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"BOATS AGAINST THE CURRENT":
A COMPARISON OF FITZGERALD'S GATZ - GATSBY AND
MILTON'S LUCIFER - SATAN

-
Kevin Scahill

“Boats Against the Current”: A Comparison of Fitzgerald’s *Gatz* – *Gatsby* and Milton’s *Lucifer* –
Satan

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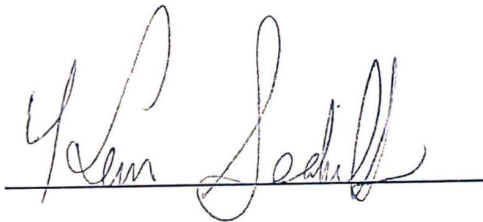
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ABSTRACT

KEVIN JOSEPH SCAHILL. "Boats against the current": A Comparison of Fitzgerald's Gatz – Gatsby and Milton's Lucifer – Satan (under the direction of Dr. Linda Barnes).

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to approach the character of Jay Gatsby in a fresh way by avoiding both common readings of the character and the application of what has become known as Literary Theory.

Methods: The method of criticism was partially influenced by Michel Foucault in the practice of suspending ideas of unity, but the comparison of Gatsby and Milton's Satan was done according to older and less advanced critical methods, similar to what has been called Liberal Humanism.

Results: Disregarding known readings of the character Jay Gatsby suggested a resemblance to Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*, and this resemblance, in turn, suggested that what some critics see or saw as quintessentially American would have been merely Satanic to John Milton.

Conclusions: Jay Gatsby and Satan from *Paradise Lost* are similar in five significant ways. This suggests that the character and even the idea of what critics have thought of as American can be even more complicated than has been suggested.

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“Boats against the current”: A Comparison of Fitzgerald’s *Gatz* – *Gatsby* and Milton’s

Lucifer – Satan

CHAPTER I

Introduction

In 2002, Victoria De Zwaan, in “Seminal Authority and the Dissemination of Self: The Law of Fitzgerald Scholarship,” claimed that “it may well be to the benefit of the Fitzgerald industry that it does not seem to open itself up to the constantly changing fashions of criticism,” but “either there will have to be a radical revolution inside Fitzgerald scholarship (the breakdown of the reigning paradigm), or Fitzgerald’s fate may be a kind of obsolescence” (681). Most of her article argues against what she considers the law, in practice, of most Fitzgerald scholarship, that Fitzgerald’s self-documentation reveals “the real man,” and gives “us authentic and authoritative insight into his work” (667). It is certainly true that the strength of previous Fitzgerald scholarship and the diligence of previous Fitzgerald scholars do make it difficult to approach Fitzgerald’s work in a fresh way. Because *The Great Gatsby* is, by far, the most studied and analyzed piece of Fitzgerald’s work, it is most susceptible to these dangers and is the text that this study will be focused on. Even if one can avoid the common pitfalls that De Zwaan discusses, there are still more relatively common approaches to Fitzgerald’s work, and particularly *The Great Gatsby*, which are easy to fall into. Three of the more common ways to read *The Great Gatsby* are to discuss it in terms of the so-called American Dream, compare broadly it broadly to T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and the “Sir Gatsby”

scholarship, where Gatsby is compared to a grail knight and Daisy is compared to the grail, and all three of these ways to read *The Great Gatsby* have produced brilliant scholarship. There is a limit, however, to the number of times that one may convincingly or interestingly compare the novel to *The Waste Land* or Gatsby to a grail knight, and, in fact, the novel really might become a waste land if *nothing new will grow there*. Jay Gatsby himself could also become stale and crystallized if he comes to be understood and read in just a few certain ways.

Of course, there have been several applications of what has become generally known as Literary Theory to *The Great Gatsby*. There have been Feminist, Marxist, Deconstructive, and even Bakhtinian readings of the novel. While this might seem to provide a variety of different approaches, there are, however, some difficulties in going that route. Even if one disagrees with Harold Bloom's characterization of much Literary Theory as "the anti-humanistic plain dreariness of all those developments in European criticism that have yet to demonstrate that they can aid in reading any one poem by any poet whatsoever," or Noam Chomsky's dismissal of Jacques Derrida *et al*, Literary Theory really is something of a divided house, where one is for Paul and another is for Apollos. At any rate, except for a little borrowing from Michel Foucault, it will be avoided here.

Ideally, the novel itself should be multi-faceted enough to provide several angles of reading. Criticism should enlarge the text and not reduce it. In the words of Keats, every rift should be loaded with ore. It would help if its eponymous hero, in particular,

were complex enough to admit further study. If, to students, he becomes merely the pursuer of the American Dream or the grail knight on a quest, then the end of his ability to say anything might be near. Thankfully, however, for those interested in the perpetuation of Fitzgerald studies, Jay Gatsby is multi-faceted enough to convincingly suggest several different types of readings that scholars have not yet put forth. An attempt to avoid well-worn paths to the character of Jay Gatsby suggested a surprising hypothesis: Gatz-Gatsby is, in five important ways, similar to Milton's Lucifer-Satan in *Paradise Lost*. This similarity seems to have gone unnoticed in criticism so far, but, once accepted, it invites even more interesting speculation about the novel and American Literature in general.

This critical method used in this study was influenced by several scholars' critical theories, but the primary influence for the motivation of turning away from established readings of Jay Gatsby would be the Victoria De Zwaan article already mentioned and Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault's claim that all texts are "caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences" is central to this criticism (23). Also foundational to this study is Foucault's claim that we must "rid ourselves of a whole mass of notions, each of which, in its own way, diversifies the theme of continuity" such as the ideas of tradition, influence, development, evolution, the spirit of its age, and the character of its author (Foucault 22). As he says later, however, these "pre-existing forms of continuity...must not be rejected definitely of course, but the tranquillity [sic] with which they are accepted must be disturbed," (25) and "the systematic erasure of all given unities enables us first of all to restore to the

statement the specificity of its occurrences” (28). Specifically, in examining the similarities between Satan and Gatsby, the following unities will be initially suspended: the tradition that each writer was responding to, any influences on either writer (including any influence of Milton on Fitzgerald), all questions of form or genre, the time-space (Bakhtin’s *chronotope*) that each text was created in, and either the biography of Milton or of Fitzgerald.

CHAPTER II

Comparison

Satan and Gatsby share five significant characteristics that seem fundamental to the characters. They both claim to be self-created; they both rebel against God, the authorities, and their “stations” in life; they both are great warriors; they both fit the New World explorer archetype (along with its similarity to Ulysses); and they both possess a significant and futile greatness.

Of the five, one of the more interesting Satanic characteristics is the idea of self-creation. In his book, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition*, J.M. Evans points out that Milton was hardly the first person to write about the Fall. According to Evans, however, Milton was the first person to have Satan claim that he had created himself. What is perhaps most interesting about this, is that this might very well be the *locus classicus* in Western literature for a created being to claim self-creation. In Book 5, lines 853 – 861, Satan tells Abdiel,

“That we were formed say’st thou? and the work

Of secondary hands, by task transferred

From Father to his Son? Strange point and new!

Doctrine which we would know whence learnt: who saw

When this creation was? Remember’st thou

Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?

We know no time when we were not as now;

Know none before us, self-begot, self- raised

By our own quick'ning power.”

The full impact of this claim may be hard to see. As C.S. Lewis explains on page 96 of his *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, the situation of Lucifer (as he was known before he was Satan) with the begetting of Messiah was as follows: “A being superior to himself in kind, by whom he himself had been created – a being far above him in the natural hierarchy – had been preferred to him in honour by an authority whose right to do so was indisputable.” In the hierarchy of Heaven, a created being is subordinate to the creator. If God, through Messiah, created Lucifer, then Lucifer must obey them. Their authority is indisputable. As a rationalization for his rebellion, Lucifer claims that he was not created by God; therefore, it would actually be against the hierarchical rules of Heaven and morally wrong for him to be subordinate to God or Messiah because they did not actually create him. As his own creator, he must logically be only subordinate to himself. Of course, Lucifer did not create himself, but he does next best thing: he ends up creating the Satan identity, although not altogether willingly.

