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***The Great Gatsby and Tender is the Night***

**A Feminist Reading**

**Barbara Joyce**

**A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
English**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

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## **Abstract**

### ***The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* A Feminist Reading**

**Barbara Joyce**

Both the critical commentary and the literature of patriarchal culture view women as problematic, connected somehow to the evils which befall the men of this culture. Because woman is misunderstood, blamed and treated so shabbily, men are always unsure of her, uncertain about when she will want to have power in her hands. But men both fear her and are in awe of her.

The novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald reflect a patriarchal attitude toward women in their attitude and tone. They view women as fatal destroyer or beautiful angel, only rarely as fellow human beings. These novels, have, ever since their inception, been regarded as romance novels, and indeed they are about marriage and romantic love, but these are not the main concerns of the novels. The male is less interested in woman as love partner than in his own concerns, his own friends, relationships with other males, and his own masculinity. It is a gloomy view of relations between the sexes, and, unfortunately within the strict confines of patriarchy, it is a true one.

A feminist reading of Fitzgerald's two novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, hopes by its observations to loosen the restrictions of patriarchy, restrictions which caused so much pain for Fitzgerald and so much pain for the characters within his work.



**To  
Ken, Beth and Kate  
and a  
special thank you  
to  
Prof. Robert Martin**

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All the feminist is asserting... is her own equivalent right to liberate new and perhaps different significances from the same texts; and at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant because she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it. - Annette Kolodny.

## **Chapter One**

### **Feminist Theory, Feminist Literary Criticism, and F. Scott Fitzgerald**

#### **I.**

#### **Feminist Theory**

A feminist reading is an analysis of literature from a feminist perspective, but some clarification of that term -- feminist -- will be helpful here at the outset. For the purposes of this paper, the term "feminist reading " is one which has been informed by several theories -- sociological, philosophical, ideological -- which address a variety of subjects of concern to women. These theories explain cultural attitudes toward the sexes, the variety of definitions for "masculine" and "feminine," the roots of misogyny, as well as

the study of those child rearing practices which create differences in the sexes.

A common thread runs through these writings. They all agree that gender is a social construction. This means that they agree that the social practices which create the sexes are not natural but to a large degree fabricated. To clarify further, I will quote from Rachel Blau DuPlessis's introduction to *Writing Beyond the Ending*. She argues that "heterosexuality is not a natural law, for it must be produced in individuals; nor is it exclusively a personal, private, or sexual choice, but a cultural and narrative ideology" (xi). This notion is of interest to feminists who understand that a system of engendering humans has disadvantaged women (as, I might add, it has disadvantaged men). Feminist literary scholars understand that literature plays a vital role in this engendering process.

Feminist literary criticism, which provides us with a fresh and exciting perspective on literature, then, takes its energy from a whole range of modern theoretical work which questions how humans are engendered. The literary artifacts of a culture not only show a culture's attitude toward sex and sexuality but also reveal how they, themselves, are instruments by which human males and females are turned into men and women.

I will begin by outlining some of the theories and philosophies by those key figures who have addressed the

immensely complex issues which broadly speaking come under the umbrella of feminism.

Claude Levi-Strauss explains how men have become the dominant sex when he claims that women are used as tradeable commodities between groups of men. They serve a necessary function, that of cementing men together to form societies. This fundamental principle -- that woman is a device to expedite relationships between groups of males -- has meant that men control social organization and women are organized by them. Levi-Strauss states that,

women are the gifts which men exchange between each other...they are gifts not givers. They have no significant power or influence within a system which is controlled by men and works to their benefit. Men, not women, have the power to determine the value of women in the exchange and the meanings associated with them. (Greene and Kahn, 7)

Gayle Rubin's article "The Traffic in Women" incorporates Levi-Strauss's theories into her analysis of the oppression of women in a sex-gender system. Rubin claims that the "exchange of women" between groups of men *creates* gender by "enforcing heterosexuality and constraining female sexuality" (Greene and Kahn, 8). She explains that this system affects both men and women adversely because "exogamy...enforces a pervasive, absolute symbolic opposition of men to women, suppressing their similarities and oppressing them both by preventing either from enjoying the traits associated with the other" (Greene and Kahn, 8). Her

words remind us that both men and women are pawns of a gender system which takes the natural products --humans -- and turns them into constructed genders.

Sherry Ortner explains how women have become equated with nature and men with culture. Because of woman's connection to reproduction -- childbearing, lactation, and child rearing -- she seems to live closer to nature. Within our culture, nature is perceived as somehow inferior to culture because culture is thought to include all those aspects of human endeavour which transcend the "lower" order of things, i.e. nature.

Ortner explains further, though, -- and this reveals how women are viewed with such a mixture of reactions within literary texts -- that women are also part of culture. Women live within culture, partake of the same rituals as do men. Furthermore, they may also be perceived of as the originators of culture because of their role in socializing the young. An ambivalent attitude toward women is therefore a direct result of the perception of women as being in a "problematic intermediary position" between nature and culture. (Rosaldo, 74) Schematically and to simplify this order of things, women's position vis à vis men's looks like this:

Culture/Man  
Woman  
Nature

Because men are so tenuously connected to reproduction, child-rearing and the domestic sphere, it is assumed that they belong solely to the domain of culture, and are the makers of culture. Because of our cultural habit of thinking in oppositional pairs, wherein nature is perceived of as lower or inferior to culture, those humans (women) who are closer (not of, but closer) to nature, will always be regarded as inferior to those humans (men) who belong to culture.

Hélène Cixous explains man's dominance and woman's subservience by explaining this concept of patriarchal binary thought which contains the following oppositions:

Activity/Passivity  
Sun/Moon  
Culture/Nature  
Day/Night  
Father/Mother  
Head/Emotions  
Intelligible/Sensible  
Logos/Pathos (Moi, 104)

Cixous tells us that these oppositions have become aligned with that other binary couple, Male/Female, with the result that the "feminine" side of these pairs is always perceived of as negative and powerless. Furthermore, Cixous points out, "for one of the terms to acquire meaning, it must destroy the other. The 'couple' cannot be left intact: it becomes a general battlefield...victory is equated with activity and defeat with passivity; under patriarchy the male is always the victor"

(Moi,105). Cixous understands that equating woman with the "negative" side means that human regard for women is tinged with negativity.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is an immense body of work whose subject is the myths which surround women. She explains that the misconceptions and biases which define women and maintain a misogynist attitude toward them also justify women's secondary status. According to de Beauvoir, "few myths have been more advantageous to the ruling caste than the myth of woman; it justifies all privileges and even authorizes their abuse" (de Beauvoir, 288). Aided by these myths, Man lives not with real woman but her archetype. These myths enable Man to be free to enjoy the solitude of his own concerns.

In the company of a living enigma, man remains alone - alone with his dreams, his hopes, his fears, his love, his vanity. This subjective game, which can go all the way from vice to mystical ecstasy, is for many a more attractive experience than an authentic relation with a human being. (de Beauvoir, 289)

Myths about women are the mothers of the stereotypes and images of women that are found in literature. Philip Rahv documents the powerful image of evil that women represent in literature in his discussion of the beautiful and irresistible demon who destroys any man who associates with her. The dark evil temptress and the pure blonde virgin are such familiar archetypes (in the works of Hawthorne, James, Anderson and Hemingway) that readers find it difficult to



imagine women portrayed otherwise. Ever literature written by women is not free of female stereotypes or those unattractive images of women that are part of this culture's collective psyche.

Myths are also stubbornly resistant to real life experience which might contradict them. "The contrary facts of experience are impotent against the myth," de Beauvoir explains (*The Second Sex*, 286). If woman does not conform to the myth of her, it is she who is at fault, not the myth. It is the nature and power of myths that they defy our experience with reality, in this case real life women. Furthermore, myths about women are especially powerful in maintaining patriarchal status quo. De Beauvoir points out that misconceptions about women are

deliberately used by patriarchal society for purposes of self-justification; through the myths this society imposed its laws and customs upon individuals in a picturesque, effective manner; it is under a mythical form that the group-imperative is indoctrinated into each conscience. (de Beauvoir, 294)

In literary texts, it is often the myth of women that we encounter. The assumptions that women are generally emotional, weak, or passive and that men are generally rational, strong, or active are so ingrained that they have become almost impossible to refute.

