

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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In *This Side of Paradise*, *The Great Gatsby*, and several of his short stories, F. Scott Fitzgerald questions the importance of wealth as a factor in supporting happiness and fostering the American Dream on an individual basis. With these texts, Fitzgerald acknowledges that wealth is a factor and, simultaneously, a problem in fulfilling one's dreams. Furthermore, he suggests that idealism is a more essential, lasting factor, in comparison to wealth or social status, in motivating individuals to reach goals or to sustain defeats. However, as Fitzgerald's writing suggests, personal idealism often conflicts with drives for social status and wealth—a problem which foresees potential concerns in contemporary American culture.

Fitzgerald's Idealism and the Question of Wealth

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of the Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Amy Wood, Author

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Introduction: Fitzgerald's Idealism and the Question of Wealth

In the following three chapters of this thesis, readers will find a discussion of the writing of F. Scott Fitzgerald and the author's concentration on dreams and idealism. Detailing the novels *Paradise* and *Gatsby* as well as some of Fitzgerald's significant short stories, this thesis discusses ways in which money and socioeconomic status both affect dreams and idealism and, more importantly, ways in which these concepts cannot define the human spirit. Although Fitzgerald, as mentioned, was himself preoccupied with concerns about money and fitting in with wealthier people than those he came from, his writing touches on the "emotional bankruptcy," a title of one of his stories, that results when financial and superficial factors solely define the individual. Lastly, the chapters collectively show that Fitzgerald too "believed in the green light," or the intrinsic and deeply American nature of dreams and idealism.

When F. Scott Fitzgerald began his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, he expressly wanted his writing to be valued by readers and literary critics alike. During his lifetime and while he was still a young man, he achieved this goal through the publication of *Paradise*. By his own admission, he intended his writing to earn him his fortune—a fortune that he felt he needed to secure his marriage with the woman of his dreams, which was also accomplished with *Paradise's* publication. Fitzgerald's desire for wealth and literary acclaim was combined with his own intense idealism and an awareness of and self-reflection on the drawbacks of external motivations for literary creativity. Both his desire for wealth and his idealism motivated him to produce some of the best American writing of the 1920s. His literary contributions, after waning in popularity during the 30s, are considered to be part of the classic

canon today. Perhaps his style, with its humor and glamorous subject matter, made his writing relatable for the readers of his own day and would allow it to apply to today's readers. Arguably, the factors which motivated Fitzgerald to write, his desire for fame and wealth, appear as themes in his writing and continue to make it enduring for future readers.

These motivating factors are present in Fitzgerald's characters in the form of their interminable or at least ever-present idealism. For instance, notable characters such as Jay Gatsby and Amory Blaine are both driven by factors similar to those that affected Fitzgerald. They each experience significant romances that they, in turn, idealize. This idealization compels them to want to gain wealth so that they may marry the women they love. Amory is idealistic in other ways; he believes in the intellectual environment he finds at Princeton, and he has strong ideals for himself and what he will become. Gatsby's romantic idealism spills over into other facets of his life and causes him to live in a kind of dream world. At the same time, the characters' idealism and dreams move them to moments of inspiration. Gatsby's perhaps misguided idealism prompts his materialism and his desire to build his image with excessive parties. However, it is this same idealism that causes him to have true moments of greatness and motivates him to mold himself into what he considers great. Similarly, Amory, in his better moments, writes poetry and studies with intense enthusiasm. In the face of dejection, Amory gains strength from his idealism, and Gatsby's dream is so vital to his character that, with the loss of it, he literally ceases to exist. Gatsby's physical death at the end of his dream symbolizes his spiritual death—the end of his idealism. Amory, on the other hand, carries on because, though he has

had his dreams crushed, his remaining idealism is enough to allow him to be hopeful, and readers may imagine that a kernel of his dream remains which will grow into a new dream in the future.

As essential to Fitzgerald's characters as their idealism and dreams are, they do not always wear them on the surface. Instead, they can be seen when readers look beyond the characters' intense focus on status, superficial concerns, and, most importantly, money. The main characters mentioned, as well as the characters of several other stories, are often preoccupied with money, other wealthy characters, or the idea that they need to become wealthy. Gatsby, in particular, makes many of his choices so that he will gain wealth, even if his methods for making money are somewhat disreputable. In addition to making money, he wants to appear wealthy; he buys expensive things and everything he surrounds himself has the appearance of luxury. Gatsby is so obsessed with appearing wealthy that he takes great efforts to be seen as old money. In one moment in the novel, he mentions, falteringly, that he has been educated at Princeton, and he affects a persona which he supposes will make him appear refined. Gatsby does not behave this way for the sake of money alone, but for the sake of realizing his dream and his underlying romantic idealism.

The theme of wealth, defined as simultaneously glamorous and vulgar, pervades Fitzgerald's writing, reflecting the author's own overt concern with wealth:

What is striking about the young Fitzgerald is that he had a romantic yearning for success and the glamour that went with it; in a sense he may be said to have pursued . . . a vulgarized version of the American Dream. Whatever the context, Fitzgerald wanted to stand out, to be one of the best. (Hook 11)

His interest in wealth and status is well-established by critics and Fitzgerald himself, as is the ambivalence which he felt regarding the wealthy and the importance he placed on having money. Fitzgerald demonstrates this ambivalence in his writing, suggesting that the desire for money becomes a problem when it consumes the person who wants it. This type of fixation becomes a distortion of the person's perception of his own identity or self. For instance, he believes he is more or less valuable as a direct result of having or not having money. Though Fitzgerald may have dabbled in this identity-driven need for money, he also minimized it with his idealized version of the American dream in which the goal was to have money and be successful but not to an excessive degree.

The themes of money and romance are seen repeatedly in Fitzgerald's writing, and he admitted in the essay "One Hundred False Starts" that good writers each only have a handful of successful themes which they recycle in their writing:

Mostly, we authors must repeat ourselves—that's the truth. We have two or three great and moving experiences in our lives—experiences so great and moving that it doesn't seem at the time that anyone else has been so caught up . . . in just that way before. Then we learn our trade, well or less well, and we tell our two or three stories—each time in a new disguise—maybe ten times, maybe a hundred, as long as people will listen. (*Afternoon of an Author* 184).

This lends support to the idea that readers can find Fitzgerald in his own writing, perhaps more readily than they find writers of other works in their writing. In the bulk of Fitzgerald's contributions, he seems to tell and re-tell hints of being a "poor boy." Fitzgerald was not actually poor, or even badly off, but he came from a family that had less money than the young men with whom he went to college, and he wanted to fit in with them. His "moving experience" was the "poor boy's" attempt to gain success in

order to marry a well-to-do girl, which shows up in some likeness in his writing time and time again. *The Great Gatsby*, as Fitzgerald told a friend, is partly about “the unfairness of a poor young man not being able to marry a girl with money” (Turnbull 150). With *Gatsby*, he creates a character with a similar situation to his own; he is motivated to become wealthy after his love interest, Daisy, marries a very wealthy man rather than waiting for *Gatsby* to earn his income. Fitzgerald, unlike *Gatsby*, is able to marry *Zelda*, a young woman with the expectation of being taken care of, after he gains wealth from the sales of his first novel. However, Fitzgerald remained skeptical of his situation, prompting the themes of his writing:

During a long summer of despair I wrote a novel [*Paradise*] 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 who married the girl a year later would always cherish an abiding distrust, an animosity, toward the leisure class—not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smoldering hatred of a peasant. (*The Crack-Up* 77)

Gatsby's story may be seen to represent an alternate universe for Fitzgerald, the close call which haunts him, in which the main character does not marry the woman of his dreams. The novel depicts Fitzgerald's deepest fears played out. Daisy chooses her established place in upper society instead of *Gatsby*, and Fitzgerald may not have won *Zelda* if he had not been financially successful as a young novelist.

Like his characters, Fitzgerald's goal of becoming part of the wealthy class was not as important to him as his own dreams. His personal quest for superficial factors such as money and status was tempered with the sheer aesthetic quality of his writing. In general, aspects of his writing style as well as its content suggest that Fitzgerald's true concerns are idealistic like those of his characters. For instance, the techniques he uses in his fiction, particularly his frequent use of a neutral narrator to

distance the reader from the main characters, underscores his own separation from their money-driven goals. In *Gatsby* particularly, the narrator is also the straight-man character in the novel in addition to fulfilling the hermeneutic role of the novel. Content about money in Fitzgerald's writing does not diminish the idealism that goes with it because such content is often juxtaposed with the narrator's more grounded thoughts.

Similarly, the strength of the character development in his writing reveals his own dreams and idealism. For example, in 1924 through the process of composing *Gatsby*, the character of Jay Gatsby became very important for Fitzgerald. Developing and holding on to Gatsby's character was challenging but also emotionally moving for the author; Fitzgerald mentioned while creating his character that Gatsby stuck in his heart (Stavola 125). Fitzgerald encountered many psychological resistances while writing this novel, and particularly while creating the character of Gatsby, because "Gatsby embodied so many of the most painful experiences, fears, and desires of Fitzgerald's own life" (Stavola 125). Fitzgerald's difficulty in creating Gatsby may have come about because he was the literary exaggeration of Fitzgerald. In addition, Daisy may have been modeled after Fitzgerald's own wife, Zelda, who came from a wealthier, more established background than his own. Fitzgerald's romantic interests, tended towards wealthy women with a prominent social standing. Zelda Sayres herself was from a rich Southern family, and in Montgomery, the Sayres were considered "very important" people (Wagner-Martin 21). Daisy's representation of Zelda works to establish the personal significance of the novel and links Fitzgerald more closely to Gatsby.

Paradise, Money and Idealism

F. Scott Fitzgerald's first novel *This Side of Paradise* portrays the story of a young man whose situation is reminiscent to the author's own. Much of the novel was drawn from Fitzgerald's experiences, including his romantic life and the time he spent at Princeton University. Through the publication of *Paradise*, Fitzgerald was afforded his first taste of literary and financial success, which propelled him into fame and caused him to be expelled from Princeton. In addition to detailing his own experience, the novel, importantly, demonstrates Fitzgerald's skill as an author in terms of its prose and unique literary style. Perhaps more essential than its artistic merit and aesthetic description and even its overall message, are the references in the novel to money and society, which support the value American society places on success, wealth, and social status. These references emerge as the novel progresses and change shape as the main character, Amory, matures and has to face hardship. Through the influence of a brilliant education and an eccentric, indulgent mother, Amory forms opinions about the importance of wealth and society. However, he goes through similar experiences to Fitzgerald's, losing his love and his financial stability. These losses dispel his youthful egoism, but in the novel's resolution, he holds fast to the faint remnants of his dreams and his former idealism.

In 1917 at the age of twenty-one, Fitzgerald began writing the manuscript for *The Romantic Egoist*, which was later to become *Paradise*. As James L. West explains, Fitzgerald wrote the first manuscript when he was a student at Princeton, during weekends which he spent at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, waiting to be called to serve. To his regret, he did not go overseas to war, but he did meet, fall in love with,

and become separated from Zelda Sayre during this time. An alcohol binge and the fear of losing Zelda prompted several revisions of his novel. Fitzgerald thought of *Paradise* as an opportunity to earn him “two all-important things—success and love” (West 43). Success did not happen right away, however, as Fitzgerald had to take a job in New York City as a copywriter while he was desperately waiting for his novel to be published. At this time, Scribner’s was bothered by the novel’s lack of a definable goal. Eventually, Fitzgerald made several revisions until the editors at Scribner’s were pleased, and *Paradise* was published (West 44).

