

Looking Back to the Past and Forward to the Future:

West, East and Nostalgia in *The Great Gatsby*

John Brooks

Faculty Mentor. Kirk Curnutt, Ph.D.

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Abstract

F. Scott Fitzgerald's images of the Jazz Age characterize the Twenties as a time of decadent extravagance, a sharp departure from the morally driven Victorian age that ended abruptly with World War I. Modern America was far more concerned with excess and pretense than the prewar past and lacked the order that tradition had previously inspired. Modern America, particularly the Jazz Age, was a time when conflicts were deeply cultural—the emerging modern, urban culture and the rural, traditional culture were in substantial opposition.

Fitzgerald emphasizes the moral conflicts that emerged from this rapid cultural change in *The Great Gatsby* by putting the pastoral Middle West against the modern East. This reflects Fitzgerald's perceptions of a changing time period and the implications that the changes had on the lives of Americans. The novel juxtaposes two time periods: an earlier time period in the Middle West presented through metadiagetic narrative suggesting a nostalgic look back toward Victorian times, and a characterization of the modern and industrious East set in present narrative time.

By organizing the lives of the characters in the novel this way, coming from Victorian landscapes to be introduced to modernity, Fitzgerald is able to critically assess modern culture. Fitzgerald writes his characters' pasts the way he does because it allows him to look nostalgically back to a time of order, tradition and morality while simultaneously critiquing the present and future of America.

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Literature of the early twentieth century is particularly engaging because it showcases a time period unlike any other in America's history. The expatriates of American Literature, the "Lost Generation," struggled to find the meaning of life between two catastrophic and unprecedented World Wars, living through the Roaring 20s and the Great Depression, two decades where work performed rarely aligned with wealth obtained and the surface level morality of the Victorian Age seemed to be diluted and replaced with hedonism. The novels and poetry of the modern period focus on the disenchantment of the American Dream, which was understood to be a failure. Jim Cullen explains that the evolving American Dream in the early twentieth century was the "Dream of Upward Mobility": that Americans, by means of hard work, would see progress leading toward happy, moral lives (69, 7). At this time, the growing factory system allowed for this dream to be real on one level—Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and J.P. Morgan, among others, demonstrate the possibility of the Dream of Upward Mobility. However, modernists focused on the cost of achieving upward mobility—and the "good life" in general—in the early twentieth century by citing a general decline in morality.

This critique of the American Dream presents researchers with an interesting body of literature that offers a dramatic characterization of America and its movement toward modernity. The closing Victorian Age, as Jon Stallworthy argues by emphasizing poetry like Thomas Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush," a poem postdated to the last day of the nineteenth century, was one of "relative conviction and optimism" while the

emerging modern era was built on “skeptical irresolution” (1828). Stallworthy writes, “The unsettling force of modernity profoundly challenged traditional ways of structuring and making sense of human experience... modernity disrupted the older order, upended ethical and social codes, cast into doubt previously stable assumptions about self, community, the world, and the divine” (1828).

If, as John Dewey suggested in 1926, “artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation,” literature’s purpose could be said to be delivering news in more absolute or “real” terms (Dewey 347-50). Researching the emerging modern culture through the literature it produced allows readers to understand the way writers interpreted “news,” such as the state of America and its culture, during a time characterized by a series of monumental events that changed the way people saw life. Novels—“loose baggy monsters,” in Henry James’s phrase—can be, can do, can include anything at all, defying prescriptions and confines, but they ultimately converge on unremitting issues (James 477, Stallworthy 1838). These issues, Stallworthy suggests, include “the construction of the self within society, the reproduction of the real world, and the temporality of human experience and of narrative” (1838). The flexibility that came with discussing these issues in novels enabled writers to critique America’s transition into modernity by exploring the confusion and disenchantment that came with the mass death of World War I, the emerging consumer culture, age consciousness and cultural understandings of maturity, and other rising social issues.

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is considered to be a foundational text of modern American Literature, and certainly addresses these themes of disillusionment.

Through an eloquent writing style, Fitzgerald tells the tragic story of James Gatz, known to most everyone in New York City as Gatsby, a rich and extravagant playboy. Gatsby is attempting to recover a specific and personal aspect of his past—a girl named Daisy Fay who has since married Tom Buchanan and started a family—through façades and illusions. The story is narrated by Nick Carraway, Daisy’s cousin and Tom’s school friend, who comes to New York from a well-to-do family in the Middle West because he returned from World War I restless and wishes to get into the bond business. The novel lays bare a culture characterized by excess, age consciousness, and the rise of youth culture—not to mention utter despair and hopelessness in regard to family/social values and American progress. Many critical readings of the novel side with William Troy’s essay of 1945, which hints that Gatsby is a symbol of America itself, and that his failure equates to the failure of the Cullen’s American Dream of Upward Mobility (Stallman 55).

As a modernist, F. Scott Fitzgerald was certainly consumed with looking back on historical time periods with nostalgia. David Stouck notes that in *The Great Gatsby* there are a number of curious, sometimes startling references to an innocent pastoral existence which appear incongruous in a novel apparently absorbed in the fashionable, contemporary life of New York City during the “Jazz Age” (64). These references are indicators of a historical time period that modernists revisited in the midst of the emerging modern age. Ronald Berman assures us, “F. Scott Fitzgerald was deeply aware of the conflict between modern times and what he called in 1937 ‘the old America,’” a time period that many Americans, including Fitzgerald, referred to as Victorian (*The Great Gatsby and Fitzgerald’s World of Ideas* 1). Modernists looked back on this time period with admiration because it was characterized by a rigid moral code that suppressed

free-floating anxieties, such as fears of miscegenation and the emergence of the new woman, brought on by the progress inspired by rapid industrialization and invention. Dr. Thomas Arnold, noting the rapid progress made by his generation, suggested that the Victorians had “been living, as it were, the life of three hundred years in thirty” (qtd. in Christ 979). Walter Besant, a late Victorian, remarked that so entirely altered were “the minds and habits of the ordinary Englishman” by 1897, “that he would not, could he see him, recognize his own grandfather” (979). Anxieties concerning this rapid growth necessitated an illusion of morality to preserve social order and security. This false impression of an age that found solace in moral convention could not sustain itself through the cultural events of the modern era. World War I, particularly, helped form the conflict that Berman assures us Fitzgerald was aware of. Modern America was far more concerned with excess and pretense than the prewar past and often gave a special morality to the wealthy that allowed for the extravagance and excess typically emphasized in Fitzgerald’s works.