Within patriarchy, a sex-gender system controls sexual arrangements, marriage, and child-rearing practices -- all

matters by which sexual desire is channeled and controlled. Various roles are assigned to each of the sexes. This system is a dialectic formation which can accommodate only two sexes. The reproductive function of each sex, that is, biology, is the sole factor which determines gender assignation. (Chodorow, 1978, 15)

Tied closely to this sex-gender system are the conventions of romantic love. These conventions which are as artificial as the process of creating gender, govern the lives of both men and women. Preoccupation with them inhibits our daily lives and literary endeavours. Romantic love has woven a magical spell over literary works to such an extent that it is barely conceivable to think of a long narrative work without some romantic interest.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis explains why female authors at the beginning of the twentieth century began to critique this tyranny of romantic love. She shows that romance has too great a control over us, even to the point of furthering inequity and the estrangement of men from women. She writes that

romantic thralldom is an all-encompassing, totally defining love between apparent unequals. The lover has the power of conferring self-worth and purpose upon the loved one. Such a love is possessive, and while those enthralled feel it completes and even transforms them, dependency rules. The eroticism of romantic love, born of this unequal relationship, may depend for its satisfaction upon dominance and submission. Thralldom insists upon the differences between the sexes or partners, encouraging a sense of mystery surrounding the motives and

powers of the lover. Because it begins and ends in polarization, the sustenance of different spheres is both a cause and effect of romantic love. Viewed from a critical, feminist perspective, the sense of completion or transformation that often accompanies such thralldom has the high price of obliteration and paralysis. This kind of love is socially learned, it is central and recurrent in our culture. (*Writing Beyond the Ending*, 66-67)

This thralldom which is an aspect of romance is only one of several steps in romance and, romance in literature DuPlessis explains, is "a trope for the sex gender system." (5) To explain why she uses this term, I am quoting from the Oxford English Dictionary. The term "trope"

properly denotes procedure; the ten tropes (Sceptical arguments in Greek philosophy) were intended to contain the means of refuting dogmatism in all possible forms, and to provide directions for stating every line of available argument which could lead to negative conclusions and paralyzes assent.

Romance in literature works as a method of fixing, that is, keeping static, a prescribed set of orders or instructions. In this case, the romance story operates as a narrative device which instructs men and women about how they may react to each other within patriarchal courtship.

Freudian theory also plays a significant role in the literature produced at the beginning of this century but feminists have difficulty accepting some of Freud's writings which are so obviously anti-female. He deals with female behaviour as a kind of side issue, referring to the male as the

primary sex in all discussions of the female. In doing this, he reflects the misogynist and patriarchal prejudices of the culture within which he was writing. Freud admitted his ignorance of women; in fact, his writings on the subject of women show the absence of concrete scientific procedure. Freud agreed that besides psychoanalysis there were perhaps at least three other equally valid methods of learning about the female sex. In *New Introductory Lectures*, he instructs us to -- "inquire from (our) experience of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give (us) deeper and more coherent information" if we want to learn more about women. (Chodorow, 143)

Feminist literary criticism shows that neither real life experience (overshadowed by myths as it is) nor the poets (who are often male and who live within the influence of these myths about women) can help further our knowledge of females. Certainly science, with its own set of entrenched presets cannot be unbiased. Feminists hope that their own artistic and/or scholarly endeavours will help humans to better understand the construction of women. Feminists hope this knowledge will in turn increase women's prestige and enlarge the realm of what is possible for women to accomplish.

Within patriarchy, males are privileged while females are relegated to a secondary or inferior status. Females are maintained in this inferior role by stereotyped ideas about them as well as the idealization of them and a whole cluster

of myths which define them. But women cooperate in making themselves objects. They work to construct themselves to conform to society's definition of their social role and function. Oddly enough, women construct themselves as women to live within patriarchy, but as Jonathan Culler (*On Deconstruction*) has shown, they make themselves into men to read literary texts which support patriarchal ideology.

A feminist reading of any literary text can accomplish only so much by pointing to that text's biases toward women, or the inequities between men and women. Thus an analysis of the way *both* sexes are created and perceived must be undertaken. Feminists believe that this work will inevitably help to combat the effects of a rigid sex-gender system. To accomplish this requires a consideration of the ways by which men, too, are constructed and then presented in literary texts.

Nancy Chodorow ("Mothering, Male Dominance and Social Control") argues that the social convention of women mothering creates male dominance and the opposition of men to women. That women are frequently the sole caregivers of young children and that men are largely absent from the nuclear family/domestic sphere means that the mother exerts a control over the male child which establishes an exclusive bond between the female parent and her male child. This bond contributes to a cycle of reproduction. The male parents' absence means that the male child grows to maturity suspicious of femininity, goal oriented and work oriented, and

suited to a work situation which requires male dominance and more male absenteeism from the family domestic unit. This cycle also includes the opposition of values belonging to each sphere -- the workplace is characterized by aggression and competition while the home represents a haven away from the workplace, a place of nurturance. This opposition of workplace and home has meant that there has tended to be little onus on the workplace to uphold "humane" values.

Chodorow also explains that as a culture, we understand the subject of gender and its creation to be natural and further that "the reification of gender ...involves the removal of all imputation of historicity and all sense that people produce and have produced its social forms" ( Eisenstein, 91). In the chapter "Sexual Sociology" in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow argues further that the cultural fact of women's mothering creates specific male qualities in the male child that contribute to distrust of women, suspicion of things feminine, misogyny in society and misogyny in folk tales, myths and literary symbols.<sup>1</sup>

De Beauvoir believes that man's wish to push back the relentless flow of time against his ultimate end -- to defy his mortality -- means that he desires to conquer the flesh. He wishes to transcend the mundane, the things of this world. This is what is meant by transcendence. Women, on the other hand, are equated with immanence, those duties of daily life such as food preparation and home management. Man accomplishes his need to conquer the flesh by his subjugation

of women. Marilyn French claims that man subjugates women because he needs a standard by which he can measure the degree to which he has attained freedom. But subjugation of woman is accomplished too easily. The real object of man's attentions is other men. (de Beauvoir, 1952; Sedgwick, 1985) Other men are man's equals. Pitting himself against other men, conquering them in a variety of cultural rituals or masculine rites such as duels, sports, war, money-making -- these are the true challenges.

Michael Kaufman's *Beyond Patriarchy* defines patriarchy as , "the power to transcend natural realities with historical, man-made realities" (2). He feels that patriarchal culture places expectations on males that amount to a kind of violence against them. The gender system creates masculinity as a reaction against passivity and powerlessness and thereby ensures the "institutionalization of violence" against several groups of Others -- other races, women, children, and each other. That masculinity is a fragile thing, is implied in our ideology which seeks constantly to bolster masculinity. But the creation of masculinity requires a "suppression of a whole range of human needs." Along the way, same-sex bonding, homosocial attraction to other men, which are part of youth, become repressed and sacrificed to the process of making men. The repression of bisexuality, the enjoyment of being with other men, is worked out in sports, war, religious rituals, (and duels). Relationships between men are forced to be intensely heterosexual and "homophobia (becomes) a means of trying to cope, not simply with (men's) unsuccessfully repressed,

eroticized attraction to other men, but with (men's) whole anxiety over the unsuccessfully repressed passive sexual aims..." (21).

Eve Sedgwick claims that the point of a romantic relationship between men and women is always a seeking on the man's part for acceptance into a male society. Possession of a woman is the male's way of demonstrating his superiority to other men. The point is never the woman because

...women are in an important sense property...(and moreover) property of a liable and dangerous sort...To misunderstand the kind of property women are or the kind of transaction in which alone their value is realizable means, for a man, to endanger, his own position as a subject in the relationship of exchange: to be permanently feminized or objectified in relation to other men. On the other hand, success in making this transaction requires a willingness and ability to temporarily risk, or assume, a feminized status. Only the man who can proceed through the stage, while remaining in cognitive control of the symbolic system that presides over sexual exchange, will be successful in achieving a relation of mastery to other men. (*Between Men*, 50-51)

## II.

### Implications for Literature

Literature possesses a male-dominated and heterosexual



flavour in keeping with the hegemonic values of the culture of its origin. These biases have often produced the following characteristics in canonized patriarchal literature:

1. hierarchy of characters within the literary text,
2. the predisposition to enthrallment with the themes of romantic love and marriage,
3. the suppression and distancing of the female, feminine concerns and female stories,
4. plots, situations and characters which support and propagate myths about the sexes.

The work of Virginia Woolf provides us with a contrast to the patriarchal literature whose characteristics are outlined above. Her novels, for example, provide a critique of romantic love by showing characters who reject romance, live without sexual activity, or have companionate relationships with the opposite sex. As Woolf herself said, we grow tired of the relentless falling in and out of love that is the staple of countless novels. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* provides such a critique. One of the main characters, Clarissa Dalloway, rejects marriage to a man, Peter Walsh, who is romantically, and Clarissa feels, claustrophobically, in love with her. Instead of Peter, Clarissa marries Richard Dalloway, a man whose distance from her allows her to maintain her personal integrity. Clarissa's choice of Dalloway over Peter, is the novel's protest of patriarchal marriage which deprives women of their identity.

Woolf also offers characters who are not rigidly defined as either masculine or feminine. For example, her concept of an androgynous figure is dealt with humourously in *Orlando*. The main character of this novel lives happily as a man for the first half of *his* story and then as a woman for the second part of *her* life.