James Gatz, like Lucifer, was also not a self-created being, but he willingly takes the next step with the Jay Gatsby identity. Nick says that Gatsby had “sprung from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a Son of God...and he must be about his Father’s

business” (98). In connection with Satan, using the words “a Son of God” to describe Gatsby is very interesting. It is the existence of the Son of God, and Satan’s refusal to be beneath Him, in Milton, that is the occasion for Satan’s rebellion. His not originally being considered a Son of God is a catalyst for everything that happens next. As it will be shown when dealing with the rebellions of Gatsby, one could also make the argument that it was James Gatz’s status as different from Gatsby, the Son of God, which was also a catalyst for everything that he came to do.

The second Satanic characteristic is rebelliousness, the classic *non serviam*. Satan rebels against God and against his social class. After his expulsion, in Book 1, 110 – 116, Satan makes it clear that he feels that a “suppliant” or serving place would be beneath him:

To bow and sue for grace
 With suppliant knee, and deify his power
 Who from the terror of this arm so late
 Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,
 That were an ignominy and shame beneath
 This downfall.

In 261 – 264 of the same book, he delivers the more famous *non serviam* lines: “Here we may reign secure, and in my choice/ To reign is worth ambition though in hell:/ Better to

reign in hell, than serve in heav'n." When Messiah's place in the hierarchy was announced, Satan "thought himself impaired" (5.666). His longest rationalization occurs later in Book 5 when the fallen and unfallen angles first meet on the battlefield.

Speciously, he claims that

...For orders and degrees

Jar not with liberty, but well consist.

Who can in reason then or right assume

Monarchy over such as live by right

His equals, if in power and splendor less,

In freedom equal? (5.792 – 797)

By leading a violent army against Heaven, he literally rebels against God and Messiah. As God and Messiah are the only known authorities over him, he can be said to be rebelling against all known authorities as well. What is interesting though is that a large portion of his complaining deals with his place in the hierarchy of Heaven, his social class. God and Messiah make up the ruling class, and Satan is merely another member of the working or serving class. Theoretically, he had always been part of the serving class, but it would seem that he does not realize this until he realizes that he is not a Son of God like Messiah. By attempting to usurp the throne of God, what Satan is actually attempting is a form of social climbing, albeit a violent form. With the new

developments, there seemed no opportunity for upward mobility, and Messiah must have seemed very much like an outside hire.

Satan as a rebel is a commonplace, but the rebelliousness of Gatsby has received less critical attention. Gatsby, however, lived in active rebellion against various authorities and especially his social class. Just as Satan rebelled against God, one could also argue that Gatsby rejected God and religion as well. Intriguingly, one of the things that Paul Giles argues in “Aquinas vs. Weber: Ideological Esthetics in *The Great Gatsby*” is that Gatsby begins his career as a literary character as a young apostate. Many scholars have argued for the validity of considering Rudolph Miller from “Absolution” as a proto-Gatsby. If the argument is accepted, then Gatsby, like Satan, is an apostate.

Ryan LaHurd, for instance, says that “Absolution” is “Gatsby’s front door.” He claims that “if ‘Absolution’ is reconstituted as a part of Gatsby, it enlarges the picture of Gatsby’s personality by presenting his most formative years under the name of Rudolph Miller” (114). He argues that approaching the texts this way helps make Jay Gatsby as a character more comprehensible. It is assumed that Fitzgerald should be taken at his word and that Miller really is an accurate representation of James Gatz as a child.

In “‘Absolution’ and *The Great Gatsby*,” Lawrence Stewart, however, argues otherwise. He claims that “‘Absolution’ and *The Great Gatsby*, though they share a few superficial similarities, are basically irreconcilable” (181). He argues that, especially with regard to their attitudes toward religion, Gatsby has more affinities with Father Schwartz, the priest from “Absolution,” than with Miller. Stewart contrasts Miller’s

decision that “there was something ineffably gorgeous somewhere that had nothing to do with God” with the fact that Nick uses Biblical imagery to describe Gatsby and Gatsby’s dreams. He also claims that Miller is, in general, supposed to suggest a generic adolescence rather than the more specific ideas that Gatsby suggests.

Paul Giles uses “Absolution” to support the impact of the influence of Catholicism on *The Great Gatsby*. He even suggests that Fitzgerald’s ambivalence toward the American Dream was, in part, a product of his Roman Catholic upbringing. He argues, “this ambivalence should be seen...also as a textual stress emanating from specific pressures which can be located within the context of a religious culture” (2). Stewart and Giles both agree that apostasy is an important part of the Miller character. If, then, one is convinced of the connection between Miller and Gatsby, Gatsby becomes an apostate early in life, in his formative years.

After God, Gatsby also rebels against the next authorities, his parents. They “were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people – his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all” (98). His rebellion against his parents, however, is tied very closely with his desire to rise above his original social class, which will be dealt with later.

Beyond God and the authorities of church and family, there is the authority of the state, and Gatsby’s rebellion against the state ought to be obvious: Gatsby is a criminal. Although often veiled and mysterious, there are several references to Gatsby’s criminal activities. He is, as Tom says, “one of that bunch that hangs around with Meyer

Wolfsheim” (133). Gatsby himself admits to Nick that Wolfsheim is “the man who fixed the World’s Series back in 1919” (73).

On even a local level, Gatsby has connections that render him immune to punishment for minor traffic violations as when he is pulled over by a police officer for speeding: “Taking a white card from his wallet, he waved it before the man’s eyes. ‘Right you are,’ agreed the policeman, tipping his cap. ‘Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse *me!*’” (68). In the final stages of the novel, Tom tells Gatsby, “I found out what your ‘drug-stores’ were,” and, turning to Nick and the others, said, “He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drug-stores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter...but you’ve got something on now that Walter’s afraid to tell me about” (133-134). Although Tom calls Gatsby “a common swindler,” it is clear that Gatsby, as a criminal, is far beyond what is common.

Beyond just rebelling against authorities, Gatsby’s life is also a war of maneuvers against his original social class. He fights hard to escape being James Gatz. He wants to improve himself. In the context of Satan, Gatsby’s attitude toward janitorial work is especially interesting. He only stays at “the small Lutheran college of St. Olaf’s” for two weeks” and is “dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself,” and he despises “the janitor’s work with which he was to pay his way through” (99). Gatsby believes he is destined for something beyond the station and class that he was born into. Henry Gatz himself admits that their family “was broke up when he run off from home, but I see now there was a reason for it. He knew he had a big

future in front of him” (172). Later, Henry tells Nick that Gatsby “was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves...He told me I et like a hog once, and I beat him for it” (173). Intent on his “future glory,” the young Gatsby fantasizes about more desirable things:

The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the washstand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace...he was quick and extravagantly ambitious. (99-100)

He thinks that his experience with Dan Cody will be the escape he is looking for, but, in the end, “he never understood the legal device that was used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye,” and Gatsby becomes poor again, but with, at least, a “singularly appropriate education” (100-101). Later, when he meets Daisy, he again chafes against his actual social class. Although “he was at present a penniless young man without a past,” Gatsby “had deliberately given Daisy a sense of security; he let her believe that he was a person from much the same stratum as herself, “but “he had no comfortable family standing behind him” (149).

So Satan and Gatsby are rebels. In the course of their rebellions, they both exhibit martial prowess, especially Satan. It is easy to find evidence that Satan was a great

warrior, for Milton explicitly identifies him with Achilles and mentions his prowess in battle several times. Beelzebub refers to him, albeit hyperbolically, as

O Prince, O Chief of many thronèd Powers,

That led the' embattled Seraphim to war

Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds

Fearless, endangered heav'ns perpetual King. (1.128-131)

In lines 283 – 294, his armaments are described in the conventional epic manner, with a particular focus on the shield. Harold Bloom is one of the scholars who have examined this passage closely. In “Milton and his Precursors,” he points out that Milton’s description of Satan alluded to similar passages in Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Tasso, Spenser, and the Bible (560). He goes on to cite passages from Homer and Spenser dealing with the shields of Achilles and Radigund respectively.

