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"AN ELUSIVE RHYTHM": *THE GREAT GATSBY* RECLAIMS *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

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The multitudinous intertextual resonances in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* collectively support both the author's confident prepublication assertion that "This book will be a consciously artistic achievement"[1] and an (unfortunately revisionist) academic portrait of Fitzgerald as a Princeton alumnus. Certainly the elusive intertextual rhythms with which the novel is wrought remain largely uncharted, but these allegedly include, among a great many others, relationships with works by Charles Dickens, Emily Brontë, John Keats, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Maddox Ford.[2] With widening chronological disparity it has been argued that the novel is a modern expression of the grail quest,[3] and also that Gatsby is the Phaeton figure of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* failing like this mythic forbear to harness his chariot to the sun that Daisy represents.[4]

Until recently, however, the novel's intertextual engagement with poems by Geoffrey Chaucer did not figure in this panoply. Yet a juxtaposed reading of *Gatsby* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* announces the presence of the latter in Fitzgerald's novel with compelling conjunctions of character, theme, spatial and temporal structure, and a number of strikingly similar "set scenes." These scenes include, for example, the union of the lovers at the house of the intermediary (Pandarus or Nick) during a rainstorm, and the poignant if futile visit to the departed lady's house.[5]

The critical work beginning to pursue this particular elusive rhythm is recent and by no means voluminous, but is becoming more assured with the evidence amassing. Nancy Hoffman first argued the case in her article, "*The Great Gatsby: Troilus and Criseyde* Revisited?", drawing a number of important correspondences between the two works. F. T. Flahiff removed the need for Hoffman's cautious punctuation in *"The Great Gatsby:* Scott Fitzgerald's Chaucerian Rag."[6] Essential to Flahiff's argument was the version of the story by fifteenth-century Scottish poet Robert Henryson: the reunion of the two lovers echoes Henryson's "sequel" to Chaucer's poem, *The Testament of Cresseid.*

Deborah Davis Schlacks departs from this point in *American Dream*

Visions: Chaucer's Surprising Influence on F. Scott Fitzgerald. Although she does not pursue the *Troilus-Gatsby* correspondence, noting only the existence of Hoffman's and Flahiff's articles, she argues comprehensively that Fitzgerald found a source of creative renewal in Chaucer's dream vision poems and echoed them in his early works, including *Gatsby.* Such works are ringing with "the melody of Chaucer's lesser known poems."[7] She also adds to the evidence Hoffman produced to demonstrate that Fitzgerald knew Chaucer's work.[8] This external evidence is perhaps more necessary here than in other cases. Schlacks recognizes that, for many, "Fitzgerald simply seems an unlikely candidate to have been influenced by an author so distant in time and culture from his own." But by the same token, "Fitzgerald . . . was better read and better educated than some people have realized" (Schlacks, pp. 1, 6). Since Fitzgerald's knowledge of Chaucer is a certainty, it is more than appropriate to consider the internal evidence that *The Great Gatsby* continues to provide.

It is demonstrable that the novel shares many points of contact with Chaucer's poem. lt is also demonstrable that it shares with Henryson's work the conditions of a sequel to Chaucer's poem.[9] Yet the relationship between the works is not direct but mediated—"*In the meantime / In between time*"[10]—by the tradition that notably comprises Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* and also Shakespeare's *The History of Troilus and Cressida.* Beginning promptly with Henryson's poem, this tradition effects a popular degradation of the story and particularly of Criseyde' s reputation, which sees its nadir in Shakespeare's play.[11] While still displaying symptoms of the disease that infected characters and ideals in these two intervening texts (and thereby suffering in any direct comparison of world views between Chaucer's poem and itself), *The Great Gatsby* makes in fact a rehabilitative return towards a more Chaucerian treatment of the Troilus and Criseyde story.

To compare directly the world views offered by Chaucer's poem and Fitzgerald's novel is to conclude that the real tragedy is that of 1920s America, unable to repeat even the tragedies of a more mythic heroic past. The symbolic gardens of the medieval courtly love tradition have pathetically expired into a grotesque valley of ashes. But comparison of the novel with the state of affairs in Henryson's or Shakespeare's version shows a marked disparity of a totally different kind. Daisy Fay is not Henryson's leprous Cresseid, cast off by Diomed and dying unrecognized by Troilus, making her name "a synecdoche

in literature for the tramp" (Hoffman, p. 154). Although notoriously "careless" in her treatment of both things and people, Daisy is no worse than a pragmatist, always operating in response to worldly pressures, and even Nick must exculpate her from responsibility for Gatsby's romantic inflation of her. In Shakespeare's play heroism and courtly love founder alike in the mire of the Greek and Trojan battlegrounds where "All the argument is a whore and a cuckold" and Criseyde is just such another promiscuous Helen.[12] In *Troilus and Cressida* there are no ideals, only illusions clearly not worth the having.

The tragedy in *The Great Gatsby* is unmitigated, even compounded, but crucially altered. Courtly love still founders in a mutable world hostile to its transcendent existence, and through the choice of an all-too-mortal object for devotion. Post-war 1920s America denies its heroes opportunities for heroism so that, as Flahiff phrases it, "the ikons of an heroic past exist only as shadows floating on the bloodied waters of a swimming pool."[13] In *Gatsby,* as in *This Side of Paradise,* there is a sense of "all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in men shaken."[14] There is no Chaucerian palinode sweeping Gatsby up to an eighth sphere from which he gains a vision of something really "commensurate to his capacity for wonder" (*Gatsby,* p. 140). Instead Fortune, embodied in Daisy's petite frame, rules in a "vast heedless universe,"[15] God exists as a billboard alone, and the novel ultimately ends in "holocaust" under "an unfamiliar sky [seen] through frightening leaves" (p. 126). Nick, as Pandarus, is perhaps more morally suspect even than Shakespeare's Pandarus, who is at least aware that he is little more than noundom for the pimp.[16]

Fitzgerald makes his Pandarus the narrator of the story, and expands the moment of not-quite-memory in Henryson's poem to create Nick's partial but pervasive awareness of a prescripted story that they are all unwittingly reenacting. This inarticulate awareness gnawing at the edge of Nick's consciousness forms an element of the tragedy as much as its sense of exhausted possibility. Yet in the very teeth of this bleak and disturbing world the novel retains the beautiful and impossible dream, magnifying it through Nick's wonderment that it has been born (and borne) in this world at all. Gatsby is allowed his incredible dream, is even exalted for it by the novel's sceptical Pandarus. Of Chaucer's poem M. C. Bradbrook says: "The human tragedy, while subsumed into something greater, remains beautiful in itself" (Bradbrook, p. 316). Both the "something greater" and the beauty are, she argues, excised from Shakespeare's version of events. But in

