CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

THE REINTEGRATION OF SCOTT FITZGERALD
The "Basil" stories and "The Crack-Up" essays

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by
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"Of course all life is a process of breaking down": so begins one of the most unusual documents in American letters, "The Crack-Up" essays, written by F. Scott Fitzgerald this side of his fortieth year. The statement that "all life is a process of breaking down" forms the thesis Fitzgerald develops in the three "Crack-Up" essays. Because the statement defines the processes of life; the initial approach to Fitzgerald's thesis would logically be from the point of view of the biological sciences. Our biologist would find Fitzgerald's thesis wanting not in accuracy, but rather in completeness. For the thesis that "all life is a process of breaking down" is an accurate enough definition of but one-half of the metabolic processes that combine to keep an organism alive. The thesis is an accurate definition of catabolism, or destructive metabolism, the process in a plant or animal by which living tissue is broken down into waste products of a simpler chemical composition. Fitzgerald's definition of life is wanting in that it fails to include constructive metabolism, or anabolism, the process in a plant or animal by which food is changed into protoplasm and other living tissue. In a word, then, the thesis of "The Crack-Up" essays, while recognizing that "all life is a process of breaking down," fails to realize that all life must be a process of building up as well.

But to probe the materials that compose "The Crack-Up" essays utilizing only the instrument of the biological sciences would lead to misinterpretation of those materials due to limitations inherent in our instrument. Furthermore, to approach "The Crack-Up" essays from a physiological, or even a strictly psychological, point of view would be to misconstrue Fitzgerald's intention. True, as the title of the essays itself would indicate, Fitzgerald's intention in "The Crack-Up" series seems
to be the description of some kind of nervous breakdown or psychological trauma he had just undergone. However, in a series of essays numbering some seven thousand words, Fitzgerald devotes but twenty actually to describe this "crack-up": "And then suddenly, surprisingly, I got better. And cracked like an old plate as soon as I heard the news."

No, Fitzgerald is closer to revealing his intention in the composition of "The Crack-Up" essays when he tells us: "I have spoken in these pages of how an exceptionally optimistic young man experienced a crack-up of all values, a crack-up that he scarcely knew of until long after it occurred" (p. 416). Fitzgerald's intention, as he says here, is to describe the "crack-up" of his value system, to depict the ethical disintegration he had undergone. But even more importantly, "The Crack-Up" essays are Fitzgerald's attempts to come to terms with that disintegration. Fundamentally, "The Crack-Up" essays entail a philosophical presentation, but not, however, in a conventional sense. For unlike a conventional philosophical presentation which involves the formulation (the building up) of a stance or system, "The Crack-Up" essays (and this is a source of their powerful uniqueness) represent the honest attempts of a man to come to terms with an already inveterate philosophy of life, a philosophy which holds that "all life is a process of breaking down." One major focus of interest in this paper will be an analysis of Fitzgerald's attempts in "The Crack-Up" essays to come to terms with the philosophy of life he discovered, at the age of thirty-nine, he had come to maintain.

In "The Crack-Up" essays, Fitzgerald's stance with respect to the world around him, we can now label "philosophical catabolism." "Philosophical catabolism"
was not, of course, the position Fitzgerald had earlier maintained. As we shall come to see when we examine them, the essence of "The Crack-Up" essays is conflict. One of the major conflicts is created by the tension which exists between the "philosophical catabolic" position Fitzgerald has come to hold standing upon the threshold of middle age, and the position which characterized Fitzgerald's young manhood. This latter position can be termed, to the infinite delight of our biologist, "philosophical anabolism." Now, while "The Crack-Up" essays, all published in Fitzgerald's thirty-ninth year, are a direct expression of his "philosophical catabolic" position, a series of eight short stories, published throughout Fitzgerald's thirty-first and thirty-second years, indirectly reflects his "philosophical anabolic" position. The second major concern of this paper will be to trace out this "philosophical anabolic" position in these eight short stories, specifically to the purpose of drawing a contrast between the philosophy of life reflected in them and that reflected in "The Crack-Up" essays.

The subject matter of these short stories deals with the maturation processes of one Basil Duke Lee, from age fourteen up until his first year in college. Through the delineation of several incidents from the life of Basil Lee, Fitzgerald successfully portrayed a sensitive boy's first steps into young manhood. The initial story in the "Basil" sequence, "The Scandal Detectives," will be studied in greater detail than those which follow it, as it will serve as our introduction into the personality of Basil Duke Lee, the environment which is impinging upon that personality, and Fitzgerald's technique in the construction of the short story series.
In "The Scandal Detectives," Fitzgerald immediately informs us that the world Basil is to grow up in, the world of the early twentieth century, will be the scene of ideological and social revolution. As the story opens, Basil Lee and his best friend Riply Buckner, however unconscious of that fact, are contributing to this revolution: "They were making the first tentative combinations of the ideas and materials they found ready at hand--ideas destined to become, in future years, first articulate, then startling, and finally commonplace" (p. 3). The two boys are involved in the construction of "The Book of Scandal," a compilation of rumor and fact attributing varying degrees of misconduct to their acquaintances. The rate at which the boy's minds are changing is evidenced by this piece of information about "The Book of Scandal": "One of the mildest items, a matter they had hesitated about setting down, though it had shocked them only last year, was: 'Elwood Leaming has been to the Burlesque Show three or four times at the Star'" (p. 4). Finally of "The Book of Scandal," for it is destined to pass from the story, Fitzgerald provides the following piece of information: "The single defect in the book was that it could only be enjoyed with the aid of the imagination, for the invisible ink must keep its secrets until that day when, the pages being held close to the fire, the items would appear" (p. 4). The symbolism here is obvious. The secrets recorded in "The Book of Scandal," the attributions of misconduct, can only be enjoyed by the boys imaginatively. They are to remain potential delights of the imagination until such time when, kindled by the fires of a more mature desire and passion, they become actualized. And the major focus of
interest in "The Scandal Detectives" is a premature flare-up of Basil's fire.

Upon the approach of three of their female contemporaries, Basil and Riply shift their attention from "The Book of Scandal" to the young ladies. In terms of the symbolism traced, the potential experience of the imagination is beginning actualization. When the two boys and three girls rendezvous at the Wharton's yard, a meeting-place for their crowd, Basil experiences a curious reaction to the person of one Imogene Bissel: "For the first time in his life he realized a girl completely as something opposite and complementary to him, and he was subject to a warm chill of mingled pleasure and pain. It was a definite experience and he was immediately conscious of it. The shadowy afternoon became lost in her suddenly--the soft air, the light, the laughter and voices, the tinkle of a piano over the way--the odor left all these things and went into Imogene's face as she sat there looking up at him with a smile" (p. 7). First, the experience is Basil's initial realization of woman, "something opposite and complementary" to himself. Of more importance is the specific nature of Basil's reaction to this initial confrontation with woman. Basil's surroundings--the sunlight and flowers, the laughter and voices--become submerged in his desire for Imogene Bissel. In more technical terminology, Basil has displaced the sensations of a pleasurable summer afternoon into the person of Imogene. It is impossible to overrate the importance of this point to an understanding of the "Basil" stories, and also "The Crack-Up" essays themselves. Basil, as did his creator, possesses an extremely romantic sensibility--so romantic a sensibility that his very
world can become lost in his emotion for a young girl. Basil responds to this experience by asking Imogene if she would accept his class ring. He promises to give the ring to her later that evening at the Wharton's yard. However, when the time comes to present her with the token, Basil finds that the center of Imogene's attention is no longer himself, but one Hubert Blair. The importance of Hubert Blair to an understanding of the "Basil" stories will be dealt with later. What is of issue here is Basil's reaction to Imogene's preference of Hubert Blair to himself: "Gloom settled upon Basil, and through the heavy dusk the figure of Imogene began to take on a new, unattainable charm. He was a romantic boy and already he had endowed her heavily from his fancy. Now he hated her for her indifference, but he must perversely linger near in the vain hope of recovering the penny of ecstasy so wantonly expended this afternoon" (p. 12). There are two important points to be made here. First is the fact that Imogene becomes more desirable to Basil as she becomes more inaccessible. The second point, a direct result of the first, is that Basil helplessly pursues Imogene in spite of the humiliating indifference she displays toward him. As we shall see, one of the final lessons Basil learns before we leave him is that it is impossible to "make" somebody love him. Furthermore, Basil is to learn that to pursue amorously an indifferent person is, at bottom, a self-damaging admission of one's own impotence.