On the first day of the war in Heaven, “the battle hung; till Satan, who that day/
Prodigious power had shown, and met in arms/ No equal, ranging through the dire attack” (6.246 – 247). It is eventually Messiah, not the loyal angels, who drives Satan and his minions to hell.

There is less about Gatsby’s martial prowess in *The Great Gatsby*, but it is still there. As Jerome Mandel has claimed, “although not an aristocrat, Gatsby is a great warrior, perhaps in the mold of Sir John Hawkwood and The White Company” (546). About the war, Gatsby himself says that he “tried very hard to die,” but “seemed to bear

an enchanted life” (66). In one battle in particular, he distinguished himself by leading his two machine-gun detachments to a great victory and he says, “I was promoted to be a major, and every Allied government gave me a decoration – even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea!” (66). The medal itself says it was “For Valour Extraordinary” (67). Gatsby “did extraordinarily well in the war” (150). This aspect of Gatsby has been emphasized by the Sir Gatsby scholarship. While knights certainly must be brave and effective warriors, one can be as brave as a knight without being, in other aspects, very much like a knight at all. As already shown, Satan himself is associated, through allusions and formulaic constructions, to knights, Arthurian and otherwise. It seems to be a much less popular approach, however, to describe Satan as a grail knight and Eden as a grail chapel.

It is easy to forget Gatsby’s war stories because they are only flashbacks in the main narrative. It is very easy to see only the “cool” persona that Gatsby projects onto West Egg, but, as an actual war hero, he differs significantly from everyone else in the narrative. With regards to military accomplishments, Mandel’s comparison between Gatsby and Nick is very apt: “In medieval terms, Gatsby returned one of the victors from the Great European Tournament of 1918, whereas Nick Carraway merely participated” (546). Tom Buchanan did not even participate.

Throughout literature, some brave warriors were, like Ulysses, also great explorers. Although the similarity has been noted for each character individually, as far as I can tell, however, no critic has noticed that both Satan and Gatsby are explicitly

identified with the New World explorer type. There are critics who have written about the story of Columbus and the egg and how this story relates to *Paradise Lost*, and there are also critics who have written about the story of Columbus and the egg and how it relates to *The Great Gatsby*. One might even argue that there has been a disproportionate amount of scholarship for such a little story, but it certainly aids this research. The story itself is fairly short.

There are many different sources for the anecdote of Columbus and the egg. According to the scholar Takashi Yoshinaka in “Columbus’s Egg in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,” it was “Girolamo Benzoni who invented the story (or, strictly speaking, lifted the story of the egg from the section dealing with Brunelleschi in Vasari’s *Vite*, and connected it with Columbus for the first time)” (1). The most likely source of the anecdote for Milton, Yoshinaka claims, is “*Hakluytus Postumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes, Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells, by Englishmen and Others* (1625) which Boswell does mention among the list of books Milton read” (1).

George Monteiro, in “Carraway’s Complaint,” suggests that a likely source for Fitzgerald’s use of the anecdote was Washington Irving’s *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. The anecdote can basically be summarized as follows. After Columbus “discovered the New World,” and came back to Europe, he was asked if he thought there were others who could have done the job of discovering the New World just as well as he had. He told those present to try and make an egg stand upright, but none could do it. Columbus did it by slightly cracking the egg’s bottom and setting it upright

on its misshapen bottom. He claimed that his discovering the New World was like his trick with the egg: easy to perform once he had shown the way.

Although Milton's allusion to the egg story is not as clear as Fitzgerald's allusions, Yoshinaka presents a fairly strong case. Yoshinaka claims that the following lines are the allusion:

Th' invention all admired, and each, how he

To be th'inventor missed, so easy it seemed

Once found, which yet unfound most would have thought

Impossible. (6.498-501)

The lines themselves are referring to Satan's invention of cannons that help turn the tide of battle in the favor of the fallen angels, but Yoshinaka's argument is strengthened by showing how much the rest of the poem associates Satan with the early explorers.

Milton identifies Satan with the early explorers of America, but this identification is hardly complimentary to either party. Interestingly, as William C. Spengemann has shown in his book *A New World of Words*, Milton is not the first major poet to connect the spirit of exploration with damnation, for Dante placed Ulysses in Hell "in canto 26 of *Inferno*, for having presumed to sail outside the sanctified circle of the known world in search of a 'new land'" (101).

The Divine Comedy was written long before Europeans, excluding Leif Ericson, sailed to America, but *Paradise Lost* was written during an exploration and travel writing boom, and Spengemann argues strongly that, “intended or not, the association in *Paradise Lost* between Satan’s project and the American adventure is rhetorically unmistakable” (107). Yoshinaka points out that

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan’s escape from Hell is constantly couched in navigational terms, and the similes used to describe Satan’s main exploit are frequently drawn from voyages of discovery...the parallel between Satan and Columbus can be strengthened by the view that *Paradise Lost* is a poem about colonial plantation” (2).

Spengemann maintains that “Satan, the seeker after this undiscovered land, bears all of the traits that readers of Hakluyt and Purchas had come to associate with New World voyagers” and gives a long list of both traits and supporting citations (107). Some of the stronger passages that associate Satan with the early explorers are as follows.

After the conversation with Chaos, “Satan stayed not to reply,/ but glad that now his sea should find a shore” (2.1010-1011). The scheme to come to earth, according to Spengemann, “is planned in Pandemonium, a council of colonial adventurers who have already been compared to mariners (2.285-90)” (107). Satan is compared “to them who sail/ Beyond the Cape of Hope” (4.159-160). Through an allusion to the *Aeneid* in line 660 of Book 2, “Scylla bathing in the sea,” Satan is associated with Aeneas, who is himself associated by Virgil with both Achilles and Ulysses. Aeneas, incidentally, is

perhaps a better model for Satan than either Achilles or Ulysses, for it is his mission to defeat the indigenous tribes, found a new colony, and build the republic of Rome that would eventually become the Augustan Empire of Virgil's day.

As far as nautical or marine imagery in *The Great Gatsby* goes, in 1987 Margaret Lukens actually claimed that "few of the novel's critics or teachers have noticed how profoundly informed the prose is by marine imagery" (44). It still may not be the most popular topic in Fitzgerald criticism, but there are a few scholars who have analyzed the marine and nautical elements of *The Great Gatsby* thoroughly. Lukens herself convincingly compares Gatsby to a drowned sailor in her article "Gatsby as a Drowned Sailor." In "Carraway's Complaint," George Monteiro deals thoroughly with the legacy of early explorers in *The Great Gatsby*, and Robert Martin argues in "Gatsby and the Dutch Sailors" that the scattered appearance of the nautical references "suggests that from a structural viewpoint they actually derive and proceed from the central image of the Dutch sailor passage in its original position as the conclusion of chapter 1" (62). So there certainly has been some research connecting Gatsby to the early explorers of America.

In the text itself, the most obvious and most often cited example of Gatsby's identification with early explorers is the last few pages of *The Great Gatsby*, the following passage in particular:

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch

sailors' eyes – a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder...[Gatsby] had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter – 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.

(180)

This is certainly the most quoted and analyzed passage of the novel, but the connection between *The Great Gatsby* and the Columbus and the egg story will be examined first. Monteiro, who has been referenced before, explains how *The Great Gatsby* alludes to this story.

Monteiro's article convincingly claims that Fitzgerald owed, in some areas, a debt to Washington Irving and Irving's *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher*

Columbus, which he says “anticipates Carraway’s simile connecting the egg to Columbus in the first chapter of *The Great Gatsby*” (166). In Irving, there is an account of the egg story, and the passage in question from *The Great Gatsby* is the following:

Twenty miles from the city a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay, jut out into the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere, the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. They are not perfect ovals – like the egg in the Columbus story, they are both crushed flat at the contact end... (4-5).

The very setting of the novel, going back and forth between West Egg and East Egg, can be seen as a continuous allusion to the Columbus story.