Fitzgerald's version, the dream that inspires the tragedy is already both beautiful and great in itself. It is actually Gatsby's "romantic readiness," and the concomitant capacity for wonder able to be generated in this maculate world that this readiness both describes and inspires, which survive the holocaust and are apotheosized at the novel's end.[17]

So Nick's characterization as Pandarus, which casts him to the brink of moral bankruptcy, therefore lends extra weight to his finally conceded affirmation of Gatsby's vision. His implicit collusion in and voyeuristic ambivalence towards the illicit affairs of others is damning with regard to his much-discussed moral character, but has its origins in Chaucer's own voyeur and go-between, Pandarus. It is interesting to note again that Nick is after all a "bond man" (p. 12) by trade—or by nature; being "in the bond business" (p. 6) is wonderfully in keeping with his inherited role as a procurer. Nick's ante-room attendance at Tom and Myrtle's liaison in the New York apartment sounds a suspicious echo of Pandarus' presumed presence on the occasion of Troilus and Criseyde's union. Like his active involvement in Gatsby's reunion with Daisy, his complicitous involvement in this episode while removed from the central couple themselves prefigures another illicit assignation between the lovers. ln the latter instance he acts as a watchdog for Daisy and Gatsby while they escape the garden party (and Tom) to be alone together.

The first episode recalls Pandarus' highly ambiguous involvement in the bedroom scene in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde.* Having achieved the lengthy vicarious seduction of his niece for his friend, Pandarus then appears to remain in the room, supposedly reading: "And with that word he drow hym to the feere, / And took a light, *and fond his contenaunce, / As for* to looke upon an old romaunce" (*Troilus* 3, 978–80, my emphasis).[18] A degree of indecorous behaviour is evidently implied. What are we to make of his counterfeit disinterest? His attention is clearly elsewhere, on the progress of the liason between the two lovers. When Troilus faints, "Pandare up as faste" (*Troilus* 3, 1094) to sort out the issue, thrusting Troilus bodily into bed beside Criseyde. He then teases Criseyde lewdly the next morning by complaining that the "loud rain" kept him awake.

In *The Great Gatsby,* Tom takes Nick to Myrtle's Washington Heights apartment. Nick goes out to buy cigarettes, but when he returns, Tom and Myrtle have retired from the living room. Since the entire apartment consists of "a small living room, a small dining room, a small bedroom and a bath" (p. 25), they have clearly not gone very

far. Even Nick's description of the tapestried furniture in the room contributes to the titillating aspect of the scene as any movement leads him "to stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles" (p. 25). Obviously, Nick in the living room is uncomfortably near the bedroom to which Tom and Myrtle have retired. He sits down "discreetly," but such discretion has already been ironically loaded. Myrtle similarly sat "discreetly" in another train carriage from Tom and Nick while on the way to this liaison. Like Pandarus, Nick also picks up a book (and even tries to read) but it is further notable that the book he selects, *Simon Called Peter,* was labelled "immoral" by Fitzgerald elsewhere in his comments on censorship.[19]

Interestingly, this episode caused Fitzgerald some concern, and he made repeated reference to it in letters to his editor Maxwell Perkins. He wrote to Perkins on three separate occasions regarding the scene, asking whether it was "raw", or "noticeably raw", but adds in the first letter: "I think its pretty nessessary" [*sic*].[20] He asks in the second letter: "Does it stick out enough so that the censor might get it. Its [*sic*] the only place in the book I'm in doubt about on that score." Fitzgerald's defence of the scene and his decision not to alter it show how necessary he thought it to be, in all its controversial ambiguity.

Nick's character becomes almost automatically the focus for moral aspersions, however misdirected, as he is continually implicated in situations that do not concern him. This is ironically the case when Myrtle decries her husband at the party later that same evening:

> "Crazy about him!" cried Myrtle incredulously. "Who said I was crazy about him? I never was any more crazy about him than I was about that man there."
>
> She pointed suddenly at me and everyone looked at me accusingly. I tried to show by my expression that I had played no part in her past. (p. 30)

Aspersion is silently cast again later as Nick picks up a woman's pocket book in the commuter train on the eve of the confrontation scene: "I picked it up with a weary bend and handed it back to her holding it at arm's length and by the extreme tip of the corners to indicate that I had no designs upon it—but every one near by, including the woman, suspected me just the same" (p. 89).

Nick's presence is also insisted upon by Daisy and Gatsby on the afternoon of their reunion (at Nick's house), initially when Daisy arrives and then more peremptorily on the ensuing visit to Gatsby's house

next door. Nick's presence paradoxically renders him an absent witness: "perhaps my presence made them feel more satisfactorily alone" (p. 74). On all of these occasions, Nick is more or less unwillingly constrained by others to be the third party during their romantic encounter. He conveys that his involvement as go-between for Daisy and Gatsby was solicited, just as earlier he professed that the confidences foisted on him by young men in college were (mostly) unwelcome, yet his collusion implicates him nonetheless, as R. W. Stallman points out: "Though Nick disbelieves in [Gatsby's dream], he nevertheless arranges for the reunion of the lovers whom time has divorced, and thereby he involves himself, Honest Nick, in the adulterous affair and shares responsibility for its consequences."[21]

Characterizing Nick thus as Pandarus makes him something of a voyeur. So, despite his protestations of disinterest, he admits to certain tendencies in his outlook which suggest conversely that he plays the role quite naturally. He is a lone figure in New York but experiences its "racy, adventurous feel" (p. 46) vicariously, picking out "romantic women from the crowd," fantasizing that he will meet them, and following them in his mind "to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets" (p. 47). He watches people in taxis and imagines he is "sharing their intimate excitement" (p. 47). But when he is at Myrtle's party experiencing dramatic events first-hand, he reacts by mentally removing himself so that he is simultaneously an observer outside looking in. He casts himself into the voyeuristic role he claims to resist:

> Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life. (p. 30)

Chaucer's Pandarus initially undertakes to procure Criseyde in order to alleviate the suffering of a friend, while apparently relishing the theatrical contortions required to achieve this end. Nick is initially co-opted via Jordan Baker to comply with Gatsby's own initiative to invite Daisy to tea. What surprises Nick, though, is not Jordan's revelation of a previous affair between the couple, but "The modesty of the demand" (p. 62) made of him. His acquiescence in this relatively small matter of a tea invitation prefaces his graver complicity after the initial reunion. During one of Gatsby's parties he "remained watchfully in

the garden" (p. 82) at Daisy's request, allowing the couple to escape Tom for half an hour and sit on the steps of Nick's house. Furthermore, in the unrevised galleys of the novel, when Daisy asks Nick if she and Gatsby can go and sit on Nick's steps, Nick responds by offering her the key to his house.[22] (One is uncomfortably reminded here of Pandarus' self-congratulatory wish in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida:* "And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here / Bed, chamber, Pandar to provide this gear!" [III, ii, 210–11]). The unrevised galleys of the novel also intriguingly write out any rationale for Nick's involvement, as Matthew J. Bruccoli remarks:

> On page 89 of the manuscript Fitzgerald provided Nick with reasons for playing Pandarus—he resents Tom's open unfaithfulness to Daisy, and he is romantically impressed by the account of Gatsby's commitment to Daisy that Jordan has just related to him: "And besides an assignation becomes more than an assignation, becomes a ritual after five years." The word *assignation* is revealing, for it indicates that Nick is aware that he is setting up a liaison—not just a reunion. Fitzgerald cut this material in typescript because it changes Nick from an observer-narrator into an investigator-novelist. No reason for Nick's complicity is provided in the published novel. (Bruccoli, ed., *Gatsby*, p. xxxiii)

Arranging for the reader to observe Nick alternately reason and refute his way through his role as Pandarus raises the issues of Nick's moral smugness and of the apparent schism between Nick's status as participant and observer, involved in or detached from the action of the novel. Yet it does so in order to question whether, in fact, a schism exists at all. If Nick's outlook is indeed voyeuristic, then he is simultaneously observing when participating and participating when observing. In this sense, no matter how unflattering for Nick, it is his character that resolves the would-be paradox.

The fact that such a resolution may also be achieved in a narrator only compounds Nick's ambivalent characterization. As Flahiff states, "The distance that separates the sympathetic witness from the panderer is sometimes no distance at all" (Flahiff, p. 91). K. G. Probert has more directly equated the role of a narrator (however morally correct) with that of a voyeur: "Voyeurism is the unpleasant real-life analogy to the stance of a narrator" (Probert, p. 205). He also characterizes Nick in this light:

> He is curious to see Tom's mistress, though not to meet her [pp. 21–22], and he is simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the variety of life with an ecstatic interest that borders on the scatalogical [p. 30]. His role as pander for Gatsby is at best ambivalent, and, in retrospect, his remark that he is afraid of "missing something" [p. 5] if he forgets to reserve judgements sounds as if it comes from a man at a keyhole. (Probert, p. 204)

One is led to raise the question: what is the effect of handing this story (and its readers) over to such a narrator as Nick? What happens when it is Pandarus, whose value judgements must perforce be suspect, who now tells the story? In Chaucer's poem both the narrator and Pandarus are love's servants' servant (*Troilus* 1, 15), but there the resemblance between their characters ends. Without the selective omniscience of Chaucer's narrator who is compelled to tell a known story through to its tragic but narratively predetermined end, Nick's own treatment becomes one of tracking an elusive rhythm he finds some difficulty in articulating, let alone understanding. The struggle of one of the characters to narrate a familiar story, and through this act to register a partial awareness of reenacting it, is one of the fascinating developments of this merger. It is also one that sharpens the depiction of a world without a responsible overseer of any kind; here, there is no omniscient narrator to take charge of shaping and interpreting events and it is left to one of the characters to attempt the role unaided.

The limitations of both Nick's and Pandarus' eloquence are telling. Nick, like Pandarus before him, is well versed in the artifices of formal language. Greeting Daisy after their separation of some years he trips off a flattering hyperbole describing the effect of her absence on Chicago: "The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath and there's a persistent wail all night along the North Shore" (p. 11). Yet Nick, again like Pandarus before him, is ultimately incapable of finding adequate language to articulate his experience. Chaucer's Pandarus, like Boccaccio's, opts for amusing, irritating streams of interconnected proverbs whose very multiplicity empties them of meaning or relevance. R. K. Gordon notes that in Chaucer's poem, loquacious Pandarus' speech "makes up nearly a quarter of the whole work."[23] While the number of lines spoken by Troilus shrinks from 1,706 (of 5,704) in Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* to 1 ,462 in Chaucer' s poem (of 8,239), the number of lines spoken by Pandarus grows from 789 in Boccaccio's

work to an impressive 1,804 in Chaucer's.[24] Yet both Boccaccio's and Chaucer's Pandarus are ultimately bereft of words. For all his boasted "store of fit speeches" (*Il Filostrato* canto 2, p. 43), and "for al his wise speche" (*Troilus* 2, 57), Pandarus is verbally impotent when events become too painfully immediate to relegate them to proverbial experience: "Pandarus heard all in sadness, and, feeling it to be true, knew not what to say" (*Il Filostrato* canto 8, p.123).

> This Pandarus, that al thise thynges herde,
> And wiste wel he seyde a soth of this,
> He nought a word ayeyn to him answerde;
> For sory of his frendes sorwe he is,
> And shamed for his nece hath don amys,
> And stant, astoned of thise causes tweye,
> As stille as ston; a word ne kowde he seye.
> (*Troilus* 5, 1723–29)

Although "Gatsby's longing for transcendence must be expressed in words in the novel, and it falls to Nick to express it" (Pendleton, p. 95), and despite the fact that this often inspires Nick to lyricism, Nick frequently resorts to adjectives that merely describe indescribability: "unutterable" (pp. 86, 139; and "unutterably", p. 137), "uncommunicable" (p. 87), "indefinable" (p. 94), and "inexplicable" (p. 97). To adopt Nick's own comment regarding Gatsby, "What could you make of that, except to suspect some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured?" (p. 119). And towards the end of *The Great Gatsby,* Nick, like Pandarus before him, is also reduced to the realization that his fund of suitable words no longer avails him: "There was nothing I could say" (p. 139).[25]

Similarly, although Nick's attempts to recall the origin of familiar echoes are frustrated, these attempts are nevertheless recorded in his narrative and adumbrate the shadow of the history that is suppressed. Gatsby says of his time in the war after Daisy's marriage to Tom, "I tried very hard to die but I seemed to bear an enchanted life" (p. 53). There is a veiled irony when one considers that Troilus dies indeed in the fifth book of Chaucer's *Troilus* only to be resurrected by Robert Henryson in true sequel tradition for his *Testament.* When Tom claims to have been researching Gatsby's mysterious past life, Jordan quips: "Do you mean you've been to a medium?" (p. 95). Gatsby's past, even by flippant implication, transcends the span of his own thirty-odd years. It is therefore possible to read another ironic intertextual reference when,

at the moment of reunion with Daisy, Gatsby says quite unnecessarily: "We've met before" (p. 68). (In the annals of bathetic romantic opening lines this ranks near that of Chaucer's Troilus: "Ha, a, quod Troilus . . . " [*Troilus* 3, 65].) Nick also says of Jordan that she is—unlike Gatsby or Daisy—"too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams *from age to age*" (p. 106, my emphasis).