After Fitzgerald changed its ending to the final revision, the plot of the novel could be considered an American *Bildungsroman* with Amory Blaine as the *Bildungsroman* hero. A *Bildungsroman* describes “youth in the process of maturing,” and, according to Jack Hendriksen, *Paradise* fits the definition because it follows certain common *Bildung* patterns such as “the presence of a weak or absent father and a domineering mother [which] creates strong psychological motivations for the hero’s actions,” “the presentation of the hero as representative of his own generation,” and an “ending [which] places the hero on the verge of adulthood through a revelation or insight” (29-32). The novel fits the pattern by detailing the life of Amory, from his youth, as he attends a preparatory school and Princeton, to his young adulthood, when he struggles with the loss of his love and his family money. Specifically, the plot begins with Amory as a spoiled upper-middle class child, traveling with his eccentric mother. The novel then describes Amory’s life and thoughts as he receives a privileged education, and it ends at his young adulthood, with Amory broke and contemplating on the “impoverished class.” Wealth and socioeconomics factor

heavily into Amory's emerging perception of himself and his place in society. In particular, his concerns about money, with the exception of his intended marriage to Rosalind, are somewhat selfish and shortsighted, but he accepts his state of poverty in the end, suggesting that Amory has grown up.

Far before he gets to this understanding, however, Amory is brought up under the influence of his wealthy mother, Beatrice, who craves attention, acts dramatically, and behaves somewhat impulsively. Her main concerns are entertaining herself with holiday diversions and by discussing her "nervous breakdowns" and other questionable health concerns with strangers and with Amory:

"I am feeling very old today, Amory," she would sigh, her face a rare cameo of pathos "My nerves are on edge—on edge." (20-21)

Beatrice's friends include mainly new acquaintances, to whom she can talk about her nervous breakdowns and her interests, without boring them. Beatrice is both a hypochondriac, and she repeatedly falls in and out of her faith in an effort to gain more attention from priests—she claims that next to doctors, priests are her "favorite sport." What drives Beatrice to her attention seeking behavior is not fully established in the novel, but it is hinted that she is a bored member of the privileged class. She is certainly bored by Amory's father, who she married in one of her "less important moments" because she was feeling "a little bit weary" and "a little bit sad" (20). Perhaps Beatrice had greater expectations for her life because she received such a superior education provided by her family's wealth:

Beatrice . . . absorbed the sort of education that will be quite impossible ever again; a tutelage measured by the number of things and people one could be contemptuous of and charming about; a culture rich in all arts and traditions, barren of all ideas, in the last of those

days when the great gardener clipped the inferior roses to produce one perfect bud. (20)

Through this type of, perhaps, extravagant but superfluous schooling, Beatrice may have developed her behavior, which seems to lend her an attitude of entitlement. At the same time, she is an interesting, humorous, and intelligent character who both influences Amory to be creative and exposes him to the arts.

Beatrice influences Amory so greatly in his childhood that he deems this time in his life “Amory plus Beatrice.” She partly shapes his character, but he also perceives her shortcomings as a child and is not entirely molded by her influence: “[e]ven at [his] age he had no illusions about her” (21). They travel alone together: “doing” the country, and she teaches him eccentric, if humorous, values. For instance, she suggests Amory never rise early, and she tells him that his breakfast needs to always be brought up to him so that he may eat in bed and be idle:

Dear, don't think of getting out of bed yet. I've always suspected that early rising in early life makes one nervous. (20)

As a result, Amory tends to be lazy, even as he grows older, and expects that he will not have to work hard to win favor with people or to do well academically. Her presence may have also promoted his preference for superficial forms of attention and his occasionally vapid behavior, which we find instances of throughout the novel. However, she also educates him at a young age and helps him uncover the better parts of culture: “[s]he fed him sections of the “Fetes Galantes” before he was ten; at eleven he could talk glibly, if rather reminiscently, of Brahms and Mozart and Beethoven” (21). Overall, her influence may be that which makes Amory crave attention, but her

money and sway afford him an advantaged upbringing and allow him to attend St. Regis and Princeton.

Once at St. Regis and later at Princeton, Beatrice's influence on Amory remains the foundation of his character. Like his mother, Amory has some genuinely positive qualities; he is intelligent and committed to his education, but also by her example, he has grown to be self-absorbed and rather entitled in his youth. These qualities form Amory's identity as a self-professed egoist, which is reflected when he is a young student at St. Regis, wondering how people can "fail to notice that he [is] a boy marked for glory" (32). Amory additionally feels that he is physically, socially, and mentally superior, and he even creates his own code of aristocratic egoism:

Physically.—Amory thought that he was exceedingly handsome
Socially He granted himself personality, charm, magnetism, [and] poise
Mentally.—Complete, unquestioned superiority. (33)

Following his own code, he perceives that he is destined for greatness. At Princeton, Amory's egoism carries on; he strives to be popular, a football star, and a member of the campus elite. At the same time, through Beatrice's influence, it is likely that Amory developed his creativity and his capacity to dream. He is very much a dreamer, often preferring his fantasy world to reality in the same way that Beatrice preferred ruminating on her false illnesses to focusing on her real life: "before [Amory] fell asleep he would dream on of his favorite waking dreams, the one about becoming a great halfback, or the one about the Japanese invasion, when he was rewarded by being made the youngest general in the world. It was always the becoming he dreamed of, never the being" (33). When he gets older, he continues to dream, and he maps out the appealing things he will do as an adult: "[h]e was going to

live in New York, and be known at every restaurant and café, wearing a dress suit from early evening to early morning, sleeping away the dull hours of the forenoon” (45). While he fails to realize his dreams through the course of the novel, his creativity leads him to an authentic interest in literature and writing and helps to develop his intellect and empathy.

At Princeton, Amory has shed much of Beatrice’s influence, and takes part in the University’s unique culture. Princeton serves as a microcosm in the novel, mirroring rules from the larger, surrounding society. Here, Amory grows into a young man, gains his education, and endeavors to fully engage in what intellectual life has to offer. He attempts to win his place as the best, most popular student in this “society.” As the title suggests, Princeton represents for Amory some of the aspects of a near-paradise environment, and it is hugely important to Amory—as other characters cannot help but notice, such as Isabelle, Amory’s girlfriend during preparatory school: “Oh, you and Princeton! You’d think that was the world, the way you talk!” (104). Throughout the rest of the novel, and as critics have mentioned, he maintains a sort of nostalgic affection for it, holding it as an ideal as Fitzgerald did:

Fitzgerald presented the institution as far more than a setting; indeed it became his center of the universe. Princeton must be analyzed as a modernist’s paradise temporarily gained, inevitably lost, never forgotten. Readmission remains Amory’s secret hope. (Van Arsdale 163)

Amory often deciphers his environment in terms of ideals, as an egoist and romantic—he has very high expectations for himself and for the world. Because Princeton is a rather controlled environment, and, with some exceptions, the students in the novel who attend it are not depicted to have great disparities in the income levels of their

families, it represents a utopia for Fitzgerald. In his mind, the young men who go there are among the very best, which is why he initially wanted to attend. Princeton, similarly, is the institution that Amory chooses, if not for entirely academic reasons, because of what it represents compared to other schools of its caliber:

Amory had decided definitely on Princeton, even though he would be the only boy entering that year from St. Regis'. Yale had a romance and glamour . . . , but Princeton drew him most, with its atmosphere of bright colors and its alluring reputation as the pleasantest country club in America. (50)

It is Princeton as a form, an “ideal” institution and ideal “place,” rather than its function as a University, a place of education, which impresses him. For instance, he says that in “spite of going to college”—a ten thousand dollar education as he mentions earlier in the novel—he received a good education, and he was one of the few men who did receive a good education at college (213). In other words, Amory’s education is also a product of the unique circumstances of his upbringing, the books he chose to read outside of his classes, and the overall experiences of his life.

At Princeton, Amory meets Dick Humbird who he looks up to because he represents money and because Amory appreciates his deft mannerisms and his approach to Princeton and its surrounding society:

Humbird had, ever since freshman year, seemed to Amory a perfect type of aristocrat. . . . Everything he said sounded intangibly appropriate. He possessed infinite courage, an averagely good mind, and a sense of honor with a clear charm and *noblesse oblige* that varied it from righteousness. . . . He seemed the eternal example of what the upper class tries to be. (89-90)

Amory is somewhat disappointed when he discovers that Dick’s moneyed traits are not the result of a wealthy background—Dick is the son of a grocery clerk who gained a fortune in real estate. However, when Dick is killed abruptly in an automobile

accident towards the end of the book, his death adds to the hardship that Amory has been facing. He finds his death to be very upsetting and undignified, and it magnifies his sense of tragedy:

[N]ow he was this heavy white mass. All that remained of the charm and personality of the Dick Humbird he had known—oh, it was all so horrible and unaristocratic and close to the earth. All tragedy has that strain of the grotesque and squalid. (98)

Here his sense of tragedy hints at his understanding of poverty which comes later in the novel, as base and abhorrent. His “ideal” of sorts has died, marking the death of another ideal—like the death of his love affair with Rosalind and the end of his ideal time at Princeton—and he feels impoverished for want of hope and direction.

He is all the more uncertain when he finds that he will inherit less money than he has been promised. Financial concerns figure significantly into the life and maturation of Amory, particularly, considering that his wealth diminishes from that of having a significant allowance to having nothing through the course of the plot. Amory is not so much concerned with his family’s money or the appearance of it as he is with its absence. As stated previously, Amory’s childhood is one of some extravagance and privilege, as he travels with his mother. It is only when he attends Princeton that his funds decrease. When his father dies, for instance, he finds that their family money was ill-tended, and he has less than he expected. This, strikingly, is the only real concern he demonstrates at his father’s funeral; he expresses no outward sorrow for the loss of his father. Of course, during the novel, they are not depicted as being particularly close, but the narrator comments on Amory’s focus on the finances as well as his lack of grief:

What interested him much more than the final departure of his father from things mundane was a tricorned conversation among Beatrice, Mr. Barton, of Barton and Krogman, their lawyers, and himself, that took place several days after the funeral. For the first time he came into actual cognizance of the family finances, and realized what a tidy fortune had once been under his father's management. . . . In the volume for 1912 Amory was shocked to discover the decrease in the number of bond holdings and the great drop in the income. (112)

Beatrice's death brings about a similar reaction in Amory; he is discouraged to discover that she left a great deal of the family money to her church, and he is left with very little. Because the narrator points out the coldness with which Amory refers to the deaths of his parents, we can assume readers are intended to notice that Amory is somewhat detached and overly concerned with money. Oddly, he expresses, and arguably feels, so little emotion for the loss of Beatrice when the loss of his money has him in a panic, and considering that he was close to his mother.

