

PARODY



F. Scott Fitzgerald

(1896-1940)

The Love Song of F. Scott Fitzgerald (c.1955)

John Abbot Clark

(As suggested by Budd Schulberg's novel, *The Disenchanted*, Arthur Mizener's biography, *The Far Side of Paradise*, etc. etc. With the usual apologies to Mr. Eliot.)

Let us go then, you and I,
When Dartmouth is spread out against the sky
Like a student cracked-up on a ski-run.
Oh, damn it, Budd, don't ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

St. Paul bored me. Princeton and Hollywood
Undid me.

Between the conception
And the creation
Falls the Script.

I should have been a pair of shoulder pads
Scatting across the gridiron, beating Yale.

In the dorm the coeds come and go
Talking of Michael Arlen, Bow. [trivial figures]

Where are the words that stab, what ideas grow

Out of this academic rubbish?
And the dull class gives no shelter, the library no relief,
And the dry prof no sound of soda water.

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And when I was a youngster, prepping at Newman,
The coach sent me in to play safety,
And I was frightened. And out I came.
In one's room with a book, there you feel free.
I drink, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

Perkins is the kindest editor, quarrying
Novels out of Wolfe, mixing Hemingway and Eastman.
And indeed there will be time,
Time for *Esquire* and the *Post*,
Time for *Gatsby* and the *Night*,
And time yet for a hundred indiscretions;
Time for Perkins and revisions.
In the dorm the coeds come and go
Talking of Michael Arlen, [actress Clara] Bow.

To Hollywood then I came
Burned out burned out
Twad twad twad
Junk junk junk junk
So couthly forced
Thalberg.

Under the real smog of a California dawn
Here is no art but only tripe
Tripe and no art and Sunset Boulevard
Here one can neither think nor dream nor write
But loud technical mouthing
There is not even silence in the desert
But red sullen faces of cameramen snarl
From platforms on location.

I see crowds of extras, walking round a set.
Thank you. If you see Mr. Schulberg, your father,
Tell him I bring the scenario myself:
One must be so careful these days, with budding novelists about.

In the
In the dark
In the dark night of the soul
It's always three o'clock in the morning.

I had not thought death had undone so many.
Then I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying
"Bishop!
You who were with me on the *Lit* at Nassau!
That Trilling review you planted last year in *Partisan*,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it come out this year?
Or has the editorial frost disturbed its bed?"

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, not Prince Scott, either,
As Lardner said I was.
I am no Conrad—and in my bibliography there's no great matter;
I have seen the fashion of my Jazz Age flicker,
And I have seen the Nouveau Critic hold my coon-skin coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.
“Am I right or wrong?”
I ask the headwaiter...
I smile, of course,
And go on drinking Bushmill's.

I grow old...I am knelled...
I shall no longer wear the bottoms of my trousers belled.
You will see me any evening in the bar.
As from afar
I remark a classmate assaulted in a speakeasy in New York,
Crossing home to the Princeton Club to die.
Another classmate tumbled from a skyscraper...

I remain self-possessed
Except that sometimes there's a ghostly rumble among the drums,
The asthmatic whisper of trombones,
Recalling Carcassonne and proms,

I shall wear my football togs, and walk out upon the field.
I have heard the cheerleaders cheering, each to each.

I do not think that they will cheer for me.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the gin, the olive sandwiches,
Among the porcelain,
Would it have been worthwhile,
To have bitten off the Great American Novel,
To have cross the river, and squatted on my hams under the trees,
To say: “I am Lazarus, Budd, come from the dead,
Come back to show you how, tell you all—tell you all, that's fit to print?”

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the Jelly-Beans and Flappers, after
The scrapbooks and the shawl,
After the Paris night in clusters,
After the cotton bathing trunks, full of the Mediterranean's bright heat—
If one, gazing at the figurine,
Or darting hurried glances at the busts of Shakespeare and Galileo, should say:
“That is not what I meant, at all,

But at my back from time to time I hear
The horns of Marmons and the sax's wail which shall bring
Scott to Zelda in the spring.

The novel's strand is broken: The Last Tycoon is
Clutched by stronger hands—the Bunny Hug. The tributes
Cross from East to West, unheard. The readers are departed.
Huck's river, run softly, till they end my song.

Mrs. Parker comes at noon.
And then the lighting of the candles
In the William Wordsworth Room.
Shantih shantih shantih

John Abbot Clark