In pre-Civil War eras, conflicts were largely geographical, cleanly pitting the Northern Union against the Southern Confederate States in regard the acceptability of slavery. In the Gilded Age, a period of rapid economic growth following the Civil War and Reconstruction (1865-1901), conflicts were largely centered on ethnicity and social class because the war was still immediate in people’s minds. Following World War I America left this Victorian Age and entered the modern twentieth century, coming into the Jazz Age, a time of great change and movement, where conflicts were deeply cultural. This time period saw a cosmopolitan, modern, urban culture pitted against a provincial, traditionalist, rural culture.

Fitzgerald was a man “at once prewar and post-war” (Fitzgerald, “My Generation” 194). He wrote that he and his fellow modernists “inherited two worlds—the one of hope to which we had been bred [the Victorian], the one of disillusion which we had discovered early for ourselves [the modern]” (194). Although the Victorian world was only several years lost in time, he believed that it “was growing as remote as another country” with America’s movement toward modernity (194). He wrote, in a 1938 letter to his daughter:

...my generation of radicals and breakers-down never found anything to take the place of the old virtues of work and courage and the old graces of courtesy and politeness. But I don’t want you to live in an unreal world or to believe that the system that produced Barbara Hutton can survive more than ten years. (The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald 36)

This sentiment, suggesting the death of the system that produced the “Poor Little Rich Girl,” perfectly emphasizes Fitzgerald’s understanding that times had changed during his life. No longer could people hope to succeed on merit (or luck) alone. The emerging age would require work and would come without guarantees of success.

Although readings of *The Great Gatsby* are innumerable, it should be noted that the novel emphasizes the conflict between the modern, urban culture and the rural, traditionalist culture. Fitzgerald reflects his perceptions of the changing time period and the implications that the changes had on the lives of Americans by placing the pastoral Middle West—as opposed to the Old West of the Frontier—against the modern East. Fitzgerald’s pastoral Middle West isn’t used to contrast the differences between lifestyles in terms of vocation or landscape, but rather to contrast character in terms of morality by associating the western geography with a less modern time. For this reason, Nick’s Middle West is “not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling

returning trains of [his] youth, and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 176). Nick’s Middle West isn’t an actual place, but an upbringing that instills virtue and honor through traditions of morality and order.

The novel emphasizes a rural Middle West alongside New York City to juxtapose two time periods. Fitzgerald presents us with an earlier time period in the Middle West presented through metadiagetic narrative suggesting a nostalgic look back toward Victorian times. A characterization of the modern and industrious East set in the present narrative time of 1922 is offered in contrast. The underlying structure of the novel, concerning differences between these two milieus, suggests a foundation of movement in America, as change is essentially a movement from one state to another. Robert Beuka, in *SuburbiaNation*, affirms that the novel is “set in an environment in transition,” and “positions a nostalgia for landscapes of the past in the face of the onrush of modernity” (Beuka 26). This movement throughout the narrative, being realized by displacing Victorian characters in a modern setting, reveals changes in character to create a portrayal of America concerned with the implications of progress in respect to principles and order. This technique establishes disconnectedness from place and time that “opens out into a sense of alienation” (27). This interpretation confirms Robert Lehan’s analysis that the novel “not only caught the sense of the past, it at times caught the sense of the future” (Lehan 7).

Robert Ornstein argues that in *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald presents readers with the East/West phenomenon in order to establish an imaginative sweep of the American continent. He interprets this technique as being little concerned with the materialism and

moral anarchy of the twentieth century. Instead, he argues that the theme is “the undying quest of the romantic dream, which is forever betrayed in fact and yet redeemed in men’s minds” (Ornstein 54). However, this does not account for why the dream is a failure.

Modernism, because of industry and the wealth it made obtainable, is the reason that the American Dream was reintroduced in the minds of Americans, but the materialism and moral anarchy that modernism embellished were the ultimate indicators that American Dream was unachievable; that is, unachievable in a sense that the immorality that accompanied *success* contradicted the possibility of leading a happy, *moral* life.

Fitzgerald’s purpose *is* to discount the dream, but he does so by revealing the moral ambiguities that modernism inspires by nostalgically contrasting it to the Victorian Age. For this reason, the novel is more than an assessment of the dream against a Jazz Age setting; it transpires as an exploration of Victorian attitudes in an increasingly modern era.

This method of reading the novel, as a snapshot of America during a turbulent time period, aligns with Ronald Berman’s notion in *The Great Gatsby and Fitzgerald’s World of Ideas* that “Fitzgerald was a first-rate observer of the American scene,” which insists that he can no longer be taken as a “lightweight” (2). Berman suggests that as the subject matter presented in *The Great Gatsby* recedes further into the historical distance, the issues of the novel become ever more distinct by differentiating themselves from current issues. Thematic material of this historical novel is, after all, directly related to issues of 1922, the year it is set, and, inevitably, issues of 1925, when Fitzgerald penned it, allowing the novel to function as a paradigmatic production of the early 1920s and the culture that filled it. However, because Fitzgerald was a modernist consumed with the

past, specifically the fin de siècle period of his youth, the novel also effectively accounts for the departure of the culture of the prewar, Victorian past.