Regardless of the fact that Amory responds with little emotion to Beatrice's death, she enhances Amory's egoism and affects him greatly, as do the other female characters in the novel. They seem to understand Amory better than he does, and, as a narrative device, they serve to explain Amory's behavior in the plot. Both the "popular daughter" Isabelle and the poverty-stricken, but lovely, Clara, who has no romantic interest in Amory, perceive that his egoism masks certain insecurities. Clara explains her view about Amory to him during one of the times he visits her:

[T]he reason you have so little real self-confidence, even though you gravely announce to the occasional philistine that you think you're a genius, is that you've attributed all sorts of atrocious faults to yourself and are trying to live up to them. (152)

In addition to developing Amory's view of himself, the female characters also affect him by factoring heavily into his financial considerations. Most obviously, his

relationship with Rosalind, a beautiful young woman who is accustomed to luxury, to the extent that she rarely does “her own hair,” causes him to worry about his depleted finances (201). Amory wants to marry Rosalind, but she has several suitors with better means to support her. However, she too loves Amory, and they spend all of their free time together. Reminiscent of Fitzgerald’s own life, Amory even takes a job as a copy editor, which he despises, to earn a suitable income. For a while, this arrangement works, and Amory lives in a state of distracted bliss, focusing, for once, almost entirely on another person and the experience of being in love. Like Daisy in *Gatsby*, Rosalind then changes her mind and decides to marry for the security and comforts which accompany wealth, and Amory is devastated. Their breakup is depicted as a tragic play with their conversation broken into lines, as if to highlight the histrionics of the scene:

AMORY: And you love me.

ROSALIND: That’s just why it has to end. Drifting hurts too much.
We can’t have any more scenes like this.

(She draws his ring from her finger and hands it to him. Their eyes
blind again with tears.) (204)

In the script form of this chapter, Fitzgerald emphasizes the impact that Rosalind has on Amory: “AMORY: (*Wildly*) I don’t care! You’re spoiling our lives!” (204). Unlike Jay Gatsby, once Rosalind’s engagement is announced in a newspaper, he holds out no hope that they will be reunited, and she is, in essence, dead to him. The loss of Rosalind affects Amory deeply; he goes on a drinking binge, mourning the loss of his youth and love in the chapter titled “Still Alcoholic” (209).

As his depression deepens, he continues to behave recklessly, taking the fall for a friend who spent the night in a hotel with a woman who was not his wife. This

event highlights the novel's depiction of the value that certain individuals are perceived to have. Notably, these seemingly more important individuals are wealthier. In the above example, Amory "sacrifices" himself so that his friend will not have his reputation ruined, although, in this case, there is little financial difference between the two. Amory seems to act this generously because he already feels so bad about himself that he does not think an additional blow will matter. The young woman, who accompanies his friend, asks him whether he is more important than Amory. Amory responds mysteriously that "it remains to be seen," suggesting that their futures, in essence their future accomplishments, will reveal how important they are (258). Either way, he knows that Tom will grow to resent him because he will be in debt to Amory, or he will have to make something out of himself in payment to Amory's gesture. A great deal of the energy that Amory spends is devoted to affirming to himself that he is one of the important people. His selfless act, on the other hand, suggests Amory's emerging character as an adult who is less concerned with how others judge him and more concerned with what he may accomplish. With the loss of the ideals that mattered to him, Amory doubts that he is important. He no longer has Rosalind and their "ideal" love, and he has also lost the paradise or "ideal," in this case, institution and environment, which he found at Princeton.

As Amory's depression increases, the beauty of the environment described at the University becomes rainy, the mired and disenchanting city of New York, symbolizing his growing dejection:

The rain gave Amory a feeling of detachment, and the numerous unpleasant aspects of city life without money occurred to him in threatening procession. There was the ghastly, stinking crush of the

subway—the car cards thrusting themselves at one, leering out like dull bores who grab your arm with another story. (261)

In addition to losing his love and ideals, Amory fears living in the city without the comforts afforded by the money of his former class. The city's subway car cards, as they are personified in this passage, act like a group of overly effusive bores.

Similarly, the people who have to ride these cars are depicted as base, worn out individuals with little energy or benevolence left to give:

[A] man deciding not to give his seat to a woman, hating her for it; the woman hating him for not doing it; at worst a squalid phantasmagoria of breath, and old cloth on human bodies and the smells of the food men ate—at best just people—too hot or too cold, tired, worried. (261)

In this example, they are reminiscent of the lower-middle class described in *Gatsby*, with characters such as Myrtle—who are poignantly depicted as, at times, less moral—or amoral—and basely physical. The environment which contains them is old and depressing, and human life seems shameful and purposeless, a direct contrast to life at Princeton:

He pictured the rooms where these people lived—where the patterns of the blistered wall-papers were heavy reiterated sunflowers on green and yellow backgrounds, where there were tin bathtubs and gloomy hallways and verdureless, unnamable spaces And always there was the economical stuffiness of indoor winter, the long summers, nightmares of perspiration between sticky enveloping walls . . . dirty restaurants where careless, tired people helped themselves to sugar with their own used coffee-spoons, leaving hard brown deposits in the bowl. (262)

In this example, the grime dirt and ugliness are a far cry from the spires and gothic romanticism of Princeton. The places where poor people must live, in Amory's imagination, are cramped and physically uncomfortable. Amory hates this

environment and he hates the people who have to live in it, not for their own fault but because they are poor:

“I detest poor people,” thought Amory Poverty may have been beautiful once, but it’s rotten now. It’s the ugliest thing in the world. It’s essentially cleaner to be corrupt and rich than it is to be innocent and poor. (262)

In essence, he despises poverty and the poor because they represent life that is both physically filthy and devoid of intellectual life, and, for Amory, becoming a part of this group means that he has to relinquish the high standards he had for himself as a child and as a young man at Princeton.

Amory despises poverty because it is the opposite of everything he loves and wishes to become. For instance, the women he loved, his mother, Beatrice, Isabelle, and Rosalind, all have family money. There is one exception in Clara, who manages to avoid the negative connotations of being poor, perhaps to point out Amory’s unfair stereotypes. They represent money to him; Rosalind, for instance, knew that she would not be the woman he loved if they were to marry without money (204). The women who represent money have a certain allure and beauty for Amory in the same way that Princeton, “the sunny land of spires,” has an environment of alluring architecture and history, described in one passage in terms of symbols—spires and gargoyles of gothic architecture (163). Amory has “a deep and reverent devotion to the gray walls and Gothic peaks and all they symbolized as warehouses of dead ages,” and he likes knowing that the architecture of Princeton “with its upward trend [t]he silent stretches of green, the quiet halls with an occasional late-burning scholastic light held his imagination in a strong grasp, and the chastity of the spire became a symbol of this perception” (67). Then when Amory leaves the university, he describes the campus in

further poetic terms, and though this is not a symbol of wealth, perchance, it is that of higher education—what money affords.

Amory continues to be preoccupied with money and class as the novel progresses, but his opinions change abruptly at the novel's dénouement; his attitude about poor people becomes more humane and his theories on socioeconomics become rather socialist. Amory discusses wealth and potential social reforms with a man who offers him a ride in his car; he suggests to the man that "[m]oney isn't the only stimulus that brings out the best that's in a man, even in America" (279). The man and Amory disagree, and Amory argues that men will work and, furthermore, compete with each other not for money, as men have done in the past, but for symbolic honor, "blue ribbons," and the simple notion of being the best. He also suggests that all children ought to be given the same opportunities, marking a significant detour from Amory's earlier professed idioms:

Every child . . . should have an equal start. If his father can endow him with a good physique and his mother with some common sense in his early education, that should be his heritage. If the father can't give him a good physique, if the mother has spent in chasing men the years in which she should have been preparing herself to educate her children, so much the worse for the child. He shouldn't be artificially bolstered up with money, sent to these horrible tutoring schools, dragged through college . . . Every boy ought to have an equal start. (278)

This statement is potentially hypocritical on Amory's part, considering the viewpoint of the elite atmosphere from which he makes his assertions. On the other hand, it also suggests Amory's flirtation with socialism, his perception of faults in a society which excludes impoverished individuals from the ideal environment he experienced at Princeton. Although his views on education and class-relations may be superficially

developed, they importantly show his reflection on issues outside of himself. Here, he is no longer a true egoist, solely concerned with himself and his own predicament, and through his hardship he is able to identify with humanity on a broader scale.

The end of the novel results in continued expansion on Amory's part in which his youthful, shallow egoism becomes a brief expression of solipsism and finally an assertion that he will carry on. He hears the sound of the bells at Princeton and reflects on the change that has come over him. Amory is no longer the young idealistic student that he was at the University, and he is "sorry for" the new group of students that will perpetuate the myths of the past:

[T]he chosen youth from muddled, unchastened world, still fed romantically on the mistakes and half-forgotten dreams of dead statesmen and poets. Here was the new generation . . . a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success. (287)

Before, Amory believed in these dreams fully and wanted to be successful on Princeton's terms. His former egoism changes to an expression of solipsism, Amory admits that he knows himself, "but that is all" (287). When these lines are pared with the following passage, the reader sees Amory's appreciation of his own limitations and his continued belief in the unseen motivations of the past combined with a faint but present anticipation for what will come:

There was no God in his heart, he knew; his ideas were still in riot; there was the pain of memory; the regret for his lost youth—yet the waters of disillusion had left a deposit on his soul, responsibility and a love of life, the faint stirring of old ambitions and unrealized dreams. (287)

Amory cannot entirely articulate why the struggle of life is still worthwhile in the end, but he understands that it somehow is. That which motivates Amory to carry on, even

when his life has not turned out the way he imagined it, is difficult for him to define, but it is linked to the artistic and literary pursuits he enjoyed in college. These are not, however, the superficial endeavors which he pursued to appear to be clever but those which were separate from his ego and his sense of class and financial superiority. He finds at the end that these motivations are almost ethereal, “the faint stirring of old ambitions and unrealized dreams,” and very distinct from worldly financial considerations (287). It is as if Fitzgerald wants Amory, as grounded as he was in materialistic, competitive tastes, to triumph over them in the end. Amory is confused but knows he will go on without the “worship of success” but with a stirring of his old dreams.

The Short Stories

In addition to his brilliant career as a novelist, Fitzgerald displayed much of his talent as a writer through his short stories. He wrote an estimated 180 stories in his lifetime, although many have since been lost. Critics consider many to be vivacious and psychologically insightful, yet they have written little about them compared to his novels. This may be due to the poor quality of some of the stories or because the author himself held a negative opinion of them (Petry 1). Despite the uneven quality of the stories and the criticism critics have given them, many represent Fitzgerald's development as a writer. He experimented with his technique while writing stories, which allowed him to develop various methods and themes. Successful styles and ideas Fitzgerald created while writing the stories likely served as the foundation for his novels. For instance, critics have found that "Winter Dreams" and "The Swimmers" led to the making of *The Great Gatsby* (*The Short Stories* 17). Similarly, "Love in the Night," I would suggest, prompted *Tender is the Night* in terms of its setting on the Riviera and its prose style. Similarly, the themes of wealth and idealism found in the novels show up, as Fitzgerald's readers would expect, in the short stories.

Fitzgerald made a considerable portion of his income from the sale of his stories to periodicals, but he did not like that necessity required him to earn money from story writing. He often regretted that he had to bend the plots and themes of his stories to meet the interests of specific periodicals' readers. His contemporaries also hinted that the story genre was not a satisfactory outlet for a writer of his caliber, and novelist Charles Norris directly warned Fitzgerald that he would be finished as a respected author if he continued to pander to the *Post's* readership. In spite of this, he

earned as much as \$4,000 per story at the height of his literary career. One of Fitzgerald's formulaic romances, the happily-ending "Popular Girl," for instance, sold for thousands in 1922 (Pelzer 25). Unfortunately, the early financial and literary success he had with his stories was limited, and impressive profits slowly gave way to diminished sales and, finally, rejection in 1937 by the *Saturday Evening Post* (Meyers 80).