Woolf also rejects the tremendous influence of the main character on a narrative (and the significance of this will become apparent in my discussion of Dick Diver in *Tender is the Night*). *The Years* begins with a main character, Eleanor, who becomes replaced by a second character, Sara, a different type of woman altogether, who takes over the reader's attentions half way through the novel. The novel *Mrs. Dalloway* presents a central couple who are not romantically attached. In fact, they never meet, but the influence of one on the other is tremendous. Clarissa Dalloway learns something from Septimus Smith's suicide at the end of the novel. She sees his death as a protest against the kinds of oppression she herself has endured and she learns to carry on with her life perhaps more accepting, certainly more bravely.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis (*Writing Beyond the Ending*) discusses the ways by which novels more traditional than Woolf's support patriarchal ideology. Her concern is with the female reader, the young woman who falls under the novel's tremendous influence. She claims that

...education (is) an institution of gender, and culture as a whole,

including literary products like narrative, channel the girl into dominant structures of the sex-gender system. The romance plot in narrative thus may be seen as a necessary extension of the processes of gendering, and the critique of romance that we find in twentieth century female authors, as part of the oppositional protest lodged against both literary culture and psychosexual norm. (38)

Judith Fetterley asks that female readers become "resisting readers." She writes of John Keats' objection to poetry "that has a palpable design upon us" (*The Resisting Reader*, xi). She finds that the major works of American fiction constitute a series of designs on the female reader, all the more potent in their effect because they are "impalpable." Further, they are able to work their way into our consciousnesses by virtue of their seeming to be apolitical. Her book, *The Resisting Reader*, aims to represent a different subjectivity, a different reality than those texts which constitute a canon of great American works of literature and claim to present a set of universal truths to their readers.

Elaine Showalter also reveals her scepticism about these works' capacity to represent the entire truth when she says,

...the exclusive categories of masculine and feminine are dominated by a hierarchical mentality which inevitably regards one category as more favoured than the other...Whether the text is male- or female- authored, the literary canon contains, not a uniform example of male as subject and female as object, but a valuable record of a conflict between sex, gender and common humanity. These texts convey the working myths of the culture. We are to blame if we read them as gospel instead of myth. (Greene and

Kahn, 244)

Feminist literary criticism is concerned with the degree to which literature supports and furthers the inequities between men and women and the extent to which we take for gospel the myths within this literature.

Ian Watt discusses the close connection between patriarchal ideology and literature in *The Rise of the Novel*. He argues that the novel's moral values reinforce bourgeois economic reality in which women are totally dependent on marriage for economic survival. According to the economic system represented within the novels that Watt discusses, virtue is a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder. Virginity relinquished before marriage inevitably means that a woman is less marketable, and therefore less likely to survive economically. Until very recently, women have been provided with few marketable skills save those which ensure attracting a suitable financial provider. It is difficult to say to what extent the novel has created a reality which it very innocently seems to be only representing.

Women's role in an economic system also determines her psychological make-up. The polarization of economic roles that occurred on a widespread scale in the eighteenth century was accompanied by a polarization of psychological roles, requiring women to be emotionally passive and weak as well as economically dependent. We have the principle that man is the breadwinner and woman his helpmate and homemaker. The

myth that sexual polarization is natural provides a basis for the economic and social systems of industrial society, requiring that men be strong in order to face the harsh world of the competitive marketplace, that they be captains of industry, to steer the ship of state, and that woman, the weaker sex, withdraw from the rough world for which she is not suited, into the home where she may nurture children and preserve culture. The novel has been instrumental in reflecting this social definition of men and women -- the novel shows and preserves her as a private creature, reinforcing purity, piety, and submissiveness as the proper female virtues and punishing those women who fail to comply. (Wendy Martin)

Another example of the cooperation between art and capitalism is the case of *Harpers* magazine which published countless articles extolling the virtues of domestic life for women and instilling in its readers a desire for the qualities of virtue, chastity, and modesty --characteristics which, if adopted by women, would ensure that women were not qualified to take part in the rigors of life in the workplace. (Ryan, 1975) Both the novel and the periodical have played an important role in creating a prevailing philosophy that women should remain in their domestic role as homemakers and mothers, the notion that spheres for the sexes is natural and immutable.

There is an ideology of gender that is so basic to our way of life that it is rarely thought of and rarely analyzed. This

ideology is inscribed in discourse -- literature, art, language, dance. It is produced and reproduced in cultural practice. Roland Barthes shows how this production occurs in his discussion of the group photograph of seventy women novelists which appeared in *Elle* magazine. The photo's caption reads -- Jacqueline Lenoir, two daughters, one novel; Marina Grey, one son, one novel; and so on. These women were chosen because they have been able to take part, like men, in an area of creativity. However, the caption suggests that no matter how far these women have evolved in partaking of linguistic power, they were put on earth to give children to men -- "let them write as much as they like, let them decorate their condition, but, above all, let them not depart from it" (Greene & Kahn, 4). I use Barthes' example to illustrate the presence of authority in literature in general, especially in works by male authors, that constitute a canon whose ideological bases are the air we breathe and take for granted.

Literature itself is a discursive practice, writes Michel Foucault. Its "conventions encode social conventions and are ideologically complicit." It is impossible to keep gender assumptions out of our literature. Not only does literature transmit ideology; it also creates it. "To invoke the conventional narrative resolutions of marriage or death, for example, as most nineteenth-century novelists did, was to sanction them, make them prescriptive as well as descriptive, to perpetuate them as the working myths of the culture" (Greene & Kahn, 5).

Literature in its adherence to patriarchal values also has a heterosexist inclination. Furthermore, even feminist writing is not without its biases. Bonnie Zimmerman is perplexed by the omission of lesbians from feminist anthologies. She claims this omission results in the "lie that women have searched for emotional and sexual fulfilment only through men - or not at all" (Greene & Kahn, 179) She points out the limitations the sex-gender system makes on women's friendships and attachments. Her comments illustrate the gulf between real life and literature. She points out that in real life, women are important to other women, but, in literature, it seems only men are important to women. Our literature, preoccupied as it is with romance and heterosexual relationships (or friendships between men) means that women must conclude that their own feelings for other women are somehow odd or unimportant because these feelings rarely make their way into the literature of our culture.

Nina Baym's essay, "Melodrama of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," points to the tendency in American literature to focus on the problems of American men and shows how this focus has had huge implications for the women in that literature. Baym shows that literary critics have been responsible for creating a canon of literature which does not represent a female point of view because that point of view is simply not of interest to critics. Baym points to Lionel Trilling, one of Fitzgerald's important proponents, who judges works on cultural rather

than aesthetic grounds. Consequently, works that supported the dominant values of American culture became those most widely accepted. Trilling is only one of several critics who were devoted to a literature that supports the myth of the possibility of (man's) achieving complete self-definition in a new land untrammled by history and social accident. The individual becomes aligned against society which, in this literature, is perceived of as his enemy. Against this individual, "...the entrapping society and the promising landscape...are 'depicted in unmistakably feminine terms'" (p, 72). Baym adds that this portrayal of the individual's problem "...gives a sexual character to the protagonist's story which does indeed limit its applicability to women. And this sexual definition has melodramatic, misogynist implications" (72).

American literature is a literature which privileges the male perspective, and deals with his problems, his concerns, and his difficulties with opposing forces. One of these opposing forces is woman. Consequently, American literature bears some remarkably anti-female attitudes and contains some decidedly anti-feminine practices. This tradition of misogyny begins with the concept of the fallen woman which is central to Christianity. It is not surprising that the fiction of a nation founded by Puritans, should reflect this bias. The American novel has inherited the Puritan conviction that life is a continual moral struggle and that man, and especially woman, is a frail creature. Like the Puritan sermon, the eighteenth-century novel attempted to instruct by example, exhorting readers to lead virtuous lives. Sermons relied on



homily and style to bring the message home while the sentimental novel used example and emotion to achieve the same result.

Feminists need to look at works of literature to see how they have prevented new ideas about women, how they have furthered myths about women, and how they have maintained the status quo of various systems within our culture. Sometimes, looking at works of literature by women shows a contrast to male writing and provides a refreshing change. The works of Virginia Woolf which I cited earlier are a case in point.

### III.

#### F. Scott Fitzgerald

The polarization of the sexes, the equation of women with the lower order of things, and the various myths about her are reflected in the works of literature of our culture. These are givens, time-honoured assumptions that enter into this literature, and have gained a kind of acquired right because of their existence in this literature.

But the literature written at the beginning of this century is a little unusual in that it began to reflect the fluctuation in sexual and social conditions that are

characteristic of this period. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*No Man's Land*) find this era's insecurity in male-female relations, "the battle of the sexes" worked out in literature. Gilbert and Gubar show that hatred toward women in works by male authors proliferates in novels like *Women in Love* in which Gerald describes his feelings for Gudrun, the archetypal New Woman.

...he thought, what a perfect voluptuous fulfillment it would be to kill her...to strangle her, to strangle every spark of life out of her...till she lay completely inert, soft, relaxed forever, a soft heap lying dead between his hands, utterly dead. Then he would have had her finally and forever; there would be such a perfect voluptuous finality. (452)

Gilbert and Gubar claim that twentieth century man's fear that women are gaining the upper hand caused this change. They argue that the movement toward universal suffrage sparked these changes and was at the root of the fear which inevitably worked its way into twentieth century literature. They write that the Suffrage campaign

...must have aroused in men an extraordinary desire for self-assertion; it must have made them lay an emphasis upon their own sex and its characteristics which they would not have troubled to think about had they not been challenged. And when one is challenged, even by a few women in black bonnets, one retaliates, if one has never been challenged before, rather excessively. (*No Man's Land*, 15)

But this is too easy an explanation. There are more complex reasons for the friction between men and women which has

become the hallmark of the literature of this period. Man's dominance at this time was more likely eroded by a variety of social forces than the claim of women to the right of enfranchisement or their cry for prohibition. The staggering loss of life and suffering brought to world consciousness by the first World War, increasingly dehumanized work, and a depersonalized social environment as a result of increased urbanization are only a few of the social forces which meant that man was beleaguered by more than his fear that women might be taking over.