Instead of interacting with *The Great Gatsby* autobiographically, connecting fictional characters to actual lives, a method that has provided insightful interpretations for a variety of Fitzgerald's works, Kirk Curnutt suggests a cultural study approach. In *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, he writes that the author's tales of optimistic "jelly-beans" and playful flappers reflect "the experience of peers who like him came of age amid the welter of cultural change that marked the first two decades of the twentieth century" (Introduction 5). By looking at the text in this way, suggesting that the characters of *The Great Gatsby* are not references to select people but rather to all people of a select time period, that of modern America as it came into itself in the first decades of the twentieth century, Fitzgerald's work may be more accurately described as an image of a changing time period than an image of Fitzgerald's life.

In order to adequately understand *The Great Gatsby*, then, it is necessary to understand the world that inspired it and the world in which it takes place. As Ronald Berman explains, "the book was written before most of its readers were born. It inhabits a different world, with barriers between men and women, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, rich and poor, capital and labor, educated and half-literate" ("*The Great Gatsby* and the Twenties" 79). Although readers may approach the text with specific ideas in mind, Berman suggests ideas of love and existential freedom, noting both Gatsby's idealistic love for Daisy and his inability to transcend social barriers that exist in his world, readers' ideas may not be the ideas that the story brings to its readers.

While the real time of the novel takes place in the modern East and serves to illustrate a corrupt, immoral future, the characters' pasts play an important role in their perceptions of New York because they indicate inherent Victorian attitudes. The main characters of *The Great Gatsby*—Nick Carraway, Daisy and Tom Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Gatsby himself—are all characters from the Middle West. Ornstein reminds us that the novel is “a story of ‘displaced persons’ who have journeyed eastward in search of a larger experience of life” (Ornstein 56). Nick is from the vague “Middle West” and only came to the East because he returned from World War I restless. Gatsby grew up along the shores of Lake Superior in a small town in Minnesota, only leaving because of the influence of modern, consumer culture. Gatsby's image is created from magazines, a modern aspect of the emerging consumer culture, although he exhibits the same restlessness as Nick does. This restlessness is a purely modern condition that lures characters of *The Great Gatsby* to modernity, in this case by bringing them East to the thriving city of New York, in search of the American Dream.

Fitzgerald dives deeper into the subject of restlessness in *This Side of Paradise* when Thomas (Tom) D'Invilliers consults Amory Blaine on the subject: “Why shouldn't you be bored,” yawned Tom. “Isn't that the conventional frame of mind for the young man of your age and condition?” Amory explains that he is “more than bored,” he is restless. They decide that this condition is direct result of love and war, which “ruined the old backgrounds, sort of killed individualism out of [their] generation” (185). As a result, Amory understands that life is “huge and complex:” “The world is so overgrown that it can't lift its own fingers, and I was planning to be such an important finger” (185).

Amory's restlessness comes from his new, disillusioned understanding of the world, which killed his dreams of becoming anything more than ordinary.

Also from the Middle West in *The Great Gatsby* are Jordan and Daisy, before she married. They both lived in Louisville. Tom came from Chicago. Nick notes the phenomenon of this Eastward movement, telling us at the end of the novel, "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 176). Nick's general observation in the final pages of the novel is actually a very valuable comment. Because all of the characters are from the West yet come east only to be ruined because they have "some deficiency," the novel has a structure that suggests that the West and the East are fundamentally different places.

The Middle West, where the novel's characters originate from, is characterized as Victorian. It maintains a pastoral demeanor, with a sense of tradition, order and morality. By rendering it in this way, Fitzgerald places an assumed sense of morality and appreciation for order or tradition into his characters. Fitzgerald's characters successfully exhibit their Victorian pasts because they seek the security of a familiar setting after moving to the alien city. Beuka notes that characters, especially Nick, are displaced in the modern East because their worldviews are unrepresented:

As [Nick] confesses in the beginning of his narration, the "thing to do" on moving to New York would have been to "find rooms" in the city; instead, drawn by his longing for an environment at least superficially similar to that of his hometown, Nick settles on the 'commuter town' of West Egg. (32)

By settling in West Egg, Nick demonstrates nostalgia for his Victorian identity subconsciously, long before he becomes aware of the actual corrupting influences of modernity.

The real time of the novel is “set in 1922, at the height of the Jazz Age, on Long Island’s North Shore, or Gold Coast” (30). In the present narrative time, which comprises the majority of the novel, we are witness to Fitzgerald’s description of the 1920s and its lack of morality in order to understand the radical cultural departure from the Victorian past. The most memorable passage emphasizing Fitzgerald’s disillusionment with modernity comes from his description of New York’s poorer suburbs as Nick rides with Tom into the heart of the city. Here, Fitzgerald writes of a “desolate area of land” called the “valley of ashes”:

This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 23)

Nick agrees with Tom, that this place, described as a “dismal scene” and “waste land,” is a “terrible place” (24-6). This description bears a strong resemblance to the scenes describing T.S. Eliot’s “Unreal City,” London, in “The Waste Land” (Eliot line 60). Both Eliot’s unreal city and Fitzgerald’s valley of ashes are dry, sterile, and filled with death. Fitzgerald uses language in this passage that characterizes “gray” things that “crawl” or give out “ghastly creaks” while stirring up “impenetrable clouds” of “bleak dust” that “drift endlessly” (23). This language is a conscious choice to describe the hopelessness of this wasted area and its inhabitants. Fitzgerald’s valley of ashes serves to show readers, as well as well as Nick (who misinterprets his father’s advice about tolerance and some

people not having the same advantages as he's had), that the "progress" Americans experienced wasn't universal, and that it left some—such as those in the valley of ashes—by the wayside.

