

“Was Sartorial Student—am now Sartorial Stylist!”

“So the short, swift chain of the Princeton intellectuals, Brooke’s clothes, clean ears, and, withal, a lack of mental priggishness...Whipple, Wilson, Bishop, Fitzgerald ... have passed along the path of the generation—leaving their shining crown” (250).

—F. Scott Fitzgerald. *The Crack-Up*

“His striking good looks combined with his youth and brilliance to complete the image of the novelist as a romantic figure. He photographed handsomely, he dressed well in Brooks Brothers collegiate style” (115).

—Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*

According to Arthur Wayne, global relations representative of Brooks Brothers New York Flagship store, Catherine Martin, costume designer for Baz Luhrmann’s 2010 remake of *The Great Gatsby*, “was aware of the Fitzgerald connection to Brooks Brothers” (Klara). In putting together the film’s wardrobe, Martin apparently “modeled the film’s 500-piece wardrobe off Brooks’ [Brothers] early 1920 catalog offerings (some of which F. Scott Fitzgerald bought for himself),” and then had the “store ma[k]e the costumes...right down to Leonardo DiCaprio’s tux.” Sartorially speaking, Martin’s choice was an historically accurate one, for it echoes Fitzgerald’s own sartorial allegiance to what Matthew J. Bruccoli describes as “Brooks Brothers collegiate style” and his understanding of clothing as an important signifier of class, taste, and fashionable aesthetic of masculinity.

Fitzgerald, undeniably one of the most fashionable and fashion-conscious male writers of the 20th century, had a life-long preoccupation with clothing, fashion, and sartorial display, which is evident in his fictional work, self-promotional publicity, and in his everyday life. Throughout his fiction, Fitzgerald threaded metaphoric, symbolic, and metonymic references to the sartorial style of fashionable dress in countless descriptions of the clothing and sartorial display of impeccably dressed or otherwise fashion-conscious male protagonists. With rare exceptions, photographs taken of Fitzgerald throughout his life show him meticulously dressed at *the height of fashion*, in fashionable yet classic, stylish menswear attire. These photographs illustrate that concerns about dress and sartorial display were central not only in creating fictional male protagonists that seem to be fashionable avatars of their creator, but also, as Bruccoli suggests, in creating his identity as a writer and, I might add, maintaining an identity as a fashionable, classy and masculine society man with impeccable taste. Bruccoli’s description of Fitzgerald’s appearance suggests that, from youth onward, the “clothes conscious” Fitzgerald’s preoccupation with dress and appearance were intended to cultivate an image of himself as a particular kind of writer, “the novelist as romantic hero.” While I agree with Bruccoli, I also think there was more this image that Fitzgerald meant to cultivate and perpetuate through dress and sartorial display.

Fitzgerald modernizes the image of the novelist as romantic hero traceable to the Romantic poets, George Gordon, Lord Byron in particular, and Regency “butterfly dandies,” like the young Benjamin Disraeli, in a fashionable makeover that replaces velveteen frock coats, turbans, Don Juan-like Turkish trousers, turbans and poets’ blouses with Brooks Brothers collegiate style bearing hints of the dandiacal flair that influenced his first sartorial mentor and model, his father, Edward Fitzgerald, and influenced the sartorial preoccupations of his youth and adolescence.

I have written about F. Scott Fitzgerald’s attention to male sartorial display, dandyism in particular. In this paper, I am interested in tracing Fitzgerald’s meticulous attention to his own clothes, dress, and style—his performance of sartorial display. This paper will attempt to trace, using a combination of text and image, the trajectory of Fitzgerald’s sartorial education and evolution into a sartorial stylist—from young Scott’s dandiacal sartorial emulations of a dandy father to sartorial performances of style, taste, and class that wrought his identify not only as an artist, as Bruccoli suggest, but also as a man and a fashion icon to be emulated by other writers, artists, and men. Fitzgerald would not have committed *Gatsby*’s mistake of sartorial superfluity.

Bruccoli, Matthew J. *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. 2nd rev. ed. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2002. Print

Klara, Robert. “Brooks Brothers Premieres *The Great Gatsby*—Well, His Closet: the Story Behind the Venerable Haberdasher Selling a *Gatsby* Collection.” *ADWEEK*. 10 May 2013. www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/brooks-brothers-premieres-great-gatsby-well-his-closet-149386. Accessed 1 November 2016.