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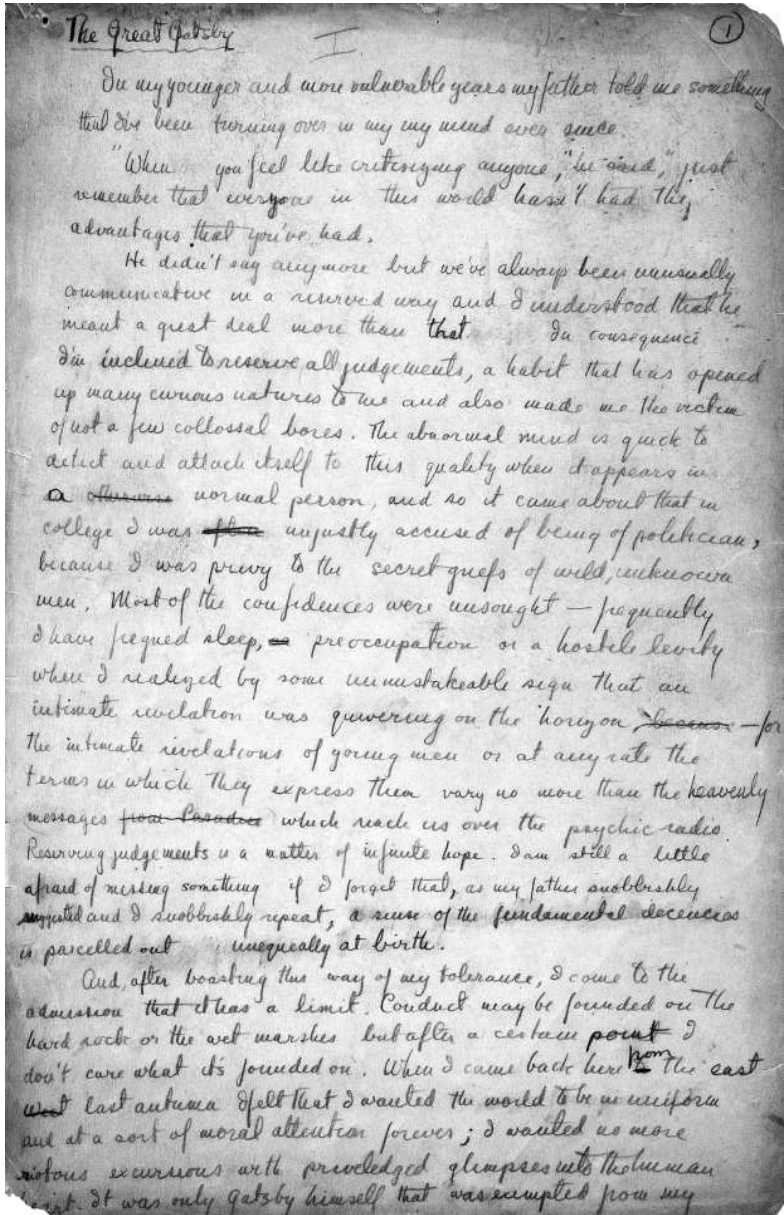
F. Scott Fitzgerald , Edited by James L. W. West, III , Don C. Skemer

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THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF THE WORKS OF  
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD



First page of the holograph.  
Princeton University Library.

# THE GREAT GATSBY

An Edition of the Manuscript

\* \* \*

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Edited by  
JAMES L. W. WEST III  
and  
DON C. SKEMER



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J.L.W. III

D.C.S.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

(Beginning on p. 173)

*Frontispiece.* First page of the holograph of *The Great Gatsby*.

1. The first page of ur-text.
2. The second page of ur-text.
3. A page from the Ada/Dud version of the novel.
4. Nick and Jordan encounter Owl Eyes in Gatsby's library.
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6. The valley of ashes, "the back alleyway of Hell."
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Additional facsimiles and illustrations appear in the Introduction, pp. xxiv and xxv, and in the Commentary, pp. xxx, xxxi, xxxii, xxxvii, xlv, and xlvi.

## INTRODUCTION: COMPOSITION OF THE NOVEL

This volume of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald presents a diplomatic reading text of the holograph of *The Great Gatsby*, the earliest full version of the novel that survives. An intermediate version, published under the title *Trimalchio*, has also appeared in the Cambridge series.<sup>1</sup> Comparison of the holograph text with *Trimalchio*, and of both texts with the first edition, reveals much about the composition of the novel.<sup>2</sup> The three versions differ from one another in language, structure, and mood. *The Great Gatsby* did not spring fully formed from its creator's brow. Fitzgerald labored hard on the novel, putting it through several drafts and revisions and continuing to work on it until a few weeks before formal publication. The period of its creation was an extended moment during which he brought together talent, inspiration, and self-discipline to produce a masterpiece.