Popular images often describe the 1920s as a decade of prosperity and righteous living, not acknowledging places like Fitzgerald's valley of ashes. Instead, descriptions focus on colorful characters like bootleggers, gangsters, and flappers who listened to hot jazz and spent gratuitous amounts of money, which they earned from a soaring stock market, as fast as they could obtain it. Fitzgerald certainly doesn't help dissolve this misleading image of universal opulence, but he disenchants the understanding by critiquing the lack of morality that the hedonistic age inspired. His prose is saturated with lavish images describing all aspects of extravagance only obtainable by wealth. Curnutt notes that throughout his canon Fitzgerald describes:

cut-glass bowls, blue porcelain bathtubs... chiffon dresses and silk stockings, saffron hats, pink-shaded lamps with blackbirds painted on them, Circassian leather lounges, tortoise-shell eye-glasses, as well of jewels of all varieties, from emeralds to rubies to diamonds—including at least one as big as the Ritz Hotel. ("Fitzgerald's Consumer World" 89-90)

The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald's masterpiece, is no exception. One cannot help but remember the scene that puts Daisy Buchanan in tears, that is, when Gatsby reveals his tailor-made shirts, "piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high" in his cabinets:

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them one by one before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple green and lavender and faint orange with monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly with a strained sound Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. (92-93)

The way that Fitzgerald emphasizes the value of beautiful and exotic objects throughout his work directly relates to an increasing trend in the 1920s, which accompanied the availability of money in the decade: the rise of a consumer culture. Many citizens of the Roaring Twenties enjoyed an unprecedented rise in the standard of living and luxury because they enjoyed full employment and low inflation (Curnutt, “Fitzgerald’s Consumer World” 88). This Great Boom brought on a period of intense prosperity, but it also “inspired criticism for its indifference to intellectual and artistic life” (88). Because the emerging consumer culture inspired this indifference toward intelligence or artistic lifestyles, placing value on objects instead of character, many artists read it as a movement away from the morality of previous generations.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick describes Gatsby’s parties in elegant language that sparkles with hints of extravagance and excessive, aberrant living. The extravagant scenes of objects that Fitzgerald writes of contrast with the image of the valley of ashes and demonstrate overindulgence as an indicator of hedonism. After illustrating the party scene at Gatsby’s house, where “on weekends [Gatsby’s] Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight,” Nick describes the level of help Gatsby has to allow him throw such showy social gatherings (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 39). This clearly establishes that Gatsby not only hosts stereotypically bravura parties with hot jazz; he does so without exertion, physically or economically, living a prosperous, unrestrained life. Nick tells us that “on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before” (39). Fitzgerald is very careful about his language throughout the novel,

especially passages describing Gatsby's standard of living. It is self-evident but not insignificant that Gatsby can easily afford eight servants, including one labeled "extra," who toil all day to fix whatever destruction accumulates during the weekend parties.

Fitzgerald is suggesting that immense wealth, like that of Gatsby and Tom, inspires carelessness. In the final pages of the novel, Nick realizes this about Tom:

They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. (179)

Although Nick doesn't characterize Gatsby as being careless in the same way that he understands Tom and Daisy to be, Gatsby's ability to buy himself out of his problems can be read along similar lines. Also, Gatsby can be interpreted as selfish, just as Tom and Daisy are, because he displays complete disregard for anybody's opinions or emotions except for Daisy's. He may be generous about buying others gifts and allowing them to attend his parties without asking for anything in return, but he bases his entire lifestyle on Daisy, disregarding and even using other characters in the story to attain her.

Notions of prosperity and ostentatious living that modernity inspires are further demonstrated by Nick's description of the magnificent, modern technology that reinforces Gatsby's lifestyle:

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb. (39-40)

In this passage, readers are drawn specifically to the juice extracting machine. It suggests progress through mechanization, but because the machine is something affordable only by those who have wealth which can be recklessly spent on non-necessities, it functions

as a symbol of extravagance. Nick makes a special point to draw readers to the machine because it is a new invention and out of place in his eyes. We must remember that although he describes himself as from a “well-to-do” family in the Middle West, his conception of wealth matches that of the “ragged edge of the universe,” not that which is demonstrated in the East by Gatsby or Tom, who brings a “string of polo ponies from Lake Forest,” Chicago, to New York (3, 6). These examples of extravagance amaze Nick, who says “it was hard to realize that a man in my own generation was wealthy enough to do that” (6). To ensure that the decadence of Gatsby’s parties is portrayed fully, Nick describes the lavish spread Gatsby nightly provides for his guests:

On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d’œuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another. (40)

The language Nick uses here emphasizes both the excessiveness of Gatsby’s standard of living (“a *real* brass rail”) and the types of people who attend Gatsby’s parties.

Gatsby’s guests, who are welcome to attend his parties even though they are uninvited, are strictly Easterners. They are theatrical people, politicians, and the nouveau riche who wink at the illegal and the criminal. Nick briefly mentions many of these guests when reading from a catalogue in the beginning of the fourth chapter. The guests he mentions include the following: Clarence Endive, who gets in a fight with a bum named Etty while wearing white knickerbockers; Ripley Snell, who is so drunk that Mrs. Ulysses Swett’s automobile runs over his right hand and he lands in the penitentiary three days later; the young Quinns, who are later divorced; and Henry L. Palmetto, who later kills himself by jumping in front of a subway train (62-3). As Berman assures us, the

biographies of the guests listed in Nick's catalogue all seem to be "organized around sex, money, and many troubles with both" (*The Great Gatsby and Fitzgerald's World of Ideas* 89). This catalogue is full of suggestive masterpieces that agree with Berman's understanding of Gatsby's guests: the "Leeches" suggest parasitic behavior and a group of guests that attend the parties seeking gain, the "whole clan named Blackbuck" suggests a group of people who use the black market in order to earn *bucks*, or money, "young Brewer" is an individual who is making alcohol amidst Prohibition, "the Hammerheads" are stubborn and stupid but they are also crafty like sharks, and the names "Edgar Beaver" and "the Hornbeams" both carry sexual connotations suggesting that they are people attending Gatsby's parties in search of sexual gratification (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 61-3).

