

# GIANT OF THE JAZZ AGE: The Literary Celebrity of F. Scott Fitzgerald

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*An indelible symbol of the early twentieth century, F. Scott Fitzgerald meticulously connected himself to the excess and debauchery of the Jazz Age. With the publication of his first novel, This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald thrust himself into the world of literary celebrity. His poignant satire and tragic dramatization defined a generation, imbuing the disillusioned masses with a new raison d'être. By carefully curating his own promotional media narrative, Scott was able to fasten himself to Lost Generation youth culture and the privileged sphere of elite American academia. Moreover, he used professional esteem to bolster his role as an arbiter of Jazz Age social conventions. Through a comprehensive analysis of his personal musings, this essay will reveal how Fitzgerald employed his celebrity to fashion an enduring literary identity.*

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“It was always the becoming he dreamed of, never the being.”<sup>1</sup> At the time that F. Scott Fitzgerald penned this line, he was but a mystery to a public that would soon stoke his authorial flame through ardent idolization of both his person and his writing. An immutable symbol of the Jazz Age, F. Scott Fitzgerald immortalized the glamour, animation, and tragedy of 1920s America. Fitzgerald’s literary celebrity was unprecedented, enveloping both himself and his writing. As Matthew Bruccoli noted in his biography of Fitzgerald, “I feel that Scott’s greatest contribution was the dramatization of a heart-broken and despairing era, giving it a new *raison d’être* in the sense of tragic courage with which he endowed it.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, Fitzgerald was both a composer and a product of his generation. With the publication of *This Side of Paradise* at the onset of his career in 1920, he irrevocably connected himself to the hedonistic culture of the Jazz Age youth. His writing sought to analyze, dramatize, and satirize his own life, as well as comment on the various social phenomena of the early twentieth century. Speculating on concepts like feminism, marriage, debauchery, and youth culture, Fitzgerald hoped to enshrine the period with his own cultural arbitration. Even after death, his authorial reputation remained a product of those efforts to define his generation, which were ultimately reflected in the lives of his literary characters.

Leading contemporary scholarship surrounding the life and literary celebrity of Fitzgerald begins with the posthumous publication of his biographies. The first, published by Andrew Mizener in 1951, renewed public interest in Fitzgerald following his death but received negative attention due to its short-sighted analysis and distorted anecdotes presenting the author’s life and relationships.<sup>3</sup> While Andrew

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<sup>1</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew J. Bruccoli and Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), xix.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Mizener, *The Far Side of Paradise: A Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).

Turnbull published an updated analysis of Fitzgerald in 1962, the preeminent source of study on the author remains the work of Matthew Bruccoli, first published in 1981.<sup>4</sup> The thorough and comprehensive scope of Bruccoli's biography paints the most objective portrait of Fitzgerald's life and career yet, as evidenced by its inclusion of more primary sources than any previous. These works provide a valuable cross-sectional analysis of Fitzgerald's life and literary career; this paper will utilize the aforementioned biographies alongside a critical analysis of his personal musings to demonstrate how Fitzgerald constructed his literary identity and acquired authorial acclaim.

In addition to situating itself among existing scholarship about Fitzgerald's professional life, this paper positions itself within the more contemporary field of literary celebrity. Formative authors in this sphere include Joe Moran, Loren Glass, and Aaron Jaffe, all of whom employ literary celebrity as an interpretative lens to connect literature with broad sociocultural phenomena.<sup>5</sup> Glass and Jaffe argue that literary celebrities exist where their popular media presence may not be 'literary' at all, while Moran's analysis argues that literary celebrity both affirms authorial identity and harms individualism. Drawing on the notion that celebrity authors have autonomy, Moran challenges the idea that identity and celebrity are merely imposed on an author. Furthermore, Timothy Galow—modernist literary scholar and associate professor of English—argues that the development of authorial celebrity at the beginning of the twentieth-century is a complex phenomenon that involves a range of elements, including authorial behavior, production, promotion, and public reception.<sup>6</sup> It is alongside Moran and Galow's frameworks that this paper will examine the role of celebrity autonomy, social arbitration, and promotional negotiation in Fitzgerald's professional life to understand how he constructed and managed his own literary celebrity in early twentieth-century America. Moreover, this distinct lens will elucidate valuable insight into the nature of authorial maneuvering and its role in the perpetuation of Modernist literary success.