This edition of the holograph is supplemented by a full-color digital edition of the original, available online from the Princeton University Library. Also available at this source are digital images of the galleys of *Trimalchio*—the long proofsheets on which Fitzgerald entered his last round of revisions.<sup>3</sup> The scans of these documents,

<sup>1</sup> *Trimalchio*, ed. James L. W. West III (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> In this Introduction and in the Commentary on the holograph that follows, the word “holograph” refers to autograph manuscript draft(s) of *The Great Gatsby* written in Fitzgerald's hand. The word “manuscript” refers to autograph drafts of other literary works written in Fitzgerald's hand.

<sup>3</sup> Black and white facsimiles have appeared earlier: the holograph in *The Great Gatsby: A Facsimile of the Manuscript*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Washington, D.C.: Microcard Editions Books, 1973); and the corrected galleys in vol. III of *F. Scott Fitzgerald Manuscripts*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (New York: Garland, 1990). In 2017 an unannotated facsimile edition of the holograph was published in Cambremer, France, by Éditions des Saints Pères.



made at Princeton with a Cambo large-format camera, are remarkable for their clarity and detail. One can see pencil strokes, erasures, cancellations, revisions, and even the texture and grain of the paper.<sup>4</sup>

The availability of the holograph, together with *Trimalchio* and the 1925 first edition, makes it possible to trace the history of *The Great Gatsby* from Fitzgerald's work table to its first appearance in print.<sup>5</sup> Critics, teachers, and students will be able to study the novel as a fluid text, evolving and progressing toward its final form. The holograph is a work in progress; one should not read it impatiently, waiting for it to turn into the published novel. A more productive approach is to notice how much of the final version is already present in the holograph, and how much Fitzgerald will add and discard as he moves forward. *The Great Gatsby* was not yet a masterpiece in holograph, but its essential elements were in place. This edition makes it possible to study the novel in its earliest surviving text, as it was taking form in its author's mind.

## I. COMPOSITION AND UR-TEXT

Fitzgerald began to consider settings, characters, and themes for his third novel as early as June 1922.<sup>6</sup> His first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, had been published in April 1920; his second, *The*

<sup>4</sup> The originals of the holograph leaves were imaged in the Princeton University Library's Digital Studio in the Harvey S. Firestone Memorial Library, at 7200 pixels on the long side, using a Conservation by Design book cradle with a Cambo 4x5-inch large-format camera, adapted to take a Phase One P65 digital back. The lens was a 90mm Schneider APO-Digitar. See footnote 2 of the Commentary.

<sup>5</sup> A facsimile of the first printing of the 1925 first edition was published in 1990 by Collectors Reprints, Inc., in its First Edition Library. This facsimile mimics with considerable success not only the text of the first printing but also its paper, casing, and jacket.

<sup>6</sup> Composition narratives include the following: Kenneth Eble, "The Craft of Revision: *The Great Gatsby*," *American Literature* 36 (November 1964): 315–26; the introduction by Matthew J. Bruccoli to *The Great Gatsby*, ed. Bruccoli (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991): ix–lv; and James L. W. West III, "The Composition and Publication of *The Great Gatsby*," in *Approaches to Teaching Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer and Nancy P. VanArsdale (New York: Modern Language Association, 2009): 19–24.

## Introduction

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*Beautiful and Damned*, had appeared in April 1922. He was living in a rented cottage at White Bear Lake, a resort in Minnesota near his home town of St. Paul, and was correcting proofs for his second collection of short fiction, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, which would be published in September. In a letter to Maxwell Perkins, his editor at Charles Scribner's Sons, Fitzgerald announced that this new novel would be set in "the middle west and New York of 1885" and that the story would have "a catholic element."<sup>7</sup> Fitzgerald worked intermittently on this novel until the late months of 1923 but did not produce a full draft. Much of this writing he would scrap, salvaging only the short story "Absolution," published in the *American Mercury* for June 1924. "Absolution" can be read as a preamble to *The Great Gatsby*. It is set in the Midwest; its main characters are a young boy and a Catholic priest; the boy, Rudolph Miller, is an early version of Jay Gatsby—a dreamer who wants to escape from his limited upbringing in order to fulfill his fantasies of romance and adventure.

Fitzgerald abandoned the Midwest material early in 1924. He reconceived the novel that spring while he was living with his wife, Zelda, and their daughter, Scottie, in Great Neck, New York. Paper and watermark evidence from the holograph, detailed by Don C. Skemer in his Commentary, demonstrates that Fitzgerald was at work on this reconceived version as early as April 1924 and perhaps a month earlier. In a much-quoted letter to Perkins, written ca. 10 April, Fitzgerald promised that the novel would be "purely creative work" and that it would draw upon "the sustained imagination of a sincere and yet radiant world."<sup>8</sup> Fitzgerald made rapid progress on this version; he had probably produced the first three chapters by the time he and Zelda and Scottie sailed for an extended stay in Europe in May 1924.