The behavior that Nick observes of Gatsby's guests aligns with that of the catalogue, as Gatsby's parties usually conclude with arguments between women and the "men said to be their husbands" or "bizarre and tumultuous" car accidents resulting from reckless driving (51, 53). Characters from the Middle West often demonstrate Victorian ideals in the narrative, however. For example, Nick explains that before meeting Myrtle Wilson with Tom Buchanan in New York, he'd been drunk only once in his life. This abstinence or indifference toward alcohol clearly sets Nick, who has very recently come to the East, apart from those who have been influenced by the hedonism of the modern age. Nick's lack of excess demonstrates self-control that partygoers from New York attending Gatsby's parties rarely represent. Furthermore, Nick explains to readers that he is "rather ashamed that on [his] first appearance [he] had stayed so late," further demonstrating affinity with politeness and order.

The “female guests” who are “too young to know one [liquor or cordial] from another” suggest an age division between the men and women attendees. This age gap is further emphasized by Nick’s portrayal of Gatsby’s gatherings in general, in which he narrates one of the more famous lines of the novel, “In [Gatsby’s] blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars” (39). In this passage, Nick seems to offhandedly mention from the neighboring lawn that the guests are composed of “men” and “girls.” This is actually a mindful use of language by Fitzgerald to bring attention to the rise of the youth culture and the beginning of age consciousness, another impactful movement in the 1920s and the modern age in general.

With the prosperity and decadence imbedded in the Jazz Age, which made possible the growth of the leisure class, came an indifference to intellectual life. Because of this growing social trend, which encouraged general indifference toward wisdom automatically accrued throughout the aging process, a modern attitude toward the life cycle emerged. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman mourned in 1922, “age as age claimed respect, the elders assuming that wisdom accrued with the passage of time with no effort on their part....But now the scene changes—changes beyond recognition. Age [now] stands as the rear-guard for an advancing society.” Fitzgerald, like Gilman, took note that “the hour of age has passed, and the hour of youth has come” (349).

The youth Fitzgerald describes is tied directly to the late years of the Victorian period, the 1890s, when industrialization and urbanization lessened the attention given to children from parents. Fitzgerald’s fiction observes the two generations in the 1920s, illustrating the growing age gap and movements that came from it, by simultaneously describing both the older, traditional generation and the new, rebellious

youth generation. When Nick notes that “men and girls” attend Gatsby’s parties, and that the “girls” are too young to recognize certain beverages that Gatsby has graciously provided, he is explaining several things. First, as aging was synonymous with decline and deterioration, that the men would have surrounded themselves with feminine objects—seen as objects because of the emerging consumer culture—who were “girls” because they embodied youth and would have allowed the men to feel young, too, by association. Curnutt explains that youth was more than having a physical existence as being young; it was “an attitude, a life style available to those who knew the secret to not succumbing to senescence” (“F. Scott Fitzgerald, Age Consciousness, and the Rise of American Youth Culture” 30). With this in mind, it seems possible, too, that the “girls” Nick describes are actually women who have dressed up to appear youthful in order to capture the attitude of the youth, reiterating the common theme of illusion that is evident throughout the novel. Myrtle and her sister reflect this possibility in the New York party scene. Fitzgerald writes of Myrtle’s “costume,” to explain that she is not who she is trying to appear to be, and makes a point to describe Catherine’s eyebrows as having been plucked and artificially drawn “at a more rakish angle” in an attempt to restore “the old alignment” of her aging face (*The Great Gatsby* 30).

Although Fitzgerald portrays the Jazz Age in a way that aligns with the stereotypical portrayals of prosperous living and magnificent opulence, including flappers and hot jazz, his modernist way of interpreting the world makes his descriptions rich with moral judgments and questions concerning the dissipation of social virtues that came with the radical cultural changes. Therefore, some of the gaudiest celebrations of wealth and youth, beneath the surface, are actually annihilating criticisms. It is clear, as Curnutt

proposes, that “Fitzgerald’s recurring inquiry into the effect of easy money on individual morality reflects 1920s anxieties over American culture’s sudden glorification of fiscal and emotional irresponsibility” (Introduction 13). Gatsby’s juicing machine and elaborate cream-colored roadster, complete with green leather interior and nickel trimmed boxes that swell along its body under a series of wind-shields capable of reflecting the sun dozens of directions, certainly serve as symbols of excess and a shifting system of values that emerged out of the leisure class. Likewise, the age consciousness demonstrated with the emergence of the youth culture demonstrates that spontaneity and pleasure are more valuable than honesty or intellect. This group of people, especially the nouveau riche, abandons an older, Victorian collection of values in order to live lives of hedonism in a modern age characterized by excess and pretense.

As the novel progresses, New York comes to be associated not only with glamour, excitement and a general concern with youth over intellect or artistic ability but also with violence. We first see this in Tom’s breaking of Myrtle’s nose in the 158th Street apartment. Tom strikes Myrtle following a discussion concerning whether or not she had any right to mention Tom’s wife’s name. Tom and Gatsby’s showdown at the Plaza toward the end of the novel also connects violence with New York. Finally George Wilson’s movement toward Gatsby’s house before the shooting suggests a “movement of ‘urban’ violence” out of the city (Beuka 41). Because Fitzgerald associates violence and imminent immorality with modernity, and therefore New York, Nick’s reaction while crossing the Queensboro Bridge into modernity is appropriate: “‘Anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge,’ I thought; ‘anything at all...’” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 69).

William Barrett notes the irony in the fact that while Fitzgerald was intimately connected with the Jazz Age, he simultaneously stood outside of it: “his own moral code had been formed on an earlier one, and he did not really participate in the new code that was born in the twenties” (Barrett 138). Barrett suggests that this historical separation, between the moral code of Fitzgerald’s generation and that of the modern generation emerging around him, allowed Fitzgerald to be “so sensitive an observer of the decade of flaming youth and flappers” (138). Fitzgerald’s moral displacement allowed him to write about a time period that excited most people with an undertone of contempt and disapproval.