Some of the best stories were compiled for readers in the increasingly impressive collections: *Flappers and Philosophers* (September 1920), *Tales of the Jazz Age* (September 1922), *All the Sad Young Men* (February 1926), and *Taps at Reveille* (March 1935) (Kuehl 13). The first two collections were written in bursts of prolific creativity while Fitzgerald was still fairly young. These stories demonstrate his literary abilities, technically and creatively, while the last two show his maturity and control as a writer. This maturity can be defined as a "consistency of voice" as well as the professional experience to best make use of his natural talents as a writer (Petry 3-5). With each collection, Fitzgerald's sophistication as a writer is increased because his editors continued to want new or varied material in terms of style and subject matter. Fitzgerald was encouraged to experiment with various literary concepts and techniques, although this sometimes produced the inferior writing, which the author so disliked. Eventually, he applied some of the more successful concepts and techniques that he developed in his story writing to his novels. As such, Fitzgerald's ideas often reverberate throughout the bulk of his writing rather than being separated into those in his stories and those in his novels, and many of his themes and settings are recycled:

Since Fitzgerald perforce wrote stories while he was working on novels, certain “cluster stories” introduced or tested themes, settings, and situations that are fully developed in the novel. He routinely “stripped” passages from a story for reuse in a novel. (*The Short Stories* 17)

The principal themes in his writing are found in more works than the “cluster stories” referred to, and many of his short stories are connected with specific elements readers find in the body of his writing, such as his ambivalence about wealth as well as his idealism. The stories in general suggest the theme of ego being linked to income, which is seen in *Gatsby* and *Paradise*.

One such story which upholds the themes found in *Gatsby*, especially themes about money, is “The Swimmers.” The timing of this story’s publication, which was directly before the Wall Street Crash of 1929 in the *Saturday Evening Post*, was particularly poignant. The plot has an American man, Henry Marston, living in Europe with his French wife, Choupette, and his children. He decides to move back to America to make more money, even though he and his family have been living comfortable on less in Europe. Henry wants to purchase a fancy car, buy his wife modern appliances, and, as he says to his wife, gain wealth because he thinks it is the right thing to do as an American:

I’m tired of getting ahead on your skimping and saving and going without dresses. I’ve got to make more money. American men are incomplete without money. (Fitzgerald 501)

The theme of the importance of wealth continues to feature prominently throughout this story, particularly when Choupette wants to divorce Henry and does not want “a cent of [his] money,” but she wants keep their children (505). Henry is willing to give Choupette a divorce and whatever material possessions she wants, but he does not

want her to raise their children alone because he fears that she and her new wealthy beau, Wiese, will produce an overly indulgent home life: "I'd rather apprentice them to a trade than have them brought up in the sort of home yours and Choupette's is going to be" (505). He also knows that her interest in the children is not maternal but, rather, without them her family will consider her "suspect" (505). Wiese believes he can force Henry's hand, stating that he is "one of the richest men in Virginia," and that money is power:

On your side there's an obstinate prejudice: on mine there are forty million dollars. Don't fool yourself. Let me repeat, Marston, that money is power. You were abroad so long that perhaps you're inclined to forget that fact. Money made this country, built its great and glorious cities, created its industries, covered it with an iron network of railroads. It's money that harnesses the forces of Nature, creates the machine and makes it go when money says go, and stop when money says stop. (507-8)

For Wiese, not only does money rule America as a nation and economic structure, it rules its land and natural entities. Wiese then informs Henry that he intends to make sure Choupette keeps her children. His money allowed him to "uncover" a fictitious psychiatrist who supposedly treated Henry four years ago and would testify to the nature of a nervous breakdown he had at that time. Though this information about Henry's past mental state is slander, when Henry hears of this, he reels "as if from a *material* blow" (508, italics mine). Fitzgerald's use of diction hints that money has "weight," in a physical sense as well as in a conceptual manner.

However, we soon find a reversal of money's power over nature, by which Fitzgerald suggests that the value and influence of money has been overstated. Henry's original assessment of the importance of wealth as that which "makes the man," and thereby bolsters his ego, lessens. He begins to see value in himself as an

individual through his frequent swims in the ocean, which allows him to connect with nature. Wiese and Choupette request to meet with Henry on his motorboat to negotiate terms of the divorce. When the motorboat threatens to drift out to sea, Henry, the only one who can swim, finds himself in the position of power. He secures written guarantees that he can keep the children, places the papers in an oiled-silk pouch which hangs from his neck, and swims towards the shore. It is the most challenging swim of his life, but from it, he gains everything he wants, including a new perception of his country:

[He] had a sense of overwhelming gratitude and of gladness that America was there, that under the ugly debris of industry the rich land still pushed up, incorrigibly lavish and fertile, and that in the heart of the leaderless people the old generousities and devotions fought on, breaking out sometimes in fanaticism and excess, but indomitable and undefeated. (512).

From Henry's thoughts, we are given the impression of the older sense of the American dream, the idea of "America" itself, rather than the lofty, conspicuously wealthy class of *Gatsby*. He refers to "the land," with its abundance of natural resources and an idealistic "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" people. In this example, he is simply appreciating the land and people who "strive," as well as the "willingness of the heart," which is the final line of the story (512). While Fitzgerald may be somewhat opposed to the desire for wealth, he admires certain aspects of the American dream—those that correspond to idealism. What he idealizes is not necessarily improvement or upward mobility but the striving for improvement, which requires a kind of wanderlust, freedom, and constant movement:

Americans, [Henry] liked to say, should be born with fins, and perhaps they were—perhaps money was a form of fin. In England property begot a strong place sense, but Americans, restless and with shallow

roots, needed fins and wings. There was even a recurrent idea in America about an education that would leave out history and the past, that should be a sort of equipment for aerial adventure, weighed down by none of the stowaways of inheritance or tradition. (506)

Here, the American dream is represented in favorable terms, and the goal for Americans is to omit the past altogether as opposed to tirelessly climbing the ladder of mobility. The American drive for wealth is represented by a youthful restlessness that seems exciting, particularly when compared to the solidity of England. Americans themselves are hinted to be natural creatures in constant motion, such as fish and birds. He idealizes them as beings who are free to take part in an adventure rather than weighed down by the past.

In other stories, Fitzgerald demonstrates the uniqueness of the American condition while discussing the possible problems with having wealth. For instance, in the Americans-in-Europe story “One Trip Abroad,” a couple, Nicole and Nelson Kelly, described as nice, young, and newly married, are traveling around Europe. They have recently come into “quite a bit of money” and have decided to go to Europe to pursue their creative interests: Nicole intends to paint and Nelson to sing (580). Like “The Swimmers” and “Babylon Revisited,” in this story, Fitzgerald details the expatriate experience, showing, at first, that the Kellys are happy. They are in the beginning content to be alone with one another while exploring Europe. The Kellys turn down offers from friends to go out, considering life to be “better than any show” (580). When they finally accept an invitation to join another couple on their travels, Nicole regrets the decision, fearing that doing so may harm their bond: “In the eight months of their marriage she had been so happy that it seemed like spoiling something” (578). Eventually, their prolonged travel in Europe and the continued

partying with friends makes them listless, and out of boredom they begin to drink excessively (582). After a few years, they become unfaithful to one another and their youthful, romance fades:

“It’s just that we don’t understand what’s the matter,” [Nicole] said.
 “Why did we lose peace and love and health, one after the other? If we knew, if there was anybody to tell us, I believe we could try. I’d try so hard.” (597)

Although, they do not perceive the reason for the failure of their romance, it is, presumably, their lifestyle, specifically its indulgence and lack of direction afforded by their wealth, which causes them to lose the innocence and autonomy they once had.

However, the narrator hints at their problem throughout the story with the addition of a doppelganger couple that mirrors the actions of the Kellys in the plot. We first see the doppelgangers in the beginning of the story, directly after Nicole agrees to join the other couple. Nicole mentions the mesmerizing couple to Nelson:

“I passed that couple in the hall just now . . . that young couple—about our age . . . that we thought looked so nice . . . I’m almost sure I’ve met the girl somewhere before.”
 The couple referred to were sitting across the room at dinner, and Nicole found her eyes drawn irresistibly toward them. *They, too, now had companions, and again Nicole . . . felt a faint regret.* (579, italics mine)

Here, the other young wife is joined by a new companion just as Nicole meets the other couple. Soon she sees her once again when their group is invited to watch a native dance in which the female dancers remove articles of their clothing. The dance makes Nicole uncomfortable, but she does not want to leave and “appear to be a prig” (581). However, when Nicole recognizes the other wife getting up and leaving quickly, she follows suit, but she is upset with Nelson for not leaving with her. In another example in which time has passed in the story, Nicole, who is happy because

she is young and good-looking, is struck by the appearance of the other wife who is dressed extremely smartly (585). Later, after Nicole discovers Nelson's affair and lashes out at him, the Kellys notice a woman sitting on the other side of the café where she is:

Something strident and violent had happened across the café; a woman screamed and the people at one table were all on their feet, surging back and forth like one person . . . [F]or just a moment the Kellys saw the face of the girl they had been watching, pale now, and distorted with anger. (589)

Even the destruction of the Kellys' romance is highlighted in the actions of the other wife. John Kuehl notes that the doppelgangers for the Kellys are always referred to namelessly, and they appear as a déjà vu phenomenon with similar physical descriptions to that of the Kellys (108-9). The thoroughness with which Fitzgerald depicts the similarity of both couples indicates that perspective is deliberate in this narrative. Not only do readers recognize the flaws and problems of the Kellys, they see them enhanced by the doppelgangers and by the Kellys' final perception of themselves. Nicole finally perceives the doppelganger to be a representation of she and Nelson—"They're us! They're us! Don't you see?" (597). Fitzgerald then ends the story with the Kellys recognizing that they are alone together once again, and the ominous storm that was approaching diffuses into a "tranquil moonlight." Here, Fitzgerald does not necessarily suggest that romance can exist only in a vacuum but, rather, that excessive idleness brought on by wealth, creates problems for romance and dreams. He also insinuates that Americans, with their drive for continued improvement and motion, may not conform well to more established, European

ways—or that the innate drive of Americans did not take well to an expatriate experience which valued history over change.

The inevitability of change on one's dreams is a feature of "Winter Dreams," one of the *Gatsby* cluster stories, which Fitzgerald wrote in September, 1922, prior to the novel. The *Gatsby* cluster stories included passages which he would later reuse in the novel itself; other *Gatsby* cluster stories were "Dice, Brassknuckles & Guitar," "Absolution," "The Sensible Thing," and "The Rich Boy," which was written and published after *Gatsby* (*The Short Stories* 17). These stories exemplify the sensuous and physically descriptive prose found in Fitzgerald's later novels, a technique which lends itself to the timelessness of his writing. His humor, such as that in *Gatsby*, as well as the dialog and mannerisms with which he depicts his characters, on the other hand, tend to date his writing, specifically as 1920s or thereabout. "Winter Dreams" lacks the humor found in his novel, but it may be one of Fitzgerald's strongest stories because it reiterates the themes found in *Gatsby* regarding money and romance, which are in many ways particular to the American condition. Specifically, it reveals what dreams, or idealism respectively, do to motivate and drive characters. For many of Fitzgerald's characters, their specific dreams and idealism is their reason for existing, and this is no exception for the main character of "Winter Dreams." The plot of this story is similar to *Gatsby* and the romance of Jay Gatsby towards Daisy in that a young Dexter Green falls in love with a young socialite, Judy Joyce. In this case, Dexter is not able to marry Judy for a reason aside from his financial status—because of the capriciousness of her affections. Dexter has achieved financial independence by the time he meets Judy as an adult, but, since she has discouraged a suitor because he

was poor, Dexter assumes that his money will give him an upper hand in winning her over. She has other wealthy suitors, but she is more concerned with whichever suitor piques her interest at the moment versus the suitor's financial and socioeconomic status.