It is my intention to study two novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, focussing not on these immense social changes which are also represented within these novels but concentrating specifically on those subjects of interest to feminists. This reading will focus on the treatment of female characters in the novels and the treatment of these same female characters by literary critics. I will also discuss the effect on these novels of male dominance, in other words the huge influence that a controlling masculine perspective has on Fitzgerald's works

Lillian Robinson's "Treason Our Text - Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon" offers a point of departure for my study. She claims that "...the predominantly male authors in the canon show us the female character and relations between the sexes in a way that both reflects and contributes to sexist ideology" (106). She recommends that feminists emphasize alternate readings of male-authored

texts in a way that reinterprets women's characters, women's motivations and actions and that identifies and challenges sexist ideology. This study of *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* concentrates on the reinterpretation of women's characters, women's motivations and actions. It will also identify and challenge sexist ideology as it affects literary practice and I will also reinterpret men's characters, their motivations and actions within these two novels.

Because a feminist reading can achieve only so much by constant reference to the unfair treatment of women in literary texts, I have chosen to look at *both* men and women within Fitzgerald's texts. Culture requires that men be the opposite of women - that they be active, self-seeking, and unemotional. In Fitzgerald's texts, though, the ideal man is shown to be a combination of "feminine" and "masculine" qualities. *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* provide their own definition of masculinity, one which borrows qualities which are considered feminine. Dick's charm, fine manners, consideration of others and Gatsby's self-effacement and inherent shyness are such qualities. However, these nearly androgynous heroes are also destroyed in their novels. Their form of masculinity apparently is not tolerated by the patriarchally based culture which is the context of Fitzgerald's novels. The heroes of these two novels fail in their quests -- Jay Gatsby to achieve acceptance into a male-operated culture and Dick Diver to hang onto his position of authority. The failure of these male characters suggests that

the world is not ready for Fitzgerald's concept of masculinity.

By and large, literary criticism has viewed the central female characters in Fitzgerald's novels as responsible for the failures of the novels' fine young heroes. These critics call these female characters weak, passive, and immoral. While there is evidence in the texts to support this view, it is important to remember that these female characters have been made either weak or passive by the patriarchal constraints on them in the novels. Neither women in life nor female characters in literature can be said to be naturally or inherently either weak or immoral. Their behaviour, mediated as it is by social systems, exists nowhere in a pure state.

The 1920's seem to have marked a particular intensification of threats to the gender system. While it may be true to say that gender roles and gender definitions are continually in a state of flux, the 1920's were a period of immense change perhaps because of increased opportunities for women. We can only begin to imagine the fear of the loss of the status quo wrought by these changes in women's behaviour, women's roles, and increased numbers of women in previously male-only professions.

Lindel Ryan quotes from Leslie Fielder when he explains that although

Fitzgerald's sense of struggle between male and female was inevitably heightened by the social climate of the twenties and thirties. "Fitzgerald apparently never managed to accommodate to

the fact that he lived at the moment of a great switch-over in roles,"... and Fitzgerald's attitude towards women's new freedom, as he expresses in his fiction, bears this out. (Ryan, 84)

The texts of F. Scott Fitzgerald register the fear of the rise of women and, as well, they reveal Fitzgerald's awareness of the disturbing changes which were taking place within the sex gender system. His novels also, as Ryan points out, show Fitzgerald's profound belief in women's weakness and his belief that his world was a man's world. A great deal of the critical commentary on Fitzgerald's work ties the problematic relationships with women in his work to his own difficulties with women but this paper tries to show that his work reflects a deeper reality, one that goes beyond his life and even beyond a specific period in history. Fear, suspicion, admiration, reverence, disinterest -- woman is always the Other, no matter how else she is regarded , especially but not exclusively in texts authored by males.

Fitzgerald was caught between two worlds -- the Victorian and the modern. His work often yearns for that old warm world of moral security that Nick is nostalgic for -- a world that would be "in uniform and at a sort of moral attention." But his works also understand that the new era was one which refused to fulfill his desire for security and stasis.

Patricia Thornton states that "the dramatic redefinition of sexual roles will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the

most important changes of the twentieth century and F. Scott Fitzgerald might well be hailed as its chief chronicler" (457). His use of what may be considered androgynous characters (Gatsby, Dick, Jordan Baker, Beth Warren), the fear of man's becoming more feminine, and the homophobia are only some of the manifestations of this sexual upheaval of Fitzgerald's era. Furthermore, the novels register more discomfort than pleasure at the prospect of these changes.

Pamela Farley describes the 1920's this way -- "the Jazz Age exploded after the war into what seemed like a wild spree, supported by the promise of the Boom and imaged in the possibilities of Charles Lindberg's winging his way across the Atlantic, conquering centuries-old concepts of space and time" (9). The effects of this period of upheaval were experienced by the nation's young men and women. A no-holds-barred approach to sex prevailed. Freudian and Jungian psychology provided scientific rationale for the notion that an uninhibited sex life was conducive to good health. Popular movies offered unheard of exposure to sex and sexuality. Modern readers clamoured for the frankness of authors like Aldous Huxley, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, and Radclyff Hall. "The Pulitzer Prize juries had to drop the words 'wholesome' and 'highest standard' from their stated requirements that the prize-winning novel must 'present the wholesome atmosphere of American life and the highest standard of American manners and manhood'" (Farley, 12).

The phenomenon of the companionate marriage and the

growing acceptance of premarital sex, easy access to divorce, and especially divorce by consent where no children were involved, all began to be accepted as part of cultural practice. Despite prohibition or because of it, social drinking was a widespread phenomenon. A Boom period in manufacturing lasted from 1923 until late 1929 at which time it became apparent that the prosperity of the twenties had been ill-founded. Changes in technology most noticed in the auto industry meant that in 1919 there were 6.8 million cars on the road but by 1929 the number had jumped to 23.1 million.

But these changes were more welcomed by some than by others. The Ku Klux Klan was revived in 1915 and by 1924 had a membership of four and one-half million, its purpose to protect the American family and the purity of women. Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster wrote an impassioned letter condemning the banning and prosecution of Radclyff Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) in which they argue that murder and adultery were acceptable literary subjects but apparently not lesbianism.

May they mention it incidentally? Although it is forbidden as a main theme, may it be alluded to, or ascribed to subsidiary characters? Perhaps the Homes Secretary will issue further orders on this point. And is it the only taboo, or are there others? What of the other subjects known to be more or less unpopular in Whitehall, such as birth-control, suicide, and pacifism? May we mention these? We await our instructions! (DuPlessis, 3)

The forces of conservatism held fast during this period



despite numerous social changes which indicated otherwise. Elaine Showalter and Richard Evans show that the enfranchisement of women which might be seen as evidence of immense societal changes can also be viewed as symptomatic of a resurgence of conservatism in the 1920's.

\* \* \* \*

Chapter Two of this paper will deal with the various literary and cultural practices responsible for constructing those particular images of women in Fitzgerald's two novels, the reinterpretation of the characters of Daisy and Nicole and the literary commentary which deals specifically with Fitzgerald's female characters. Chapter Three is an analysis of *The Great Gatsby* in which I will show that a second relationship, that between Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway, rivals the love between Daisy and Gatsby. In Chapter Four, my discussion of *Tender is the Night* focuses on Dick Diver's tremendous influence on the novel, how his dominance affects other characters, the plot itself, and the literary devices used in the novel.

Fitzgerald's novels both undermine and support the ideology of capitalism. While the novels' heroes are attracted to wealthy women, they also understand the corruption associated with the moneyed class. The novels are peopled with wealthy, seemingly influential and prominent individuals and the settings -- Gatsby's huge Long Island mansion or that watering hole of the leisure class, the French Riviera -- are

the places where we find America's wealthy people, but Gatsby's house is too garish, his parties too lavish and his guests are only types while the people of the Riviera are ridiculed and chastized. Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* reveal the harm done to humans by a system in which money-making and money-spending become the primary determinants of human behaviour. In Chapter Two of *The Great Gatsby*, Doctor T. J. Eckleburg stares out over the wasteland of America, his billboard a reminder of the crassness of materialism and the competitiveness of the business world that supports American life. Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby worship at the feet of King Midas but think of themselves as more pure than Tom Buchanan. In *Tender is the Night*, Nicole is damaged by the business values of her Robber Baron-like father and Dick, too, falls under the tyranny of Daddy Warren's fortune.

While the American Dream which both Jay Gatsby and Dick Diver internalize, is a product of capitalism, the Dream is also at odds with capitalism, an economic system which purports to offer opportunity to all but does not. Fitzgerald's novels reveal that capitalism encourages limitless hope in the individual but also frustrates that individual by not fulfilling its promises. Perhaps the problem is that while capitalism stands for opportunity and equality, it also stands for inequity, competition and aggression. The American Dream can be realized but it can also fail those who set too much store by it. In *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, both men and

women are caught and either damaged or destroyed by the expectations of two systems -- the gender system and capitalism.