Imogene, then, departs from the Wharton's yard with Hubert, leaving a crestfallen Basil watching them walk home together. As Basil himself heads for home, a rain begins to fall, a rain which totally re-vitalizes the emotionally injured young boy: "It came quickly
and he was drenched and running before he reached his home eight blocks away. But the change of weather had swept over his heart and he leaped up every few steps, swallowing the rain and crying 'Y-o-o-o-o!' aloud, as if he himself were part of the fresh violent disturbance of the night (p. 13). Each story in the "Basil" sequence is, ultimately, organized upon the basis of a pattern consisting of our young protagonist being emotionally floored by a set of life's circumstances, only to bounce back and confront life with more determination, and with knowledge added from the recent painful experience. It is this competitively resilient quality of Basil's personality that seems to prevent an otherwise sensitive nature from being smothered under life's intimidations.

While Basil's experience of woman in the person of Imogene Bissel is the major focus in "The Scandal Detectives," a step in the direction of a moral development is the minor focus. Hubert Blair, by virtue of his "gymnastic virtuosity," is a constant source of fascination to the girls of Basil's crowd. Naturally enough, the boys of Basil's crowd resent this. In "The Scandal Detectives," Basil decides that Hubert will have to pay for his success with Imogene that night at the Wharton's yard. Basil, Riply, and one Bill Kamph decide to accost Hubert one night outside Hubert's alley, bind him, gag him, and deposit him in a garbage can. However, when the time for retaliation arrives, Basil finds himself unable to harm Hubert, as he comes to the following realization: "He discovered that he liked Hubert Blair--liked him well as any boy he knew" (p. 16). Speaking of this realization at the close of the story, Fitzgerald says of Basil: "Outside of Hubert's gate, he had for
a moment felt morally alone, and he realized that whatever combinations he might make of the materials of life would have to be safely within the law" (p. 22). While this is nice sentiment, there is a more specific point to be made concerning Basil's experience outside Hubert's gate. Basil's jealousy of Hubert's gift is not malicious; instead, Basil pays homage to Hubert by imitating him. Indeed, it is always to be Basil's pattern to imitate the qualities of his successful contemporaries. Eventually Basil comes to understand that an attempt to imitate the quality of another is, like the pursuit of an indifferent female, a self-damaging admission of impotence. He comes to understand that whatever success he himself is to achieve in life can be brought about only through an honest development of his own qualities. Basil's moral development throughout the stories is precisely this—the self-determination of where exactly his strength of character lies, and his attempts to develop those strong points to their fullest. When Fitzgerald, at the end of "The Scandal Detectives," says of Basil, "he realized that whatever combinations he might make of the materials of life would have to be safely within the law," there is a danger, inherent in the phrase, of misinterpreting him to mean that Basil's moral development is to be a conventional one. On the contrary, Basil's moral development is not circumscribed by any set of conventions. His moral development is "individualistic": in that it is concerned primarily with the strengthening of his character, so that he can emerge from the battle of life the victor.

Finally, I would like to illustrate with an example from the text of "The Scandal Detectives" a point
previously made. It was stated that the "Basil" stories are patterned to Basil's experience of life's "ups and downs." Observe Fitzgerald's description of just how quickly our hero gets over Miss Imogene Bissel:

... after another week he found that he no longer grieved over losing Imogene. Meeting her, he saw only the familiar little girl he had always known. The ecstatic moment of that afternoon had been a premature birth, an emotion left over from an already fleeting spring.

He did not know that he had frightened Mrs. Blair out of town and that because of him a special policeman walked a placid beat for many a night. All he knew was that the vague and restless yearnings of three long spring months were satisfied. They reached combustion in that last week—flared up, exploded, and burned out. His face was turned without regret toward the boundless possibilities of summer. (pp. 22-3)

The next story, "A Night at the Fair," finds Basil attempting to exploit some of the "boundless possibilities" of that summer. At the Minnesota state fair, Basil and Riply, at the suggestion of the worldly-wise Elwood Leaming, set out to "pick up some chicken." They successfully apprehend two of the delectable creatures. Elwood immediately monopolizes the attention of one of the girls, leaving Basil and Riply to compete for the attention of her companion. However, Basil finds himself at a disadvantage, for while he still dresses in short pants, one week earlier Riply graduated into a pair of long trousers.

So, Riply gets the girl. Having found the girl attractive to begin with, Basil undergoes a characteristic reaction to her preference of Riply to himself: "A twinge of jealousy went through him and he inspected the girl again and with more appreciation, finding her prettier than he had thought. Her eyes, dark and intimate, seemed to have wakened at the growing
brilliance of the illumination overhead; there was a promise of excitement in them, like the promise of the cooling night." Again, Basil's perception of his surroundings has become immersed in the feeling he directs toward this young girl, the direct equation being made between the brilliance of her eyes and that of the coming night. There is an added dimension to Basil's response to this girl, a very important dimension to an understanding of the psychology of our young protagonist. Fitzgerald tells us that Basil see "promise" in the young girl's eyes, the same "promise" he sees in the coming night. Throughout the "Basil" sequence, Fitzgerald reiterates this aspect of the boy's personality; the world around him holds a wealth of "promise." The world holds a wealth of "promise" for Basil because it is the stage upon which he intends to act out his dreams. A young girl can hold this same "promise" for Basil as he endows her person with the spirit of his dreams. In the presence of such a girl, Basil's dreams become substantial before his eyes. This is why it is of such moment to him to possess such a girl—she is the essence of his dreams.

Humiliated by his experience at the fair, Basil returns home alone. The next day he goes downtown and buys two pairs of long trousers, ordering one pair to be sent home that evening. Riply, meanwhile, has called Basil telling him that he can fix Basil up with the sister of the girl they had competed for the previous evening at the fair. When the time come to depart for the fair grounds that evening, Basil's long trousers have not arrived. Rather than go to the fair in short pants, subjecting himself to further humiliation, Basil decides to stay home:
He would not go the fair without his suit—he would not go at all. He would sit at home and luckier boys would go adventuring along its Great White Way. Mysterious girls, young and reckless, would glide with them through the enchanted darkness of the Old Mill.