F. Scott Fitzgerald was largely an autobiographical writer, with both his prose and correspondence demonstrating extensive self-awareness and a desire to cultivate his own personality. Working within early twentieth-century American society and his own associated professional literary esteem, he manipulated his image by carefully curating the promotional media narrative surrounding him. This paper explores several ways in which Fitzgerald navigated his own celebrity in the context of the Jazz Age. To begin, it will focus on his identification with the Lost Generation's youth culture, as Fitzgerald specifically emphasized his connection to collegiate academia and the privileged youth who attended elite American universities as he established himself as their chronicler and symbolic figurehead. Furthermore, it will investigate Fitzgerald's professional esteem to examine how he fashioned himself a cultural expert, using literary celebrity to navigate the challenges of social arbitration. Finally, it will look at his literary celebrity in the 1930s, analyzing the importance of audience, attention, and cultural relevance to show how Fitzgerald navigated a slump in stardom at the end of his career. To evidence these claims, this paper will employ a series of Fitzgerald's autobiographical meditations in the form of personal essays, interviews,

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Scribner, 1962); Bruccoli, *Epic Grandeur*.

<sup>5</sup> Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); Loren Glass, *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity: Stein, Fitzgerald, and the Modern(Ist) Art of Self-Fashioning* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Timothy W. Galow, "Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity," *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 2 (April 2010): 313-29.

and correspondence. While published posthumously, many of these sources use original manuscripts and typescripts, lending them Fitzgerald's characteristic style and intimacy. Through a comprehensive analysis of his personal musings, this paper will unravel themes of youthful ambition, professional esteem, and cultural longevity to reveal how Fitzgerald employed his celebrity to fashion an enduring literary identity.

### **The Lost Generation: Identifying with Youth Culture**

F. Scott Fitzgerald consistently emphasized his connection to youth culture to portray himself as a symbol of 'The Lost Generation.' He propagated the belief that he wrote for the youth of his generation, which led to his proclamation as their chronicler and figurehead. As he iterates in an interview with Heywood Broun from the *New York Tribune*, "The wise writer, I think, writes for the youth of his own generation, the critics of the next, and the schoolmasters of ever afterward."<sup>7</sup> This interview took place in 1920, after the publication of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, and it accurately depicts the way in which Fitzgerald negotiated his own promotional media. He used specific language that conferred his own inclusion in the subset of both "wise writers" and "the youth of his generation." In doing so, Fitzgerald implanted the idea of a social dichotomy that he was both a member of and symbol for the Jazz Age youth into public discourse. Advertisements, interviews, and even his own essays herald Fitzgerald as both a writer and a representation of the heedless young characters that populated his early works, further highlighting his young age, impulsive lifestyle, and authorial talent.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the reflection of these notions in both his autobiographical essays and interviews of which he was the subject reveal a pattern of autonomous promotional fashioning. This is most notably evidenced at the onset of the Heywood Broun piece, where he mentioned that the interview was "sent to us by Scribner's," Fitzgerald's publisher.<sup>9</sup> In their own propaganda, Scribner's advertised him as the youngest writer for whom they had ever published a novel.<sup>10</sup> This collaboration between author and publisher helped Fitzgerald to effectively synthesize a compelling narrative of his life and career. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that Scott's influence extended beyond his fictional prose, encompassing the promotional mechanisms behind his own journalistic persona to cultivate the image of a talented and youthful Jazz Age literary icon.

Likewise, Fitzgerald aided his conflation with youth culture and the development of his literary persona by affirming his connection to elite collegiate academia, the subject matter of his novel *This Side of Paradise*. In writing about the early twentieth-century's collegiate youth with the authority of recent experience, Fitzgerald's work mirrors the interests of a privileged young group whose schooling and professional aspirations distinguished them from other social classes. Galow notes of the era that college was quickly becoming an important part of life for white middle-class Americans, with a new class of professional-managerial 'brain' workers emerging.<sup>10</sup> For the members of this privileged group, elite universities provided a basis for shared experiences and culture; for his own part, Fitzgerald was determined to strengthen the bond between his name and the youth culture at Princeton University, despite his failure to graduate. Long after his time at Princeton, interviews, such as that conducted by Gilmore Millen in 1927, still propagated Fitzgerald's affiliation

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman, eds., *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Galow, "Literary Modernism," 313-29.