As characters from the Middle West are acclimated to the East, which symbolizes the modern, urban culture, they grow increasingly distant from their Victorian roots. Although the characters share a distinct cynicism and disillusionment toward the modern world that consumes them in New York, they are inevitably involved with and consumed by the cultural changes. The new America that Daisy, Jordan, Tom and Nick experience by moving to New York is as powerful and unavoidable as the cultural changes that swept America as it left the Victorian past and entered modernity.

Nick is the only character we are able to observe throughout the process of acclimation. It is clear that his prolonged presence in the East tempts him tremendously, as he begins to fall for the illusion of modernity by drifting away from his instilled Victorian sensibilities. He explains that he “began to like New York, the racy, adventurous feel of it at night, and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 56). His admiration for adventure suggests a fascination with new experiences that goes against

his conservative, order focused upbringing. In New York, he often fantasizes about “romantic women.” He imagines himself entering into their lives and feels secure because “no one would ever know or disapprove” of his thoughts, which are growing increasingly distant from his Victorian roots (56). These secret thoughts rouse guilt that confuses him and disillusion Nick’s worldview.

Jordan and Daisy’s pastoral morality has also been confused by modernity. Jordan tells Nick that she and Daisy had a “beautiful white girlhood” in Louisville, the white implying an innocence that has since been lost along with her youth (19). In Jordan’s metadiagetic section of the novel, which describes Daisy and Gatsby’s romantic afternoon from a limited, third person perspective, she comes off as innocent and honest. In her story, she is going to the Red Cross to donate time by making bandages. Several years later, Nick describes Jordan as having “mastered a certain hardy skepticism,” and tells us that she doesn’t mind Tom having a mistress, so long as she doesn’t phone during dinner time—she considers that to be indecent (15). Furthermore, we know that she cheats in golf and drives recklessly. Daisy, too, tells Nick that she has grown “pretty cynical about everything;” she’s “had a very bad time” and thinks “everything’s terrible anyhow” (16-7).

Fitzgerald doesn’t give the reader much information concerning Tom’s youth and pastoral past. Nick explains only that Tom was a football player for New Haven and that his family is excessively—even monstrously—wealthy (6). Readers aren’t introduced to Tom’s past because, unlike the other characters in the story, he does not have a past life that contradicts his lifestyle in present narrative time; furthermore, he doesn’t serve to represent the Victorian ethos in affirmative terms. He believes in a wholly Victorian

tradition of order throughout the novel, but his family's monstrous wealth has separated him from it by making him careless. Tom's sense of order uses the ideology of morality to instill upper class, white, male dominance. It is important to remember that while modernists looked back on the Victorian Era with admiration because it was characterized by a rigid moral code that suppressed free-floating anxieties brought on by rapid industrialization and invention, the moral code that the time encouraged was an illusion to preserve social order and security. Tom's family, with their monstrous wealth, is separated and demonstrates that the Victorian concern for the future is troubling because it relies on social barriers, racism and sexist ideology that do not align with modernity. Therefore, Tom, like the other characters of the story, even with wealth, cannot survive modernity without adapting to cultural changes.

Nick tells us that he believed "Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game" (6). Although Nick is accurate in suggesting that Tom will go on forever seeking, it isn't the glory of his football years that he is searching for. Tom is trying to push a Victorian agenda in a modern world; he is searching for security in the tradition of Victorian order. Because Tom's way of thinking isn't represented in the reality of the modern age, he grows to be a "terrible pessimist about things" and believes "civilization's going to pieces," just as many of the modernist writers believed (12). Tom sees modernity as a threat, suggesting that "nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white" (130). He believes that if the white race does not "look out," it will be "utterly submerged" (13). Tom's racism is founded on a strong fear of miscegenation, the mixing

of races by sex or marriage, specifically the idea of mixing blood. Miscegenation is a historical remnant of the racism in America that worked to single out non-white races as “the other.” This was a particularly effective system of power in the Victorian Age, as it supported white dominance during the period of colonization. Particularly interesting, when placed next to his clear frustration with modernity, is Tom’s subscription to *The Saturday Evening Post*. This demonstrates his confusion amidst the changing time period because his participation in the mass print culture hints that he is unknowingly eroding Victorian order.

The fin de siècle period also produced the new woman, a threatening redefinition of sexual relationships that evolved into the flapper of the modern age. Although earlier in the Victorian period separate roles in society for men and women were more concretely established, the recognized cultural distinctions between genders were eroding. Tom fears the emergence of the new woman, suggesting that he “may be old-fashioned in [his] ideas, but women run around too much these days,” meeting “all kinds of crazy fish” (103). In this passage, Tom maintains the Victorian tradition of male dominance and the idea that there exists a hierarchy of social classes. Tom excuses himself for adultery with Myrtle Wilson—a large, bosomy woman who serves as an embellished image of a late Victorian female as opposed to the slender bodies featured in *Vanity Fair* in 1922—while believing that Daisy needs to be kept on a leash because she is a woman. A hierarchy did exist into the modern age, as we can see from *Gatsby*—who is the “crazy fish”—and his inability to transcend his meager past even with his abundant wealth. It is likely that the hierarchy existed only because the old-money families oppressed the nouveau riche as Tom does: on the grounds that they are unsophisticated.