In a day or so the fair would be over—forever—those girls, of all living girls the most intangible, the most desirable, that sister said to be the nicest of all—would be lost out of his life. They would ride off in Blatz Wildcats into the moonlight without Basil having kissed them. No, all his life . . . he would look back with infinite regret upon that irretrievable hour. (p. 25)

The irony inherent in this passage is that Basil's long pants do arrive, he does go the fair, and "that sister" is "a fright." Basil is a boy who lives in his dreams. This necessarily produces unhealthy effects on the boy due to the fact that actual incidents rarely reach the level of his imaginary anticipations of them. On the other hand, Basil is a boy who lives for his dreams. This just as necessarily produces healthy effects on the boy due to the fact that, despite constant disappointment, he struggles increasingly hard to carve life into the pattern of his dreams. So to carve life is the motive of the boy's personality.

"The Freshest Boy" finds Basil at the nadir of his young career. What will be traced in this story is an attitude toward the past which emerges from it, and which is developed throughout the remainder of the sequence. Alas, it seems there is an obnoxious element in our hero's personality. Basil talks too much. He brags about himself, he gives undiplomatic advice to his contemporaries, and loves to demonstrate how smart he is. One of the most humiliating experiences Basil had at school was when the following item appeared in the school paper: "If someone will
please poison young Basil, or find some other means to stop his mouth, the school at large and myself will be much obliged." Riding on the train that is taking him to St. Regis prep-school in New York, Basil is reminded of this humiliating experience by one Lewis Crum. Basil's reaction to Lewis' reminder is as follows: "Then, resolutely, Basil tried to reinsert this unfortunate souvenir of the past. All that was behind him now. Perhaps he had been a little fresh, but he was making a new start" (p. 26). In effect, Basil, changing environments, decides to ignore this past experience, pretending that it never occurred.

One does not, however, reform one's personality by pretending that one's past errors never occurred. We next encounter Basil after he has been at St. Regis school a little over two months. Not yet two weeks at St. Regis, Basil was well on his way to becoming "Bossy" Lee, the school's most unpopular figure. It seems that Basil's "freshness" was what initially annoyed his contemporaries, and led to his being made the school's whipping-boy. At the moment, Basil is attempting to gain permission to go to New York and attend the theater. But he can get nobody to go with him. Finally, the headmaster, feeling sorry for the boy, agrees to let Basil go to New York with a Mr. Rooney, the school's football coach.

Once in New York, Mr. Rooney leaves Basil alone, as the former plans to use the occasion to get drunk. On his part, Basil is enjoying New York as a welcome release from the constant baiting he is subjected to at school. Dining on a chocolate parfait, before attending the theater, Basil opens a letter from his mother. The letter informs Basil that his grandfather is going to Europe in a few days, and has in-
vited Basil and his mother to go with him. It is just the kind of release from his present environment that the young boy must have been desiring: "What a day! He would tell Mr. Rooney--Why, he needn't ever go back. Or perhaps it would be better to go back and let them know what he was going to do, while they went on in the dismal round of school" (p. 39). With such thoughts running through his head, Basil enters the theater and watches the show. Suffice it to say that Fitzgerald's description of the young boy's perception of the three-act play is a beautiful piece of writing. For we are concerned with an experience Basil has after the play. Before the play had begun, Basil was thrilled to find that his hero, Ted Fay, the captain of the Yale football team, was a member of the audience. Before the play had run its course, Basil had become overwhelmed by the beauty of the leading lady. Then, watching the stage door for her departure, Basil sees the young lady emerge arm-in-arm with none other than Ted Fay. Following them into the dining area of the Knickerbocker, Basil takes a seat within earshot of the table the young couple has engaged. Basil overhears the young actress tell Ted Fay that, in spite of the fact that she loves him, she has promised to marry the man who was responsible for getting her the leading role in that play. Their conversation has a profound effect on Basil: "Basil got to his feet and hurried down the corridor, through the lobby and out of the hotel. He was in a state of wild emotional confusion. He did not understand all he had heard, but from the clandestine glimpse into the privacy of these two, with all the world that his short experience could conceive of at their feet, he had gathered that life
for everybody was a struggle . . ." (pp. 43-44).

Then, Basil becomes aware of his surroundings, and
the splendor of Broadway effects him thus:

It was dark outside and Broadway was a blazing
forest fire as Basil walked slowly along toward
the point of brightest light. He looked up at
the intersecting planes of radiance with a vague
sense of approval and possession. He would see
it a lot now, lay his restless heart upon this
greater restlessness of a nation—he would come
whenever he could get off school.

But that was all changed—he was going to Europe.
Suddenly Basil realized that he wasn't going to
Europe. He could not forego the molding of his
destiny, not to alleviate a few months of pain.
The conquest of the successive worlds of school,
college, and New York—why, that was his true
dream that he had carried from boyhood to ado-
lescence, and because of the jeers of a few boys
he had been about to abandon it and run igno-
miniously up a back alley! (p. 44)

One's past is not something one can ignore, or at-
tempt to run away from. To realize the dream, one
cannot mentally cut away the past, pretending that
it never existed. Rather, to realize the dream, one
must attempt to incorporate the past, even those
humiliating experiences from one's past, into the
building of one's personality. Basil does not at-
tempt to run away from the experience of his first
term at St. Regis. He remains to fight back and
redeem himself. And when the second term arrives,
and with it the coming spring, the world, once a-
again, whispers of endless "promise."

The story-line of the next piece, "He Thinks He's
Wonderful," we will be concerned with not at all.
Suffice it to say that it consists of Basil's ex-
perience of two parallel disappointments, each the
result of Basil's propensity for running off at the
mouth. The story is of interest because of the
emergence into the sequence of one Ermine Gilber
Labouisse Bibble, a southern beauty who provides Basil with his first experience of the delights of love. Basil's first love affair comes at precisely the right moment in terms of his personality development. As the story opens, Basil is riding home on the train from St. Regis. His first year at that institution has had the following effect on him: "During this year at school, where he had been punished for his 'freshness,' for fifteen years of thorough spoiling at home, he had grown uselessly introspective, and this interfered with that observation of others which is the beginning of wisdom." Minnie Bibble is the cousin of Bill Kamph, whom we have met in "The Scandal Detectives." On vacation with her family, Minnie is introduced by Bill to Basil Lee: "She was going to Glacier National Park. . . . It was written in passage she would come to Basil as a sort of initiation, turning his eyes out from himself and giving him a first dazzling glimpse into the world of love" (p. 61). Basil's gaze, having been turned inward upon himself, returns outward and focuses upon the person of Minnie Bibble. The characteristic pattern develops. Basil's world becomes submerged in his emotion for Minnie. However, it is not merely the sights and scents of an evening that become associated in his mind with the young girl's person. It is, literally, the entire world. Fitzgerald tells us that several days after he had fallen in love with Minnie, Basil composed for her the following "wondrous geographical" poem:

Of all the red roses of Rome,
Of all the deep tears of Vienna,
The sadness wherever you roam,
I think of that night by the lakeside,
The beam of the moon and stars,
And the smell of an aching like perfume,
The poem is a testimony to the strength of his emotion for the young girl, in that, for Basil, all the "promise" in the pleasures that the entire world has to offer are Minnie Bibble. We will encounter Miss Bibble again.