Two days before his departure, Fitzgerald answered a letter from Charles C. Baldwin, who had written to ask for biographical information. Baldwin was preparing a work of literary journalism—*The*

<sup>7</sup> Fitzgerald to Perkins, ca. 20 June 1922, in *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence*, ed. John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Scribner, 1971): 61.

<sup>8</sup> *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, 70.

*Men Who Make Our Novels* (Dodd, Mead, 1924)—and wanted to include remarks about Fitzgerald. The author obliged with a few details about his life and reading. He then told Baldwin: “My third novel (unpublished) is just finished + quite different from my other two in that it is an attempt at form, and refrains carefully from trying to ‘hit anything off.’”<sup>9</sup> Fitzgerald’s claim to have finished his novel before he sailed for Europe is doubtful. He does not mention having completed a novel in his letters to Perkins or to Harold Ober, his literary agent, or in other letters from the spring of 1924. But the letter to Baldwin does show that Fitzgerald had strong momentum, was confident of completion, and was aiming for a high literary mark.

More substantial evidence of the beginnings of *The Great Gatsby* is provided by two leaves of ur-text, sent by Fitzgerald to Willa Cather in late March or early April 1925.<sup>10</sup> By this time Fitzgerald had completed his work on the proofs of the novel and was waiting, on the island of Capri, for its publication. Here is Fitzgerald’s letter to Cather:

Hotel Tiberio, Capri, Italy

MY DEAR MISS CATHER:

As one of your greatest admirers—an admirer particularly of *My Antonia*, *A Lost Lady*, *Paul’s Case* and *Scandal* I want to write to explain an instance of apparent plagiarism which some suspicious person may presently bring to your attention.

To begin with, my new book *The Great Gatsby* will appear about the time you receive this letter (I am sending you the book besides). When I was in the middle of the first draft *A Lost Lady* was published and I read

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from the facsimile of this letter published in 2013 by the University of South Carolina Libraries. The original of the letter is in the Bruccoli Collection, Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, at South Carolina.

<sup>10</sup> These two leaves, and Fitzgerald’s accompanying letter to Cather, were purchased by Princeton University Library in November 1977 from Seven Gables Bookshop. The availability of the documents was made known to the library by Charles Scribner III. A transcription of Fitzgerald’s letter and facsimiles of the two leaves of ur-text were first published in Matthew J. Bruccoli, “An Instance of Apparent Plagiarism”; F. Scott Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, and the First *Gatsby* Manuscript,” *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 39 (Spring 1978): 171–78. The leaves and the letter are in the Fitzgerald Additional Papers at Princeton.

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it with the greatest delight. One of the finest passages is the often quoted one toward the end which includes the phrases “she seemed to promise a wild delight that he has not found in life... “I could show you” ... ect (all misquoted here as I have no copy by me).

Well, a month or two before I had written into my own book a parallel and almost similar idea in the description of a woman’s charm—an idea that I’d had for several years. Now my expression of this was neither so clear, nor so beautiful, nor so moving as yours but the essential similarity was undoubtedly there. I was worried because I hated the devil to cut mine out so I went to Ring Lardner and several other people and showed them mine and yours and finally decided to retain it. Also I’ve kept the pages from my first draft to show you and am enclosing them here. The passage as finally worked out is in my Chapter One. Hoping you will understand my motive in communicating this to you I am

With Best Wishes and Most Sincere Admiration

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

The passage in *A Lost Lady* that Fitzgerald was thinking of reads as follows, from the Knopf 1923 first edition:

Her eyes, when they laughed for a moment into one’s own, seemed to promise a wild delight that he has not found in life. “I know where it is,” they seemed to say, “I could show you!” He would like to call up the shade of the young Mrs. Forrester, as the witch of Endor called up Samuel’s, and challenge it, demand the secret of that ardour; ask her whether she had really found some ever-blooming, ever-burning, ever-piercing joy, or whether it was all fine play-acting. Probably she had found no more than another; but she had always the power of suggesting things much lovelier than herself, as the perfume of a single flower may call up the whole sweetness of spring. (pp. 171–72)

The passage in *The Great Gatsby* about which Fitzgerald was worried is a description of Daisy Buchanan’s face and voice, quoted here from the first edition:

Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered “Listen,” a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour. (p. 11)

Cather wrote back to Fitzgerald on 28 April 1925:

MY DEAR MR. FITZGERALD:

I had read and hugely enjoyed your book before I got your letter, and I honestly had not thought of “A Lost Lady” when I read that passage to which you now call my attention. So many people have tried to say that same thing before either you or I tried it, and nobody has said it yet. I suppose everybody who has ever been swept away by personal charm tries in some way to express his wonder that the effect is so much greater than the cause,—and in the end we all fall back upon an old device and write about the effect and not the lovely creature who produced it. After all, the only thing one can tell about beauty, is just how hard one was hit by it. Isn’t that so?