While it is true to say that the novels represent a male perspective which often looks unfavourably upon females, there is also much in the texts that is sympathetic toward them. There is a small voice which tries to make itself heard. It is not the voice of woman but another opinion, a second country heard from, and though it is overpowered by the large booming voice of male dominance, Fitzgerald must be given credit for its presence in his novels. Its little voice is the voice that just for one brief minute accepts the changes of this period and provides its own critique of those aspects of the status quo it seems to defend. More specifically, this little voice provides a critique, perhaps unknowingly, of some of those literary traits I mentioned earlier. Romantic love is questioned by the fraternal bond between Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* and the dominance of the main character becomes the protagonist's own problem in *Tender is the Night*.

While both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* reflect the dominant patriarchal and hegemonic values of their Father culture -- heterosexual romance, romantic courtship between unequals, gender asymmetry and polarization, the novels also give evidence of cracks beginning to develop in the fixed status of the gender system. Through their use of split heroes, characterizations which question definitions of

masculine and feminine and an authorial voice, marginal in its yearning and desire but rhetorically dominant, the novels represent a tension between dominant and muted that is characteristic of writing by females. This unfamiliar quality makes F. Scott Fitzgerald's work a fascinating study. Fitzgerald's texts are rich with information which provides us with knowledge about ourselves, in fact, "a valuable record of a conflict between sex, gender, and common humanity" (Greene and Kahn, 244). They are also rife with information about the restrictions on men and women and therefore supreme examples of the tremendous hold of patriarchal ideology on literature.

The images of the self-immolating and the destroying woman are misogynist constructs rooted in our mythic heritage, heightened by a defensive reaction to the significant changes in the role and position of women -- in combination with the troubling shape of the American social order -- in the period between the two World Wars. (Farley, 23)

Woman mythologized, fragmented, interpreted exists as a colonized element of patriarchy. (Greene & Kahn, 250)

## **Chapter Two**

### **Something Borrowed: The Construction of Women by Culture & by Fitzgerald's Novels**

Because we live within a patriarchal culture, one that values males more than females and the masculine more than the feminine, literary texts have tended to be biased against the female. Mysterious, odd, or overly emotional -- this is woman from a man's perspective. Because literary power has been in the hands of men, women have been largely defenseless at challenging this view of themselves, but, more importantly, a gender system which propels the tradition of woman as idealized love object as well as betraying bitch, fatal force and evil destroyer is the prevailing system within which this literature is created.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels belong to this male-dominant tradition. In addition to his female characters' secondary status, within the novels, the male characters project their ideals onto the female characters, investing them with unrealistic qualities and, later, blame them for not living up to these projections. Judith Fetterley explains that "...in the male mind which is at once Gatsby, Carraway, and Fitzgerald, the impulse to wonder is instinctively associated with the image of woman" (73). This association leads naturally to disillusionment, both disillusionment with the object of wonder and disillusionment with the woman.

### Woman as The Other

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir identifies the various aspects of the mythos which surrounds women. She explains the roots of culture's misogyny and its ambiguity toward women by pointing out that the male is both fascinated and repulsed by the female and this notion informs our understanding of how the female character is constructed in Fitzgerald's novels. Culture accepts the dichotomy: man -- creative and active; woman -- receptive and passive. This division, originating in the reproductive and sexual function of the sexes, denies any other interpretation of gender. Man may envy woman's fertility, her connectedness to nature, but he also rejects her carnality. He wants to rise above the forces which pull him to earth, to transcend the mundane, to live in the light and reject the dark place that is woman and

physicality.<sup>1</sup>

In Fitzgerald's texts, woman is frequently presented as "the Other," a mysterious, distant, alien, unfathomable creature. Daisy Buchanan's and Jordan Baker's first appearance in *The Great Gatsby* introduces them as two white billowing creatures.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an 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 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 women ballooned slowly to the floor. (8)

At first, these women are full of movement, even granted the magical capacity of flight, but Tom Buchanan calms and cages them by shutting the doors to the outside world. This first description of women in *The Great Gatsby* is familiar and breathtakingly enjoyable. The reader is accustomed to valuing women for their aesthetic contribution to literature, accustomed to women contributing decoration to a work of art. But Daisy and Jordan's providing us with aesthetic pleasure reminds us that women have been cast in this role, that they are not free agents, and Tom's shutting the door tells us that their capacity for movement is controlled by the presence of Man.

James Tuttleton's "Vitality and Vampirism in *Tender is the Night*" claims that this novel presents women as vampires who are capable of sucking energy from the male protagonist, but in our first encounter of the women in *The Great Gatsby*, it is a man who takes the life from the women. At the dinner party which ensues, the men dominate, the women seem to recede, wait, partake of light banter, flirt, say little of substance -- it appears they are shallow, but this is only an aspect of their being perceived of as the Other.

We soon learn that Daisy is a victim. Tom Buchanan is the Subject; Daisy is his Object. She waits to see what will happen to her marriage. She has no power to change what will happen to her. Others decide for her. The phone rings and the breaths are held while Tom talks to his woman -- the woman who threatens Daisy's security.

Like Daisy, Jordan is treated as the Other in this novel. Set apart and distanced by the text, Nick accuses her of being different somehow. "The bored haughty face that she turned to the world concealed something - most affectations conceal something eventually..." (58). As the Other, woman is always a mystery and as the Other, she has every reason for hiding herself. It follows that this distanced creature deals in subterfuge. But Nick *accuses* her of "dealing in subterfuge." (59) Whether or not this is a true appraisal of Jordan's character, Nick can make his accusation stick because women within a male-dominated world *do* resort to being secretive.



They must do so to conceal any deviation from a rigidly prescribed set behavioural rules which are designed to control them. The treatment of the female character, Jordan, reminds us that the behaviour of women can be suspect while similar "subterfuge" in a man might be attributed to expediency or strength. To add insult to injury, Nick comments further about Jordan's dishonesty -- "dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply" (59). He means that men judge women by different standards because they see the behaviour of women as that of another beast altogether different from the male. It seems Nick is compelled to construct an image of Jordan that is full of contradictions -- on the one hand he admires her, while on the other he accuses her of dishonesty.

Even though F. Scott Fitzgerald's female characters take their inspiration from the women in his own life, Ginevra King or Zelda Sayre for example, it is the myth of women that we meet in these novels, women interpreted by men, women pushed to the outer rim of the reader's attentions, and women used by men for selfish purposes.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis explains that literature influences the reader by providing "scripts" for behaviour, by offering models for cultural behaviour and norms. Sociologists use this term "'scripts' to explain the existence of strongly mandated patterns of learned behaviour that ...offer a rationale for unselfconscious acts" (2). DuPlessis argues that even physical acts like sex are made possible by their creation in social life

-- love too, even though it appears to be impulsive, is "organized."

So too literature as a human institution is...organized by many ideological scripts. Any literary convention -- plots, narrative sequences, characters in bit parts - as an instrument that claims to depict experience, also interprets it. No convention is neutral, purely mimetic, or purely aesthetic. (2)

DuPlessis' words make me suspicious of all those aspects of narrative which seem to be natural. The image of women, for example, has to be seen for what it is -- the myth of woman -- not woman as she really is but woman as man perceives her and writes of her in literature. DuPlessis sensitizes me to the kind of ease with which Nick takes control of the reader in *The Great Gatsby* or the kind of control Dick's perspective has on the novel in *Tender is the Night* and the ease with which readers rally to support these two controlling perspectives.

Within patriarchal society, the female is the recipient of a great deal of male anxiety simply by virtue of *not being male*. Because a great deal of the literature of our received tradition is written from a male perspective, the female represented therein is blamed, used as a scapegoat, and generally belittled. According to Nick Carraway, young men are lonely outsiders -- "poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner - young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life" (57). This sympathy toward

struggling, young, unsuccessful men is coupled with the texts' overall bias against women, a bias which becomes apparent if one reads both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* from a feminist perspective. Even though Nick is occasionally ill-disposed to other male characters as well as occasionally kindly disposed to some of the females, in *The Great Gatsby*, a misanthropic attitude is directed by far more at the female characters than the males. In *Tender is the Night*, even though there are three points of view represented in each separate book of the novel, it is Dick Diver who receives reader sympathy. Frequently this sympathy is gained at the expense of the female characters in the novel.

### Literary Conventions

One convention in literature which occurs as a result of the males taking charge and assuming control is the use of female characters as literary devices or metaphor.

#### Woman as Metaphor

##### i. The Ideal

In *The Great Gatsby*, the female character Daisy is sought after, pined over, and pursued by Jay Gatsby. Daisy is "the golden girl...the king's daughter...high in the white palace" (120). But the idealization of women should not be confused

with affection for her; it is rather awe of her combined with fear of her. Idealizing woman keeps her apart from Man. It is not so much the woman Daisy whom Jay Gatsby loves but association with her that he desires. This female facilitates the male's acceptance into a male-operated culture, a culture which treats women like gifts of exchange between rival tribes. 2.

The ease with which a female character becomes equated with the Man's ideal in American literature stems from the naturalness with which she is associated with that other ideal, the American Dream. Disappointment with both the woman and the dream is the inevitable outcome of this comparison. Both woman and the Dream are man's projections of his ideals; hence woman's equation with the Dream. "The romantic ideal of beauty and youth is corruptible in time -- that is in woman or society. The two become equated on a personal level in the action of plot...For the male protagonist, his 'disenchantment' with the ideal image and the substantial reality clash invest his efforts with tragic implications," explains Pamela Farley (113). Man's tendency to idealize woman results in his becoming discouraged but isn't the effect on woman far more tragic? Within this habit of idealizing woman, man retains his integrity as a human, but woman does not. She is an object of wonder, not man's equal -- set apart, she is a stranger to him.