The next story, "The Captured Shadow," is perhaps the most interesting story in the "Basil" sequence. In "The Captured Shadow" we see Basil's boyhood dream become realized. One of the most important motifs which runs throughout the "Basil" sequence is that of "the gentleman burgler." Being introduced to Basil in "The Scandal Detectives," we are told: "His favorite character in fiction was Arsene Lupin, the gentleman burgler, a romantic phenomenon lately imported from Europe and much admired in the first bored decades of the century" (p. 5). Later, in the same story, we hear of Basil's future plans: "This summer he and his mother and sister were going to the lakes and next fall he was starting away to school. Then he would go to Yale, and be a great athlete, and after that . . . he was due to become a gentleman burgler" (p. 9). When we first see Basil in "The Freshest Boy," he is day-dreaming about his life as a gentleman burgler. Into a Broadway restaurant peopled with "diplomats and members of the underworld" steals our hero, revealing himself to the crowd as "that elusive gentleman, Basil Lee, better known as the Shadow." In the present story, Basil writes a three-act play about the exploits of a gentleman burgler, also known as the Shadow. The title of Basil's play is "The Captured Shadow," whence the title of this short story. In terms of "the gentleman burgler" dream motif which
we have traced throughout the sequence, the symbolism inherent in the title "The Captured Shadow" is obvious. Basil is not only the author of "The Captured Shadow," he also directs and produces the play's performance. In the composition, direction, and production of "The Captured Shadow," a play dealing with the exploits of a gentleman burgler, Basil has actualized his boyhood dream.

The effect that his dream's actualization has upon the boy is the most important aspect of "The Captured Shadow." During the two weeks of its rehearsal, "The Captured Shadow" is the most important thing in Basil's life. On the evening of its performance, Basil reacts to the play's beginning in the following manner: "Then, suddenly, everything was ready. It was incredible. 'Stop! Stop!' Basil wanted to say. 'It can't be ready. There must be something--there has always been something,' but the darkened auditorium and the piano and the violin from Geyer's Orchestra playing 'Meet Me in the Shadows' belied his words." After the play has ended, several people from the audience come to congratulate Basil on the fine job he had done on the play. Fitzgerald tells us: "It might have been very bad and demoralizing for Basil, but it was already behind him. Even as the crowd melted away and the last few people spoke to him and went out, he felt a great vacancy come into his heart. It was over, it was done and gone--all that work, and interest and absorption. It was a hollowness like fear" (p. 88). The tragedy is that the dream can be actualized but once. For once having been actualized it is no longer a dream. However, to mourn the loss of a dream would be but another unproductive admission of impotence. The thing to do now is to apply oneself toward the actualization
of one's remaining dreams. This is the direction Basil takes at the close of "The Captured Shadow." The play over, walking home from the auditorium, Basil's mother begins speaking of the performance. Basil cuts her short, replying "Oh, that's all over, Don't talk to me about that--don't ever talk to me about that any more" (p. 89).

Our next story, "The Perfect Life," provides us with a precise sketch of the nature of Basil's moral development. The story takes place during Basil's second year at St. Regis. Last year the most unpopular boy at St. Regis, Basil is now, at the beginning of "The Perfect Life," the most celebrated student at that institution, the hero of a recent football game with another school. At this moment, into Basil's life steps one John Granby, a former alumnus of St. Regis, now a "big man" at Princeton. John Granby informs Basil that Basil's recent success on the field carries with it a requisite responsibility. Because Basil has now become a figure the other boys at school look up to, it is his duty, Granby tells him, to set a good example. Through his example, he is told, Basil can prevent other boys at school from stealing, drinking, smoking, and swearing. Fitzgerald documents the effect of Granby's sermon on Basil as follows: "For an hour Granby talked and Basil listened; the red wall beside the road and the apple-heavy branches overhead seemed to become less vivid minute by minute as his thoughts turned inward. He was deeply affected by what he considered the fine unselfishness of this man who took the burdens of others upon his shoulders." Granby's sermon has turned Basil's gaze inward, and, as Fitzgerald has told us in "He Thinks He's Wonderful," it is objectivity rather than intro-
spection that leads one to wisdom. As Basil returns to his room, Fitzgerald tells us of the young boy's moral side: "Though he often brooded, his brooding was dark and nameless and never concerned with moral questions. The real restraining influence on him was fear—the fear of being disqualified from achievement and power. But this meeting with John Granby had come at a significant moment. After this morning's triumph, life at school scarcely seemed to hold anything more—and here was something new. To be perfect, wonder ful inside and out—as Granby put it, to try to lead the perfect life" (p. 93). Basil's attempt to "lead the perfect life" is admirable in that it involves the progressive efforts to actualize another dream. The problem is that it is the wrong dream, being not Basil's, but John Granby's. Ultimately, Basil's objectivity is restored, as he discovers that John Granby's blueprint of "the perfect life" is not his own.

Basil's re-encounter with Minnie Bibble in "Forging Ahead" is the chief concern of that story. Unaware that Minnie is again in town visiting her relatives, Basil has the following experience in a park:

It was one afternoon while he watched a tennis tournament... that he found himself suddenly fascinated by a girl's face a few yards away. His heart leaped up into his throat and the blood in his pulse beat with excitement; and then, when the crowd rose to go, he saw to his astonishment that he had been staring at a child ten years old. He looked away, oddly disappointed; after a moment he looked back again. The lovely self-conscious face suggested a train of thought and sensation that he could not identify. As he passed on, foregoing a vague intention of discovering the child's identity, there was beauty suddenly all around him in the afternoon; he could hear its unmistakable whisper, its never-inadequate, never-failing promise of happiness. "Tomorrow—one day soon now—this fall—maybe tonight."
Later, when Basil discovers that Minnie is in town, he realizes that the young girl who affected him so was Minnie's younger sister. Fitzgerald's description in this passage of an aesthetic experience is both powerful and felicitous. Wordsworth described aesthetic experience in terms of "emotion recollected in tranquility." While the analogy is not precise, Basil's world effuses beauty at his unconscious recollection of a past experience—the experience of Miss Minnie Bibble. Where Fitzgerald is not one with Wordsworth in this passage is the characteristic nature of Basil's aesthetic experience. Basil's world exudes beauty, beauty murmuring of infinite "promise."

One afternoon Minnie drives over to Basil's to inform him about a farewell party being thrown in her honor. She asks if he doesn't know of some place they could go and be alone. Basil knows of a spot, just perfect, an isolated "little pigtail of a road." Alone together on the road, they embrace and exchange emotion in whispers. Then: "He held her away suddenly. . . . There it was, in her face touched by the sun—that promise—in the curve of her mouth, the tilted shadow of her nose on her cheek, the point of dull fire in her eyes—the promise that she could lead him into a world in which he would always be happy" (p. 45). This, then, is the "promise" Basil sees in Minnie's face, perpetual happiness. It is not, however, a promise that Minnie Bibble, or any other human can fulfill. Perpetual happiness in the form of another human being, the "impossible dream," is, like John Granby's dream of "the perfect life," the wrong dream for Basil to pursue. In the closing story of the sequence, "Basil and Cleopatra," Basil is made to realize the futility of maintaining such a dream.
In the opening paragraph of "Basil and Cleopatra," Fitzgerald provides the most overt description in the entire sequence of Basil's tendency to immerse his surroundings in the emotion he directs toward a young girl: "Wherever she was, became a beautiful place to Basil, but he did not think of it that way. He thought the fascination was inherent in the locality, and long afterward a commonplace street or the mere name of a city would exude a peculiar glow, a sustained sound, that struck his soul alert with delight. In her presence he was too absorbed to notice his surroundings; so that her absence never made them empty, but, rather, sent him seeking for her through haunted rooms and gardens that he had never really seen before." The girl referred to in this passage is Minnie Bibble. Basil has come to Mobile to visit Minnie who, likewise, is visiting that city. Riding in a car with Minnie from the railway station, Basil endows his surroundings with the essence of an exquisite day-dream: "This must be Mobile Bay on the left, Basil thought; 'Down Mobile,' and the Dixie moonlight and darky stevedores singing. The houses on either side of the street were gently faded behind proud, protecting vines; there had been crinolines on these balconies, and guitars by night in these broken gardens." (p. 52). Lost in imaginative revery, Basil does not observe the heart of Miss Bibble being stolen by another of the car's passengers; one Littleboy LeMoyne, a tall, urbane resident of Mobile, "a year or so older than Basil." Having dropped LeMoyne at his destination, Basil begins talking personally with Minnie. From the drift of the conversation, Basil begins to make a disturbing discovery--Minnie, having all but pledged herself to Basil back in Minnesota, now appears rather indifferent to his person. Then, that night at a country-club dance, to his
mounting distress, Basil notices that Minnie appears far more interested in securing the attention of Littleboy LeMoyne than that of Basil Lee. However, the next day, Basil finds himself reinstated as the object of Minnie's affections. It is only because LeMoyne has gone out of town that Minnie has reinstated our hero. Basil knows this, but the strength of his desire for the girl renders him incapable of facing the fact. Basil asks for proof of Minnie's affection in the form of a kiss. As LeMoyne will be out of town for three days, Minnie tells Basil that she'll submit to his wish if he will remain in Mobile for three days. Knowing that he should not stay the three days, as it will not give him enough time to study for exams he must take preparatory to his entrance into Yale, Basil, nevertheless, chooses to remain in Mobile as Minnie's companion.