One of the key issues regarding the modern emergence of consumer culture was whether the marketplace offered individuals new opportunities for self-definition or trapped them in mechanistic spending habits (Curnutt, “Fitzgerald’s Consumer World” 90). Previous to this movement, in the Victorian past, identity had been rigidly and deterministically defined by typical standards such as class, race, age, or morality. However, with the emergence of consumerism came the concept of *style*, allowing individuals to classify themselves according to their own desires. An emblematic and innovative thought of this time period was, as Bruce Barton explains in a 1928 article for *Good Housekeeping*, “Every man is a combination of many different personalities, a battlefield in which the fighters are his different selves” (Barton 58). This way of interpreting identity, which carries the connotation of chaos, sharply contrasts Victorian sense of order. This thought suggests that consumption was not necessarily about creating a “false” self, but realizing the “real” self. Gatsby falls into this pattern, as Fitzgerald refers to Luke 2:49 when describing James Gatz’s transformation in *The Great Gatsby* from a nobody from a small town into the magnificent product we’re presented with:

The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from the Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father’s Business, the service of a vast, vulgar, meretricious beauty. So he invented the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end. (98)

This created identity, whether supposed to be a “real” identity or not, is still an illusion. Even Gatsby, who is able to flaunt his wealth in ways that seem to prove him successful, is not able to transcend to the identity that he wishes—that being a genuinely wealthy man of higher social class such as Tom Buchanan. Scott Donaldson makes clear that Gatsby is unable to actually be “an oxford man” because his “clothes, his car, his house,

his parties all brand him as newly rich, unschooled in the social graces and sense of superiority ingrained not only in Tom Buchanan but also Nick Carraway” (Donaldson, “Possessions in *The Great Gatsby*” 77). It is not only money that matters, but social distinction, too. The irony is that Gatsby remains unspoiled by wealth although he is viewed as a clownish arriviste by the old money families. Gatsby may lack the culture and sophistication necessary for social position, but he is undamaged by the moral crises that encircle him.

Instead of the assertive extroversion that we see from male characters like Gatsby, women sought their illusions through beautification. Ultimately, men achieved their embodiment by buying, while women achieved theirs through selling, creating a constituent metaphor for romance (Curnutt, “Fitzgerald’s Consumer World” 94). Structurally, this analysis can be found in many of Fitzgerald’s works, including *The Great Gatsby*: “a young man devis[ing] an elaborate plot... in order to win an imperious girl” (Brucoli 108). The gender dynamics and their placement in the cycle of consumer culture is relevant because it projects an illusion that consumer habits were modes of producing identity in a modern world.

Women of the twenties reflected the consumer culture by creating their identities through objectification—hence the emergence of the flapper. Daisy’s role as a flapper in *The Great Gatsby* is far from indistinct, but still atypical because she is aging through the novel. Daisy, who struggles with her age consciousness, often reverts to childlike behavior. In the novel she is twenty-three but still holding onto the youth that she had when Gatsby courted her briefly five years prior. Her actions and dialogue frequently reflect her tendency to cling to her youth, including when she quixotically says, “I’d like

to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around” (94). It isn’t until Tom and Gatsby square off against her and demand she choose between them that Daisy admits that she, as well as the rest of her small party in New York’s Plaza Hotel, are “getting old,” saying, “If we were young we’d rise and dance” (128). Until this moment, Curnutt explains, her tendency to revert to childishness is a way of remaining carefree and not connecting consequences to actions (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Age Consciousness, and the Rise of American Youth Culture* 41).

The catch in this scenario, and what makes *Gatsby* work, is that in the process of trying to create the “real” self in order to win over an object of desire, the characters of Fitzgerald’s stories often discover their actual selves. Gatsby, for example, even with his created style, from his affection for cream-colored roadsters to his rich salutations (referring to Nick as “old sport”), is characterized by the authentically rich characters—especially Daisy’s husband, Tom—to be nothing more than nouveau riche because he constantly appears to be overly extravagant in ways that only the socially unschooled can be (Curnutt, “Fitzgerald’s Consumer World” 99-100). For this reason, Gatsby’s ostentation and subsequent illumination of his illusion, many readers of *The Great Gatsby* have interpreted Fitzgerald’s message to be that social mobility was not an actual option, simply a modern delusion. Therefore, the consumer world’s perpetuation of the American Dream, that success is obtainable to those who chase it, is a lie.

Fitzgerald, in *The Great Gatsby*, clearly sets the West against the East by placing his characters’ homes and roots in the West and moving them to the East. In the East, with the exception of Tom—who remains purely Victorian despite his experiences with modernity because he has such immense wealth that his lifestyle cannot be dramatically

altered—his characters trade their instilled, Victorian values for the dishonesty, extravagance, and disillusionment of the modern age.

We can detect a similar understanding of the uneasy relationship of those clinging to a Victorian past yet witnessing the morally ambiguous modern age in other writing of this uncertain time period. Donaldson reminds us of Fitzgerald's actual experience with New York, "the land of ambition and success," where he went after World War I "to make his fortune" (Donaldson, "Marriage and Money in Fitzgerald's Stories" (109). In his nonfiction article "My Lost City," Fitzgerald discusses his personal relationship with New York, romantically explaining that the Middle West characterized "[his] girl" which kept "the warm center of the world [in the West]" (Fitzgerald, "My Lost City" 107). The East, however, he understood to be "cynical and heartless"; the city might glitter, but Fitzgerald did not see it as being gold: his "great dreams of New York became tainted" (107-8). After finally accepting the city for what it was, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald lost their identities as the city, with its "glamour and loneliness," transformed them into minute members of a massive, contemporary New York (110). In New York, Fitzgerald was drawn into many of the immoral practices we read in *The Great Gatsby*. He was caught up in the restlessness, the hysterical tempo of the city that encouraged "people who were not naturally alcoholics [to be] lit up four days out of seven," disrupted dignity, and broken promises of maturity or success (114). In the end, Fitzgerald resembles Gatsby, writing that he lost his "splendid mirage" and begging, nostalgically, "Come back, come back, O glittering and white!" (115).