Furthermore, Jay Gatsby wants Daisy Buchanan because of the power equated with her in a culture which defines

women in terms of the men who possess them. (Farley,113) "In the quintessentially male drama of poor boy's become rich boy, ownership of women is invoked as the index of power; he who possesses Daisy Faye is the most powerful boy..." (*The Resisting Reader*, xvi). For Jay Gatsby, Daisy is a device which will ensure his rite of passage into manhood. When he fails to win her wholly, the reader is disappointed not because of the hero's inability to win the girl but because she has thwarted the male's acceptance into male-dominated society. There are several literary practices which help to make the reader feel the hero is worthy of this acceptance. By constructing the female character Daisy so that fewer details are provided for her than for Nick and Gatsby, she appears aloof, even a little cold. Also a particular tone with just a touch of criticism is used to describe her. Nick says, "I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming." (9) However, if this criticism really were irrelevant, Nick would not have said it. He accuses Daisy of wanting power over others, implying that power and women do not mix. Power is for men; women are to remove themselves from the desire for power. Nick's narrative tone helps convince the reader that the hero should be granted his wish for acceptance into a male-dominated society.

Man's idealizing woman also creates division between the sexes. But does man perhaps desire this division? Jan Hunt and John Suarez point out that Fitzgerald's male protagonists pursue an unattainable, remote woman at the same time as

they pursue rejection because their true motive is to avoid association with women. Pursuance of the ideal woman who will refuse reciprocation of their affection is these heroes' way of avoiding the "sweat and heat" of life. Hunt and Suarez argue further that Fitzgerald's heroes pursue this woman in order to avoid competition with their fathers -- violating a good woman means violating Mother and her violation ultimately means betrayal of Dad. This is Fitzgerald's representation of a phenomenon that he perceives to be a male priority -- the desire to please Father.

In *Tender is the Night*, woman is both admired and undermined by the text. Girlfriend-Nicole, at first valued for her beauty and youth, soon becomes insane-wife-Nicole who must be watched constantly and guarded against the recurrence of her disease. Her psychiatrist husband, initially so enraptured with her, soon must exhaustively interpret and mediate the world for her. Then, when she begins to regain her health, she is somehow to blame for not having stayed sick, for this return to health spells the end of her marriage to Dick and his loss of face as a superior man.

The female character, distanced or blamed, is not valorized but fetishized by these texts. As a fetish is regarded with superstition and extraordinary reverence, so too are the female characters within these stories. Like a fetish, this woman is psychologically necessary to sexual gratification and like obsession with a fetish, obsession with her, impedes complete sexual expression.

The texts suggest that both Jay and Dick remain immature as a result of their dependence on women. Jay forfeits family and acceptance into the dominant society when he loses Daisy. If not for his death, he might have remained in an idealistic, youthful state forever trying to attain the unattainable. Dick, too, is portrayed as childish in his use of many toys. He searches for metal on the beach with an adult sand toy and later calls to Nicole in the garden at the Villa Diana through a megaphone. His attraction to very young girls (Nicole first, then Rosemary) suggests a lack of maturity on his part. Both Jay Gatsby and Dick Diver are unable to achieve their maximum human potential and this is shown most clearly in their inability to achieve sexual harmony -- their attraction to woman as fetish prevents their growth.

Furthermore, Dick's attraction to young girls also reveals that power is closely tied to sexuality. His use of women shows an insecurity about sexuality. Sex with a young girl can reduce this insecurity. Her lack of sexual experience and her lack of power significantly reduce any potential threat to the male ego. A desire to be father/lover to younger women shows Dick's need for the ultimate advantage over his romantic conquests.

Woman as young girls or ideals are rendered powerless and powerless women make Man more comfortable. When Nick Carraway observes that "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us," (82) the

pronoun "us" does not include women. The green light is not there for women; woman is the green light that man pursues. It is a Man's dream that is the subject of *The Great Gatsby* and it includes woman only as a symbol and not as a participant or partner.

## ii. The Diseased One

The character of Nicole shows us the logical extension of the the perception of woman as the Other, a perception which has bleak consequences for women. She can easily slip into the role of madwoman. As such, she is a believable metaphor because relegated to the role of "the Other," she is perceived and perceives of herself as odd. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*Madwoman in the Attic* ) explain how women can become synonymous with disease. They argue that woman's viewing herself as an object leads directly to illness. Learning to become a beautiful object, at its most extreme, means that the girl learns anxiety about -- perhaps even loathing of -- her own flesh. Anorexia is a modern symptom of this disease; tight-lacing and vinegar-drinking were nineteenth century symptoms. Constantly negating her own desires, silencing her voice and neglecting to tell her own version of the story leads to neurosis.

Sarah Beebe Fryer claims that Nicole's mental illness can be seen as symbolic of woman's unfortunate state within a male-dominated world. Fryer argues that "(Nicole's) vulnerability to 'rape' by her father and subsequent



exploitation by her father surrogate, a psychiatrist with whom she has a transference, can be viewed symbolically as a reflection of the New Woman's tenuous social position in the face of patriarchal traditions" (71). Both victim of incest and used by her husband, the female character, Nicole, embodies the victimization of women.

The incest theme in *Tender is the Night* coupled with the theme of little girls used by the movie industry, focuses on a "sickness" in American society -- the exploitation of women at the hands of a system whose unrelenting longing for money, questionable business ethics, and inherent corruption, uses women for a variety of purposes, not the least of which is the need to purge the guilt of assorted perversions. It connotes the need to launder dishonestly earned money and the need of shady businessmen like Jay Gatsby to redeem themselves through the love of a good woman, or through the affection of a young daughter in the case of Devereux Warren.

Marriage to a mentally ill wife creates sympathy for Dick Diver and not for his wife. Her sickness is a problem for the hero -- the reader immediately rallies around him against her. On at least two occasions there is illness in others in the novel, illnesses whose normality contrasts with Nicole's real disease. Others have the diseases of the healthy. Dick contracts the flu and Tommy catches a cold. One wonders if closeness to Nicole's "germs" infect these men because it seems that association with her means these characters catch something. In effect, Dick catches something from her that he

can't shake off -- he loses his self-esteem and the two husband and wife appear to change places. The suggestion is that whatever she has rubs off on him and ruins him. This is coupled with Dick's fear that Nicole, because of her madness, possesses a greater strength than he. Dick says as much when he tells Nicole, "Young woman, you'll be pulling your weight long after your friends are carried off screaming" (142). Fitzgerald creates the metaphor woman = madness (as a result of incest) and thereby protests Daddy Warren's values and everything he represents but he also denies Nicole's victimization by giving out clues which suggest she remains aloof from the damage of the incest and moreover has a kind of power which enables her to withstand the damage of the sexual assault by her father. The novel sets up a tension between the incest images and the image of strong Nicole.

Woman is a literary device through which Fitzgerald shows the sickness of woman's state as well as the sickness of patriarchal society. It is an effective and believable metaphor because of cultural precedent -- women are so odd, so different that their sickness is a natural consequence of their difference. They are rendered as diseased because of a controlling male perception and the universal acceptance of their strangeness.

### **iii. Woman as America**

Another consequence of the male author's treating

woman as "the Other" is the equation of the female character with his country. Man's homeland creates problems for him. He may love his country, that place that has spawned his dreams but his country has also thwarted his dreams -- his country is a force to be reckoned with. Disappointment with his country becomes synonymous with disappointment with his women and this equation is especially evident in American literature.

Judith Fetterley claims that Daisy Buchanan's failure to give herself over wholeheartedly to Gatsby is a symbol of America's failure to live up to the expectations of the men who "discovered" her. Fetterley points out that "America is female; to be American is male; and the quintessential American experience is betrayal by woman" (*The Resisting Reader*, xiii). Fetterley argues that American literature either excludes women outright or includes them in a powerless state -- as myths, metaphors, or symbols -- literary devices by which male authors deal with their anxieties about women.

John Callahan (*Illusions of a Nation*) discusses the tendency of American men to think of woman as synonymous with America when he claims that

...to Gatsby, to Diver...women are rarely personalities, rarely individuals, rarely human beings. above all they are rarely women. Consistently, they assume metaphorical values which reflect the divided allegiance of Fitzgerald's heroes to a romantic transcendence and to a vision of the world as resource to be possessed and held in dominion... (211).

It is the privileging of the male perspective which renders women as metaphors in the literature of the American nation and this literary convention of viewing women as separate from man stems from a perspective grounded in the deeply held beliefs of all Americans. *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."* The Declaration of Independence, founded on eighteenth century thinking, claims Individual Man's God-given right to this "happiness," but this "happiness" is not extended to all and, more importantly, this "happiness" is founded on the unhappiness of others. American men are held captive by an ideology which justifies their dominion over "others." Woman is only one of several "others." Callahan contends that the shared beliefs expressed in the Declaration of Independence prevent man's enjoyment of "others," his learning from "others" and his benefiting by association with "others." The literary practice of making woman into a literary device captures her and limits her, denying her inalienable right to personhood status, denying man's enjoyment of or learning from woman.