<sup>9</sup> Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 123.

with the university. Millen began the interview by introducing “F. Scott Fitzgerald, who left Princeton when he was twenty-one and wrote a book that made every critic in the country hail him as the interpreter of the youth of the Jazz Age.”<sup>11</sup> The nature of this promotional sentiment was quite paradoxical, as it did not condemn Fitzgerald for his inability to graduate but instead likened his departure from Princeton to the monumental success that followed, thereby inferring that Fitzgerald’s professional aspirations were achieved because of his time at the university. This inference ties in with Galow’s observation about the evolving nature of the college-educated working class, as Fitzgerald once again appears in a social dichotomy where he is a product of and symbol for the new class of brain workers. Moreover, at the end of the interview, Millen refers to Fitzgerald as “this affable young Princetonian, who writes about jazz and flappers, and reads and thinks more seriously than most older writers.” Despite having already noted that Fitzgerald left the university, Millen still confers the term “Princetonian” upon the author as a fundamental part of his identity. By the same token, Fitzgerald is described as “affable” and “young,” a characterization that, at the age of thirty-one, had not strayed from the public narrative that surrounded him in his early twenties, thereby affirming and maintaining Fitzgerald’s symbolic connection with the Jazz Age youth even as his own youth faded.

Fitzgerald’s association with Princeton and the young academic elite would present him with the ability to occupy another paradoxical public role as both a representation and an arbiter of youth culture and its associated moral constitution. In some of his earlier publicity material, Fitzgerald used his position within the college-bred social stratum to speculate on the character of the Jazz Age generation. Such supposition is evident in an interview conducted by Marguerite Mooers Marshall and the *New York Evening World* from 1922, in which Fitzgerald was asked about the audacious nature of young married couples. He noted that “The younger generation has been changing all thru the last twenty years ... I put the change up to literature ... All, or nearly all, the famous men and women of history—the kind who left a lasting mark—were, let us say, of broad moral views. Our generation has absorbed all this.”<sup>12</sup> By beginning his response with “the younger generation” and ending it with “our generation,” Fitzgerald meticulously employed language that would appeal to the ethos of the contemporary youth, thereby establishing himself within the very community that he analyzed. As Galow observes, it was Fitzgerald’s personal affiliation with Princeton that granted him the credibility to represent the youth and provide value to “outsiders.”<sup>15</sup> To those within the established subculture of white middle-class Americans, Fitzgerald was a prominent figurehead and a symbol of their shared experience; to those on the periphery, he was a credible spokesman who offered a means of understanding collegiate academia and the contemporary youth. This social dichotomy and self-awareness demonstrate that Fitzgerald’s literary identity was accompanied by a certain level of celebrity autonomy and promotional negotiation.

Similar to his rhetorical maneuvering, Fitzgerald judiciously cultivated his style and personal appearance to truly solidify his identity as the emblem of the early twentieth-century youth elite. As Thomas Alexander Boyd observed in 1922, “His were the features that the average American mind never fails to associate with beauty. But there was a quality in the eye with which the average mind is unfamiliar.”<sup>13</sup> Given that Fitzgerald’s features were presented as such, it is important to consider the standard of male attractiveness in the period, which was not universal and

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<sup>11</sup> Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald, Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Bruccoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 14.

demonstrated a clear racial bias. The facets of beauty that Fitzgerald represented are expounded upon in an article from *Motion Picture Magazine* in 1927, where Margaret Reid mentions that Scott has “Prince-of-Wales hair and eyes that are, I am sure, green. His features are chiseled finely. His mouth draws your attention. It is sensitive, taut, and faintly contemptuous, and even in the flashing smile does not lose the indication of intense pride.”<sup>14</sup> Fitzgerald’s own beauty primarily centered around his facial features, where the physiognomy of his mouth paralleled his distinguished, highbrow, and intellectual persona.<sup>15</sup> For Scott, it was especially prudent to maintain a congenial relationship between his sumptuous visage and his public role as a token of elite American academia, as their concurrence bolstered his efforts to craft a persistent literary identity. While conventionally alluring, Fitzgerald was also deemed by Boyd to possess a unique quality that sets him apart in the mind’s eye. This delineation was most prominent when Scott was compared to his authorial contemporaries by individuals such as Reid, who remarked that, “By all literary standards, he should have been a middle-aged gentleman with too much waistline, too little hair, and steel-rimmed spectacles.”<sup>16</sup> By comparing Fitzgerald’s physical beauty to the predominant male authorial stereotype, his promotional media reinforced the idea that he presented a distinct literary archetype, characterized by an erudite disposition and debonair countenance that effectively paralleled the Lost Generation’s collegiate youth.