The result is that Basil does not take the necessary time to study for the exams, and after the results of these exams are posted, he finds himself ineligible for football. He has forfeited a life-long dream for three days' worth of a girl's somewhat dubious attention. Furthermore, Basil learns from a friend that immediately upon his departure from Mobile, Minnie had, in fact, taken up with LeMoyne. So, Basil has come up empty-handed. There follows upon this a characteristic period of brooding introspection. Then, having requested and passed a special exam which renders him eligible for football, Basil regains his objectivity and his spirit revives: "only now did he begin for the first time to be aware of Yale. The quality of romantic speculation rewoke, and, listlessly at first, then with growing determination, he set about merging himself into this spirit which had fed his dreams so long"
However, having missed half the season due to his ineligibility, Basil reconciles himself to riding the bench for the remainder of the season. Then, the week before the Princeton game, one of the quarterbacks splinters his arm, and during the game itself, the other quarterback is carried injured from the field. Basil, having watched from the bench with jealous hatred LeMoyne's performance at Princeton's defensive end position, is called into the game to direct the Yale squad as quarterback. Believing Minnie to be in the crowd watching LeMoyne, Basil resolves to humiliate LeMoyne with his own success. After committing errors that lead to a Princeton touchdown, Basil begins advancing the Yale team in the direction of the opponent's goal-line. Many of the large gains happen to be plays Basil has purposely run over LeMoyne's end. Tiring his rival out in this manner, Basil adds to LeMoyne's humiliation by insulting him, and caps his revenge by throwing the winning touchdown pass over LeMoyne's end. After the game, LeMoyne approaches Basil and in the ensuing conversation Basil learns that Minnie has dropped LeMoyne for one of Basil's classmates.

Knowing Minnie will be at the victory dance that evening, Basil seeks the advice of an older girl he knows. Recounting the tale of his brief romance with Minnie, Basil asks the older girl what he should do. Her reply is simple: "There's nothing to do. I can see that. She's more sophisticated than you. She staged the whole thing from the beginning, even when you thought it was you. I don't know why she got tired, but evidently she is, and she couldn't create it again, even if she wanted to, and you couldn't because you're too much in love. All that's left for you to do is to show her you don't care. Any girl hates to lose
an old beau; so she may even smile at you--but don't go back. It's all over" (p. 66). Basil realizes that the girl has told the truth, that his affair with Minnie is "all over," and he attends the dance resolving not to lose his head over her again. Yet, at the first sight of Minnie: "he saw her, and in the same breath he was dizzy and confused with excitement" (p. 66). Basil cuts in on a dance with Minnie, and she tells him that she is proud to know him for everyone has been telling her how well he performed on the field that afternoon. After their dance has ended, Basil takes a place against a wall, and, as he repeats her compliment over to himself, the hope of re-capturing the heart of the girl builds in his mind. However, an incident cuts this reverie short. Littleboy LeMoyne, maudlin drunk and moonstruck, has crashed the Yale dance lamenting the loss of his Minnie in loud bellows. LeMoyne subdued, when Basil again dances with Minnie, he finds her so badly shaken by the incident that she has to sit down. Seated with Basil she begins to cry, and: "He wanted to put his arm around her and tell her she was the most romantic person in the world, but he saw in her eyes that she scarcely perceived him; he was a lay figure--she might have been talking to another girl. He remembered what Jobena had said--there was nothing left except to escape with his pride" (p. 68). Minnie juxtaposes LeMoyne's outrageous behavior with Basil's common sense--why, rather than brood over the loss of her affection, he had even brought another girl to the dance. Now, Basil realizes he has at last secured Minnie's attention. Perhaps, if he tried, he could get her back. But Basil strengthens his resolve, foregoing the temptation to re-capture her heart: "And as he held on to himself an extraordinary thing
happened—the world around him, outside of her, brightened a little. Presently more freshmen would approach him to congratulate him on the game, and he would like it—the words and the tribute in their eyes. There was a good chance he would start against Harvard next week" (p. 68). At the sound of Minnie's voice pronouncing his name, Basil's resolution again dissolves. He regains it, only to lose it again as she dances off with another boy. Confused, Basil steps outside:

Lost again in a fog of indecision, he walked out on the veranda. There was a flurry of premature snow in the air and the stars looked cold. Staring up at them he saw that they were his stars as always—symbols of ambition, struggle, and glory. The wind blew through them, trumpeting that white note for which he always listened, and the thin-blown clouds, stripped for battle, passed in review. The scene was of unparalleled brightness and magnificence, and only the practiced eye of the commander saw that one star was no longer there. (pp. 68-69)

With this passage, the "Basil" sequence comes to an end. Walking out on the veranda, Basil shifts his attention from the "pink silk dress" on the ballroom floor to his surroundings. It is the stars, "symbols of ambition, struggle, and glory," symbols of Basil's dreams, that secure his attention. It is in this passage that Basil finally extricates the spirit of his dreams from the person of Minnie Bibble and refocuses that spirit once more upon the world around him. In doing so, he becomes aware "that one star was no longer there." No longer preoccupied with Minnie's presence at the dance, Basil is free to realize that his success that afternoon on the football field was a great step toward the actualization of his dream of conquering Yale. The dreams of capturing the city of New York and the heart of the ineffable female yet remain. As we leave him, Basil has
come to understand that the "promise" of happiness which the world holds for him, while it may exist incidentally in the person of a young girl, rests essentially in his own ability to carve life into the pattern of his dreams.