The egg story, of course, is not the only allusion to the early settlers of America. Martin, for instance, illustrates one way that Fitzgerald’s word choice suggests that the sailing and exploring metaphors apply to Gatsby’s entire life as Jay Gatsby. When picked up by Dan Cody, Gatsby is “beating his way along Lake Superior as a clam-digger and a salmon fisher” (98). Martin points out how *beat* also occurs in the last sentence of the novel and explains,

Properly understood, these two references to ‘beat’ and ‘beating’ are not only further links between Gatsby and the Dutch sailors, they also function as metaphorical reflections of his pursuit of the larger dream. A sailing definition of ‘beat’ is ‘to make progress to windward by sailing full and by, first on one tack and then on the other’. If ‘tacking’ is understood as changing one’s course or

direction to take advantage of the prevailing wind, Gatsby's varied career can be seen as an extended sailing metaphor in which he 'beats' his way from Lake Superior to Long Island Sound first on one tack and then on the other as clam-digger, salmon fisher, mate, skipper, and finally as gangster and bootlegger. (63)

Monteiro explains another allusion in the final passage of *The Great Gatsby* that even more closely links Gatsby with Columbus. It is easy and obvious to connect "a fresh, green breast of the new world" with "the green light at the end of Daisy's dock," but, according to Monteiro, Fitzgerald's use of the word *breast* is more significant than might readily be apparent. Beyond associating the New World closely with femininity, fertility, and Daisy, Monteiro claims that

Behind Nick's words and sentiments lies a vast body of Western literature on notions of a terrestrial paradise...Irving's history describes the first look which those 'honest Dutch tars' had of the New World when their ships 'entered that majestic bay which at this day expands its ample bosom before the city of New York, and which had never before been visited by any European. (162)

Monteiro goes on to show that Columbus himself said that the earth was in "the form of a pear...or like a round ball, upon one part of which is a prominence like a woman's nipple, this protrusion being the highest and nearest the sky" (qtd 163). This protrusion was believed to be a terrestrial paradise.

In comparing Gatsby and Satan, this is extremely interesting. Columbus and his contemporaries believed in the possible existence of a terrestrial paradise, like Eden.

Thus, by associating Gatsby with these early explorers, he is associated with men who were literally looking for a terrestrial paradise, just like Satan sought the terrestrial paradise.

It should be mentioned, however, that some scholars object to the association of Gatsby and New World explorers. Michael Beatty, in “The power of romance and the Gatsby-Wolfsheim ‘gonnegtion’” asks,

Does Nick, does Fitzgerald, do we, know what Dutch sailors in the early-seventeenth century were thinking while they eyed the approaching shores of Long Island? Doesn't it seem improbable that they were 'compelled into an aesthetic contemplation?' And by what logic do the Dutch sailors become representative of man in general? Even if we start thinking of the early American settlers as a whole, don't we think of them in terms of commitment, endurance and luck? The evocation above of that 'old unknown world' in terms of siren-like whisperings and 'a fresh, green breast' reads as a piece of myth-making...In sum, I do not think that Fitzgerald has succeeded in conveying in any fullness the quality of the ambitions and virtues that have manifested themselves in the making of America. (116-117)

It is hard to know how to respond to Beatty in this situation. Perhaps it is just easiest to concede that Fitzgerald is indeed myth-making, forging a myth of seeking the American dream, but what exactly else was expected or hoped for? At any rate, whether or not this association has any historical accuracy (an irrelevant concern for this study), it is

undeniable that within the text itself that Gatsby is associated with the New World explorers.

A last possible association with Gatsby and exploration actually connects Gatsby with the first sailor and explorer that Satan was compared to: Ulysses. The textual similarity between the ending of *The Great Gatsby* and some lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses" has undoubtedly been noticed before but does not seem to be mentioned in any readily available scholarship. Of course, it might have just been overlooked because it is a tenuous connection, but the imagery and sentiment are similar. In the poem, Ulysses tells his mariners that "'Tis not too late to seek a newer world," (57) and that they are "Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will/ to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" (69 – 70). Before that, however, he acknowledges that "Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough/ Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades/ For ever and for ever when I move" (19 – 21). Whatever the reason for the similarity, those lines certainly do bear an interesting resemblance to some already quoted lines from *The Great Gatsby*:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter – 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.

(180)

Both passages paint a picture of a boat steadily moving forward to a new world but never reaching its destination.

The last of the five Satanic qualities is greatness, but the greatness of each character is something controversial and often questioned. Because *Paradise Lost* is so much older, the idea of the greatness of Satan has a much longer history of being problematic than the greatness of Gatsby, but Gatsby has his detractors as well. Several scholars have examined the problem of Satan's greatness in different ways.

Perhaps a more accurate term for the quality that Satan and Gatsby possess would be "greaterness" but a neologism hardly seems warranted when greatness can do the job. A working definition of greatness will be the following: possessing certain valued qualities to a greater degree than other characters. Thus, in a company of warriors, for example, the most proficient warrior would be great. In a den of thieves, the most proficient at stealing would be great, and so forth. With this hopefully straightforward definition of greatness, it is probably already apparent how Satan and Gatsby can be considered great, but it seems necessary to first deal with some scholarship on the subject of Satan's character from some major critics.

Milton's Satan has been a very polarizing character in literary criticism. Frank Kermode has called it contending "for and against Satan in the hero-ass controversy" (604). Harold Bloom, for example, in the introduction to his seminal work *The Anxiety of Influence*, has drawn a line between himself and many other critics, including "the C.S. Lewis or Angelic School of Milton Criticism" (23). Throughout this examination of *Paradise Lost*, Bloom uses Satan to illustrate the characteristics of what Bloom refers to as the ephebe, or strong Modern poet. Furthermore, he claims in the same book that

It is sad to observe most modern critics observing Satan, because they never do observe him. The catalog of unseeing could hardly be more distinguished, from Eliot who speaks of “Milton’s curly haired Byronic hero”...to the astonishing backsliding of Northrop Frye, who invokes, in urbane ridicule, a Wagnerian context. (23)

Generally speaking, Bloom raises serious objections to judging Satan by moral standards rather than purely aesthetic standards. By Bloom’s standards, Satan ought to be held in the highest regard, the archetype of that rare and powerful genius, the ephebe or strong poet. An example of judging Satan morally is the passage he was possibly referring to by Northrop Frye:

The sombre, brooding, humourless ego, with its ‘high disdain from sense of injured merit’ drives us to look for compensation, perhaps by identifying ourselves with some irresistible hero. If in this state we read Milton, we shall find his Satan, so far from being the author of evil, a congenial and sympathetic figure...there are demonic elements portrayed in Wagner that some very evil people have found, as many have found Satan, irresistibly attractive. (524)

It is easy to understand why a critic would want to avoid judging Milton’s Satan by contemporary moral standards because these arguments eventually lead away from the text. It would not be fair to claim, however, that either Frye or Lewis are particularly preoccupied with condemning Satan or even preoccupied with morality in general. In his *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis says, “I should warn the reader that I myself am a

Christian, and that some (by no means all) of the things which the atheist reader must ‘try to feel as if he believed’ I actually, in cold prose, do believe. But for the student of Milton my Christianity is an advantage” (65). Several scholars have maintained that an approach to *Paradise Lost* that tries to ignore Christianity will render an incomplete reading of the poem.

There is a whole chapter dealing with Satan in Lewis’s *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, and it is in this chapter that Lewis says, “We know from [Milton’s] prose works that he believed everything detestable to be, in the long run, also ridiculous; and mere Christianity commits every Christian to believing that ‘the Devil is (in the long run) an ass’” (95). Before that, he claimed that

the main difficulty is that any real exposition of the Satanic character and the Satanic predicament is likely to provoke the question ‘Do you, then, regard *Paradise Lost* as a comic poem?’...but only those will fully understand it who see that it might have been a comic poem. Milton has...subordinated the absurdity of Satan to the misery which he suffers and inflicts...Milton cannot exclude all absurdity from Satan, and does not even wish to do so. (95)

This charge of a comic absurdity will be important to remember in discussing Gatsby as well. Ultimately, the “hero-ass controversy” seems to be still going on. If, like Lewis, one claims that understanding *Paradise Lost* involves understanding what Milton believed, then Satan may indeed seem like an ass, but those, like Bloom who find “Milton’s God wanting” will reject Milton’s hierarchy and are likely to find Satan the

greater figure (*Anxiety* 23). As Kermode says, however, “Theirs is an interesting quarrel, but its ground ought to be shifted; and in any case this is not the occasion to reopen it” (604).