Judy is often insensitive to the feelings of others by her capricious behavior; as the narrator mentions, “[w]hen a new man came to town every one dropped out—dates were automatically cancelled” (227). At the same time Judy's apparent selfishness, her “need” to be admired and her callous forgetfulness regarding her suitors, is not entirely deliberate, which Dexter perceives. He supposes that she is somewhat reckless in her behavior as a form of self-preservation brought on to protect herself from too many overly-enthusiastic suitors. She is also somewhat self-sufficient, perhaps in a narcissistic sense, but, at the same time, she relies heavily on the attentions of her suitors to fulfill her egoism:

[Judy] was entertained only by the gratification of her desires and by the direct exercise of her own charm. Perhaps from so much youthful love, so many youthful lovers, she had come, in self-defense, to nourish herself wholly from within. (227)

Judy's behavior also suggests the American characteristic of freedom and restlessness seen in the other stories. Though she seems self-concerned and selfish, Judy does not appear to be in control of her behavior or to understand the motivations for her actions, partly because she is a flat character, and Fitzgerald does not develop these motivations. On the other hand, she seems to be driven by some unperceivable force—as Dexter is driven inexplicably by his own winter dreams. She “simply,” as Dexter notes, makes “men conscious to the highest degree of her physical loveliness” (227). In the end, Dexter does not end up with Judy, presumably because of her fickle

behavior. When he hears of her again, he is told that she has changed dramatically—the former exuberant and beautiful Judy has been reduced to someone with “pretty eyes.” She is no longer anything special and her husband is known to be unfaithful to her—a great departure from her former romantic situation. As a result, Dexter’s winter dreams and the implied hope that he and Judy will be reunited end abruptly with his knowledge of her changes. In other words, Dexter seemed to be living for the vague notion that the perceived “failure” of his youth, not marrying Judy Jones, would someday be rectified. He can no longer idealize Judy, and the loss of his dream seems to affect him more dramatically than the initial loss of her.

Dexter may be the more interesting and multi-dimensional character in the story because of his very quest for Judy and for what she represents to him. Dexter begins the story as a bright and motivated adolescent. He is smart and successful as a caddy, but he is also “dissatisfied” with his place in society, like so many of Fitzgerald’s characters. His youthful dissatisfaction expresses itself in the form of dreams he creates while caddying on the golf course. Unlike some of the others, Dexter caddies only for pocket money; his father owns the second best grocery store in his town. But Dexter has bigger dreams than that of managing his father’s grocery store, which he makes while caddying for wealthy men like Mr. Mortimer Jones, who calls him—when he quits abruptly one day—the best caddy he ever had, perhaps in appreciation of his driven behavior and hard work. Dexter decides at age fourteen that he is too old to caddy anymore. He is motivated at an early age, partly by little Judy, at this time a bratty adolescent, for whom he refused to serve as a caddy. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Dexter’s character is his ability to dream like Gatsby; he

wants to be a part of Mortimer's and little Judy's world rather than a brilliant assistant to it. His appreciation for and anticipation of his dreams are displayed in his preference for fall—and the emergence of his winter dreams—over spring:

Dexter knew that there was something dismal about this Northern spring, just as he knew there was something gorgeous about the fall. Fall made him clench his hands and tremble and repeat idiotic sentences to himself, and make brisk abrupt gestures of command to imaginary audiences and armies. October filled him with hope which November raised to a sort of ecstatic triumph, and in this mood the fleeting brilliant impressions of the summer at Sherry Island were ready grist to his mill. (218)

Dexter's winter is a time in which he day dreams about all of his potential greatness, spawned from his experiences as a caddy during the summer. Here winter, the season of hibernation and rest, serves as a symbol of latent dreams. This latent quality of dreaming and anticipation seems to define him, and when he meets Judy again when they are older, she represents everything he has striven for in the winter. Dexter does not simply want Judy as a rich girl: "He wanted not association with glittering thing and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves" (221). However, the motivations for Dexter's wants, and even for his highly instinctual dreams founded in youth, are ambiguous and elusive even to Dexter. It is as if Fitzgerald suggests that the drive within certain individuals is inexplicable, but the addition of these dreams/drives defines the individual:

[His winter dreams] persuaded Dexter several years later to pass up a business course at the State university—his father, prospering now, would have paid his way—for the precarious advantage of attending an older more famous university in the East, where he was bothered by his scanty funds. But do not get the impression, because his winter dreams happened to be concerned at first with musings on the rich, that there was anything merely snobbish in the boy. . . . Often he reached for the best without knowing why he wanted it. (220-1)

Here, the narrative voice interjects in this passage, and the reader is instructed not to judge Dexter because his desires are deeper than snobbery. We are only to know that this is Dexter, and his yearnings for certain glittering things cannot be accounted for or separated from his person.

Dexter is a bit of a snob regardless of the narrator's suggestions, especially in the sense that he is dissatisfied with himself compared to the rich characters of the story. His personal dissatisfaction at not being born rich does not reach the level of insecurity present in the character of Michael in "The Bridal Party," but he does acknowledge to himself that he wishes "his children to be like them" and that he is "but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang" (225). Like Michael, he does worry about his dress and his mannerism, while recognizing that the truly rich do not have to do this. The children of the rich can be careless, but Dexter knows what he is and what patterns of behavior he must stick to:

His mother's name had been Krimsligh. She was a Bohemian of the peasant class and she had talked broken English to the end of her days. Her son must keep to the set patterns. (225)

These lines reveal a darker side to Dexter's winter dreams, as if they are a form of compensation for his not having been born rich. In this way, money is linked to his ego, and Dexter makes money for compensation rather than idealism.

The dream persists with Judy, but with the "loss" of the old Judy, it is finally relinquished. As Fitzgerald writes, "sometimes he ran up against the mysterious denials and prohibitions in which life indulges;" this occurs without discouraging him. Being denied by Judy does not destroy him, but the complete dissolution of his dream leads to a loss of purpose for Dexter, almost like a death:

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck's soft down Why these things were no longer in the world! They existed and they existed no longer.

He associates his memories of Judy with the place their interactions occurred, which lends a visceral quality to his dream. Importantly, he *tries* to bring up these images, and when he realizes that “Judy” is gone, he is *struck* by their absence—though these memories were already in the past for Dexter. Finally, when he accepts their absence he is able to grieve for himself and for the loss of this “place” in a physical and chronological sense:

For the first time in years the tears were streaming down his face. But they were for himself For he had gone away and he could never go back any more. The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished. (235-6)

In this passage, he grieves for the very end of his youthful, winter dreams, which is a mature, if disheartened, acceptance that they were nothing but an illusion, but he also grieves for his inability to dream again. Without his dream, he seems to lack an understanding of his identity: “long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone” and “I cannot care. That thing will come back no more” (236). By this, Fitzgerald suggests that with the loss of Dexter’s idealism, he also loses himself—who he used to be.

Idealism and dreams are the characters’ most moving, essential influences, but sometimes they clash with the characters’ decisions. This occurs in “Babylon Revisited,” considered to be one of Fitzgerald’s best short stories. First published in

the *Saturday Evening Post*, December, 1930, this story reflects on several of Fitzgerald's themes in a more sophisticated manner than readers find in the other stories, including attitudes that steer characters away from their dreams and problems such as alcoholism (Bryer 350). Specifically, two motifs are contrasted in the story—that of the return to Babylon, the ancient center of sumptuousness and wickedness, and “that of the quiet and decent life at home that [Charlie] wishes to establish for his child,” arguably, his dream (Baker 270). The main character, Charlie Wales, may have had a difficult time reconciling these two motifs in the past, but in the story he expresses dissatisfaction at the way he has behaved. Since Charlie's wife's death, Honoria, Charlie's daughter, has been the ward of her aunt, Marion, and her uncle. Charlie wants to have custody of Honoria returned to him, but this proves difficult for Charlie because Marion does not consider him dependable. She cannot forgive him for his lifestyle of partying and recklessness with money, which is, as she perceives it, his responsibility in her sister's death.

Similar to the author's attempts to free himself from alcoholism, Charlie rehabilitates himself in order to create a stable home for his daughter and to gain her back from Marion. He drinks to excess, like Fitzgerald, and has squandered money during these periods of intense drinking. However, he assures his sister-in-law that he has been rehabilitated by staying away from former influences and by taking one small drink each day, as not to allow his cravings to get too big. Marion decides against returning Honoria to Charlie after a few of his former, “Babylonian” friends stop by and make a bad impression on her. Charlie, too, is no longer impressed with his old friends because they tend to use him:

[They were] an unwelcome encounter. They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from their strength. (623)

Charlie sees that his former friends want to use him since he has gotten himself together; they remain the same and are only interested in novelty and superficial happiness.

At the same time, their visit prompts Charlie to revisit “Babylon” by reflecting on his mistakes in the past, such as his carelessness with money. These former mistakes reflect Charlie’s former way of thinking, which is illogical and somewhat superstitious:

He remembered thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number, hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab. . . . I had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering . . . his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont. (620)

He remembers his money “given,” in the passive voice, as if to demonstrate just how separate he is from his past actions. Now he understands why he has been so extravagant: his behavior was almost superstitious in an attempt to distance himself from the concern and love he had for his family. At dinner with Marion, he demonstrates that his behavior and thinking has changed, and he wants to believe in more valuable concepts:

A great wave of protectiveness went over him. He thought he knew what to do for her. He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. (619)

This passage demonstrates that Charlie has changed and his actions reflect these changes. Furthermore, his attitudes, which suggest grounded thinking, could not be further from those he held when his wife was living.

Marion does not understand or believe that Charlie has changed; she still thinks of him in terms of his extravagance with money, which she may not “approve of” because of her own unacknowledged envy for his wealth. She says she is protecting Honoria by not returning her to Charlie, and she is only willing to consider doing so because he has more money and can better provide for her. Charlie recognizes their difference, explaining that the aunt and uncle are “not dull people” but are “very much in the grip of life and circumstance” (630). In a sense, Marion’s inability to forgive allows her to hold Honoria as collateral, but it is really her bitterness at the circumstances which prevents her from allowing Charlie to take Honoria. It is also Marion’s envy at Charlie’s wealth which causes her to maliciously maintain her control of Honoria, in that she is the one thing his money cannot buy. In a less spiteful manner, Marion has different views about how money ought to be used compared to Charlie. She is careful with it because it has value for her, while Charlie used it in the past it as something simply to enjoy. As mentioned, part of the reason that Marion despises Charlie is his past prodigal attitude with regards to money. Their differing views are shown in how they react to the perception of Americans in Europe before the crash:

“It seems funny to see so few Americans around.”

“I’m delighted,” Marion said vehemently. “Now at least you can go into a store without their assuming you’re a millionaire. We’ve suffered like everybody, but on the whole it’s a good deal pleasanter.”