Nick's vague awareness of echoes from past ages takes the form of an elusive imprint similar to Troilus' not-quite-memory of Cresseid in Henryson's *Testament.* This moment of frustrated recognition is expanded to pervade Nick's narratorial consciousness. Nick sees, for example, "an indefinable expression, at once definitely unfamiliar and vaguely recognizable, as if I had only heard it described in words, [pass] over Gatsby's face" (p. 94). The same sentiment is expressed again in the novel: "That unfamiliar yet recognizable look was back again in Gatsby's face" (p. 105). This paradox of the simultaneously recognizable and unrecognizable, familiar and unfamiliar, is evoked in Henryson's poem as Troilus passes Criseyde, now a disfigured leper:

> And with ane blenk it com in-to his thocht
> That he sum-tyme hir face befoir had sene;
> But sho was in sic ply he knew hir nocht.
> Yit than hir luik in-to his mind it brocht
> The sweit visage and amorous blenking
> Of fair Cresseid, sumtyme his awin darling.
> Na wonder was, suppois in mynd that he
> Tuik hir figure sa sone, and lo! now, quhy;
> The idole of ane thing in cace may be
> Sa deip imprentit in the fantasy,
> That it deludis the wittis outwardly,
> And sa appeiris in torme and lyke estait
> Within the mynd as it was figurait.
> (*Testament,* stanzas 70–71, p. 364)

Nick listens to Gatsby's account of his love affair with Daisy like a listener who has heard the story or its like before and to whom the general outline is familiar while the particulars have been forgotten. Nick fails to remember or to articulate his memory, but his repeated attempts to articulate almost-memories are a valuable indication that Nick seems aware of elusive rhythms of a pattern of past events being unwittingly replayed:

> Through all he said, even through his appalling senti-

> mentality, I was reminded of something—an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever. (p. 87)

Despite the distance that separates them, Gatsby exhibits the same "appalling sentimentality" as his forbear Troilus in his lovelorn state. On first meeting Gatsby, Nick comments that his "elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd" (p. 40). Gatsby's confession that he is "trying to forget something very sad that happened to [him] long ago" also meets with Nick's cynical response: "The very phrases were worn so threadbare that they evoked no image" (p. 52). This comment reflects on both characters alike. Gatsby speaks in clichés which have lost their emotive value. Nick as Pandarus, on the other hand, claims to have been privy to numerous unsought confidences since his childhood. Gatsby's rhetoric is empty for Nick because Nick has a long history of hearing such familiar "plagiaristic" confessions, both in his personal past and in his much longer history as the go-between: "the intimate revelations of young men or at least the terms in which they express them are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions" (p. 5).

Through the evocation of an anterior intertext, the reader is placed in the uncomfortably privileged position of having a greater degree of omniscience than Nick, observing all the characters playing out a script and Nick's partial, confused awareness of that fact. In his first letter of response to Fitzgerald after receiving the novel in typescript Maxwell Perkins praised the expression of distance which has the reader observing the little tragedy from a distant sphere while the characters founder, wingless, unable to escape an inexorable destiny:

> You adopted exactly the right method of telling it, that of employing a narrator who is more of a spectator than an actor: this puts the reader upon a point of observation on a higher level than that on which the characters stand and at a distance that gives perspective. In no other way could your irony have been so immensely effective, nor the reader have been enabled so strongly to feel at times the strangeness of human circumstance in a vast heedless universe.[26]

The distance that gives perspective is created in a number of ways. Nick's own attempts to remove himself emotionally from the embroilment are one form of distance from Gatsby's romantic martyrdom. Nick understands that Gatsby's optimism is futile. Pandarus similarly knows that Troilus will not recapture his dream incarnate: "God woot, refreyden may this hote fare, / Er Calkas sende Troilus Criseyde!" (*Troilus* 5, 507–8). In *The Great Gatsby,* Nick leaves Gatsby watching over Daisy in a protective vigil outside her house after she has deserted him a second time. Nick's comment corresponds to Pandarus' cynical tone: "So I walked away and left him standing there in the moonlight—watching over nothing" (p. 114). Nevertheless, in the offices of friendship both Pandarus and Nick try to divert Troilus and Gatsby from impending disillusionment. Pandarus urges Troilus to go to Sarpedoun's with him, saying they will spend a week there and will leave at the week's end (*Troilus* 5, 492, 499). Nick in turn urges Gatsby to save himself: "Go to Atlantic City for a week, or up to Montreal" (p. 115). Troilus attempts to resist this diversion out of grief for Criseyde's absence and anticipation of her imminent return. So, too, Gatsby resists Nick's prompting to leave the site of his attachment to Daisy: "He wouldn't consider it. He couldn't possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn't bear to shake him free" (p. 115) .

The brief "prologue" section that begins the novel indicates that the narration occurs retrospectively, from a temporal distance of at least one year. The cynicism that characterizes this prologue and compounds the distance it describes encourages an association with the bitter, world-weary epilogue delivered by Shakespeare's Pandarus. Nick Carraway at the outset of *The Great Gatsby* claims to want "no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart" (p. 5). While he does not bequeath diseases, Nick describes the "foul dust" that parasitically preyed on Gatsby's dream. Epically proportioned tragedy is reduced to the earthbound level of "the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men" (p. 6). Unlike the narrator of Chaucer's poem who claims to "wepen as I write" (*Troilus* 1, 7), Nick remains emotionally reticent. Yet the general effect of this prologue in the novel is also that of the proem to the first book of *Troilus and Criseyde,* which conveys that the story is finite and past, inexorable in its historically predetermined course. As Morton Bloomfield says of Chaucer's poem, "*Troilus and Criseyde* is a medieval tragedy of predestination because the reader is continually forced by the commentator to look

upon the story from the point of view of its end and from a distance."[27]

Nick also begins *The Great Gatsby* as an historian, with a prior indication of the end of "the history of that summer" and in the pessimistic tone this end engenders. As well as emotional and temporal distance, this prologue notes the geographic distance which separates the narrator from the events of his story. As the history of the Trojan war unfolded east of Henryson's Scotland and Chaucer's and Shakespeare's England, so the events of *The Great Gatsby* occur east of Nick's home in the American Midwest, from which he writes. Nick leaves his home to head east to Long Island in the spring of 1922, but returns to the west after Gatsby's death. At one point the New York sky is described as "like the blue honey of the Mediterranean" (p. 29), casting allusion even further eastwards.