Correspondingly, his good looks proved to proliferate the celebrity status that would later allow him to fashion a stylized identity. An anecdote from Brucoli’s biography describes how Fitzgerald’s romanticized physical allure further bolstered his public esteem: “Fitzgerald’s appearance accelerated his elevation to celebrity status. His striking good looks combined with his youth and brilliance to complete the image of the novelist as a romantic figure.”<sup>17</sup> Depictions of his physical appeal once again propagated the notion of Fitzgerald as a young, talented, nonpareil literary icon. As with the gamut of promotional media surrounding his charm, this was a product of personal maneuvering, and Scott certainly made a conscious effort to look and dress the part of a handsome young scholar. Brucoli noted that “he dressed well in Brooks Brothers collegiate style ... It was frequently remarked that Fitzgerald looked like a figure in a collar ad.”<sup>18</sup> In assuming the attire of a Princetonian academic throughout his career, Fitzgerald was able to mold and maintain his polished erudite persona.

As is evident in both photographs and interviews, Fitzgerald employed this sartorial code alongside his youthful features to harness the physical side of his celebrity and manipulate his authorial identity. The effect of this conscientious self-presentation was particularly profound amongst the press, as Fitzgerald was described in a demigod-like fashion, inextricably linking his image to the glamorous privileged youth culture he presents in *This Side of Paradise*. This impact is particularly evident in a 1921 excerpt from the *St. Paul Daily News*, where Boyd proclaims: “The agreeable countenance of a young person who cheerfully regards himself as the center of everything, Scott Fitzgerald is not unlike Amory Blaine, the romantic egotist. His eyes are blue and domineering; nose is Grecian and pleasantly snippy; mouth ‘spoiled and alluring’ like one of his own yellow-haired heroines.”<sup>19</sup> Fitzgerald no longer merely chronicled the early twentieth-century’s impetuous youth but had instead literally and figuratively fashioned himself into their charming hero as his writing,

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<sup>14</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 91.

<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald, Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 90.

<sup>17</sup> Brucoli, *Epic of Grandeur*, 119.

<sup>18</sup> Brucoli, *Epic of Grandeur*, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 8.

appearance, and public persona became decisively interconnected. While Scott shaped his celebrity identity in the likeness of his foolhardy young protagonists, he simultaneously became a symbol of his time, irrevocably fastened to the culture of the Jazz Age for those same ideals he was satirizing in his work.

### **Professional Esteem: Identified by Expertise**

Fitzgerald used his authorial acclaim and professional esteem to fashion himself an expert on the morality and culture of Jazz Age society in addition to painting himself as an authority on the youth culture of his time. As an accomplished social satirist and spokesman for his generation, middle-class Americans looked to Fitzgerald for commentary on the reckless and impulsive nature of the Lost Generation youth. Fitzgerald's personal commentary following the release of his second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*, which focuses on themes of youth, marriage, and pleasure, ultimately reveals the way in which he perceived prosperous newly married couples in the early twentieth century to be doomed. When asked by Marguerite Marshall of the *New York Evening World* what was wrong with young married couples in the 1920s, Fitzgerald replied:

First of all, I think it's the way everybody is drinking ... There's the philosophy of ever so many young people to-day. They don't believe in the old standards and authorities, and they're not intelligent enough, many of them, to put a code of morals and conduct in place of the sanctions that have been destroyed for them. They drift. Their attitude toward life might be summed up: This is all. Then what does it matter? We don't care! Let's go!<sup>20</sup>

His literary celebrity granted him authorial autonomy, permitting him to convey his social expertise and condemn the very ideals that he and his generation symbolized. Moreover, as an acclaimed author of such youthful proportions, Fitzgerald existed in a sphere where he could also criticize older generations. In his short essay, *What I Think and Feel at 25*, Fitzgerald proclaims: "I do not like old people. They are always talking about their 'experience' and very few of them have any. In fact, most of them go on making the same mistakes at fifty and believing in the same whitelist of approved twenty-carat lies that they did at seventeen."<sup>21</sup> In essence, Fitzgerald's literary celebrity and professional esteem granted him the ability to become a social arbiter and contribute to the profound Modernist cultural dialogue of the early twentieth-century.

