America recommitted itself to putting as many back to work as possible. The country had suffered a blow and it returned with a humbled perseverance. It may not have been as immune to hardship as it had thought, but it was not defeated. Similarly, Fitzgerald came to the end of the 1920s in nearly a diametrically opposite position from the one in which he had entered the decade. He was thought to be professionally spent. His novels did not sell, and he survived on the sale of stories that he denigrated. Zelda's mental health was deteriorating rapidly and she was increasingly institutionalized. Scottie rarely lived with him. He was deeply in debt and saw no clear path out of it. His drinking had severely damaged his health. His friends were few and his prospects fewer.

Yet Fitzgerald, like his country, persevered, albeit, also like his country, with a dramatically changed belief system. The aristocracy of the wealthy was discovered to be anything but noble, and the American promise of equality of opportunity was a false myth. Fame and social éclat glittered but did not nourish. Fitzgerald, the chronicler of his age, again mirrored in his personal life the attitudes of his countrymen: "With his facility for expressing the mood of an era in his life and work, he embodied both the excesses of the Boom and the anguish of the Depression."1 The ambitions of most Americans had changed dramatically. They now wanted jobs to pay their bills and feed their families. Similarly, Fitzgerald had come to appreciate that commitment to work and fulfillment of responsibility were what ultimately mattered.

An obvious conclusion may be drawn about Fitzgerald's professional career: he was at his best artistically in the years of his greatest popularity. During the composition of The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald's commercial fiction was in such demand that large magazines such as the Saturday Evening Post, Hearst's, and Metropolitan competed for it. Tender Is the Night was written during the time when Fitzgerald's popularity with slick magazine readers was at its aIl-time high point; for example, in 1929 and 1930, important years in the composition of Tender Is the Night, he published fifteen stories in the Saturday Evening Post. In sharp contrast to the 1925-1933 stories, which are characteristically of an even, high quality, and many of which are closely related to two novels of this period, the stories of the Esquire years are, in general, undistinguished. In addition, with minor exceptions, the stories written in this final period have little relation to Fitzgerald's last "serious" work, The Last Tycoon. The Esquire years thus constitute a low point from both a popular and an artistic standpoint. They are years during which he lost the knack of pleasing the large American reading public and at the same time produced a comparatively small amount of good artwork.

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