Thus distance creates perspective, and perspective creates a sense of inexorability for the reader in Gatsby's failure to set back the clock and recapture the past, to win Daisy back from Tom, and finally to escape death by appointment in Wilson's own inexorable timetable:

> Until long after midnight a changing crowd lapped up against the front of the garage while George Wilson rocked himself back and forth on the couch inside . . . .
>
> About three o'clock the quality of Wilson's incoherent muttering changed . . .
>
> By six o'clock Michaelis was worn out . . . when he awoke four hours later and hurried back to the garage Wilson was gone. . . . he didn't reach Gad's Hill until noon. . . . By half past two he was in West Egg where he asked someone the way to Gatsby' s house. So by that time he knew Gatsby's name. (pp. 122–25)

Revealing the hands of the clock moving ceaselessly about their course, Fitzgerald bares the spokes of Fortune's wheel and its ceaseless movement: "on lofte / And under eft . . . / Aftir hir course" (*Troilus* I, 138–40). It is of course Daisy Fay who embodies the qualities of the fortune that rules the world of the novel: she is inextricably linked to temporality and concomitant mutability, and she must turn and change in response to "the pressure of the world outside" (p. 118).[28]

Early in the novel Daisy is associated with present time, the here-and-now. Nick says of one of her speeches, "She was only extemporizing" (p. 15)—an understatement of the magnitude of Gatsby's famous comment dismissing Daisy's marriage: "it was just personal"

(p. 119). Daisy is *ex tempore;* she takes her inspiration from the moment, for the moment alone. Her speech is like "an arrangement of notes that will never be played again" (p. 11). At the first dinner party she "seized upon the momentary interruption" (p. 14) of Tom's phone call to whisper to Nick. At the visit to Gatsby's house she calls "Come here *quick*!" (p. 74). This is the trait that dictates her decision to marry Tom: "And all the time something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately—and the decision must be made by some force—of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality—that was close at hand" (p. 118). She is unable to turn back the clock for Gatsby for precisely the same reason: "I love you now—isn't that enough? I can't help what's past" (p. 103). Gatsby, on the other hand, refuses to commit himself to time. As David Parker puts it, "Gatsby . . . as befits a hero of romance, never once deigns to recognize time" (Parker, p. 40). Nick responds to one of Gatsby's invitations with the question "What time?" (p. 39). Gatsby's telling answer typifies his own relationship with time: "Any time that suits you best."

Gatsby as a romantic hero defies the time and flux in whose images the novel is steeped. More specifically, however, there is a distinct dual time scheme in *Gatsby* that forms another intertextual parallel with Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and simultaneously strengthens Daisy's characterization as a temporal, mutable creature. As Henry Sams wrote in 1941, there is clearly one formal time scheme in *Troilus* that spans an estimated three-year period. Simultaneously, there is a seasonal scheme of "continuous action over one season between spring and winter."[29] This latter scheme reflects the emotional climate of the story, building up the love relationship over the months of April and May, and reversing the seasonal images at the beginning of book four with the advent of the tragic conclusion.

In *The Great Gatsby* there is also a formal time scheme, spanning five years. These encompass Daisy and Gatsby's affair, Gatsby's departure for war, Daisy's marriage to Tom and the birth of her child, Gatsby's return after the war, and the summer of their reunion. There are also two parallel seasonal time schemes. The first concerns the couple's first month of love, culminating a summer wooing with a kiss "One autumn night" (p. 86). There is reference here to the excitement which is sensed at the two changes of the year and which echoes the emotional excitement and the transition augured by the kiss. Gatsby then leaves for the war after a last "cold fall day" (p. 117) with Daisy.

Daisy marries Tom Buchanan in June, but the letter of congratulation she receives from Gatsby disintegrates in water, "coming to pieces like snow" (p. 61). (There is perhaps an echo here of the shredded letter that Shakespeare's Troilus tosses to the wind: Gatsby's congratulations must also be "Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart" [V, iii, 108].) In the second case the direct action Nick narrates, "the history of the summer" (*Gatsby*, p. 8), also occurs over one season. Nick has the "familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer" (p. 7), which shows his naivete and general optimism at the outset. (The already cynical Jordan Baker, with her "autumn-leaf yellow" hair [p. 18], identifies instead with the end of summer: "Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall" [p. 92].) The novel is replete with references to midsummer, the summer afternoons, nights, and sky, and images of gardens and flowers blooming.

Daisy is as firmly linked with this cycle of seasons as she is with the course of the day. After Gatsby leaves for the war she marks his absence for a while but eventually resumes the "rhythm of the year": "Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season" (p. 118). About to marry Tom, she is described as "lovely as the June night in her flowered dress" (p. 60). Daisy is a figure of natural mutability and her character is repeatedly described in terms of time-related imagery. She is, according to her name, the "day's-eye" or sungirl, and R. K. Stallman reads her as an embattled figure opposing the falling night, darkness or blackness. The novel is certainly an elaborate articulation of *chiaroscuro;* light and dark interplay throughout.[30] Bruce Michelson also positions Daisy as the day's-eye in his analysis of *The Great Gatsby* as a reworking of the Phaeton myth: "To rule the days-eye is to rule over time itself—or so thinks Gatsby" (Michelson, p. 573). His point seems borne out in the novel as Gatsby is described as a "patron of recurrent light" (p. 70) in the scene of his reunion with Daisy. His house "catches the light" (p.70). Yet the light of the novel is "grey turning, gold turning light" (p. 118), or "constantly changing light" (p. 34).

It is as futile, then, for Gatsby to try to fix Daisy in time or place as it is to halt the ceaseless movement of the sun. Daisy will fail Gatsby because she is committed to the progression of days, bound to mutability and mortality. The final battle for Daisy occurs on the last and warmest day of summer, after which there is "a sharp difference in the weather and . . . an autumn flavor in the air" (p. 119). This conjunction

of temporal imagery with Gatsby's final attempt to capture Daisy out of time shows at once how inextricably Daisy is bound by time and how impossible is Gatsby's task of extricating them both from it.

In the tradition of the religion of courtly love, but also in the absence of other deities, Gatsby places his blind devotional faith (or "fay") not in a timeless truth but in Daisy Fay. But Criseyde, in whose name and character Daisy Fay is embedded,[31] is notoriously faith-less. By the end of Chaucer's poem Troilus has cause to lament: "Where is youre feith, and where is your biheste?'" (*Troilus* 5, 1675). Criseyde is instead prompted by pragmatism. Faith in Troilus is scant comfort or protection in the enemy Greek camp: "But syn I se ther is no bettre way, / And that to late is now for me to rewe, / To Diomede algate I wol be trewe" (*Troilus* 5, 1069–71). Robert Henryson's unfortunate Cresseid also laments that she has been "Als unconstant, and als untrew of fay" (*Testament,* stanza 80, p. 366).

In another sense of "fay"—magical, enchanted or enchanting—Daisy is the "fairy" on whose fluttering wing Gatsby rests his overwhelming hopes, finding "a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing" (p. 77). She is neither constant nor secure enough to support Gatsby' s rock of the world, or his faith. She is impermanent and imperfect. Her "magic" is described as "warm human magic" (p. 84). In short, while she has otherworldly attributes, she is uncompromisingly mortal.