For the purposes of this study, the greatness of Satan is relative to other characters in the poem. Beyond just being accorded the highest rank, it is clear that Satan excels in several ways that those around him find valuable.

It has already been demonstrated that Satan was a great warrior. Satan is brave both on and off the battlefield. Even just finding Paradise seemed unlikely and dangerous, going through “the dark unbottomed infinite abyss” (2.405) and “through the strict senteries and stations thick/ of angels watching round” (2.412-413). On confronting Death, he demonstrates his true mettle:

The monster moving onward came as fast

With horrid strides, hell trembled as he strode.

Th’ undaunted Fiend what this might be admired,

Admired, not feared; God and his Son except,

Created thing naught valued he nor shunned. (2.675-679)

After leaving Chaos and surviving the journey, he knows that Paradise will be guarded and that he will have to contend with several different angels. Even when captured, he is defiant, telling Gabriel,

Not that I less endure, or shrink from pain,

Insulting angel, well thou know'st I stood

Thy fiercest, when in battle to thy aid

The blasting volleyed thunder made all speed

And seconded thy else not dread spear. (4.925-929)

Other valuable qualities are his resourcefulness and cleverness. The closer one looks, the closer the similarity between Satan and Ulysses seems. Satan is a brilliant strategist and deceiver. He must deceive the Archangel Uriel, who is “regent of the sun, and held/ The sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in heav’n,” but his coup de grace occurs in his deceiving Eve (3.690-691). Just as Ulysses’s plan eventually penetrated the walls of Troy and led to its destruction, Satan’s plan penetrated the walls of Paradise and led to the banishment of Adam and Eve.

Just as the Greeks decided to send Ulysses on the night raid where Rhesus was killed, the fallen angels decide to send Satan “to waste [God’s] whole creation, or possess/ All,” or to “drive” the “puny habitants” or “seduce them to our party” (2.365-368). Only one among them has the courage to brave both the dangers of the journey and even the loyal angels guarding Paradise. In terms of resourcefulness, Satan catches the loyal angels unaware. He manages to even deceive Uriel and enter Paradise getting past its angelic guard. Before all of this, he proved he had no definite equal in battle. Within

the context of the poem, only Messiah and God accomplish more. Satan certainly stands above all of the other created beings, so he is relatively great.

Although obviously a much younger work, the critical controversy surrounding the greatness of *Gatsby*, despite what may seem to be titular evidence, has also been very heated. *Gatsby* has his share of detractors and share of apologists. On one hand, Michael Beatty finds Fitzgerald's portrayal of *Gatsby*'s criminality unconvincing and suggests that some of the novel is "mere myth-making." Thomas Pauly, on the other hand, does not find *Gatsby* unconvincing as a 1920s gangster. In good New Historicist fashion, he uses Herbert Asbury's "The Passing of the Gangster," an article written in 1925, to suggest that *Gatsby* was more like a 1920s gangster than some scholars have realized: "Though readers still find *Gatsby* too romantic, too idealistic, and too naïve to be a criminal success, Fitzgerald counteracted this impression by cloaking his gangster in mystery...finally suggesting that *Gatsby*...may be more dangerous than Nick realizes" (1). Pauly compares *Gatsby* to the historical gangsters George Remus and Arnold Rothstein, and he also compares *Gatsby* to the bootlegger that Fitzgerald had met personally, Max Gerlach.

In "Sangria in the Sangreal: *The Great Gatsby* as Grail Quest," D.G. Kehl and Allene Cooper come to *Gatsby*'s defense, claiming that "rather than simply 'childish' as some commentators suggest – manifesting negative characteristics of childhood...*Gatsby* is largely 'childlike' – manifesting positive characteristics of childhood," and these

include "an incorrupted innocence, a sense of wonder and awe, a romantic sense of hope" (211).

Ultimately, the greatness of Gatsby, as it is relevant here, will be determined the same way that Satan's was: by showing how he possesses some valuable qualities more than the people around him possess these qualities. It ought to be noted from the outset that Gatsby's valuable qualities that contribute to his greatness are generally not the same as Satan's. This, however, should not be too surprising when one considers that Satan and Gatsby belong to two very different cultures in very different situations.

An aspect of greatness that they share is martial prowess, which has already been touched on. Presumably, Gatsby must, like Satan and Ulysses, have had a talent for deception and stratagems in order to be so successful as a criminal, but these qualities are never shown in the novel. As Beatty has claimed, Gatsby as a criminal "is neither realized nor convincing," and "Fitzgerald, it seems to me, does not come to terms with the fact of this criminality" (114). The other valuable qualities that Gatsby seems to possess to a greater degree than those around him are his ability to acquire wealth, his faithfulness to Daisy and to his ideals, and his "romantic readiness" that Nick mentions.

The evidence that acquiring wealth is a valued quality seems particularly strong. Pauly claims that "the new credit economy of the 1920s accelerated social mobility and empowered a new ethos whereby merchandise rivaled background, profession, and merit as a determinant of status" (1). It is also illustrated well by an anecdote probably less mentioned in criticism. On account of Gatsby's wealth and parties, however,

Gatsby's notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who had accepted his hospitality and so became authorities upon his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news. Contemporary legends such as the 'underground pipeline to Canada' attached themselves to him. (97)

The parties themselves are further evidence that acquiring wealth was a valued quality. Nick goes through a catalog of guests, many very prestigious, and Gatsby tells Daisy that she will see, among his guests, "the faces of many people you've heard about," culminating in the director and the actress, "a gorgeous, scarcely human orchid of a woman who sat in state under a white-plum tree" (104). Also, it is significant that his wealth is one of the only things that his guests really know about him. His past and present are mysterious.

Another of Gatsby's valuable qualities is his faithfulness. Nick marvels at Gatsby's faithfulness to both the Gatsby identity and to Daisy. As Nick says about the Gatsby identity, "to this conception [Gatsby] was faithful to the end" (98). There are those, of course, who might question whether or not faithfulness can even be considered a valuable quality in the world of *The Great Gatsby* considering how rarely it is ever found. Its value, however, can be easily reverse engineered by examining how Nick and the other characters react to unfaithfulness.

Nick, after learning of Tom's infidelity and of the situation of the Buchanans in general, felt "confused and a little disgusted" as he drove away (20). Later, despite his own activities, on finding out about Gatsby and Daisy, Tom complains,

I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well if that's the idea you can count me out...Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard. (130)

Unfortunate Wilson is shocked by his wife's actions and tells her, "God knows what you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me, but you can't fool God!" (159). Daisy, justifiably or not, was unfaithful to Gatsby before her marriage, was unfaithful to Tom during their marriage, and was unfaithful to Gatsby in the end, letting him die in her place. Of all of the people that used to go to Gatsby's parties, only Owl-Eyes attends his funeral, and even Wolfsheim refuses to have anything to do with it. Owl-Eyes is shocked: "Why, my God! they used to go there by the hundreds" (175).

Gatsby also has romantic readiness. Romantic readiness is defined in the beginning of the novel as "some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life...an extraordinary gift for hope" (2). To Nick, it is this quality that most sets him apart from those around him. Perhaps the best contrast to Gatsby's powers of imagination would be Daisy herself. While Gatsby is convinced "of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing," (99) Daisy tells Nick, "I think everything's terrible anyhow...Everyone thinks so – the most advanced people. And I *know*. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything" (17). Nick doubts the sincerity of this view, but the reader is never given a more complete understanding of Daisy's outlook. Tom's view is similarly unromantic. At dinner in the

beginning of the novel, he announces, "Civilization's going to pieces," and says, "I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things" (12). Nick's own location on the romanticism continuum is difficult to pinpoint, but how much Nick begins to think like Gatsby is a topic that many scholars have discussed. "Theirs is an interesting quarrel," but it will not be reopened here.

The significance of each greatness, however, is that the greatness of each character proves ultimately futile. In the beginning, each character is widely admired. Gatsby "bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths" (78) and Satan was "of the first,/if not the first Archangel, great in power,/ in favor and pre-eminence" (5.659-661). In the beginning, so great was Satan's presence that a third of the angelic host believed he would be able to overthrow God himself. Satan is also admired early after their banishment.