Very cordially yours,

WILLA CATHER<sup>11</sup>

The two leaves from the ur-novel that Fitzgerald included in his letter to Cather provide a revealing glimpse of this ur-version.<sup>12</sup> Here are transcriptions of the two leaves, with revisions and cancellations indicated. The text of the first leaf reads as follows:

They stood up when dinner was announced. Jordan Vance stood up very straight with her slim shoulders back and she leaned the upper part of her body leaning a little backward. She put her hands on her hips and threw back her brown wan lovely face. Ada rose too and said

“I’m so tired of eating, arn’t you? Nobody ever does anything but eat” Her voice was dark and musical like her great eyes and Nick followed eyes and mouth and voice up and down their scale. It was not a gay voice—it was

<sup>11</sup> *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*, ed. Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout (New York: Knopf, 2013): 370. Fitzgerald saved the letter and pasted it into his scrapbook for *The Great Gatsby*, which is among his papers at Princeton. Digital images of this and other Fitzgerald scrapbooks are available online from the Princeton University Library. For Cather’s influence on Fitzgerald, see Tom Quirk, “Fitzgerald and Cather: *The Great Gatsby*,” *American Literature* 54 (1982): 576–91; Guatam Kundu, “Inadvertent Echoes or ‘An Instance of Apparent Plagiarism’? Cather’s *My Ántonia*, *A Lost Lady* and Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*,” *Études anglaises* 51 (1998): 325–37; and Robert Seguin, “Ressentiment and the Social Poetics of *The Great Gatsby*: Fitzgerald Reads Cather,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 46 (Winter 2000): 917–40.

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald marked both leaves “SAVE!” and, in the left margin of the first leaf, wrote “For Willa Cather.” Images of the two leaves are available online from the Princeton University Library and are reproduced as Plates 1 and 2 in the Illustrations section of this volume, pp. 175–76.

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somewhat sorrowful but held a promise of infinite gaiety that it had known or would know gay things ~~on~~ with the memory or anticipation which the soul behind it ~~brooded~~ played all the while.

As they went into the dining room on a screened terrace porch

And the text of the second leaf:

It was a dark sad face with bright things in it like children playing in a house of death. The ~~m~~ curve of the mouth and the ~~voic~~ singing ~~compel-~~lingness compulsion of the voice. The whispering of it “listen” ~~to me~~ of it richness of it which seem to proceed every word—the words changed their notes. The sentences were songs. There are no words to describe such voices but there is a promise of gay things in them of something magical done or yet to do.

About the rest of her Caraway felt ~~rather than~~ was aware of a diminishing of vitality ~~sinse~~ he first knew her. ~~He supposed there was a strain in an intensely strong vital man like Fay~~

These two passages belong to the first extended scene in the narrative, presumably the first scene in the ur-text as well. Nick comes to Tom and Daisy’s house and there meets Jordan. Nick is present on both ur-leaves (on the second one as “Caraway”), as are Daisy (here called “Ada”) and Jordan (here “Jordan Vance”). The narrative point-of-view is omniscient. The language on the two leaves is free-form: Fitzgerald was feeling his way into the narrative, attempting to discover words and phrases that would describe Daisy’s voice and Jordan’s faintly arrogant posture. Fitzgerald was casting about, searching for impressionistic language that would capture the essence of each woman, neither of whom he would picture in a conventional way in the published novel. Fitzgerald found the words he needed: the “promise” of Daisy’s voice, its musical timbre, its underlying “sorrowful” note, her “sad and lovely” face, her “bright passionate mouth.” He envisioned Jordan with her hands on her hips, “proceeding to the dinner table”; he pictured her “slim shoulders” and “wan lovely face”; he discerned her habit of leaning “a little backward”—a habit that gave her a supercilious air.

Tom is present as well, in the cancelled sentence at the end of the second ur-leaf. He is “an intensely strong vital man” who, the narrator suggests, has robbed his wife of some of her own vitality.

Tom's surname is "Fay" in the cancelled sentence, but this name, with its suggestion of fairy-like puckishness, is inappropriate. Fitzgerald seems to have recognized the problem immediately, scribbling through the name before cancelling the entire unfinished sentence with three horizontal strokes. Fitzgerald would use the name Fay (taken from his boyhood mentor Monsignor Sigourney Fay, to whom *This Side of Paradise* is dedicated) as Daisy's maiden name in the published novel.

These two leaves from the ur-version are tantalizing: one wishes that Fitzgerald had saved the entire draft. One would be especially curious to read the opening scenes of the novel in third-person narration, without having the action and dialogue filtered through Nick's consciousness.