This equating woman with nation originates in Man's need to view the earth as maternal, nurturing her happy children. Annette Kolodny traces this ancient tradition through three hundred years of American writing. She finds extensive evidence of imagery in which American men "cherished" the "fantasy" of blissful coexistence between man and nature

"based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine...enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose and painless, integral satisfaction" (*The Lay of the Land*, 4). This view of the land as the fully receptive Mother/Woman is a metaphor which was used to lure prospective colonists to America.

The humane and decidedly feminine, impact of the landscape became a staple of the early promotional tracts, inviting prospective settlers to inhabit 'valleyes and plaines streaming with sweete springs, like veynes in a naturall bodie,' and to explore 'hills and mountaines making a sensible proffer of hidden treasure, never yet searched.' (*The Lay of the Land*, 11)

This feminization of the land is only one aspect of the practice of making feminine that which man sets out to use, that which is an extension of himself -- his car or his ship for example. When Fitzgerald evokes reader nostalgia for America as virgin land -- "the old island... - a fresh green breast of the new world" (182) -- he is responding to this tradition. But when he uses the phrase "last and greatest of all human dreams," the feminist reader is reminded that "human" means man. Woman is denied the role of dreamer, included only as an Other.

Bruce Grenberg also sees Nicole as representative of America. Through reference to Fitzgerald's notes, he thoroughly documents the close tie between Nicole's illness and American participation in World War One.<sup>3</sup> Grenberg's findings serve to demonstrate the literary convention of equating woman with country. In the grand scheme of things American, it is men and their interests which count. Man's

affection for his country enriches and enhances him. Women do not enter into the relationship except in so far as they are able to serve his purpose. The country is "the Other;" woman is "the Other." The women and the country become inextricably bound together in the minds of American men and in their literature.

### Disparaging Comment

Within Fitzgerald's texts, an authorial or narrative voice often does not speak fondly of women. In *The Great Gatsby*, for instance, this voice uses a disdainful tone when speaking of much of modern humanity, men or women. Gatsby's party guests seem to bring out the worst in people.

Clarence Endive...came only once, in white knickerbockers, and had a fight with a bum named Etty in the garden. From farther out on the Island came the Cheadles ...and the Ripley Snells. Snell was there three days before he went to the penitentiary, so drunk out on the gravel drive that Mrs. Ulysses Swett's automobile ran over his right hand. The Dancies came, too...and Beluga the tobacco importer, and Beluga's girls. (62)

It is a tone which creates a general atmosphere of gloom about human beings, but while men are spoken of pejoratively, women receive the bulk of this ironic tone.

The large room was full of people. One of the girls in yellow was playing the piano, and beside her stood a tall, red-haired young lady from a famous chorus, engaged in song. She had drunk a quantity of champagne, and during the course of her song she had decided, ineptly, that everything was very, very sad - she was not only singing, she was weeping too. Whenever there was a pause in the song she filled it with gasping, broken sobs, and then took up

the lyric in a quavering soprano. The tears coursed down her cheeks - not freely, however, for when they came into contact with her heavily beaded eyelashes they assumed an inky color, and pursued the rest of their way in slow black rivulets. A humorous suggestion was made that she sing the notes on her face, whereupon she threw up her hands, sank unto a chair, and went off into a deep vinous sleep. (51)

My concern is that the presence of this tone in widely read and extremely popular literature shapes cultural attitudes toward women. There are many similar unflattering vignettes but even more important is the text's overall bias in favour of male characters, a bias which trivializes the problems of women and makes their characters suspicious, vague or mysterious. Female characters are wives or girlfriends of the main characters in both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*. However interesting their stories might be, it is not their story which receives the texts' attention.

The presence of unflattering, descriptive portraits of women undermines the female characters and this in turn increases the reader's respect or sympathy for the male characters who must deal with these females. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick describes Myrtle's sister, Catherine.

The sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair, and a complexion powdered milky white. Her eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more rakish angle but the efforts of nature toward the restoration of the old alignment gave a blurred air to her face. When she moved about there was an incessant clicking as

Innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms.

(30)

Sticky hair, white complexion, double eyebrows -- the effect is repulsive and a little ridiculous. Nick's criticism of her ensures his own superiority as well as the superiority of numerous judgmental comments he presents to the reader as universal truths. His judgmental attitude gives him an air of authority, lending credence to his story about Gatsby and increasing Gatsby's prestige in the mind of the reader.

It is not only Catherine who is unappealing. The afternoon in Manhattan is generally sordid and disgusting and much of it reflects on Catherine's sister, Myrtle, Tom Buchanan's latest woman. Although these sordid details also reflect badly on Tom's and Myrtle's illicit liaison and the crudeness of modern urban life, it is Myrtle's taste and friends who are questioned. Hers is a shoddy world full of ill-mannered people who can't quite make it into the right class.

The description of Tom and Myrtle's love nest casts her in an unflattering light. Even the reading material in their apartment is criticized. "Several old copies of *Town Tattle* lay on the table together with a copy of *Simon Called Peter*, and some of the small scandal magazines of Broadway" (29). The details of Myrtle's afternoon attire are used against her -- a dress which "stretched tight over her rather wide hips" (27) and later when she changes to a cream-coloured chiffon, the indiscreet noise she makes when she moves about is as



annoying to Nick as her sister's pottery bracelets. Perhaps women are to be seen and not heard; certainly their physicality is a problem for Nick.

Myrtle says, "I'm going to make a list of all the things I've got to get, a massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk ---- for mother's grave that'll last all summer. I got to write down a list so I won't forget all the things I got to do" (37). Both Myrtle Wilson and Jay Gatsby have lists of things to do. His makes him look industrious and hopeful; hers makes her look common and slatternly.

Myrtle is the familiar stereotype, the cheap, lower class woman, used for sexual purposes. Her sexuality is not to be enjoyed by the reader or celebrated by the novel but only used to show that there are two kinds of women -- the Daisies, removed from the heat and sweat of life, and the Myrtles who provide foils for those Daisies who are the real valued objects.

### **Woman's Assigned Roles**

Woman has traditionally been relegated to various roles according to patriarchal need and in literature she is presented in those roles which have been assigned to her by a male-dominated system. In turn, this literature also molds woman to a definition of her that is convenient to the male-dominated culture in which she lives. Within this context, woman is

dependent on Man both in an economic and in an emotional sense. Her delegated sphere is the narrow confinement of family and family friends. Romance/love/marriage represent the one area of expertise she is allowed. In both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, there are female characters who are presented as emotionally and economically dependent on men. Their sphere is the home and family. These females are also preoccupied with romance and romantic love. This very narrow definition of women represented by Fitzgerald's handling of his female characters, cannot help but shape the reader's expectations and understanding of women. Exceptions to this rule, Jordan Baker or Baby Warren for example, are treated by the text as problematic. Both are the brunt of unflattering comment. Jordan, while considered a romantic possibility for Nick, has to be broken off with eventually, apparently unsuitable for any long term attachment, and Baby is just too controlling and too powerful for Dick to have any degree of affection or admiration for her.

### Economic and emotional dependence

Lindel Ryan claims that because women are a "perfected economic possession," they become "self-destructive and destructive of others" (87). His statement helps us to understand Daisy's "fall" at the end of novel. That she is an economic possession diminishes her and denies her moral agency. Tom Buchanan purchases a wife for \$350,000, a wife who in turn is loyal to him because he offers her economic security. In addition, the women who surround Daisy understand the importance of marriage to woman's economic well-being. When it seems as if Daisy will falter in her acquisition of a wealthy keeper, women supporters, plunge her into an icy bath to sober her up for marriage. Women are pragmatic; they know where their interests *must* lie and their interests lie in providing themselves with security even if that security stifles their growth. (Fryer,1988, 320-21)

Richard Godden ("Money Makes Manners Make Man Make Woman: *Tender is the Night*, a Familiar Romance") also views women in an economic light. He sees women's function as created by various stages of capitalism. He shows that female softness and the polarity separating men and women result directly from the capitalist system. Godden argues that women have cooperated with this system by making themselves into the opposite of their businessmen husbands and that women have likewise created themselves as consumers mindful of their roles as spenders and displayers of

the money which is earned in the work place. Godden shows that a characteristic of late capitalism is the importance of reproducing capital. The role of the consumer, within this stage of capitalism, becomes vital to this reproduction. Since women have been primed as consumers, they are vital to capitalism's ability to propel itself by creating more wealth. Women are also significant as producers of more consumers -- not workers for the state but consumers who may serve the huge demands of a business-dominated culture.

*Tender is the Night* reveals just how closely woman is tied to an economic system. Godden explains that Tommy is a logical choice for Nicole after she leaves Dick because Daddy Warren's feudal money will remain with Barban "mercenary in royal causes, opponent of socialism and trainee stock speculator" (26). Dick's function within capitalism is to reduce the paternal threat to Nicole while maintaining Devereux Warren's good name. Godden shows that Nicole is the victim of a conspiracy to protect her father's fortune, and not as the critics would have it, the corrupter of Dick Diver. After becoming a victim of incest, Nicole should have been left alone to despise her father and other men (Fetterley, "Who Killed Dick Diver?") but she could not be left alone because capitalism's interests must be served. She must be reintegrated into the patriarchy within which capitalism is a sub-system. Godden claims that Nicole must provide a repository for all of Daddy Warren's accumulated wealth.