Comparatively, Fitzgerald made additional efforts to classify himself as a highbrow intellectual by simultaneously dramatizing and downplaying his own craft. Galow mentions that "as Fitzgerald's antics kept his face in the newspapers and reinforced his image as a debauched young man, many of the articles written by and about him reiterated other aspects of his persona. Fitzgerald himself was quite fond of emphasizing how effortlessly he produced his popular stories."<sup>22</sup> When asked how long it took to write *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald responded: "To write it—three months, to conceive it—three minutes. To collect the data in it—all my life."<sup>23</sup> Several other interviews contain similar sentiments, leading scholars like Ruth Prigozy to read the repetition and pattern of language as evidence of Fitzgerald's authority over his own publicity.<sup>24</sup> Drastic hyperbolization proved to be an effective use of his celebrity in the media, earning him positive remarks from typically ruthless critics and cementing his intellectual legacy.

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<sup>20</sup> Brucoli and Baughman, *Conversations*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Short Autobiography*, ed. James L. W. West III (New York: Scribner, 2011), 21.

<sup>22</sup> Galow, "Literary Modernism."

<sup>23</sup> Fitzgerald, *A Short Autobiography*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 124.

Perhaps the best example of Fitzgerald's self-dramatization comes from an interview that he composed about himself in the spring of 1920. When asked about his next literary endeavors following the publication of his first novel, he responded: "I'll be darned if I know. The scope and depth and breadth of my writings lie in the laps of the gods ... Knowledge must cry out to be known—cry out that only I can know it, and then I'll swim it into safety as I've swum in many things."<sup>25</sup> He exaggerated his literary faculty, likening his own writing to a prophetic experience in a successful attempt to appear effortlessly talented.

In addition to romanticizing his own social expertise and literary prowess, Fitzgerald's arrogance illustrates that his celebrity also strategically situated the appearance of a superior intellect within the framework of his authorial identity. In a letter to a boyhood friend from St. Paul, Minnesota, an exasperated Fitzgerald writes: "It seems to me I've let myself be dominated by 'authorities' for too long—the headmaster of Newman, S.P.A, Princeton, my regiment, my business boss—who knew no more than me, in fact I should say these 5 were all distinctly my mental inferiors. And that's all that counts!"<sup>26</sup> It is evident that his significant literary success altered the way he viewed his own intellect; however, Fitzgerald's donnish arrogance did not diminish his self-awareness. In 1935, he wrote a letter of correspondence to Margaret Case Harriman, candidly iterating: "Almost everything I write in novels goes, for better or worse, into the subconscious of the reader. People have told me years later things like 'The Story of Benjamin Button' in the form of an anecdote, having long forgotten who wrote it. This is probably the most egotistic thing about my writing I've ever put into script or even said."<sup>27</sup> Fitzgerald believed himself to be a truly prolific writer, and it was through his celebrity and arrogant rhetoric that he fashioned the notion of intellectual superiority into an integral element of his literary identity.

### Identity Crisis: Navigating a Slump in Stardom

Throughout the 1930s, Fitzgerald's public visibility declined alongside his rate of publication, altering both his literary identity and the ways in which he could use his celebrity to maintain sociocultural relevance. In this era, he most notably suffered a warped sense of personal identification. As Andrew Turnbull reiterates of Scott's confession to his typist, Laura Guthrie: "I have no patience and when I want something I *want* it. I break people. I am part of the break-up of the times."<sup>28</sup> Fitzgerald effectively likened his identity to that of the Great Depression, believing that he played a fundamental role in the collapse of his own career as well as the social collapse of the 1930s. In a similar vein, Galow argues that Scott reconstructed the divide between his past and present identities, reflecting nostalgically on his earlier, perceivedly ideal self and negatively on his current self.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Fitzgerald's meticulously curated persona was in utter disarray, prompting him to reassess his cultural and professional eminence.