## 2. HOLOGRAPH TEXT

The surviving holograph is not a continuous text or a fair copy of the published novel. It is instead a conflation of at least two handwritten drafts. The many differences in language and structure between the holograph and the unrevised galleys indicate that Fitzgerald put the novel through several revisions in typescript drafts that are now lost. Finally he arrived at a typescript that he was satisfied to mail to Perkins. Fitzgerald executed this revising during September and October 1924; he mailed the complete typescript to Perkins on 27 October.<sup>13</sup> Fitzgerald continued to work on the novel in proof. Perkins had the text set up from Fitzgerald's final typescript and mailed two sets of galleys to the author in December 1924. Fitzgerald performed major and thoroughgoing revisions on these galleys, necessitating much resetting of type and a second complete proofreading by his publishers.

All of Fitzgerald's characters are present in the holograph. Some of them—Tom and Daisy Buchanan, George and Myrtle Wilson, Meyer Wolfshiem, and Owl Eyes—are fully formed, or nearly so. Nick Carraway and Jordan Baker, however, are not yet completely developed. Nick, in particular, is snobbish and aloof, not particularly

<sup>13</sup> *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, 80–81.

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likable and inclined to pass judgment on nearly everyone he meets. Jordan is a minor character, a partner for Nick and his co-conspirator in arranging the affair between Gatsby and Daisy. Gatsby is not nearly as complex a character as he will be in the published book. At this point he is a shadowy figure, an accomplished host who is socially insecure, a veteran of the First World War who might be an Oxford man, and a sentimentalist with a crooked streak. He uses the expression “old sport” in the holograph, but the words do not appear until Chapter VI, when Tom and the Sloanes visit him at his mansion. And the memorable description of his smile, which appears on p. 58 of the first edition, is not found in the holograph. Fitzgerald added it on galley 15 of the *Trimalchio* proofs.

Two early versions of the famous guest list are present, one at the beginning of Chapter III and an earlier draft that Fitzgerald saved and kept with the holograph. The final lines of the novel are also here, and in two versions. The first of these commands attention. At the end of Chapter I, as Nick observes Gatsby standing alone on his blue lawn, Fitzgerald appears to discover, almost by accident, the overarching theme of his novel. He ends this first chapter with the following passage:

The sense of being in an unfamiliar place deepened on me and as the moon rose higher the inessential houses seemed to melt away until I was 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 very 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 and enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presense of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he niether understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat there brooding on the old unknown world I too held my breath and waited, until I could feel the motion of America as it turned through the hours—my own blue lawn and the tall incandescent city on the water and beyond that the dark fields of the republic rolling on under the night. (I:36–37, pp. 17–18)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> References to the holograph in this Introduction are by chapter and page number of the document itself, followed by the page number on which the passage is printed in this edition.



Fitzgerald recognized the depth and resonance of this language and transferred the extended passage to the end of the book. In the holograph the final paragraphs, expanded and amplified, read almost exactly as they do in the published novel:

Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any light except the shadowy glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the unessential houses themselves began to melt away until suddenly I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailor's 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 and 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.

And as I sat there, brooding on the old unknown world I thought of Gatsby when he picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn but now his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was all behind him, back in that vast obscurity on the other side of the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

He believed in the green glimmer, in the orgasmic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then but never mind—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. And one fine morning—

So we beat on, a boat against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past (VIII [IX]:43–45, pp. 156–57)

### 3. DELETIONS AND RELOCATIONS

Fitzgerald cut the text heavily between holograph and print. Some of the deletions—Nick's attempt to describe the “Jazz History of the World,” for example—are still present in the *Trimalchio* galleys and were jettisoned in the revising that Fitzgerald did on the proofsheets. Other material, already missing from *Trimalchio*, must necessarily have been removed in the lost typescripts that followed the holograph. These lacunae include the confrontation between Tom and Gatsby at the Polo Grounds, the suggestion of drug-taking among Gatsby's guests, and the song that Gatsby sings to Nick.

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Fitzgerald's instincts about what to cut were sound. Nick's attempt to describe the "Jazz History of the World" was unsuccessful; the face-off between Tom and Gatsby could hardly take place at a baseball game; Gatsby's song is overly emotional, even saccharine.

Some of the writing in the holograph appears in different locations in the published novel. Fitzgerald moved a great many phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and extended sequences to other places when he revised the galleys. This is one of the pleasures of reading the novel in its holograph text: to ponder Fitzgerald's reasons for moving an image or sentence or paragraph, to think about the effect of that bit of text in its original location as opposed to its effect in the new place. Fitzgerald's most significant relocation of this kind was to reposition an entire chapter. Myrtle Wilson's party, which occurs in the flat that Tom Buchanan keeps for their trysts, occupies all of Chapter IV in the holograph; but in the typescripts that followed, Fitzgerald moved the section forward and made it into Chapter II. In its original location, the chapter satisfied our keen (and delayed) curiosity about Myrtle, who had only been glimpsed in the first three chapters, and whose role in the novel was unclear. In its new position, the chapter introduces much earlier the contrasts between Myrtle and Daisy, and provides a better understanding of Tom—of his tastes and attitudes, and of the violence latent in his personality.