In *The Great Gatsby*, similar to Fitzgerald and the innocence of his ignorance toward the sad reality of modernity in "My Lost City," characters are frequently nostalgic

about their pasts. The most obvious example is Gatsby, who turns his Daisy into a nostalgic object. However, Daisy and Jordan turn their white girlhoods into nostalgic objects as well, Tom turns his Victorian roots into a nostalgic object, and Nick turns his pastoral roots into a nostalgic object. All of the characters believe that living in the past is of equal value to the present, and, as Saori Tanaka explains, “they seem to equate living in the present with living in nostalgia” (Tanaka 33). It is necessary, however, that nostalgic experience is *not* the past, as Fred Davis explains:

[S]ince our awareness of the past, our summoning of it, our very knowledge that it *is* past, can be nothing other than present experience, what occasions us to feel nostalgia must reside in the present, regardless of how much the ensuing nostalgic experience may draw its sustenance from our memory of the past. (Davis 9)

Therefore nostalgia is not a memory of the past, but an edited memory that produces a preferable past. In *The Great Gatsby*, the characters make nostalgic objects of the things they have lost. Gatsby clearly lost Daisy; and Daisy, Jordan, Tom and Nick all lost their nostalgic objects after living in the presence of the modern East. Daisy and Jordan lost their innocent girlhood, Tom lost the sense of security he grounded in his Victorian roots, and Nick lost the sense of morality he got from being manor-born in the pastoral Middle West.

Toward the end of the novel, as Nick reflects on his experience in the East, we come across a particularly nostalgic passage where he says, “One of my most vivid memories is of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time” (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 157). This passage is significant because it explains that Nick associates his identity with his home, not the wealth, extravagance or hedonism of the East. Beuka assures us that the novel concerns “place identification... infused with

nostalgia,” referring to what Gaston Bachelard termed “eulogized spaces,” spaces idealized in memory that contrast with the ordinariness of contemporary, commonplace spaces (Beuka 28, Bachelard xxxv-xxxvi). Nick’s nostalgia for the Middle West, to which he eventually returns, suggests that tradition and order are more valuable than anything the “progress” of the modern age has to offer. In Nick’s eyes the East, and therefore the modern age, is a valueless illusion:

Even when the East excited me most, even when I was keenly aware of its superiority to the bored, sprawling, swollen towns beyond Ohio, when their interminable inquisitions which spared only the children and the very old—even then it had always for me a quality of distortion. (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 176)

Nick admits that the East has something to offer that is superior to the pastoral landscapes of the Middle West. However, as was the case in Fitzgerald’s experience of New York, his “lost city,” with the superiority of modernity comes an inevitable lack of tradition and order that influences all but children and the very old, who are not of an appropriate age to participate. Nick’s perception of the East, and therefore modernity, aligns with Fitzgerald’s impersonal understanding:

West Egg, especially, still figures in my more fantastic dreams. I see it as a night scene by El Greco: a hundred houses, at once conventional and grotesque, crouching under a sullen, overhanging sky and a lusterless moon. In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand, which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house—the wrong house. But no one knows the woman’s name, and no one cares. (176)

Here, Fitzgerald is likely referring to El Greco’s “View of Toledo,” a painting that showcases Toledo, Spain, moments before a storm bursts. The painting is dramatic and powerful, illuminating a city landscape on the cusp of spectacular change similarly to America’s movement into the modern age. El Greco’s scene is apocalyptic, as it

emphasizes a dialogue between the heavens and the sun, which symbolize Christian morality and progress or enlightenment, which resists the coming storm. Fitzgerald's "View of Toledo" emphasizes a city that shines as a Holy City, like a "very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal," remnant of St. John's vision of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelations. However, Fitzgerald is clear that New York is not a Holy City. New York lacks morality, which comes from God, who is in the advertising business in the modern age—the billboard of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg that overlooks the valley of ashes as God—demonstrating a "degenerate state of religious belief" (Goldhurst 187). This glorious city is characterized by solemn death, drunkenness, a wealth of jewels, and impersonal, apathetic relationships. Modernity has allowed New York to resemble a Holy City, but it has also filled it with corrupt, immoral people. After Gatsby's death, Nick is haunted by the East; it is "distorted beyond [his] eyes' power of correction" (176).

Fitzgerald, being a representative of the "Lost Generation," a group of writers that consistently felt disillusioned with the modern age because of its lack of intrinsic, Victorian mortality, opposes the East to the Middle West in order to condemn the modern age in favor of the Victorian. Nick's returning home can be read as Fitzgerald's longing to return to the ordered, traditional times of the Victorian past. The Middle West, in *The Great Gatsby*, is described as a world that will "be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever" and lacks "riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart" (2). Although Fitzgerald writes of the Middle West, and therefore the Victorian Era with favor, he understands that it is impossible to return to his youth because it is a nostalgic memory and therefore not historically accurate. This understanding is demonstrated by Gatsby's failure to repeat his past. When Gatsby assures Nick, "Can't

repeat the past?...Why of course you can!" he is wrong because of a paradox embedded in nostalgia. As Veronica Makowsky notes, "the irony of nostalgia is that if the past could be repeated, the consequences would be the same unhappy ones, yet that is what nostalgia so strongly denies" (Makowsky 197). One can only repeat the past in the land of imagination.

Therefore, Fitzgerald, although looking back to the past as all modernist writers did, was also looking into the future. Nick's vision is expanded to encompass all of America at the finish of the novel, allowing Fitzgerald to apply his interpretation of America's cultural tendencies amidst the turbulent emergence of modernity to the nation entirely. We know that Fitzgerald understood that the Victorian morality was, like Gatsby's dream, "already behind [us], somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 180). The Victorian Dream, which Fitzgerald suggests is somewhere "beyond the city," is somewhere outside of modernity. Fitzgerald knows that, like Gatsby's irrecoverable past, it eludes us.

The final lines of the novel, easily the most famous that Fitzgerald wrote, suggest that we can, and will, try to recover this moral lifestyle, but that it is an impossible dream: "to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther...And one fine morning—So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 180). Fitzgerald was not optimistic about America's cultural direction in the presence of modernity—he was legitimately disturbed by the youth younger than himself, the sheiks and flappers that modernity created—but he was aware that it was the only direction America was able to go (Fitzgerald, "My Generation," 195). Like the "old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new

world,” the Victorian Age and the morality it carried were ultimately irretrievable and inaccessible (Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* 180).

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