Under such inimical circumstances, Fitzgerald sought to reflect on the collapse of his Jazz Age literary identity to find solace and reimagine his authorial

<sup>25</sup> Fitzgerald, *A Short Autobiography*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (New York: Scribner's, 1994), 45.

<sup>27</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Andrew Turnbull (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 527.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 265, quoted in T. Galow, *Writing Celebrity: Stein, Fitzgerald, and the Modern(Ist) Art of Self-Fashioning* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 133.

<sup>29</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 144.

legacy. This notion is most poignantly evidenced in *The Crack Up*, a series of essays and letters originally posthumously published as a collection in 1945. At the onset of the series, he remarked: “Of course all life is a process of breaking down . . . you realize with finality that in some regard you will never be as good a man again.”<sup>30</sup> With three of the collection’s most prominent essays being published in *Esquire* during his lifetime, Fitzgerald often targeted a primarily male audience, appealing to a common fear within the male psyche in order to effectively convey the despairing situation he found himself in. The “good man” he spoke of was thus a representation of his past literary identity, when he was characterized by his acclaim and position at the head of the Jazz Age cultural marketplace—both of which were in steep decline in the 1930s. In observing this decline as a “finality,” Fitzgerald confirmed that he was indeed a product of the Jazz Age, evidenced by the fact that his image no longer resonated as it did throughout the twenties.

Moreover, Fitzgerald worried that he would not be able to maintain the social obligations required to maintain his celebrity status. As he observed of his time spent in profound introspection, “I realized that in those two years . . . I had weaned myself from all the things I used to love—that every act of life from the morning tooth-brush to the friend at dinner had become an effort . . . I saw that even my love for those closest to me was become only an attempt to love, that my casual relations . . . were only what I remembered I *should* do.”<sup>31</sup> He was burdened by the obligatory maintenance of celebrity and acclaimed authorship, which led to his diminished social and literary relevance; however, this is not to say that Fitzgerald was wholeheartedly uninterested in writing for public consumption. In fact, as Galow reflects, he frequently expressed the desire to reshape his literary identity absent the publicity of his notable past.<sup>32</sup> With that in mind, Scott negotiated with Arnold Gingrich, the editor at *Esquire*, to publish his work under the pseudonym Paul Elgin.<sup>33</sup> By tying his work to a different name, Fitzgerald freed himself of the confines of literary celebrity and instead sought authenticity in front of an unbiased audience.

Ultimately, F. Scott Fitzgerald was a paradox. Through literary celebrity, he fashioned himself an immutable symbol of the Jazz Age and its associated excess. His writing and social maneuvering instilled the early twentieth century with a new *raison d’être*. Fitzgerald inextricably linked himself to the Lost Generation’s youth culture and became a symbolic figurehead for highbrow American academia. He presented a means of understanding the heedless young progressives, leading to his role as a cultural interpreter. As a largely autonomous author, Fitzgerald also developed a proclivity for promotional negotiation, frequently using the media’s propaganda to portray his image in the likeness of his ambitious and alluring protagonists. In the same fashion, he wielded professional esteem as a tool for social and moral arbitration. Finally, in the latter half of his career, Fitzgerald reflected on the burden of maintaining such monumental celebrity, wishing instead to reshape his audience and identity. He likened his own failures and the decline of his social relevance to the tragic collapse of society during the Great Depression but utilized his developed celebrity to manufacture a new and enduring literary identity. Building upon the framework of Modernist literary history, this paper provides a base with which to connect further research on the social complexity of early twentieth-century authorial maneuvering. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s profound legacy is a means of understanding how renowned authors negotiate their celebrity and perpetuate their literary success. Using

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<sup>30</sup> F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: New Directions, 2009), 125.

<sup>31</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, 131-132.

<sup>32</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 131.

<sup>33</sup> Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, 132.



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a similar kaleidoscopic lens, scholars can examine the role of celebrity autonomy, social arbitration, and promotional negotiation in the lives of other prominent Modernist writers to broaden the field of literary celebrity.

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