“But it was nice while it lasted,” Charlie said. “We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us.” (619)

The “Babylon” of Charlie’s former days hold no appeal for Marion, in part, because she does not have a positive experience with its lavishness—because she was not a part of it, and she has no experience with money directly. Charlie, on the other hand, has vivid memories of these lavish times, but he regrets them because they prevent him from being a father to his daughter:

There wasn’t much he could do now except send Honoria some things; he would send her a lot of things tomorrow. He thought rather angrily that this was just money—he had given so many people money
(633)

These lines show that Charlie does not value money as highly as his daughter, and they hint at his frustration with the importance Marion places on money because he sees what is truly worthy in life. In all, Charlie has reached a state of having a realistic and grown-up dream. With his wife gone, he simply wants to take care of and raise his daughter. He accepts the mistakes he has made in the past and takes responsibility for them, and he tries to learn from the past by sobering up and living with his true dreams in mind.

Unlike Charlie, the main character in “The Bridal Party” still has to develop his character and learn to worry less about transient concerns like money. Brucoli describes this story as an “examination of the influence of money on character” because it reveals the influence that being wealthy as well as the concept of wealth has on shaping one’s identity (*The Short Stories* 561). For instance, the central character, Michael, is wholly distracted because he thinks that he does not have enough money to marry his girl, Caroline. Their romance ends because he is too concerned about money to pick up on Caroline’s unhappiness, which is unrelated to their financial

situation. Later, Michael runs into Caroline in Paris, who tells him that she is engaged to be married to Rutherford, a wealthy businessman. Michael, who is invited to the wedding and bridal party, tries to think of ways to prevent the marriage. Michael assumes that Caroline's marriage will result in her unhappiness, and he believes that his happiness is inseparably tied to hers:

“Nothing will ever be the same again,” he said to himself. “She will never be happy in her marriage and I will never be happy at all any more.” (563).

Through a strange twist of fate, Michael gains a fortune just as Rutherford loses his before the wedding. Even knowing this, Caroline decides to marry Rutherford and is “radiantly happy” at her bridal party.

Michael mistakenly believes that Rutherford is successful in love because he is wealthy, when it is more likely his assertive, confident demeanor that gives him an edge. Michael's character, on the other hand, is highly insecure at his lack of money. Rutherford criticizes Michael's insecurity and suggests to him that women do not appreciate this characteristic:

Women aren't so darn sensitive. It's fellows like you who are sensitive; its fellows like you they exploit—all your devotion and kindness and all that. (568)

Michael is highly sensitive, particularly about how others may view his lack of finances, and he projects his own sensitivity onto Caroline. At the same time, his sensitivity makes him highly observant: he picks up on physical indicators of wealth and propriety in one's dress. In addition, he is overly sensitive about how he is dressed: “[Michael] felt suddenly that his dinner coat was old and shiny; he had ordered a new one that morning (565).” In another example, he feels slightly ashamed

because he is wearing incorrect attire for the occasion: “he was still a little embarrassed at not wearing a morning coat, but he perceived that he was not alone in the omission and felt better” (574). Later, Michael is pleased because he is wearing a “new dinner coat,” a “new silk hat,” and “new, proud linen,” which makes him feel “rich and assured,” at least for a moment (569).

Michael’s attention to the details of clothing does not help him with Caroline’s heart, but the final passage of the story suggests that he better understands the problems of being poor and its level of importance compared to other concerns. In the thick of the bridal party, he has been watching Caroline and Rutherford dance together as they are obviously in love, and suddenly he understands what is important and what has been of value to Caroline:

Michael was cured. The ceremonial function, with its pomp and revelry, had stood for a sort of initiation into a life where even his regret could not follow them. All the bitterness melted out of him suddenly and the world reconstituted itself out of the youth and happiness that was all around him, profligate as the spring sunshine. (576)

The very world seems to alter for the better for Michael in this moment; he is happy and sees fullness in life. In the end, Michael’s way of thinking changes, and he understands that his focus on what he has lost is unnecessary and believes that love is more important than money.

Fitzgerald’s stories as a whole suggest that dreams and idealism are the basis for all his significant characters’ motivations and an important part of the human psyche. However, when these characters become too concerned with becoming wealthy or with the extravagances and luxuries that come with money, their idealism and dreams tend to be circumstantial. In other words, when the desire for money

becomes too severe, it creates an all-encompassing egoism, a focus on the self that pushes others away. The relationship between love and money in Fitzgerald's writing is that "too much money militates against true love," particularly because those who have too much money lose their ability to empathize and truly care for others (Donaldson 85). On the other hand, as readers see in "The Bridal Party," when the characters are too focused on getting money, they push away their potential for love and happiness. When their financial needs and concerns are moderate and balanced with other concerns and when ego is not linked to financial worth, idealism and dreams take precedence.

In summary, the commonalities among the main characters in these short stories, Henry Marston, Nicole and Nelson Kelly, Dexter Green, Charlie Wales, and Michael of "The Bridal Party," support Fitzgerald's questioning of the impact of wealth, particularly as it relates to love. Henry, the Kellys, and Charlie each speak to the potential havoc that money can play on relationships, whether romantic relationships or those between family members and acquaintances. These characters' stories show the freedom and luxury afforded by wealth, but also the ennui and envy that comes about when money becomes the primary form of sustenance in individual's lives—as opposed to their innate dreams and capabilities. Michael, too, represents a preoccupation with money at the expense of all other concerns, particularly true happiness. Dexter intertwines his dreams with his focus on money, as does Michael, such that he cannot quite understand why all his dreams are not reached—why he cannot marry Judy—when he has wealth. Perhaps these characters have in common their fixation on gaining wealth, which certainly is not unusual in the motto of the

American Dream, to the extent that they believe becoming wealthy will fix all of their ailments and allow them to reach their dreams. What they lose in elevating the importance of wealth to this degree may be their own sense of humanity and an understanding of the value of their unique idealism.

Gatsby's Wealth and the End of Idealism

The Great Gatsby was one of the most vital descriptions of wealth in the 1920s, and, through it, Fitzgerald revealed the ambivalence he felt towards the wealthy class and the desire for wealth. In much of his writing, Fitzgerald, for instance, depicts wealth as a venue of glamour, but he also critiques the extravagance or excessiveness that may spurn from an overabundance of money. His criticism is apparent in the harsh edge he lends to Tom Buchanan, the depictions of wealthy women, and the callousness of the characters who surround Gatsby in order to be “wealthy” by association. Fitzgerald’s ambivalence, on the other hand, comes through in his depiction of Jay Gatsby, who is often appealing to the narrator and to other characters in the novel. In spite of this, Gatsby’s strong focus on the pursuit of wealth makes him seem insincere to readers in certain instances in the novel. He uses affection and deception in order to fabricate the appearance of coming from “old money,” yet he is nonetheless an often sympathetic, if reckless, character because of his unflappable, contagious idealism and the steadfast pursuit he has for his dream. By portraying Gatsby, in part, as an exaggeration of the 1920s attitudes about money, Fitzgerald exposes wealth’s critical influence. At the same time, he suggests, with Gatsby’s strong idealism, that wealth was not the only, nor the most important, motivating factor during this time.

Readers have ignored Fitzgerald’s criticism of the pursuit of wealth in *Gatsby*, viewing the novel instead as a promotion of the essentiality of money. Given that Fitzgerald’s criticisms are to some extent hidden, some readers have been immersed

fully in the fantasy and glamour of the novel without considering the ramifications of its message:

Critics of Scott Fitzgerald tend to agree that *The Great Gatsby* is somehow a commentary on that elusive phrase, the American dream. The assumption seems to be that Fitzgerald approved. On the contrary, it can be shown that *The Great Gatsby* offers some of the severest and closest criticism of the American dream that our literature affords. Read in this way, Fitzgerald's masterpiece ceases to be a pastoral documentary of the Jazz Age. (Bewley 11)

This total immersion with the glamorous vision of the novel may reflect how Gatsby, on the surface, seems to buy into the American dream and epitomize the desire for money. In many examples, he discusses money and material objects and he tries to present himself through the glamorous veil of his wealth. However, Gatsby does not obtain lasting happiness through his wealth, even though he realizes his financial dreams in their entirety.

Fitzgerald, in this way, uses the character of Gatsby to serve as a caveat against the dangers of wealth and buying in fully to the desire for wealth. In the same manner, Gatsby as an idealist signifies an extension of the author himself, who is similarly driven to acquire his goal. Gatsby is first described, for instance, as having "an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as [the narrator has] never found in any other person" (2). At the denouement of the novel, it is through his romantic idealism that the other characters remember him. This degree of romanticism lends Gatsby his great appeal, and makes the narrator perceive him to be "great." In one instance when the reader first meets Gatsby, the narrator describes his benevolent, abundant smile:

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that

you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on *you* with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. (48)

This description serves to establish Gatsby's compelling characteristics, in this case his physical traits. Here, Gatsby is the figure of charm, and the smile itself seems genuine. However, some of his charm seems affected on Gatsby's part; he is said to carefully select his words, he repeatedly uses the affected term "old sport" to refer to his friends, and his speech is at times elaborately formal. What motivates his charm is his desire to appear to be a part of the wealthy class, which results in an artificiality in Gatsby's mannerism. Toward the same aim, Gatsby pushes himself to self-improvement, even to the point that he ceases to enjoy his behavior. As a child, Gatsby was a driven individual, keeping a precise date book and creating "resolves" for himself to accomplish, such as "[r]ead one improving book or magazine per week" (174). As he grew up, his high need for wealth caused him to create high demands for himself for years, which drove him beyond realistic expectations.

When Gatsby does gain new-found wealth, he employs it to help construct an identity for himself, often ostentatiously and blunderingly, as part of the much subtler old money tradition. Like the necessity he feels in his youth to push himself, he develops his wealthy persona because he is uncomfortable with his actual background, telling the narrator that he was "educated at Oxford" while giving him the impression that he is lying (65). He then spends the bulk of his energy acquiring wealth and appearing wealthy, even to the point of ostentation, but in his case, acquiring money itself is a means to gaining Daisy's love. With his showiness about money, Gatsby is

first described as the representation of everything for which the narrator has an “unaffected scorn,” although he readily admits that in spite of this he truly likes Gatsby because of his other, more idealistic qualities (2). Regardless of his endearing qualities, his tastes associated with money are overt to the point of being garish. He lives in a huge mansion, holds lavish parties, wears pink suits and silver shirts, and prefers his big automobiles to be a showy cream color. Because of this, older-money types like Tom Buchanan do not trust Gatsby, and he does not fit in with the Buchanans and their lot. Gatsby’s strong affectation and shield of money juxtapose with moments in the story when he seems both naïve and pitiful. In the dénouement of the novel, his pitiable side appears, for instance, after Tom suggests to Daisy in front of Gatsby the criminal method in which Gatsby has made his money. Gatsby tries desperately to defend himself and reassure her, but his actions are to no avail:

[W]ith every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up, and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was longer tangible. (135)

After Daisy chooses Tom over Gatsby, he is left grasping at the remnants of his dream, which remains tenacious in spite of palpable evidence of its end.