Shakespeare dramatizes Cressida's troubling capitulation in her tent at night with Diomed, secretly espied by Ulysses, Thersites and the distraught Troilus himself. (Is there an echo of this episode in the choice of song: "*I'm the Sheik of Araby, / Your love belongs to me. / At night when you're asleep, / Into your tent I'll creep*—" [p. 62]?) Fitzgerald similarly exploits the possibility for dramatizing Daisy's tense oscillation between Gatsby and Tom. While Nick can only speculate on the process of Daisy's first decision to abandon Gatsby for Tom, "Doubtless there was a certain struggle and a certain relief" (p. 118), this replay of her decision-making is witnessed by both Jordan and Nick. The sense of replay is reinforced by the fact that Nick first hears the story of the earlier affair between Daisy and Gatsby while in the tea-garden with Jordan here at the Plaza Hotel (p. 59). There is also the fact of the "portentous" wedding march and ceremony taking place below the company, reminding them all of Daisy's marriage to Tom "in the middle of June" (p. 99) in Louisville. Nick's narration of the event he is witnessing describes the complex pressures

brought to bear on her choice. In fact, even Fitzgerald found this scene difficult. He wrote to Maxwell Perkins: "I've worried about it too long & I can't quite place Daisy's reaction."[32] Chaucer's narrator is unwilling to assert outright that Criseyde changed her heart from Troilus to Diomed, choosing this as one of his moments of selective retreat behind his sources and familiar elements of the story: "Men seyn—I not—that she yaf him hire herte" (*Troilus* 5, 1050). Similarly, Nick confesses at the end of the story (and the beginning of the novel): "I had no sight into Daisy's heart" (p. 9). But like Henryson's narrator of *The Testament,* Nick relieves Daisy of the responsibility for Gatsby's imposed romantic inflation of her. The narrator of *The Testament* defies public opinion of Criseyde and the damage already done to her reputation to excuse her as a victim of Fortune, "and na-thing throw the gilt / Of thee" (*Testament,* stanza 13, p. 353). The horrendous punishment inflicted on her by the gods, while contributing in the overall story tradition to Criseyde's degradation, explicitly follows her blasphemy rather than her betrayal of Troilus. Nick similarly exculpates Daisy, saying that it was "not through her own fault" that she had to fall short of Gatsby's dream, "but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion" (p. 75). This exculpation is also evident in the smaller details: Chaucer's Criseyde accepts Pandarus' invitation to dinner "al innocent" of the romantic plot afoot (*Troilus* 2, 1562, 1723). Daisy is also described as "innocently" (p. 66) replying to Nick's invitation to come to tea without Tom. Though she coyly asks "Who is 'Tom?'" she has no notion of Gatsby's invitation behind Nick's.

Daisy's gravest fault is not confessing that she was driving the "death car" that killed Myrtle Wilson, thereby allowing Gatsby to shoulder the blame by implication and be killed by Wilson as a direct consequence. In Schlacks' words, "Daisy (and perhaps Tom along with her) creates a 'courtly-love text' involving Gatsby's sacrificing himself for her" (Schlacks, p. 186). However, Daisy is ever the pragmatist and acts, or does not act, accordingly. Why confess to Tom, or anyone else, when there is no immediate need? And what good would it have done to do so after the "holocaust" has occurred? Meeting Tom on Fifth Avenue in late October, Nick initially refuses to shake the hand offered him. That he then overcomes his "provincial squeamishness" (p. 140) to do so is a benediction of sorts, a gesture that allows Tom and Daisy their "vast carelessness" (p. 139), and after the struggle perhaps there is also, for Nick, a certain relief.

To lay full responsibility or blame for the tragic history on

Criseyde's or Daisy's shoulders is as inappropriate as Troilus or Gatsby seeking there a foundation for the rock of the world. Blame is not accorded in *The Great Gatsby,* but the lack of overseers (even the grim assembly in Henryson's *Testament)* creates a vacuum of space where the heavens might possibly have been. While Bruce Michelson may argue that "The gods are always around somewhere, attending to the godly business which we had better avoid" (Michelson, p. 576), David Parker's reading of the novel refutes even this optimistic attribution of absence: "all that remains is a ghastly parody of providence" (Parker, p. 33). The gods are noticeably absent from the "local heavens" (*Gatsby*, p. 20) over East and West Egg. It is therefore doubly significant that when Gatsby disappears after standing, arms outstretched, in the night (Nick's first glimpse of the mysterious Mr. Gatsby), Nick no longer notices "the silver pepper of the stars" but feels instead "the unquiet darkness" (p. 20). For Gatsby the object of his aspiration is in fact Daisy's green dock light, the symbol of his idolatry. Yet in Gatsby's presence Nick notices the stars, and in his absence Nick's own vision dissolves, leaving him alone in "unquiet darkness."

The "blynde world" (*Troilus* 1, 211) of Chaucer's poem refers to lovers and pagans alike.[33] Those whose perspective is limited to "This litel spot of erthe" (*Troilus* 5, 1815) are blind fools. Boccaccio makes this more explicit: "O blindness of worldly minds!" (*Il Filostrato,* canto 1, p. 34). In Chaucer's poem, Venus, Cupid, Fortune and company are either unwilling or unable to assist the characters in extricating themselves from the predicament that they have undoubtedly had a hand in causing, prompting the narrator to exclaim: "Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites! / Lo here, what alle hire goddes may availle!" (*Troilus* 5, 1849–50). What apotheosis after death confers, however, is vision. From the eighth sphere Troilus "saugh with ful avysement" (*Troilus* 5, 1811); he "gan avyse" the earth (*Troilus* 5, 1814), and when "his lokyng down he caste" (*Troilus* 5, 1820) he is able to laugh at the world and its "blynde lust" (*Troilus* 5, 1824) .

The mutable world of *The Great Gatsby* is likewise a blind one. The theme of blindness has many varied expressions in the novel whose only overseer is a blind billboard deity in the form of the oculist Dr. T. J. Eckleburg:

> The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose. . . . But his eyes, dimmed

> a little by many paintless days under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground. (p. 21)

The "dumping ground" is the valley of ashes where men are mere dust figures, "already crumbling through the powdery air" (p. 21). George Wilson makes the obvious connection in vengeful delusion after his wife Myrtle's death. He looks at the billboard eyes which keep vigil over a landscape of ashes and ash-men, and says: "God sees everything" (p. 125). The assertion serves to remind the reader that while Eckleberg is not God, and in any case can "see" nothing, the need to place faith in transcendence of one sort or another can find no purchase in the contenders offered for such roles in the novel. As Michaelis tells Wilson poignantly, "You ought to have a church, George, for times like this" (p. 123).

Apotheosis occurs not for Gatsby after his death, but for the novel after Fitzgerald's death. It is the book, not its "hero", that "now rests far above the shifting winds of literary fortune."[34] Nick imagines East Egg and West Egg as the gulls see it from the air, but adds that the land formation presents another aspect to human beings, who remain "the wingless" (p. 8) throughout. The heavens offer no enlightening perspective but are even obscured by "an unfamiliar sky" itself obscured by "frightening leaves" (p. 126). It is empty of a God of whose presence Chaucer's narrator finally assures us. The palinode in *Troilus* puts the mortal events which preceded Troilus' death into the perspective of a "litel . . . tragedye" (*Troilus* 5, 1786). The death of Gatsby and the discovery of Wilson's body in Fitzgerald's novel, without this aerial perspective, is instead a "holocaust" (p. 126).