II

We have seen that "The Crack-Up" essays begin with the statement that "all life is a process of breaking down." I labelled this an expression of a "philosophical catabolic" position. The "Basil" stories, I said, were an expression of a "philosophical anabolic" position, a position which holds that "all life is a process of building up." To avoid confusion, a distinction has to be made here between two meanings the word "life" carries in these statements. In both "The Crack-Up" essays and the "Basil" stories, "life," in the sense of an impersonal force, is viewed as the opponent. In the "Basil" stories life is an opponent to be fought and beaten, in "The Crack-Up" essays life is an unbeatable foe, to whose demands one accommodates oneself. This brings us to the second meaning of the word "life." In the statements "all life is a process of breaking down" and "all life is a process of building up;" the "life" referred to is Fitzgerald's own. Specifically, the word refers to Fitzgerald's emotional and ethical life. In the "Basil" stories, as we have seen, the young protagonist "trains" for the battle with life involved in attempts to develop the emotional and moral sides of his character, to "build himself up" to meet the level of his personal ideals. It is in this sense that the short story sequence is an expression of a "philosophical anabolic" position. In "The Crack-Up essays, as we shall see, Fitzgerald is involved in an attempt to mitigate the pain the con-
frontation with life entails by performing a self-amputation on his character, by "breaking himself down" to the level of what is self-admittedly an animal existence. For this reason it is an expression of a "philosophical catabolic" position. The remainder of this paper will concern itself with the philosophical stance Fitzgerald maintains in "The Crack-Up" essays.

The first essay is the title piece of the series, entitled "The Crack-Up." Fitzgerald expands upon the opening statement of "The Crack-Up" by pointing out that "life has a varying offensive." One of the major weapons in life's armory are "the big sudden blows that come, or seem to come, from outside." Life's other major weapon is "another sort of blow that comes from within." While the blows that come from the outside are the more apparent of the two, Fitzgerald tells us that these blows "don't show their effect all at once." It is immediately after this piece of information that Fitzgerald tells us of the second of life's blows. Although he does not explicitly make the point, and, as we shall see, it is doubtful whether he was himself conscious of the fact, what Fitzgerald is describing here is two manifestations of one and the same weapon life employs in its offensive. Struck from the outside by one of life's blows, an individual experiences the immediate effect of that blow. However, having done its external work, the blow, impressed in the individual's memory, begins working upon the individual from the inside. It is this second, internal type of blow that Fitzgerald purports to describe in "The Crack-Up."

However, as we have seen, the internal type of blow is but a residual manifestation of the prior, external type. It will be one of the objectives of our analysis of "The Crack-Up" sequence to speculate as to what that
external blow could have been.

Fitzgerald next tells us something quite interesting: "... the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise. This philosophy fitted on to my early adult life ..." (p. 405). Now, when Fitzgerald says that the above philosophy "fitted on to my early adult life," he is not technically correct. A quotation from another of Fitzgerald's essays, entitled "Early Success," will be of help here. Speaking of the glamorous success of his young manhood, Fitzgerald says: "Premature success gives one an almost mystical conception of destiny as opposed to will power—at its worst the Napoleonic delusion. The man who arrives young believes he exercises his will because his star is shining. The man who only asserts himself at thirty has a balanced idea of what will power and fate have each contributed, the one who gets there at forty is liable to put the emphasis on will alone. This comes out when the storms strike your craft." It was not the young Fitzgerald who adhered to the philosophy that all things are hopeless yet one should attempt to make them otherwise. It is the seasoned writer of "The Crack-Up" who, looking back, realizes that this is the attitude he had carried with him during his adult life. Two paragraphs later, Fitzgerald further characterizes this attitude: "I must hold in balance the sense of the futility of effort and the sense of the necessity to struggle; the conviction of the inevitability of failure and still the determination to "succeed"—and, more than these, the contradiction between the dead hand of the past and the
high intentions of the future. If I could do this
... then the ego would continue as an arrow shot
from nothingness to nothingness with such force that
only gravity would bring it to earth at last" (p. 406).
Earlier I stated that the essence of "The Crack-Up"
essays was conflict. In the above characterization
of the philosophy Fitzgerald has come to hold in man­
hood, conflict is readily apparent. In fact,
Fitzgerald's adult philosophy consists solely of efforts
to achieve a functional balance between pairs of con­
flicting elements. The observations Fitzgerald makes
here go much deeper than this, however. The key to
Fitzgerald's adult philosophy is the phrase "and still
retain the ability to function." Following the ex­
perience of his "crack-up," Fitzgerald is still "able
to see that things are hopeless and yet ... deter­
mined to make them otherwise." The tragedy of the
"crack-up" is that Fitzgerald has lost the power to
hold these two opposed ideas in the mind at the same
time, "and still retain the ability to function." 
Fitzgerald has lost this "ability of function" because
his balance has been broken, the delicate balance that
was his ego. For, as he directly states in the above
quotation, Fitzgerald holds the existence of his very
ego to be the result of a balance maintained between
two conflicting states of mind. Earlier in this paper,
Fitzgerald was quoted as saying that what he is des­
criving in "The Crack-Up" essays is the deterioration
of his system of values. Now, Fitzgerald's conception
of his ego is precisely a balance maintained between
opposed sets of values. What Fitzgerald is describing
in "The Crack-Up" essays, then, is the disintegration
of his ego.

There follows in "The Crack-Up" Fitzgerald's descrip­
tion of the breakdown he underwent. Of all the material contained in the three essays, this section is the least informative and the least interesting. We will concern ourselves with it not at all. What we will be concerned with is the closing section of "The Crack-Up," perhaps the most intriguing section in the entire sequence. This last section contains a recorded conversation between Fitzgerald and a nameless woman. The subject of the conversation is Fitzgerald's breakdown. However, it is not the subject of the breakdown itself that secures our interest, but the philosophical undertone which emerges from the conversation. The conversation is as follows, Fitzgerald speaking in the first person: "... she said: 'Listen. Suppose this wasn't a crack in you--suppose it was a crack in the Grand Canyon.' 'The crack's in me,' I said heroically. 'Listen! The world only exists in your eyes--your conception of it. You can make it as big or as small as you want to. And you're trying to be a little puny individual. By God, if I ever cracked I'd try to make the world crack with me. Listen! The world only exists through your apprehension of it, and so its much better to say that its not you that's cracked--its the Grand Canyon.' 'Baby et up all her Spinoza?' (p. 409). While the woman's advice is not strict Spinoza, Fitzgerald has correctly isolated from that advice an attitude toward the world characteristic of the great Jewish philosopher. In answer to the Cartesian separation of the world into unextended thinking substance and extended non-thinking substance, Spinoza maintained that the world is but one process, viewed at times introspectively as thought, viewed at times objectively as matter in motion. The Cartesian dualism of mind and matter is, Spinoza argued, actually
a unity, the unity Spinoza ultimately identified as God. Spinoza's is not the Christian God, however. Spinoza saw God as immanent in the material world, in that he identified the laws of nature as the will of God. The intelligence of God is seen, even further, in the workings of the material universe. It is by such an argument that Spinoza sought to justify his unification of matter and mind.

Where the woman is not strictly one with Spinoza is in her statement that if she cracked she would make the world crack with her. Spinoza's world is one of exact determinism; there is no room for human freedom of will. Notwithstanding this detail, Fitzgerald is technically correct in labelling the woman's position Spinozan. Spinoza held that the workings of the mind cannot be affected by the body, nor body affected by the workings of the mind, for the workings of the body and mind were, for him, one and the same process. Consequently, he argued, when one speaks of an external event, he is giving but half of the picture, for included in this external event is its internal correlative, mirrored in the mind perceiving the event. The upshot of all this is that internal mental processes correspond at all times with external material processes, for the sequence and contiguity of ideas is exactly that of the sequence and contiguity of things. From a Spinozan point of view, then, if there was a "crack" in Scott Fitzgerald, there would be a corresponding "crack" in his world.