In order to better demonstrate the depth of Gatsby’s idealism and the strength of his dream, Fitzgerald describes Gatsby and presents the novel’s plot through the thoughts and statements of the narrator Nick Carraway. Nick recalls, in the opening chapter, how his father has told him “[w]henver you feel like criticizing any one . . . just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had” (1). Theirs is a family of three generations of “well-to-do people” (1). Money and the perception of one’s status give Nick and his father their perceived advantages

over members of other classes. It is also what prompts Nick to reserve judgment of characters who have newly come upon money, such as Jay Gatsby himself. The reader first encounters the identity of Nick through his narration of *Gatsby*, and he remains the standard in the novel by which other characters are viewed and judged. He always attempts to set aside his first impressions—but that does not stop the reader from making quick evaluations about other characters. His centrality makes the reader aware of the differences between the characters. In the inherent attitudes of these other characters, Fitzgerald depicts wealthy society as it clashes with middle-class norms and norms among all classes. This is intentional, and as Robert Long suggests, it is one of the essential aspects of Fitzgerald's character development in *Gatsby*:

[S]ociety is revealed most deeply in Fitzgerald's depiction of his characters. . . . It is through the eyes of Nick Carraway, the narrator, that the other characters are observed, and as a marginal participant they are also measured by him. He is, in particular, a character double of Gatsby, having in his own life many parallels with Gatsby's experience. . . . By the end of the summer Carraway's illusions are shattered, along with Gatsby's greater ones. Sane and moderate, Carraway is a continuing reminder of Gatsby's aberrancy, but in his modest stature—his inhibitions and lack of boldness—he is also a reminder of Gatsby's heroic size. (145)

Nick is the scale, and the reader views other characters in relation to his impact on society in the novel. He observes the other characters and describes them to the reader in the form of his thoughts rather than discussions. Because his narration is his thoughts and because Nick is averse to judging, he can be complacent, standing by as the observer even when his observations produce a strong reaction in the reader. This occurs in the scene in which Nick follows Daisy's philandering husband Tom Buchanan to the apartment of Myrtle Wilson, his mistress, who is, as we also may note, not a member of the privileged class like the other characters. The chapter ends

with an intoxicated Tom breaking the nose of an intoxicated Myrtle because she has repeatedly stated Daisy's name:

The little dog was sitting on the table looking with blind eyes through the smoke, and from time to time groaning faintly. *People disappeared, reappeared, made plans to go somewhere, and then lost each other, searched for each other, found each other a few feet away.* Some time toward midnight Tom Buchanan and Mrs. Wilson stood face to face, discussing in impassioned voices whether Mrs. Wilson had any right to mention Daisy's name. (37, italics mine)

This scene is typical of Nick as he watches the little, neglected dog, as it remains unnoticed by others, and the drunken altercation as it progresses. Before this description he is compelled to remove a bit of dried lather which "worried [him] all the afternoon" from the face of Mr. McKee, another random guest at the Wilson's (37). Nick, like the dog, looks blindly through the smoke, trying to make sense of the somewhat surreal, inebriated scene. The second sentence (italicized) serves as a distillation of the basic plot of the novel and as Nick's role as an effective narrator, from which he simply describes the plot and the actions of the characters.

Nick's function as a character in the story, on the other hand, suggests that unlike Gatsby he does not strive for his dreams. Juxtaposed with Gatsby, an active—if also overly forceful—participant in the course of his life, Nick, although he does have passions, does not seem to strive for anything in particular. He is struck by the events that occur in the novel enough to serve as a narrator, but in the plot itself he lacks decisiveness. At one point, he is dating Jordan, Daisy's cousin, but their relationship fizzles out in the end, though he still cares about her, without the effort that Gatsby gives his and Daisy's. In the last line regarding Jordan, Nick feels angry, very sorry, and is still "half in love with her," but he does nothing and instead simply

turns away (179). Similarly, in the scene in which all of the key characters are drinking at the hotel and Gatsby loses Daisy back to Tom, Nick suddenly remembers that it is his birthday and that he is thirty, which highlights the disconnect he has with his own life—he sees the new decade of his life as “portentous” and “menacing” (136). Arguably, he is caught up in Gatsby’s story because of the strength of his idealism, and by Nick’s example, it is strong enough to be felt by characters surrounding him.

Beyond his role as a character, one of Nick’s purposes as a narrator is to depict Daisy possessing an irrepressible charm for Gatsby with her beauty and social position. Daisy, as Nick describes her, is sure of her position with her friends and in society. She appears both captivating and intoxicated by her own circumstances:

Daisy made an attempt to rise—she leaned slightly forward with a conscientious expression—then she laughed, an absurd, charming little laugh, I laughed too and came forward into the room.
“I’m p-paralyzed with happiness.” (9)

In this passage, Daisy appears to be almost listless, but hers is a listlessness that is satisfied and charming. Nick perceives her as affecting the stance that she is so pleased to meet him she cannot move. As he further develops her description, we see that this is part of her immense charm:

She laughed again . . . looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had. . . . I’ve heard it said that Daisy’s murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming. (9)

Though Nick does not find it particularly important at the time, Daisy’s behavior suggests that she feels confident that others will move to hear her and for her. Her idleness, we can imagine, comes about from taking others’ actions for granted. While

Daisy is delighted to see her friends, the expectation is that they are there to see her—that she is to be, in a sense, waited on in all aspects of her life.

Daisy represents in the novel the physical appeal of wealth, evoking a combination of eroticism and established money. Her behavior, as we have established it, is moneyed—for Gatsby, Daisy’s very voice is “full of money” (120). The reader may suppose that his desire for money is, in actuality, a desire for Daisy, and likewise the reverse is true—in that by association with Daisy he is in close proximity to wealth. Strictly speaking, she represents his socioeconomic ideal, which he formed when he was young. Although the sentiments and feelings he has for her are real, he expresses them and understands them in monetary terms. Roger Lewis, a critic who writes about money and romance in Fitzgerald’s novels, suggests that the expression of Gatsby’s love for Daisy is uniquely that of a consumer society—of postwar America:

[T]he means by which Gatsby expresses his feelings for Daisy—even though those feelings are sincere—is by showing off his possessions. Urging Daisy and Nick to explore his house, he tells them: “It took me just three years to earn the money that bought it” (109). The very language in which Nick describes Gatsby’s love for Daisy is commercial: “I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew for her well-loved eyes” (111). (45-46)

Perhaps because Gatsby views Daisy as a static, material object, he does not allow his impression of her to change or to grow with the years. As a result, his romanticized understanding of her is two-dimensional, and the real Daisy cannot live up to his lofty expectations:

There must have been moments that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. (97)

Because Daisy represents the culmination of all of Gatsby's efforts, his relationship with her is built largely on his own fantasy.

Some critics have suggested that Daisy's character is degenerate—that she represents the femme fatale of the novel. In some ways, her character causes her to be mostly concerned with herself, but, on the other hand, Gatsby's quest for Daisy's love is also misguided because she is very obviously incapable of the affection he wants, largely because of her attitudes about money and social status. Her actions and feelings towards Gatsby are, at least, in part a reflection of her background. As many critics have mentioned, although she seems to care for a while for Gatsby, her true affection is for the kind of luxury allowed by her status as a wealthy socialite. Daisy appears to be more aware of luxury than of any one person, including her own child, who she often refers to as an afterthought. Daisy remains caught up in her own problems throughout the plot. For instance, when her daughter is born, she wishes her to be “a beautiful little fool,” which she says is “the best thing a girl can be in this world” (17). Daisy's desire for her daughter to remain in a state of blissful ignorance reflects her own dissatisfaction with her marriage and consciousness of her husband's philandering. Daisy may not have many of the characteristics which Gatsby attributes to her, but it is also wrong to suggest, as many critics have, that she is a wholly immoral or unsympathetic character. As Leland Person mentions, the critics' incorrect, but common, view of her is that she is entirely flawed or viciously indifferent toward others:

Few critics write about *The Great Gatsby* without discussing Daisy Fay Buchanan; and few, it seems, write about Daisy without entering the unofficial competition of maligning her character. . . . A striking

similarity in these negative views of Daisy is their attribution to her of tremendous power over Gatsby and his fate. . . . Such an easy polarization of characters into Good Boy/Bad Girl, however, arises from a kind of critical double standard and simply belittles the complexity of the novel. (250)

Their perception of Daisy is that she is a morally flawed character, one who ignores some of the standards of her society, because of her wealth, in an effort to better herself or to improve her situation. However, in many ways, she adheres to upper-class norms of behavior, choosing a wealthy husband and the sanctuary of money over her first love. Overall, we can more aptly define Daisy as a product of her affluent, coddled environment with her blasé, even-tempered character. Her character represents some of the problems of the wealthy, as we perceive through Nick's narration, in one of his and Daisy's first discussions:

“You see I think everything's terrible anyhow,” she went on in a convinced way . . . Her eyes flashed around her in a defiant way, rather like Tom's, and she laughed with a thrilling scorn. “Sophisticated—God, I'm sophisticated!” . . . [S]he looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged. (18)

These lines, in combination with Nick's surprise that Daisy does not simply take her daughter and leave her husband, suggest that she feels inexorably stuck in her situation. She has grown accustomed to money and security to the extent that she is willing to substitute these qualities for what we may consider a truer, more authentic happiness. However, whether Daisy is inescapably trapped in her situation, a victim of her circumstance or whether she is simply comfortable in her situation is debatable.

The opposite of Daisy is Myrtle, a coarse woman who is not used to privilege. Myrtle has little expectation to be “waited on,” and only in her relationship with Tom,

with whom she is having an affair, does she experience some financial stability. Even in her physical appearance, she reflects the opposite of Daisy and her moneyed looks:

Myrtle emulates West Egg with the same vibrant passion that the *nouveaux riches* aim at East Egg, continuing down to the full length of the social ladder the emulous discontentment of American life. In her energy she “carried her surplus flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face . . . contained no facet or gleam of beauty, but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smoldering . . .” She wet her lips . . . and spoke . . . in a soft coarse voice” (p. 21). When she is killed she lies in the road with her mouth “wide open and ripped at the corners, as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored so long” (p. 105).
(Stern 226-227)

Whereas Daisy is listless as a result of the solidity of her money, Myrtle is the figure of vitality, reflecting the American tradition of mobility. Myrtle must be vital and healthy because her physical person symbolizes she still has to climb to the top.

Daisy, on the other hand, has no need for vitality in a sense; she already has financial stability.

Myrtle is not completely guileless when it comes to wanting to improve her situation and benefiting from her relationship with Tom. She views herself and the men in her life, including her husband, in terms of material value. Specifically, Myrtle wants material items and the wealth she associates with Tom, which is missing in what her husband can provide her. She states wanting a dog, and Tom buys her one; she makes a list of things she has “got to get,” with the expectation that Tom will get them for her (37). The second chapter of *Gatsby* “details the panoply of consumer items Myrtle gathers around her to convince herself she leads a glamorous and exciting life. In fewer than five pages this lowly mechanic’s wife changes clothes three times, switching from crepe de chine to muslin to chiffon” (Curnutt 102). Also

in this chapter, she mentions that her husband cannot afford his own suit for their wedding:

He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in, and never told me about it, and the man came after it one day when he was out . . . I gave it to him and then lay down and cried to beat the band all afternoon.
(35)

Her sister Catherine mentions that Myrtle and her husband have been living over a garage for eleven years, hinting that this may have been a major factor in the dissatisfaction she has with her marriage. Myrtle misguidedly believes that Tom will solve her financial troubles, that he will eventually support her completely. However, Tom appears to be taking advantage of her; he tells her it is Daisy who does not “believe in divorce,” and Nick mentions being “a little shocked at the elaborateness of [this] lie” (34). Myrtle’s naivety represents the impossibility of her becoming a convincing part of the Buchanan’s world.