Each of their greatnesses, however, ultimately produces no long-term results. They both have a futile greatness, and this futility is an important, though less criticized and analyzed, part of each text. Ignoring this quality of greatness leads to missing an important element in each narrative. It is not as though each text suggests that there were better candidates for their respective tasks. The idea suggested is that sometimes even being the best is not enough. In *Paradise Lost*, it is revealed that no one, not even the greatest, can defeat God. In *The Great Gatsby*, no one, not even Gatsby, can "set the clock back." Each text presents an unstoppable force and an attempt to stop and even reverse that force, and each text subsequently shows conclusively that these attempts are

bound to fail while acknowledging that people will continue to try. Satan and Gatsby are both “boats against the current.” The context of each narrative, however, seems to suggest very different things about those who try to against the current and fight an unstoppable force.

CHAPTER III

Conclusion

These five similarities between Satan and Gatsby are significant because of both what they reveal and what they suggest. First, they reveal another facet of Gatsby, what Milton presumably would have considered a diabolic one. If Gatsby really is representative of America, then this makes interesting suggestions about the American character or, at least, what scholars and critics have claimed is American character.

The relationship between Satan and Gatsby is also interesting for those interested in studying influence. That is, for instance, there does not seem to be a lot of evidence for direct influence from Milton on Fitzgerald. Robert Roulston claims that “critics have detected in [Fitzgerald’s] third novel influences ranging from Chaucer’s to Rafael Sabatini’s” and goes on to list several more sources that have allegedly influenced *The Great Gatsby*: Stephen Leacock, Theodore Dreiser, Edith Wharton, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Ford Madox Ford, Joseph Conrad, Anthony Hope, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Clarence E. Mulford, Thackeray, Harold Bell Wright, T.S. Eliot, George Eliot, Petronius, Stendhal, Mark Twain, Emily Bronte, Herman Melville, Horatio Alger, Oswald Spengler, Willa Cather, John Keats, H.G. Wells, Henry James, John Lawson Stoddard, and H.L. Mencken (54). In Ronald Berman’s “Fitzgerald’s Intellectual Context,” he

quotes an interview that claims that Samuel Butler, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Anatole France were Fitzgerald's primary intellectual influences. Berman suggests that "it was probably through Mencken that Fitzgerald developed his ideas about Nietzsche and other aspects of philosophy" (70). Roulston also claims, "In truth, *The Great Gatsby* invites influence studies the way William Faulkner's fiction invites myth and symbol analyses" (54). Despite this apparent wealth of influence studies, no one seems to have seen any Milton or *Paradise Lost* in *The Great Gatsby*, so it would appear that any possible Miltonic influence would have been either indirect or unnoticed.

Then the question shifts to where this influence might have come from. For example, one critic has claimed that it is a commonplace that Fitzgerald was the aesthetic heir of Wordsworth. Wordsworth, in turn, considered himself the heir of Milton. Perhaps some Miltonism was filtered through Wordsworth to Fitzgerald.

Another interesting possibility deals with Miltonic influence on American literature more generally. Spengemann has claimed that "for reasons that *Paradise Lost* itself will not fully explain, American Miltonists prefer it to anything else in the oeuvre, devoting more pages of criticism to it than to all the rest combined" (101). Something about *Paradise Lost* seems very appealing to the American literary mind or even, perhaps, very American. There are those who also see *The Great Gatsby*, with its preoccupation with the American Dream, as a particularly American text, perhaps even quintessentially American, being one of the three most common suggestions for the so-

called Great American Novel with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Moby-Dick* as the other two candidates.

Contemplating the similarities between Satan and Gatsby and their alleged importance to American criticism has led me to the last hypothesis suggested by this study. It deals less with studying American Literature, however, and actually more with what scholars and critics have claimed about Americanism. It calls for more criticism of some criticism.

Giving a quick glance at Satan, the crew of the *Pequod*, Huck, and Gatsby suggests the following hypothesis to me: separatism from one's origins, and even blatant apostasy in some instances, expressed through nautical imagery somehow has suggested to many critics something quintessentially American. In short, what Milton would have called Satanic, critics have called American. It is probably indeterminable to ever understand what really is or is not truly American, if such qualities even exist, but what we can determine is what scholars and other writers have claimed is or is not truly American. In a time when some have set up American Studies as a pursuit in its own right, it is interesting to contemplate the suggestion of this literary Americanism, an Americanism that is exemplified by breaking away from or rebelling against traditions and even religion to find one's own destiny. Is it a belated Byronism or the lingering effect of Nietzsche? Does this suggestion harmonize well with other perceptions of Americanism? How does this Americanism differ from what Milton seems to have thought of as diabolism? Of course, these are all broad questions requiring much more

attention than is possible at the tail end of a study of Jay Gatsby, but this study suggests that Milton's Satan is a bigger piece of the puzzle of Americanism than many might have realized.

The Great Gatsby, like all texts, is caught up in an interweaving of other texts. Despite its several likely influences, however, it would be good to remember that it is, as Roulston says,

The Great Gatsby is no more a Conradian tragedy than it is a Cather-like celebration of the frontier, a Mencken-like expose of America, a Jamesian study of fine sensibilities, a Dreiserian pageant of personal disintegration, a Flaubertian exercise in aesthetics, or a romantic flight from life. It is *sui generis*, not an eclectic hodgepodge or a clever reworking of one particular source – a fact not even the most convincing influence study should ever permit us to forget. (63)

Gatsby himself is also *sui generis*. He is not Satan. He is not a knight. Victoria De Zwaan has expressed concern that Fitzgerald studies will become stale and outdated if there are not new readings that help relate his works to the present readership: "If they cannot be read differently at different times, his works will become historical and cultural documents, things of the past instead of texts for the future" (681). While this may happen eventually, there still seems to be plenty of ways to approach *The Great Gatsby*. Provided people keep reading the text itself and avoid preconceived notions about it, *The Great Gatsby* is still a novel that repays close study. Gatsby himself still repays close study. It is possible to approach what seems to be such a well-worn path and still "strike

out for the territories.” Of course, in the context of this study and what *Paradise Lost* suggests about those seeking new territory, one might even wonder what Milton would have thought of criticism constantly trying to break new ground.

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This is a long and complex article that primarily argues two things: that Fitzgerald "does not come to terms with the fact of [Gatsby's] criminality," and Nick's "romanticism enables us to discover a moral vision that endorses Nick's ability to endure beyond the disillusionment that destroys Gatsby" (108). To Beatty, the novel is "problematic in certain important ways" (110). He goes on to discuss how Fitzgerald glosses over the criminality of Gatsby without ever fully dealing with it. He claims that readers, through Nick, are encouraged to accept a romanticized version of Gatsby's criminality. To Beatty, that Gatsby "resorted to crime in his pursuit of his 'Platonic conception' of himself and his subsequent dream of romantic love that he focused on Daisy, is not, I think, a trivial matter" (113). This article was useful as an example of studying Gatsby as a criminal. It was unintentionally useful as a counterpoint to a lot of arguments. Essentially, it is hard to know what to make of Beatty's issues with the novel. It is always possible to not

suspend disbelief, and anyone determined to think of Gatsby's criminality as his primary feature is bound to disagree with his portrayal in the novel.

Berman, Ronald. "Fitzgerald's Intellectual Context." *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Ed. Kirk Curnutt. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Print.

This essay lists several intellectual influences on Fitzgerald and examines the effects of a few sources in particular. He claims that "there were concentric circles of intellectual influence around Fitzgerald, beginning with the critical ideas about literature transmitted from friends and mentors like Edmund Wilson and H.L. Mencken" (69). He goes on to discuss the influence of William James on his conception of the greatness of Gatsby. He also claims that we must "remind ourselves of the deep ethical structure of Fitzgerald's fiction" (78). He concludes with discussing Fitzgerald as a "fluent translator of public ideas" (82). While discussions of influence were mainly irrelevant for the purposes of my paper, this article was useful in my discussion of Gatsby's greatness. It provided evidence for the negative reactions to Gatsby and argued for his greatness.