From the nature of his reference to Spinoza, it is obvious that Fitzgerald is laughing at his friend's advice. As we shall see in the final essay, Fitzgerald consciously adopts a Cartesian stance regarding his "crack-up." Here, he merely refuses to
accept his friend's suggestion that the crack is in the world, affirming that the crack is in Scott Fitzgerald. However, the introductory sentences of the next essay in the sequence, "Pasting It Together," read: "In a previous article this writer told about his realization that what he had before him was not the dish he had ordered for his forties. In fact—since he and the dish were one, he described himself as a cracked plate ... (p. 411). Now, what is this but pure Spinoza? What Fitzgerald has found before him, literally, the outside world, is not, he tells us, the dish that he had ordered for his forties. Next, he admits that "he and the dish" are one, making the equation between himself and his surroundings. Further, in the next paragraph, Fitzgerald says: "I wanted to put a lament into my record, without even the background of the Euganean hills to give it color. There weren't any Euganean hills that I could see" (p. 411). This reference to a poem Shelley composed in Italy, again, reveals an equation made between the inner man and the outer world. Then, two paragraphs later, Fitzgerald says: "Now the standard cure for one who is sunk is to consider those in actual destitution or physical suffering—this is an all-weather beatitude for gloom in general and fairly salutary day-time advice for everyone. But at three in the morning, a forgotten package has the same tragic importance as a death sentence, and the cure doesn't work—and in the real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning, day after day" (p. 411). Finally, let us go back to the beginning of "The Crack-Up." There, as we saw, Fitzgerald spoke of two weapons contained in life's arsenal—the blows that come from the outside, and the blows that come from the inside. It was
pointed out that actually what Fitzgerald was describing were two manifestations of one and the same blow. Here again, while we have drifted away from a strict Spinozan correspondence between the two realms, Fitzgerald, in spite of himself, is affirming a connection between the "crack" that is in himself, and that in the world around him.

The question is probably unanswerable, and surely irresistible—what was this "crack" in the world corresponding to that in Scott Fitzgerald? Material in "Pasting It Together" combined with insights afforded by our analysis of the "Basil" stories provide us with two possible answers. Speaking in "Pasting It Together" of his breakdown, Fitzgerald says that upon reflection he realized that he had undergone two parallel experiences. The first occurred in college: "The first time was twenty years ago, when I left Princeton in junior year with a complaint diagnosed as malaria . . . and after a few months of rest I went back to college. But I had lost certain offices, the chief one was the presidency of the Triangle Club, a musical comedy idea, and also dropped back a class. To me college would never be the same. There were to be no badges of pride, no medals after all. It seemed on one afternoon that I had lost every single thing I wanted . . ." (p. 412). As a result of an illness, Fitzgerald tells us, he lost the opportunity to assert himself at Princeton. To him, "college would never be the same." In terms of what we have seen in the "Basil" stories, we can say that, following his illness, Princeton no longer offered itself as a suitable environment wherein Fitzgerald could actualize his dreams. It was the frustration and disappointment of this experience that Fitzgerald compares to his recent
"crack-up."

Now, as we know, and as Fitzgerald goes on to point out in "Pasting It Together," while failing to actualize various college dreams, Fitzgerald, with the publication of This Side of Paradise, achieved success and renown beyond his wildest dreams. However, as we saw in "The Captured Shadow," there is tragedy inherent in the actualization of a dream, for once actualized, the dream is lost forever. At twenty-three years of age, Fitzgerald realized that he possessed everything he had ever dreamed of having. And, as he tells us in an essay entitled "My Lost City," the realization made him cry, made him cry because he knew his future held anticlimax, for he had already seen his dreams actualized. The fact that there were no more dreams to be actualized troubled Fitzgerald all his life. A moving passage which closes the essay "Early Success" perfectly illustrates this:

Once in the middle twenties I was driving along the High Corniche Road through the twilight with the whole French Riviera twinkling on the sea below. As far ahead as I could see was Monte Carlo, and though it was out of season and there were no Grand Dukes left to gamble and E. Phillips Oppenheim was a fat industrious man in my hotel, who lived in a bathrobe—the very name was so incorrigibly enchanting that I could only stop the car and like the Chinese whisper: "Ah me! Ah me!" It was not Monte Carlo I was looking at. It was back into the mind of the young man with the cardboard soles who walked the streets of New York. I was him—again—for an instant I had the good fortune to share his dreams, I who had no dreams of my own. And there are still times when I creep up on him, surprize him on an autumn morning in New York or a spring night in Carolina when it is so quiet that you can hear a dog barking in the next county. But never again as during that all too short period when he and I were one person, when the fulfilled future and the wistful past were mingled in a single gorgeous moment—when life was literally a dream. (p. 90)
It is not the view of Monte Carlo which holds Fitzgerald's attention, it is the magnificence of his youthful dreams, dreams whose actualization have brought him to this cliff above Monte Carlo. The outside world no longer fascinates Fitzgerald. His dreams actualized, the world is no longer the stage upon which he can act out his dreams. Our argument leads to the following speculation: the "crack" in Fitzgerald's world is precisely the fact that it can no longer hold the "promise" of the realization of his dreams, for those dreams no longer exist.

To particularize our argument, let us speculate: the "crack" in Fitzgerald's world is Zelda. Speaking in "Pasting It Together" of the second experience which he compares to his recent breakdown, Fitzgerald says:

It was one of those tragic loves doomed for lack of money, and one day the girl closed it out on the basis of common sense. During a long summer of despair I wrote a novel instead of letters, so it came out all right, but it came out all right for a different person. The man with the jingle of money in his pocket would always cherish an abiding distrust, an animosity, toward the leisure class. . . . In the years since then I have never been able to stop wondering where my friends' money came from, nor to stop thinking that at one time a sort of droit de seigneur might have been exercised to give one of them my girl. (pp. 412-13)

As this passage testifies, the figure of Zelda was inextricably woven into the design of Fitzgerald's dreams. In fact, it can be reasonably stated that Zelda was the motive force prompting the actualization of Fitzgerald's dreams. Fitzgerald's primary objective in the writing of This Side of Paradise was to make enough money to marry Zelda. Now, what is this but another instance of the pattern we traced through the "Basil" stories, wherein the young man's world becomes immersed in his desire to possess a young woman, inso-
far as that young woman represents the object of his dreams. How does this account for the "crack" in Fitzgerald's world? In the "Basil" stories, the youth's world collapsed about him when he lost the object of his affection. But this doesn't help us, for Fitzgerald captured Zelda's hand in marriage. No, our task is much simpler. In 1930, one year after the publication of the last of the "Basil" stories, Zelda broke down mentally in Paris, initiating the chain of events that led to her horrible death in 1948. Throughout the period between 1930-1935, Zelda was in and out of hospitals, and Fitzgerald's hopes for his wife were recurrently raised by anticipations of a possible recovery, and shattered by realizations that Zelda's condition was chronic. Finally, in 1935, one year before the publication of "The Crack-Up" essays, Zelda was permanently placed in a mental institution in North Carolina. In "Pasting It Together," Fitzgerald speaks of fears which haunted him "during the long night" after his breakdown, fears of "something I could neither accept nor struggle against, something which tended to make my efforts obsolescent..." Thoughts of Zelda's illness must have been the foremost of these. Our argument in its final form is this—the "crack" in Fitzgerald's world is Zelda's illness—and I document our case with this last piece of evidence, a letter Zelda wrote Scott after having seen him in 1938 or 1939, a letter which provides insight into the nature of Zelda's "crack-up":

Dearest and always Dearest Scott:

I am sorry there should be nothing to greet you but an empty shell. The thought of the effort you have made over me, the suffering this nothing has cost would be unendurable to anyone save a completely vacuous mechanism. Had I any feelings they would all be bent in gratitude to you and in sorrow that all my life there should not even be the
smallest relic of the love and beauty that we started with to offer you at the end. • • •

Now there isn't any more happiness and home is gone and there isn't even any past and no emotions but those that were yours where there could be my comfort—it is a shame that we should have met in harshness and coldness where there was once so much tenderness and so many dreams. Your song.