Similarly, not all characters are entirely convinced of Gatsby’s entry into the upper echelon of society, but they are willing to play along with his grandeur if it behooves them. That is to say, some characters view him as is a brilliant illusionist, crafting a vision of wealth. For instance, Nick meets a man with owl-eyed glasses, referred to by Nick as Owl-eyes, who seems rather impressed by Gatsby’s fabrication of his persona. This is true even with regards to the completeness of the contents of Gatsby’s mansion as they relate to the character of Gatsby. In one instance, the man observes with astonishment that the books in Gatsby’s library are actual books rather than fakes:

“See!” he cried triumphantly. “It’s a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella’s a regular Belasco. It’s a triumph. What

thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too—didn't cut the pages. (46)

With “Belasco” likely referring to a sorcerer, the man who wears “enormous *owl*-eyed spectacles” appears to possess a more perceptive vision of Gatsby (45). He shows that books are part of his detailed illusion—the “unread volumes in his library which serve as one of his disguises” (*Gatsby and Modern Times* 163). Certainly, this view of Gatsby is not held by all or even most of the characters who comment on his behavior—and Nick, of course, does most of the commenting in the novel. However, the man with the owl-eyed glasses, along with Nick and his father Mr. Gatz, is the only other person who shows up at Gatsby's funeral or even acknowledges his death. Daisy who was supposedly the closest person to Gatsby, as Nick notes “without resentment,” fails to send even her condolences. Perhaps, he cannot resent her apparent lack of concern because it is the prevalent attitude towards Gatsby—both Gatsby and the owl-eyed man are somewhat astonished by the lack of attendance at the funeral:

Owl-eyes spoke to me by the gate.
 “I couldn't get to the house,” he remarked.
 “Neither could anybody else.”
 “Go on!” He started. “Why, my God! they used to go there by the hundreds.” (176)

This speaks to both how great of an illusion Gatsby was to the people who attended his parties and how much he was personally of value to them. Apparently, no one thought of Gatsby as someone who had died. Being larger than life, he may not have seemed merely “human” to them, and no one, beside Daisy and Nick, knew him personally. At the same time, those that knew him and attended his funeral, in this case only his father, Nick, and the owl-eyed man, felt sorry for him, knowing that he

was used, if, arguably, he might have unintentionally invited his followers to use him with his showy generosity. At the scene of the funeral it is raining, and Nick hears someone murmur, “Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on.” The rain continues during Nick and the owl-eyed man’s conversation, suggesting that Gatsby is blessed, and yet the owl-eyed man wipes the rain off of his glasses, perhaps so that he can “see” the situation more clearly, and pronounces him a “poor son-of-a-bitch” (176).

Ultimately, the crowd, here a symbol of opportunism and avarice, surrounds Gatsby because he provides them with free entertainment and the possibility of gaining wealth. By being near Gatsby, the crowd of partygoers is able to associate itself with that wealth. These partygoers make him out to be mysterious Gatsby, seeing him as someone from whom they can benefit—a supplier of wealth and an object of wealth himself. Similarly, few people who show up to Gatsby’s famous parties know him well or—have even met him for that matter, but that does not stop them from attending and indulging in all the party has to offer. Strikingly, when Nick attends his first of Gatsby’s parties, he mentions that he is “one of the few guests who [have] actually been invited” (41). However, Nick perceives that, in a way, everyone who can play by the rules allotted by Gatsby is invited to attend. The only requirement is having the appearance of buying into Gatsby’s illusion:

People were not invited—they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby’s door. Once there they were introduced to somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules and behavior associated with *amusement parks*. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with *a simplicity of heart* that was its own *ticket of admission*. (41, italics mine)

The parties are part of the grander illusion of Gatsby himself, and, here, Fitzgerald suggests that there are aspects of a theme-park to them. Having “simplicity of heart,” an open heart or mind, is the state required to experience a Gatsby event. This “simplicity” is a form of childlike innocence, or perhaps childlike greed, with partygoers simply looking for diversion. At the same time, as Nick observes, they are like greedy adults who are looking to gain something from Gatsby:

[They were] all looking a little hungry . . . I was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key. (42)

Clearly, the attitude of those who surround Gatsby is avaricious; however, Gatsby’s own permissive behavior enables their avarice. He presumably wants acknowledgement of his wealth and seems to welcome being taken advantage of so long as it facilitates this acknowledgement. Perhaps not unimportantly, Gatsby does not appear to be entirely comfortable with his wealth or status with his ostentatious behavior. We can imagine if he were, he would not find it necessary to throw such extravagant parties to “friends” who aren’t really friends. Likewise, Gatsby is unfamiliar with real, lasting wealth, and “when he acquires money he cannot quite believe in its reality, does not know what to do with it, converts it immediately into the material of romance, which furnished his imagination earlier” (Long 181). We can interpret his behavior in terms of contradictions—as a proud assertion of his wealth and as Fitzgerald’s larger insinuation of the faults of pursuing the Dream. Whether Gatsby is a success according to the middle-class criteria is debatable; he never fully enters the well-to-do niche nor does he entirely understand the moneyed class’s ways.

The novel ends after Gatsby's funeral, with Gatsby gone and with Nick trying to avoid the nostalgia he feels for Gatsby's parties: "I spent my Saturday nights in New York because those gleaming, dazzling parties of his were with me so vividly that I could still hear the music and the laughter" (181). In the end, Nick intensely associates Gatsby with the material world, specifically with his parties, but Nick also goes on to speculate on Gatsby's dream beyond that of his material influence:

I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night. (182)

Other than Nick's speculations and his insights, we too would only see Gatsby as a wealthy businessman, renowned for his over-the-top entertaining. However, Nick's insights reveal Gatsby's sensitivities and motivations for the overall story, which in this case is both a tragic flaw and that which makes Gatsby endearing and remarkable—specifically his not knowing or not accepting that his dream cannot be reached, his continual belief in "the green light" even when it is no longer plausible. From these insights, the reader is left knowing the degree to which Gatsby was hopeful and that his legacy went beyond the money, the parties, and the infamous reputation. This may be the very degree to which Gatsby believed in his dream—his variation on the American dream. From Nick's final speculation, the reader discovers that Gatsby wishes for something more than his money was able to provide. Thus, the reader sees the limitations of his great wealth as well as the limitlessness of the human ability to dream.

Fitzgerald's Continued Ambivalence

Fitzgerald's essential idealism comes through in his writing, depicted in the form of his characters' lives and thoughts as well as in the plots of his stories. Fitzgerald explores the theme of idealism by naming the Jazz Age and portraying the 1920s in his writing with glamour and a sense of what the American Dream ought to be, an idealistic image of self-improvement as opposed to the vulgar picture of materialism as represented in *Gatsby*. Fitzgerald's writings discussed in this thesis demonstrate the author's reoccurring idealistic themes, which reveal not simply the reality of what is but what characters and society have the potential for. However, these writings also importantly hint at Fitzgerald's unremitting sense of ambivalence—especially his ambivalence regarding wealth and his place in society—which often complicates and sometimes overshadows his sense of idealism.

As reflected in his writing, Fitzgerald demonstrates personal idealism, particularly through his personal relationships and by way of his sense of ambition, yet his severe ambivalence moderates his idealistic tendencies and causes him to question his own dreams. For instance, Fitzgerald's relationship with Zelda and his quest to secure their marriage has motivated his desire for fame and wealth. At the same time, he becomes suspicious of their relationship for the very reason that the pretext of wealth has established it. As mentioned previously, Fitzgerald had to continue to make money to maintain this relationship by selling second-rate short stories to periodicals. He resented having to sell stories since his wealthy contemporaries were not obligated to lower the standard of their writing to appease editors or make sales. As a result, Fitzgerald is never quite able to rectify his personal situation—including

his wealth and fame and primary romantic relationship, all of which have, in part, been established by wealth and association with wealth or through external motivations such as fame.

Fitzgerald's idealism and his ambivalence occur both in his personal life and in his writing, but the degree to which Fitzgerald expresses ambivalence in his writing suggests each text's level of sophistication. For instance, in many of the stories as well as in *Paradise*, Fitzgerald describes the plot with references to characters' idealism, which tends to emerge in the description and expend in the plot's resolution. In *Paradise*, Amory becomes rejected through the course of the plot, falling hard from his youthful state of egoism, but he ends the novel with thoughts of renewed and lasting idealism. As such, his idealism appears to be both potentially cursory, something which Amory grasps onto in times of romanticism or happiness and abandons in moments of dissolution, and it seems lasting, perhaps as a faint thread in difficult times. That it is difficult to distinguish whether Amory's idealism is lasting or temporary, a deeply held belief or a mere whim, suggests that the idealism found in the novel is superficial or that the idealistic sentiment has not been fully developed.

The popularity of *The Great Gatsby* as well as its accepted position of literary merit far outweighs that of *Paradise* and, with the possible exception of *Tender is the Night*, all of Fitzgerald's other novels. Perhaps some of this continued popularity as well as the novel's longstanding place of literary acclaim is due in part to Fitzgerald's more impressive development of idealistic thought. More specifically, Fitzgerald creates with the novel a portrayal of unbreakably thorough idealism with Gatsby who is idealistic to a fault. Fitzgerald then presents the beliefs of this greatly idealistic

character through the lens of a more moderate narrator, Nick, such that the reader can experience Gatsby's idealism, at times appreciating it immensely and at other times nearly ridiculing its irrationality as Nick seems to. Here Gatsby represents idealism in its true form, he believes in his idealistic dreams fully, whereas Nick represents a more realistic viewpoint while appreciating the potential for idealism. Precisely the method through which Fitzgerald presents these contrasting viewpoints in the novel, through these two very different characters, allows for a believable exploration of idealism as modern culture may allow it to be presented and cause it to be discouraged.

These two viewpoints represent Fitzgerald's unyielding ambivalence—his own idealism and, simultaneously, his fear of inauthentic reasons for being successful in his idealistic endeavors, such as having wealth in a culture that appreciates only wealth. The novel represents his ambivalence by describing idealism in modern America as that which cannot exist to the degree that Gatsby believes in it—either for an extended period of time or without Gatsby's capacity to not be discouraged by the reality of the present moment. At the same time, the novel arguably maintains its popularity because of its ambivalent ending, in which a believable thread of idealism persists, an appreciation for the "Gatsbys" who have made up America by believing in "the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us." Because the novel's ending is multifaceted it likely appeals to a wider audience; the novel reveals idealism to be transient—temporarily present in an environment which stunts it.

As we have seen from the writings, Fitzgerald's ambivalence toward money, wealthy people and society, and women who require wealth is that which cannot be resolved. Modern America did not present Fitzgerald with a method for alleviating his

ambivalence regarding these concerns about wealth because the very beliefs about wealth were part of 1920s culture. Fitzgerald's personal idealism allowed him to see beyond the materialism of his time, but only to a degree; in other ways he was subject to his own belief in the glamour of wealth and fame. This ambivalence, instead of necessitating a resolution, seems to be a unique part of American culture, which Fitzgerald explored through *Gatsby* and other writings, always wishing for idealism while acknowledging its difficulty.

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