Bloom, Harold. "Milton and His Precursors." *Paradise Lost: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Scott Elledge. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993. 555 – 569. Print.

He argues that "Milton's highly deliberate and knowingly ambitious program" meant competing with previous epic poets and "gave Milton the problem of expanding Scripture without distorting the Word of God" (555). As usual with Bloom, this argument is erudite and complex. He demonstrates three ways that Milton succeeds in this competition: making "his own belatedness into an earliness," making Satan excel "in his

had eminence" over other warriors and monsters, and supersedes other poets in his description of the Fall. This article was most useful for me in its discussion of Satan as a warrior. Beyond that, it was useful as an example of comparing Satan to other literary characters.

De Zwaan, Victoria. "Seminal Authority and the Dissemination of Self: The Law of Fitzgerald Scholarship." *English Studies in Canada* 28.4 (2002): 667 – 683. Print.

Concerning the "self-documentation of F. Scott Fitzgerald," she argues that "the paradigmatic premise of Fitzgerald criticism – is that these documents reveal the real man, and that they give us authentic and authoritative insight into his works," and she questions this premise (667). She goes on to claim that many critics rely on this autobiographical information, but it is not as reliable as is often assumed. She also calls into question the assumption that Matthew Bruccoli's own editing of these documents is simply an act of transcription rather than interpretation" (672). She concludes with the claim that "either there will have to be a radical revolution inside Fitzgerald scholarship (the breakdown of the reigning paradigm), or Fitzgerald's fate may be a kind of obsolescence" (681). This article was a call to arms and very important as a reaffirmation for a new approach to *The Great Gatsby*. It also convincingly argued against relying too heavily on biographical information.

Frye, Northrop. "The Story of All Things." *Paradise Lost: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Scott Elledge. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993. 509 – 526. Print.

He argues that *Paradise Lost*, as an epic, is a story of all things. He discusses the encyclopedic nature of the poem and the incorporation of Milton's theology. He goes on to compare the structure of the poem to other epic poems. He concludes with the claim that, to Milton, "the polytheistic imagination can never free itself from the labyrinths of fantasy and irony," and "revelation is a consolidated, coherent, encyclopaedic view of human life which defines, among other things, the function of poetry" (526). This was an interesting article with a lot of information very clearly communicated. Most of it wasn't relevant for my purposes, but the discussion of Satan was useful for my discussion of the greatness of Satan.

Giles, Paul. "Aquinas vs. Weber: Ideological Esthetics in *The Great Gatsby*." *Mosaic: a Journal for the Comparative Study of Literature* 22.4 (1989): 1 – 11. Print.

He argues that some of the symbolism and ambivalence toward the American Dream "may be traced to the way the inherited Roman Catholic analogical mindset of F. Scott Fitzgerald interacted with the materialistic orientation of the American Dream" (1). He argues that *Gatsby*'s attitude toward wealth, in particular, is aligned with Catholic tradition and against the Protestant work ethic. He also claims that "in *The Great Gatsby* elements of Catholic assimilation combine with elements of Catholic alienation" (4). In general, he demonstrates aspects of the novel that could have been influenced by Fitzgerald's Catholic upbringing. This article was extremely useful by thoroughly examining the Catholic elements of both "Absolution" and *The Great Gatsby* and by examining the religious elements of Miller and *Gatsby*. It assumes the connection

between Miller and Gatsby rather than arguing it. On this assumption, it demonstrates the apostate beginning of Jay Gatsby.

Guerin, Wilfred Louis. "Christian Myth and Naturalistic Deity: *The Great Gatsby*." *Renascence* 14.2 (Winter 1962): 80 – 89. Print.

He argues that "grail quest in a waste land" motif extends the novel "beyond East and West and by contrasting Christian myth with naturalistic deity he gives his story tension and irony" (81). He also makes an interesting claim about the final passage of the novel: "However important the passage is as the symbolic embodiment of the American dream and its pitfalls, the informing myth is the grail quest – the green light, and Gatsby's wonder and belief and reaching" (83). He goes on to demonstrate how Gatsby's story can be considered a quest and how Fitzgerald developed the waste land theme. What separates this article from similar studies is his examination of the naturalistic deity. This article was most useful as providing an example of the type of scholarship that I am trying to supplement. It is also interesting in its own right and a good model for comparing *The Great Gatsby* to another text.

Kehl, D. G., and Allene Cooper. "Sangria in the Sangreal: *The Great Gatsby* as Grail Quest." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 47 (1993): 203-17. JSTOR. Web. 1 June 2009.

They argue that "Fitzgerald's early and lasting fascination with the Arthurian Romance...is little recognized, nor has the ambivalent function of the grail quest in *The Great Gatsby* been examined" (203). They support their arguments with biographical

knowledge of Fitzgerald. They also draw examples from some of Fitzgerald's other fiction works. They go on to discuss W.H. Auden's essay "The Quest Hero" and how *The Great Gatsby* contains the six elements that Auden claims are essential to the quest story. This article was a paradigmatic example of "Sir Gatsby" scholarship. Published in 1993, it predates a lot of the subsequent scholarship that explored the medieval elements and influences in the novel. As an article that relies on biographical information and compares Gatsby to a Grail knight, it was useful as the perfect example of the type of scholarship I am trying to supplement.

Kermode, Frank. "Adam Unparadised." *Paradise Lost: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Scott Elledge. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993. 558 – 605. Print.

He argues that "we can easily miss something far more obvious and important to the structure of the poem: namely, that is based on a series of massive antithesis, or if you like huge structural pseudo-rhymes, and the central pseudo-rhyme is delight/woe" (588 – 589). He goes on to argue that recognizing the loss of joy and lost possibilities is one of the principal functions of the poem. This was an interesting article. It rarely related directly to my study, but it demonstrates thematic similarities between *Paradise Lost* and *The Great Gatsby*. *The Great Gatsby* clearly deals with the loss of joy and lost possibilities, but this is perhaps is not very widely recognized.

LaHurd, Ryan. "'Absolution': *Gatsby's* Forgotten Front Door." *College Literature* 3.2 (Spring 1976): 113 – 123. JSTOR. Web. 5 Jan. 2010.

He argues that studying “Absolution” alongside *The Great Gatsby* “can give valuable insights into the character of Jay Gatsby and his mode of acting which the novel alone cannot” (120). While acknowledging that if Fitzgerald had included the short story into the novel, it would have functioned at cross-purposes with the artistry of the novel, LaHurd demonstrates its usefulness as a pedagogical tool. Studying them together “leads into valuable lessons concerning character motivation, fictional craftsmanship, the use of psychology in literature, and the differences between short fiction and the novel” (122). LaHurd assumes rather than argues the connection between Miller and Gatsby. It is useful for showing how the two can be compared and useful for this research because it also mentions the religious elements of Miller and Gatsby.

Lewis, C.S. *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961. Print.

In his chapter “Satan,” he does “not labour directly to convert those who admire Satan, but only to make a little clear what it is they are admiring” (95). He clarifies Milton’s portrayal of Satan, showing, in particular, the absurdity of Satan as Milton would have understood it. HE acknowledges, however, “that Satan is the best drawn of Milton’s characters” (100). He concludes with the claim that “to admire Satan, then, is to give one’s vote not only for a world of misery, but also for a world of lies and propaganda, of wishful thinking, of incessant autobiography” (102). This chapter of C.S. Lewis’s *A Preface to Paradise Lost* was extremely useful for my discussion of Satan’s greatness. Lewis is a proponent of the “ass” position in the “hero-ass” controversy about Satan.

While my own approach sidesteps most of the controversy, this was integral in understanding the criticism about Satan so far.

Lukens, Margaret. "Gatsby as a Drowned Sailor." *English Journal* 76.2 (1987): 44 – 46. JSTOR. Web. 3 Jan. 2010.

She argues that "few of the novel's critics or teachers have noticed how profoundly informed the prose is by marine imagery" (44). She claims that Gatsby "is a fish-turned-sailor, a 'crazy fish'" (44). She demonstrates the prevalence of marine imagery in the novel and notes several examples that would be easily missed by readers not specifically looking for marine imagery. She concludes by strengthening one of her original claims: that Gatsby is "another variation on the failure of the American dream- the one that got away" (44). This article was useful for supporting my claim that Gatsby is associated with the New World explorer archetype. It was probably truer in 1987 that scholars had not noticed the marine imagery, but this is still a thorough and interesting article.