And yet in spite of this, perhaps even because of this, boats are still set against the current, destined to struggle there like Gatsby's dream, "unhappily, undespairingly" (p. 105), and this is the distinctly human triumph to which Nick bears reluctant testimony. The unhappiness is overwhelming, therefore the lack of despair almost transcends the credible. Gatsby, "a son of God" (p. 77), is forsaken—but not by Nick, who puts himself "on Gatsby's side, and alone" (p. 127). He does not simply disappear as Chaucer's Pandarus does, nor does he resort to self-pity and misanthropic invective like Shakespeare's Pandare. Another of those who find "little . . . to whisper about in this world" (p. 37), Nick elegizes Gatsby's "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life," his "extraordinary gift for hope" and "romantic readiness" (p. 6), and transcends his own characterization to ally himself with this immense, ennobling capacity for wonder. Creating an intertext of the story of

Troilus and Criseyde for his novel, Fitzgerald chose a story with a history to show that time and time again history stacks the odds against survival of human aspiration. He then set about demonstrating its immortality.

Notes

[1] Fitzgerald in a letter to Maxwell Perkins, ca. April 10, 1924, in *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence,* ed. John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 70.

[2] A glance in the index of a work such as Udo J. Hebel's *Intertextuality, Allusion and Quotation: An International Annotated Bibliography of Criticism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989) will show the representative nature of this selection of the novel's intertexts.

[3] This of course pursues the reference in the novel to Daisy as the grail to which Gatsby commits himself. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby,* ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (1925; New York and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 116–17. All further references are to this edition and will appear parenthetically. For criticism exploring the grail allusion, see for example Jerome Mandel, "The Grotesque Rose: Medieval Romance and *The Great Gatsby*," *MFS* 34 (1988), 541–58, and K. G. Probert, "Nick Carraway and the Romance of Art," *English Studies in Canada* 10 (1984), 188–208.

[4] Bruce Michelson, "The Myth of Gatsby," *MFS* 26 (1980–81), 563–77.

[5] See Nancy Y. Hoffman, "*The Great Gatsby: Chaucer and Criseyde* Revisited?", *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual 1971,* ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr. (Microcard Editions, 1971), 150, 152. The visit to the empty house as an intertextual motif in *Gatsby* is first mentioned by Hoffman. Gatsby spends the rest of his army pay to wander the streets of Louisville where he and Daisy had walked together, "the spot that she had made lovely for him" (*Gatsby,* p. 119), but Daisy is no longer there. Jerome Mandel also cites examples of the romanticization of the empty house tradition that Fitzgerald acknowledges by echoing. Perhaps the most famous example is that in *Troilus and Criseyde,* and "farewel shryne, of which the seynt is oute!" (*Troilus* 5, 553) perfectly reflects Gatsby's mood in Louisville (Mandel, pp. 554–55). All references to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* are from *The Riverside Chaucer,* 3d ed., general ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987; Oxford Univ. Press, 1989).

[6] F. T. Flahiff, "*The Great Gatsby:* Scott Fitzgerald's Chaucerian Rag," *Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honor of Sheila Watson,* ed. Diane Bessai and David Jackel (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), 87–98.

[7] From F. Scott Fitzgerald's unused "Preface to 'This Side of Paradise'" (1919; facsimile of the typescript first reproduced in the *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual 1971*), 1–2. Quoted in Deborah Davis Schlacks, *Americam Dream Visions: Chaucer's Surprising Influence on F. Scott Fitzgerald,* Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature, Vol. 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), p. 27.

[8] Hoffman provides proof of Fitzgerald's knowledge of Chaucer's work with recourse to records of his study at Princeton, noting that Fitzgerald took the course "303–Chaucer and His Contemporaries" there in the fall of 1916, for which it was stipulated: "Reading will include the greater part of Chaucer's poetry, with selections from Langland, Gower, Wyclif and the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." The course required a "thesis of considerable length, embodying the results of independent investigation." (Hoffman, p. 157n, quoting from a personal communication with Janet Miller, Dept of English, Princeton University, 1970.) Flahiff adds that Fitzgerald was taught by Gordon Hall Gerould and knew Robert K. Root, the influential critic later responsible for the important 1926 edition of *Troilus and Criseyde* (Flahiff, p. 98). In his biography of Fitzgerald, Matthew J. Bruccoli writes: "The first term of his junior year Fitzgerald's courses included English (the Renaissance—Spenser, Marlowe, Sidney), [and] English (Chaucer)." *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), p. 61. In September 1916, after withdrawing from Princeton the previous year, Fitzgerald repeated four courses, including Chaucer (*ibid.,* p. 68). Of six courses, he passed Chaucer, English Renaissance and French (p. 70). In the first chapter of her work Schlacks also expands upon the evidence of Fitzgerald's intense and sustained interest in the medieval period.

[9] Also, as Hoffman points out, Nick (aged twenty-nine and Daisy's cousin) recalls Pandarus' own predecessor Pandarus in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato,* who was a young cousin of Criseyde and not the uncle Chaucer portrays. In Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise,* the protagonist Amory Blaine refers at one point to "the racier sections of Rabelais, Boccaccio, Petronius, and Suetonius" (1920; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 106. Boccaccio is the important source for Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,* and it is Boccaccio who first introduces Pandarus into the story.

[10] Matthew J. Bruccoli notes that the lyrics to the song quoted in the novel (p. 75) are from "Ain't We Got Fun?", a popular song of 1921; music by Richard A. Whiting, lyrics by Gus Kahn and Raymond B. Egan (Bruccoli, ed., *Gatsby*, 198). Their quotation here is not flippant; the novel is intensely concerned with what has happened between Gatsby and Daisy's union and reunion, as much as it addresses what happened between Chaucer's treatment of the story and Fitzgerald's own.

[11] R. K. Gordon notes: "After Henryson the story of Troilus was degraded by balladmakers and others. Criseyde's sad prophecy [that no good word shall ever be written or said of her] was fulfilled . . . By the time of Shakespeare, Criseyde had become a mere wanton, and Shakespeare in his play left her as such." R. K. Gordon, ed. and trans., *The Story of Troilus,* Mediaeval Academy Reprints for Teaching (1934; Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1988), p. xviii. All quotations from Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* and Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* are from this edition. Stanza numbers for Henryson's poem are my own. For discussion of the degradation of the

story, see M. C. Bradbrook, "What Shakespeare Did to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 9 (1958), 311–19, and Hyder E. Rollins, "The Troilus-Cressida Story from Chaucer to Shakespeare," *PMLA* 32 (1917), 383–429.