I wish you had a little house with hollyhocks and a sycamore tree and the afternoon sun imbedding itself in a silver tea-pot. Scottie would be running about somewhere in white, in Renoir, and you will be writing books in dozens of volumes. And there will be honey still for tea, though the house should not be in Granchester.

I want you to be happy—if there were any justice you would be happy—maybe you will be anyway.

Oh, Do-Do Do Do--

I love you anyway—even if there isn't any me or any love or even any life—

I love you. [2.

At the close of "Pasting It Together" Fitzgerald performs an analysis of his psychological make-up. He separates his mental composition into five distinct parts: Edmund Wilson, his intellectual conscience; Ernest Hemingway, his artistic conscience; a man who exemplifies Fitzgerald's sense of the good life, his ethical conscience; a man who dictated Fitzgerald's relations with other people, his social conscience; and finally, Fitzgerald's political conscience, which he says has "scarcely existed for ten years." Having listed the results of his analysis, Fitzgerald concludes, "there was not an 'I' any more—not a basis on which I could organize my self-respect. • • •" In the final essay of the sequence, "Handle With Care," we see Fitzgerald involved in an attempt to rebuild his ego, to discover a basis upon which he can reorganize his self-respect. He discovers that basis in the pseudo-Cartesian formula "'I felt--therefore I was.'" Yet even here, it can be demonstrated that Fitzgerald's approach concerning his relation to the
world is in more a Spinozan than a Cartesian vein. Expanding on the formula "'I felt--therefore I was,'" Fitzgerald says: "At one time or another there had been many people who had leaned on me, come to me in difficulties or written me from afar, believed implicitly in my advice and my attitude toward life. The dullest platitude monger or the most unscrupulous Rasputin who can influence the destinies of many people must have some individuality. . ." (p. 416).

When Descartes said, "I think--therefore I am," he was affirming only his own existence based upon the fact of his self-reflecting subjective consciousness, as the first step in the direction of building an all-embracing philosophical system. Here we see Fitzgerald, in a very un-Cartesian fashion, affirming his existence on the basis of other people's past emotional responses to him. It is not the pure fact of his own emotional consciousness that Fitzgerald exhibits as proof of his subjective existence, it is the fact that in the past other people have responded to his emotional capacities, and in responding have recognized his existence. In other words, it is upon the basis of data received from the outside rather than that arrived at introspectively that Fitzgerald begins re-constructing his personality.

Fitzgerald tells us he secluded himself in a hotel room to think the problem out further. It was the following observation he had made about himself that Fitzgerald wanted to come to terms with, the most acute observation he provides us with in "The Crack-Up" sequence: "I . . . wanted absolute quiet to think out why I had developed a sad attitude toward sadness, a melancholy attitude toward melancholy and a tragic attitude toward tragedy--why I had become identified
with the objects of my horror or compassion" (p. 416). At the end of the "Basil" sequence, we saw the young protagonist triumph over his tendency to identify his goals with the person of a young girl. Speaking, in the beginning of "The Crack-Up" sequence, of the philosophy which characterized his adult life, Fitzgerald had said, "the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." Fitzgerald's observation here is a direct parallel to Keats' concept of "Negative Capability." The keynote of both beliefs is the maintainence of a degree of detachment, which is precisely the lesson Basil has come to learn when we leave him. Earlier we stated that the tragedy expressed in "The Crack-Up" essays is that Fitzgerald can no longer adhere to his adult philosophy "and still retain the ability to function." We see now why he has lost this ability to function—he can no longer maintain the necessary degree of detachment, he has "become identified with the objects" of his horror and compassion. The nature of Fitzgerald's "crack-up" can now be made clear. As was pointed out time and again in the "Basil" stories, the young hero's sensibilities were such that he readily identified everything that mattered to him in the world with the object of his affections. That Fitzgerald realized complete identification with any object, no matter how dear, impaired one's performance is evident in the final lesson he has Basil learn in the short story series. In his description of his adult philosophy, Fitzgerald explicitly expresses the belief that a degree of detachment is necessary to insure the high quality of one's performance. Now, as the "Basil" stories testify, the tendency to iden-
tify himself completely with an object must have been very strong in Fitzgerald. And, as the description of his adult philosophy indicates, Fitzgerald sought to avoid total identification by maintaining a degree of detachment achieved through a balance held between pairs of polar concepts. However, the strain of the years must have been too much—years that saw the fading of his youth and dreams, the loss of his reading public and the consequent mounting of his debts, his own increasing alcoholism, years that scoured out the insides of his beautiful Zelda until she was but "an empty shell"—as the years passed and the horror of his life mounted, Fitzgerald could not but have been pulled farther and farther into the tragedy of his life, until, identified with the objects of his "horror or compassion," the precarious balance he had maintained through the years snapped and he plunged into the abyss.

As "The Crack-Up" sequence comes to a close, we see Fitzgerald attempt to regain "the ability to function." That Fitzgerald realizes on some level that his breakdown was caused by his tendency to identify himself with aspects of the world is evident in the measure he resorts to in the effort to continue functioning. For it is precisely this tendency in his psychological make-up that Fitzgerald decides must be rooted out, must be "cut loose with as little compunction as a Negro lady cuts loose a rival on Saturday night." F. Scott Fitzgerald will identify himself no longer with the world he sees around him, he tells us at the end of "Handle With Care." From here on out, Fitzgerald says in a tone fluctuating between sarcastic levity and sardonic bitterness, his concern will be the preservation of "number one," and the variegated things
and people in the world will interest him only insofar as they can contribute to this self-preservation. At the close of "The Crack-Up" series, Fitzgerald informs us of his intention to lead the remainder of his life in violation of the adage, "No man is an island." As is inherent in the adage, there is a price to pay for violation of this piece of wisdom—one's humanity. As Fitzgerald says, as the essay sequence comes to an end, "the sign Cave Canem is hung permanently just above my door."
Notes


2. There is an additional story, entitled "That Kind of Party," which was originally intended by Fitzgerald to belong to the "Basil" sequence. However, The Saturday Evening Post, which published the other eight "Basil" stories, rejected "That Kind of Party" because of its subject matter. Fitzgerald, then, changed the names of the characters in the story, and submitted "That Kind of Party" to another periodical. Again, the story was rejected. Consequently, "That Kind of Party" was never published.


6. Fitzgerald, "He Thinks He's Wonderful," in Taps at Reveille, p. 47. All references to "He Thinks He's Wonderful" are to this edition.

7. Fitzgerald, "The Captured Shadow," in Taps at Reveille, p. 84. All references to "The Captured Shadow" are to this edition.


Notes

10. Fitzgerald, "Basil and Cleopatra," in Afternoon of an Author, p. 50. All references to "Basil and Cleopatra" are to this edition.


Bibliography