One very good sequence, present in the holograph and in an expanded form in *Trimalchio*, did not survive into print. Fitzgerald cut it in the galleys. This sequence, which takes place at a costume party at Gatsby's mansion, teaches a lesson about celebrity, about Gatsby's desire to associate with well-known people and his assumption that Daisy wants to be famous for her beauty and style. Daisy comes to the party dressed in a "Provençal peasant costume." She is at first excited by the music, the decorations, and the guests—the many "faces of people you've heard of," as Gatsby tells her. Later in the evening, Gatsby tells Daisy that a "moving picture celebrity" has complimented her beauty and wants to know "where you get your hair-cut." To his puzzlement, Daisy will not reveal her hairdresser's name. "You don't understand," says Gatsby. "She'll probably have hers done the same way and you'll

be the originator of a new vogue all over the country.” Daisy still declines to reveal the name of the hairdresser. “Do you think I want that person to go around with her hair cut exactly like mine?” she says. “It’d spoil it for me.” Then, sensing Gatsby’s disappointment, Daisy relents. Using her “little gold pencil” she writes the address of her hair stylist on a tablecloth. Gatsby, however, has already absorbed the lesson: the truly wealthy prefer anonymity. They have no desire to appear in the rotogravure sections of the Sunday papers and want nothing to do with the temporary celebrity of movie and stage people. Taking his own pencil, Gatsby strikes through the address that Daisy has written on the tablecloth, obliterating “her markings with his own.”<sup>15</sup> It is a telling exchange; one wishes that Fitzgerald had found a way to keep it in his novel.

One missing line of text from the holograph invites close attention. The line disappeared between holograph and galleys. It occurs in the four-sentence paragraph in Chapter I in which Nick first sees Daisy and Jordan, shortly before everyone is called to dinner. In the handwritten draft, the paragraph reads as follows, with errors uncorrected:

The only completely stationary object in the room seemed to be a enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments on the threshold, dazzled by the alabaster light, listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall. Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room and the curtains and the rugs and the two young woman ballooned slowly to the floor. (I: 11–12, p. 8)

The words “on the threshold, dazzled by the alabaster light” in the third sentence go missing between the holograph and galley proofs. These words occupy a complete line in the holograph, line 4 on leaf 12, Chapter I. The positioning of the words on the leaf suggests that

<sup>15</sup> VI:101–108; pp. 82–87. The expanded sequence, with the pencils, address, and tablecloth, appears on pp. 85–86 of the Cambridge *Trimalchio*.

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the typist's eye might have skipped from "moments" at the end of the third line to "listening" at the beginning of the fifth line. Eyeskip errors of this kind are often found in typed transcripts; because this omission would have caused no obvious grammatical or syntactical fault, Fitzgerald would probably not have noticed it. Possibly the typist *did* include "on the threshold, dazzled by the alabaster light" in the transcription; possibly Fitzgerald deleted the words in revision. Because the intermediate typescript does not survive, we cannot know. The evidence is not strong enough to justify restoring "on the threshold, dazzled by the alabaster light" to a scholarly text of *The Great Gatsby*, but the presence of the words in the holograph prompts the reader to speculate, to judge the rhythm and effect of the third sentence in both versions, and to wonder whether the original sentence was the one that Fitzgerald wanted.<sup>16</sup>

## 4. ADDITIONS AND REVISIONS

What did Fitzgerald add before his novel was published? His most important additions have to do with Gatsby's past. In the holograph and in *Trimalchio*, Gatsby's origins are revealed only at the end of the story, after Daisy has run down Myrtle Wilson while driving Gatsby's yellow car. Gatsby tells Nick about his background in a scene that resembles a Catholic confessional, with Gatsby as the confessor and Nick as the priest.<sup>17</sup> In galley proof Fitzgerald broke up this material and moved parts of it to earlier positions in the narrative. In the published book, Gatsby's character therefore unfolds in a different way—gradually, in bits and fragments, until all that Nick will ever know about him has been revealed. Gatsby still remains mysterious in the published novel; there is much about him that remains unclear. This uncertainty is intentional on Gatsby's

<sup>16</sup> This passage from the holograph appeared originally in Appendix 3 of the Cambridge *Trimalchio*, p. 191, and is included in the ebook edition of *Trimalchio*, published by Scribners in 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Michael D. DuBose, "From 'Absolution' through *Trimalchio* to *The Great Gatsby*: A Study in Reconception," *F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 10 (2012): 73–92.

part. “I’ve shifted things around a good deal to make people wonder,” he says to Nick.<sup>18</sup>