Ironically, in light of this discussion, Thomas Pendleton cites Troilus' famous question regarding Helen from Shakespeare's *Troilus:* "What's aught but as 'tis valued?", and Hector's response: "'Tis mad idolatry / To make the service greater than the god" (II, ii, 52, 56–57) to illustrate Gatsby's romanticism and Nick's contrasting realism, but he does not appear aware of the more expansive use of the intertext. Pendleton, *I'm Sorry About the Clock: Chronology, Composition, and Narrative Technique in* The Great Gatsby (London and Toronto: Associated Univ. Presses, 1993), p. 123. Similarly, in *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur,* Matthew J. Bruccoli comments: "[Fitzgerald's] heroes, like Shakespeare's Troilus, are betrayed or destroyed by women who lack the capacity for total romantic commitment. Thus Gatsby idealizes Daisy, who is unworthy of his devotion" (p. 79).

[12] William Shakespeare, *The History of Troilus and Cressida,* in *The Riverside Shakespeare,* Vol. 1, general ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), II, iii, 72–73. The armed Prologue also introduces the cause for the war at its most sordid level: "The ravish'd Helen, Menelaus' queen, / With wanton Paris sleeps—and that's the quarrel" (prologue, 9–10). Further references to Shakespeare's play are to this edition.

[13] Flahiff, p. 97. David Parker sees this as "peculiarly the American experience to witness the disappearance of opportunities for heroic action in the world at large." "Two Versions of the Hero," *English Studies* 54 (1973), rpt. in *Modern Critical Interpretations: F. Scott Fitzgerald's* The Great Gatsby, ed. Harold Bloom (NY: Chelsea House, 1986), p. 43.

[14] Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise,* p. 282.

[15] Perkins to Fitzgerald, November 20, 1924, in *Dear Scott/Dear Max,* p. 82.

[16] Rollins, p. 423.

[17] Probert argues that the hymn to America with which the novel concludes constitutes an apotheosis of Gatsby himself: "And both heroes, in spite of whatever judgement we may make of their actions, are apotheosized by their creators at the end of their stories: Troilus being removed to the eighth sphere (*Troilus* 5, 1807 ff.), and Gatsby in the hymn to America which forms the conclusion of his story" (Probert, p. 193). I do not believe that Gatsby himself is apotheosized, albeit symbolically, so much as the *aspiration* that Gatsby so devastatingly and flamboyantly embodied but that is not unique to him.

[18] In his explanatory notes to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,* Larry Benson remarks: "Whether Pandarus passes the night in the bedroom, without the curtains [around the bed], Chaucer does not say (see *Troilus* 3, 914, 1189, 1555)" (Benson, ed., *Troilus,* p. 1040), and later: "the phrasing here suggests that he remains [in the room]" (p. 1042).

[19] Bruccoli identifies the author of *Simon Called Peter* as Robert Keable (1887–1927)

and adds: "This popular novel (London: Constable, 1921) was regarded as immoral by Fitzgerald. See his statement on censorship [quoted in part below] . . . The novel's protagonist is an army chaplain who becomes involved in passionate episodes. The novel was in its eighty-eighth American printing (Dutton) by July 1924" (Bruccoli, ed., *Gatsby*, 185–86). The collection *F. Scott Fitzgerald In His Own Time: A Miscellany*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jackson R. Bryer (Kent: Kent State Univ. Press, 1971) reprints "Censorship Or Not" (originally published in *The Literary Digest*, June 23, 1923, pp. 31, 61). Fitzgerald writes: "The really immoral books like ' Simon Called Peter' . . . won't be touched" (p. 170).

[20] Fitzgerald in letters to Perkins, ca. December 1, 1924; ca. January 15, 1925; and January 24, 1925 in *Dear Scott/Dear Max,* pp. 85, 91, 93. The first letter expressly yokes the disappearance of Tom and Myrtle with Nick reading *Simon Called Peter* as reason for Fitzgerald's concern.

[21] R. W. Stallman, "Gatsby and the Hole in Time," *MFS* 1 (1955), p. 8.

[22] Matthew J. Bruccoli, introduction to *F. Scott Fitzgerald,* The Great Gatsby: *A Facsimile of the Manuscript,* ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Washington, D.C: Microcard Editions, 1973), p. xxix, in reference to the unrevised galleys (typescript) Chapter VI.

[23] Gordon, introduction to *The Story of Troilus*, p. xv.

[24] Barry Windeatt, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer:* Troilus and Criseyde (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 268.

[25] Schlacks argues that the novel evinces a "positive trend in endings" because Nick successfully writes the novel (Schlacks, p. 115). However, Nick's is a flawed narrative that describes its own failure even as it courageously writes itself. The significant transcendence is elsewhere.

[26] Perkins to Fitzgerald, November 20, 1924, in *Dear Scott/Dear Max,* p. 82.

[27] Morton Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *PMLA* 72 (1957), 22.

[28] Schlacks likens Daisy to the goddess Fame in Chaucer's *The House of Fame*: she is powerful and capricious, and ultimately does not grant Gatsby his wish (Schlacks, pp. 184–86). Daisy shares Fortune's characteristic changeability—even her hair colour is described as both light and dark in the course of the novel (see *Gatsby*, pp. 91, 117). For discussion of the ramifications of this for her characterization see Joan Korenman, "'Only her Hairdresser' . . . Another look at Daisy Buchanan," *AL* 46 (1975), 574–78.

[29] Henry W. Sams, "The Dual Time Scheme in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *MLN* 56 (1941), p. 94.

[30] "The Word Frequency List in Numerical Order" in *A Concordance to F. Scott Fitzgerald's* The Great Gatsby, comp. Andrew T. Crosland (Detroit: Gale Research,

1975) demonstrates clearly that "night" (with 77 references), "day" (51), "white" (47), "light" (44), and "dark" (25) are among the most frequently used words in the novel. For consideration of this image cluster in *Gatsby* see Dan Seiters, *Image Patterns in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald,* Studies in Modern Literature, No. 53 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 64–73.

[31] Criseyde's name (true to her nature) changes from author to author. After Benoît de Ste Maure's Briseida there follows Boccaccio's Criseida, Chaucer's Criseyde, Henryson's Cresseid and Shakespeare's Cressida. Fancifully reversing each of these respective versions gives the following approximations: "diesi," "diesi," "dyesi," "deisse," and "disse."

[32] Fitzgerald to Perkins ca. December 20, 1924. *Dear Scott/Dear Max,* p. 89.

[33] For an excellent analysis of blindness in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,* see Chauncey Wood, *The Elements of Chaucer's* Troilus (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1984), 153–63. See also Julia Ebel, "Troilus and Oedipus: The Genealogy of an Image," *English Studies* 55 (1974), 15–21.

[34] Charles Scribner III, introduction to *The Great Gatsby* (1925; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), pp. xix–xx.