Mandel, Jerome. "The Grotesque Rose: Medieval Romance and The Great Gatsby." *Modern Fiction Studies* 34.4 (Winter 1988): 541-558. JSTOR. Web. 1 June 2009.

He argues "medieval romance lies at the heart" of *The Great Gatsby*. His argument relies very heavily on knowledge of Fitzgerald's biography. He demonstrates from this knowledge that "throughout his life Fitzgerald was fascinated by things medieval" (543). Some of his examples are the aristocratic nature of medieval romance, Gatsby's status as a great warrior and as a courtly lover, the Cave of Lovers trope, and Fitzgerald's use of the garden. The article culminates in an explanation of the importance of Daisy's calling

Nick a rose. This was the best of the “Sir Gatsby” articles and extremely interesting. The biographical information was irrelevant for my purposes, but I found his argument for Gatsby as a warrior to be very useful. It is also useful as another example of the trend in scholarship to compare Gatsby to a knight.

Martin, Robert A. “Gatsby and the Dutch Sailors.” *American Notes and Queries* 12 (Winter 1973): 61 – 63. Print.

He argues that “if restored to its original position at the end of Chapter I, a consideration of the Dutch sailor paragraph suggests that it is the source for a number of subsequent references scattered throughout the novel in which Gatsby is closely associated with water and nautical objects connected with water” (61). In addition, he claims that “reconstructed in a chronological sequence, Gatsby’s career appears as surprisingly nautical” (62). This article convincingly emphasizes and demonstrates the prevalence of imagery connected with water. He concludes with a discussion of the nautical definition of *betas* and its importance as a unifying idea. This article was extremely useful in establishing Gatsby’s association with the New World explorer archetype. It convincingly shows how prevalent the water imagery is in the novel. The suggestion that changing the position of the final image of the Dutch sailors is interesting, but the image seems very important either way.

Monteiro, George. “Carraway’s Complaint.” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 24.1 (Autumn 2000): 161 – 171. *JSTOR*. Web. 6 Jan. 2010.

He argues that, on the last page of *The Great Gatsby*, “behind Nick’s words and sentiments lies a vast body of Western literature on notions of a terrestrial paradise” (162). He claims that the “principal if not sole source for Nick’s last rueful vision” in Washington Irving’s *A History of New York, from the beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*. He goes on to discuss the influence of Irving’s other pseudo-histories and even the letters of Columbus on “*The Great Gatsby*. It goes from talking about a belief in a terrestrial paradise to discussing the connection between the Columbus egg story and *The Great Gatsby*, Sherwood Anderson’s “The Egg,” and William Faulkner’s “The Bear.” He concludes with discussing the wonder and awe of the New World explorers. This was a very important article for helping to establish the similarity between Satan and Gatsby. From this article, I saw the connection between Fitzgerald’s dreams and paradise, and it also made me aware of the Columbus egg story. It is a thorough article and a must-read for people interested in influences on Fitzgerald.

Parker, David. “The Great Gatsby: Two Versions of the Hero.” *English Studies* 54 (1973): 37 – 51. Print.

In this article, he proposes “to examine the novel against the background of English literature” (37). He claims that there are “two chief versions of the hero in English literature” (38). He argues that Gatsby is a combination of both of these types of heroes. He goes on to compare and contrast Gatsby with Browning’s *Childe Roland*. He then shifts to demonstrate, at length, the ways that Nick is a hero of just the second type. This article was useful in corroborating my claim that Gatsby is often compared to a Grail

knight. It was also another example of the type of scholarship I have attempted: to broaden the scope of comparison for *Gatsby*. The section about Nick, however, was irrelevant for my purposes, and it was not as clearly incorporated into the article as the rest of the material.

Pauly, Thomas H. "Gatsby as Gangster." *Studies in American Fiction* 21.2 (Autumn 1993): 225 – 232. *Literature Resources from Gale*. Web. 5 Jan. 2010.

He argues that Fitzgerald's portrayal of Gatsby as a gangster "was an outgrowth of actual changes in existing criminal conditions" (1). He describes a few historical criminals that might have influenced Fitzgerald's portrayal of Gatsby. In general he argues that Gatsby is more like a contemporary gangster than many scholars have believed. This textbook New Historicist approach is an interesting addition to the arguments concerned with the verisimilitude of Gatsby's status as a criminal. Because, however, I was less concerned with the historical accuracy of Fitzgerald's portrayal of Gatsby as a criminal, its relevance to my paper was limited.

Roulston, Robert. "Something Borrowed, Something New: A Discussion of Literary Influences on *The Great Gatsby*." *Critical Essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984.

This essay lists a lot of the proposed influences on *The Great Gatsby* and concentrates "upon those writers who influence on the novel either is very pronounced or has been a subject of illuminating controversy" (55). HE dwells particularly on the influences of T.S. Eliot and H.L Mencken. He concludes, however, by asserting the novel is multi-

faceted and *sui generis*. This essay should be required reading for any potential scholar of Fitzgerald or influence studies in general. This essay was extremely important in helping to provide a clear starting point for comparing *The Great Gatsby* to other novels.

Spengemann, William C. *A New World of Words: Redefining Early American Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. Print.

In Chapter 3, “*Paradise Lost*: Milton’s American Poem,” he argues that “Milton seems fated to tease the literary lobe of what has been called the American mind, in both its creative and its critical functions, with a persistence that is quite remarkable” (95). In addition, he claims that “the working of his invisible hand can be detected as well in the dominant image of American literary history as a string of textual beads, of varying shapes and colors, arranged upon a Puritan wire” (96). He goes on to discuss the pervasive influence of Milton on American letters and surprising lack of scholarship dealing with the influence of America on Milton. He argues that “intended or not, the association in *Paradise Lost* between Satan’s project and the American adventure is rhetorically unmistakable” (107). This article is possibly the most influential source for my paper. His connection of Satan with the New World explorers was integral for my argument. His position on the importance of Milton first made aware of the possible similarities between Satan and Gatsby.

Stewart, Lawrence D. ““Absolution and *The Great Gatsby*.” *Fitzgerald – Hemingway Annual* (1973): 181 – 187. Print.

He argues that "'Absolution' and *The Great Gatsby*, though they share a few superficial similarities, are basically irreconcilable" (1). According to Stewart, the published Miller, regardless of what Fitzgerald claimed or thought, does not accurately represent a young Jay Gatsby. In addition, he argues that "in the use of religious imagery and ideas, Jay Gatsby has his predecessor not in the small boy, Rudolph, but in the priest, Father Schwartz" (184). Stewart introduces reasonable doubt into the connection between Miller and Gatsby. He reaffirms the apostasy of Miller but denies the apostasy of Gatsby. The argument, however, that Gatsby's apostasy is questionable because Nick Carraway uses Biblical imagery to describe Gatsby's dreams is not very strong. Overall though, a paper interested in trying to prove the connection between Miller and Gatsby would have a lot to refute, but this paper treats this connection as optional for the reader anyway.

Yoshinaka, Takashi. "Columbus's Egg in Milton's *Paradise Lost*." *Notes and Queries* 252.1 (2007): 40 – 43. *WilsonWeb*. Web. 6 Jan. 2010.

He argues that in Book VI, lines 498 – 501, "it seems highly possible that Milton had in mind the now well – known episode of the egg, a little of one of whose ends having been crushed, was successfully fixed on the table, which allegedly occurred to Columbus" (1). He claims that Milton might have been exposed to this anecdote in the work of Samuel Purchas. In addition, he says that "the argument for the parallel between Satan and Columbus can be strengthened by the view that *Paradise Lost* is a poem about colonial plantation" (2). He concludes with pointing out how Milton did not find Columbus an "admirable adventurer" or "heroic compatriot" (3). This article was very useful as

support for my argument dealing with the association of Satan and Columbus. It also made the connection between *Paradise Lost* and the egg story, and I would have missed that connection without this article. It was extremely relevant for my paper.