The publication of this holograph text makes it possible to trace in detail the evolution of Daisy Buchanan’s voice. In the two leaves of ur-text Fitzgerald is already attempting to capture this voice—its musicality, its promise, its gayety, its underlying darkness. In the published text, *Gatsby* provides the definitive statement: “Her voice is full of money.” Fitzgerald hit upon this phrase early on. The words “full of money” are present in the holograph, but it took three attempts for the author to get the preliminary exchange between *Gatsby* and Nick exactly right.<sup>19</sup>

Each attempt begins in the same way. *Gatsby*, Nick, and Tom are standing in the driveway outside the Buchanan house in East Egg, waiting for Daisy and Jordan, who are inside, to gather their belongings for the drive into Manhattan. Here, from the holograph, is Fitzgerald’s first try:

“Shall we take anything to drink?” called Daisy from an upper window.  
 “I’ll get some whiskey,” answered Tom. He went inside.  
*Gatsby* turned to me, his eyes glittering with happiness.  
 “She loves you,” I agreed. “That voice is full of wonder.”  
 “Its full of money.” (VI [VII]:11, p. 97)

The dialogue is awkward and elliptical. Why should *Gatsby* be happy? Does Daisy indeed love him, as Nick supposes? And there is a non sequitur: with whom or what is Nick agreeing? Nick’s suggestion that Daisy’s voice is “full of wonder” is weak, and *Gatsby*’s response—“Its full of money.”—is blunt and flat.

Fitzgerald revised the passage in the typescripts that followed. In the galleys, set from the final typescript that Fitzgerald sent to Perkins, the passage is quite different. It reads this way:

“Shall we take anything to drink?” called Daisy from an upper window.  
 “I’ll get some whiskey,” answered Tom. He went inside.  
*Gatsby* turned to me, his voice trembling:

<sup>18</sup> *Trimalchio*, 117.

<sup>19</sup> The passages that follow were published, with commentary, in West, “Composition and Publication,” 23–24.

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“I can’t stand this,” he said, “it’s agony. I wanted to put my arms around her at luncheon when he began that talk. She’s got to tell him the truth.”

“She loves you. Her voice is full of it.”

“Her voice is full of money,” he said suddenly. (*Trimalchio*, p. 96)

Gatsby’s eyes are no longer “glittering with happiness.” Instead his voice is “trembling.” He has been waiting in vain for Daisy to confront Tom at luncheon and announce that she is leaving him. Nick attempts a soothing remark: “She loves you,” he says. “Her voice is full of it.” Gatsby’s answer—that Daisy’s voice is “full of money”—is perceptive, but he blurts out the words, as if he resents Daisy’s background of wealth and privilege. Perhaps he is beginning to sense that she will stay with Tom, that she will choose money and social standing over love. Readers, however, are not yet ready for that insight.

Fitzgerald rewrote the passage one final time in the *Trimalchio* galleys. He was working in limited space and was forced to write his revisions in a balloon along the right margin of the galley sheet.

“Shall we take anything to drink?” called Daisy from an upper window.

“I’ll get some whiskey,” answered Tom. He went inside.

Gatsby turned to me rigidly:

“I can’t say anything in his house, old sport.”

“She’s got an indiscreet voice,” I remarked. “It’s full of—” I hesitated.

“Her voice is full of money,” he said suddenly. (First edition, p. 144)

All is changed by this revision. The word “rigidly” signals Gatsby’s discomfort. He is no longer overwrought and emotional; now he is tense. He uses the locution “old sport,” as he often does when he is unsure of himself. “I can’t say anything in his house,” he tells Nick, who responds sympathetically. “She’s got an indiscreet voice,” he says, but “indiscreet” is not the proper word. Nick casts about: “It’s full of—” he begins, then pauses. “Her voice is full of money,” says Gatsby in a level tone. His statement now conveys an entirely different feeling, as if he has had the thought many times before. This is not a sudden insight; he is not bitter. He has listened to Daisy’s recollected voice for many years in his dreams and musings, attempting to understand what makes it so alluring. Nick, too, has been fascinated by Daisy’s voice, but it is Gatsby who has hit upon

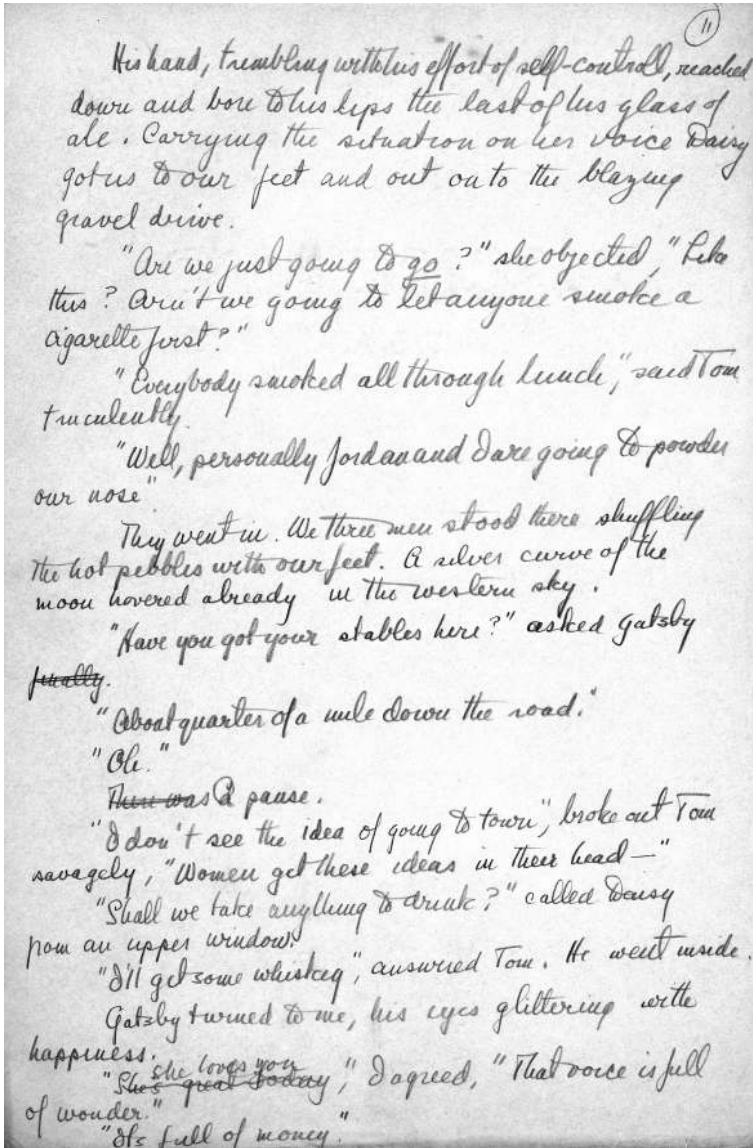
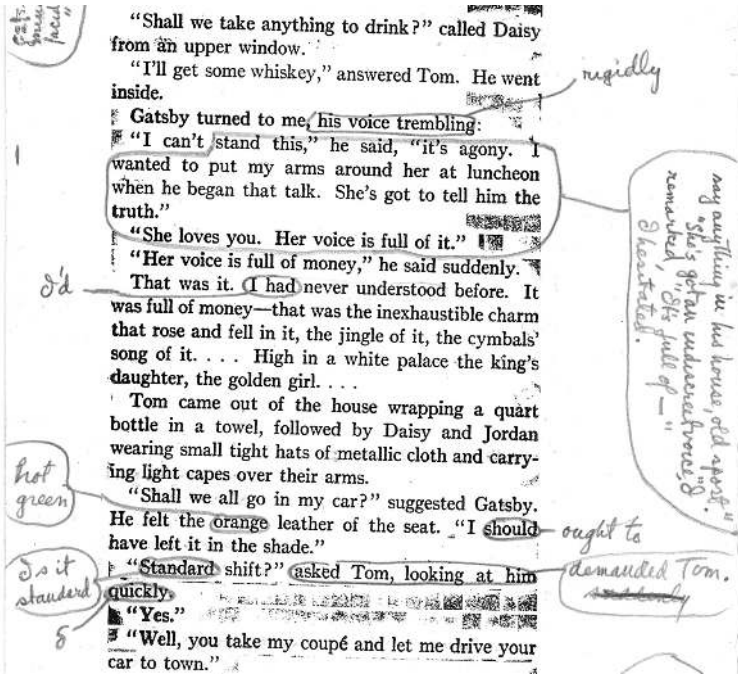


Fig. 1: Holograph Chapter VI [VII], p. 11. Fitzgerald's first attempt at describing Daisy's voice.

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Fig. 2: Detail from *Trimalchio* galley 37, with Fitzgerald’s revisions.

the proper words: “Her voice is full of money.” For us this remark is a surprise, a penetrating observation that we have been on the verge of making throughout the novel but that Gatsby, we can now see, has known all along.

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The remarks in this Introduction are meant to suggest the insights that can come from close study of the holograph text and of its relationship to *Trimalchio* and the first edition. Examination of these forms of the text by scholars and teachers will result in a deeper understanding of Fitzgerald’s characters, themes, and methods of composition. The holograph of *The Great Gatsby* is a testament to Fitzgerald’s powers of invention and his skill at revision. Most



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of the elements of the novel are already present in the holograph. By relocating blocks of material, by inventing new scenes and sequences, and by adjusting words and phrases, Fitzgerald transformed his narrative from a well-crafted novel of manners into a literary classic that has become a national scripture. This edition makes it possible to study *The Great Gatsby* in its earliest surviving incarnation—to watch as the words and phrases flow onto the leaves of paper from Fitzgerald's gifted hand.

J.L.W.W. III