Woman's passivity is directly connected

to her role within an economic system. She is not the active one, the seeker of fortunes, the worker, but the homebody and consumer and displayer of wealth. Nicole Diver personifies this passivity. She partakes of socially acceptable pastimes - writes recipes, sunbathes, and watches the children. She belongs to a long tradition of passivity, a role which has been assigned to her within patriarchy. In *Jane Eyre*, Bronte writes,

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too abstract a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (Ch. 12)

Fitzgerald's fiction reinforces the notion that passivity is a female trait by presenting it as a natural female quality in those female characters who are favoured by the novel's heroes. Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* have principal female characters who show women's dependence on men -- their secondary status, their waiting while men make the decisions and go about the *important* business of life. Theirs is both an emotional and a material dependence. Daisy waits nervously while Tom is on the phone. His extra-marital affair threatens her security. Sarcasm is her defense, a defense of the powerless. Myrtle too waits in vain for Tom to

come back. Her eagerness when she think he has returned results in her being struck down as she runs out to meet him. Nicole becomes tired of "playing planet to Dick's sun" (287) during a marriage that for her becomes one long waiting period to begin living.

Dependence is woman's assigned role. Independent women in these novels are shown to be destructive. A suspicion clings to the female characters who display independence, who seem not to need men or fit the patriarchal mold. Baby is portrayed badly, disliked and distrusted by Dick. Baby, as head of the Warren family unit, takes on a male role in assuming responsibility for marrying its eligible young heir. She also uses her influence and sheer gut determination to free Dick from an Italian jail. But the novel takes care that neither of these actions endear her to the reader. Nick disguises his fear of independent Jordan Baker by claiming that he admires her independence but reveals his true feelings when he rejects her for her presumed "dishonesty." Dick's anonymous female patient is driven insane by her independence, her competition with men, and she dies as a result of her disease.

### Romantic Arena

It seems that the one venue for women to demonstrate their expertise is the area of romance. Fitzgerald's two main female characters -- Daisy and Nicole -- lack any personal fulfillment apart from their romantic conquests. Because they are given no other arena for their talents, it is small wonder

that they become consumed by the trappings and conventions of romantic love. But woman's association with romance trivializes her while Fitzgerald's heroes' interest in finding true love increases their esteem in the eyes of the reader.

Fitzgerald shows these women to be in control of the men who pursue them -- Daisy has her gentlemen callers -- "all day long the telephone rang in her house and excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her that night" (75). Nicole's flirtations during the mountain expedition are too much for Dick Diver who succumbs to her charms.

She wore a sweater of powder blue and a white tennis skirt -- she was the first morning in May...she was a carnival to watch - at times primly coy, posing, grimacing and gesturing. She was both formidable and vulnerable, he decided, remembering other women with flower-like mouths grooved for bits. (147-149)

Men are presented as the helpless victims of these controlling women but the reality of courtship is that men are the subjects of the game of romance. They are the players; women are the objects, the markers that are pushed around the board. Daisy's worth stems from the number of gentlemen callers who have pursued her. By being the object of men's desires, she has earned the reputation of a woman who is valued and, as a result, she is valuable to Gatsby. Nicole too is the object of men's desires. She is first the object of Dick Diver's unprofessional attraction to her and, then, throughout her marriage, the object of Abe North's sick-as-a dog obsession.

Later on, she is the object of Tommy Barban's displaced aggressions. Women may play this romance game, they may even be portrayed as being in charge, but the reality is that this is a man's game which has little to do with affection for women. Woman's part is largely that she functions as an object to demonstrate one man's worth to other men.

### Daisy and Nicole & their Critics

Perhaps because of disparaging comments in Fitzgerald's works, perhaps because of the expectations based on "our mythic heritage," literary critics frequently make comments that show their disappointment with Fitzgerald's female characters. In Fitzgerald's novels, male characters are often shallow or immoral but it is the female characters that become the focus of critical indignation. Fitzgerald shows that Jay Gatsby is a pretentious man who associates with known criminals. He also shows that for all the wrong reasons, Dick Diver rises to prominence within the psychiatric profession and then unprofessionally falls in love with a patient. The ambiguity of Nick Carraway's narration testifies to his secretiveness and deceit. The negative qualities of these male characters, however, receive only a little attention by literary critics while the females absorb the bulk of negative critical commentary.

Alfred Kazin claims that...

Daisy becomes as essentially vulgar and inhuman as her husband;



the tennis champion (Jordan)..is revealed as a pathological liar; Nicole and her sister in *Tender is the Night* fashion Dick Diver's ruin. Nicole herself rounds out the ultimate portrait of her class. She escapes madness only by parasitically marrying the psychiatrist hero, but she gives him nothing except the subtle moral bribery of her wealth. (179)

David Fedo admits that Fitzgerald's heroes are weak and indecisive, but he emphasizes the negative aspects of Fitzgerald's female characters when he contends that...

Fitzgerald makes it clear that both men (Jay Gatsby and Dick Diver) were capable of regeneration, a regeneration made impossible by the selfish actions of their spouses. Fitzgerald's heroes are morally weak men cast adrift by morally weaker women; the men have no one to sustain them. They are seen as having about them much to admire; the women are not. (28)

Charles Shain adds to the list of complaints about Fitzgerald female characters when he says,

the men in (Fitzgerald's) fiction are often, as he was, astonished by the fearlessness and recklessness of women. They are also finally made aware of the deceitfulness and moral complacency of many women. Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby* and Baby Warren in *Tender is the Night*, for example, are studies of mercenary American women as dangerous to men as classical sorceresses. Daisy Buchanan and Nicole Warren are fatally irresponsible women. (Fedo, 27)

While some of the literary criticism on Fitzgerald's novels contains a prejudicial attitude toward the female

characters in these novels, there is another type of criticism which responds to the favourable aspects of Fitzgerald's female characters. Mary McCay takes a sympathetic approach to Fitzgerald's women by saying,

towards (them), Fitzgerald has a highly critical attitude that often leaves them stripped to a core that is finally lacking in enduring values. He is harder on them than on his men. He judges them more severely - as if he secretly expected more of them at the outset but put them in a world that allowed them no theatre for growth. They are stunted from the start by Fitzgerald's expectations on the one hand and by the world they live in on the other. (309)

Two critics who are sympathetic to Fitzgerald's female characters are Judith Fetterley and Sarah Beebe Fryer. Judith Fetterley sees *The Great Gatsby* as "another American 'love' story centered in hostility to women and the concomitant strategy of the scapegoat" (72) in which Daisy is the object of the novel's hostility and the love battle "is here played out as a struggle for power in an elaborate pattern of advantage and disadvantage in which romance is finally but a strategy for male victory" (72). She claims that Daisy is systematically discredited through the course of the novel moving from romantic desirable object of Jay Gatsby's affections to cold-hearted amoral hit-and-run murderess by the end. Not only is Fetterley's approach fundamentally feminist, but her essay is also grounded in a profound understanding of the sociological and philosophical theories surrounding gender.

Sarah Beebe Fryer's recent book *Fitzgerald's Women:*

*Harbingers of Change* is also sympathetic to women. As "harbingers of change," Fitzgerald's female characters display numerous self-assertive qualities that were not previously associated with women. Fryer also explains why Daisy has been judged harshly. She catalogues the past hurts that Daisy has experienced in the area of romantic love and uses this to explain that she is not shallow but hurt and damaged by romance. Daisy "...is a victim of a complex network of needs and desires: she deserves more pity than blame" (Fryer, 55). Fryer also observes that the symptoms of Nicole's so-called mental illness are more likely reactions against the frustrations experienced by most women in a male-dominated culture.

### Daisy Buchanan

Leland Person begins his essay "Herstory and Daisy Buchanan" with this -- "Few critics write about *The Great Gatsby* without discussing Daisy Fay Buchanan and few, it seems write about Daisy without entering the unofficial competition of maligning her character." (250) Much of the critical response to the character of Daisy has been extremely hostile. Patricia Thornton speaks of Daisy's "yellow centre of decay and corruption at the heart of her white periphery" (461) while David Fedo argues that she has "little substance, little conscience, little sensitivity" (33). Marius Bewley refers to Daisy's "monstrous moral indifference." To Robert Ornstein, she is "criminally amoral,"

and Alfred Kazin judges her "vulgar and inhuman." Leslie Fiedler sees Daisy as a "Dark Destroyer, a purveyor of corruption and death, and the first notable virgin of our fiction, the prototype of the blasphemous portrait of the Fair Goddess as bitch in which our twentieth-century --- abounds" (Person, 250). Critics seem to dislike her tremendous power over Jay Gatsby and "...tend to accept Gatsby as an...innocent who 'turns out all right at the end' (while) Daisy, on the other hand, becomes the essence of 'what preyed on' Gatsby, a part of the 'foul dust (that) floated in the wake of his dream'" (Person, 250).

David Fedo comments on Daisy's lack of scruples and her betrayal of the man who loves her when he says,

...Daisy, despite her undeniable charm, is portrayed by Fitzgerald as a woman of little conscience and courage. Her devotion means little: in the climactic scene in the novel - where Gatsby and Tom have it out in a suite at the Plaza hotel - she is both won and lost in a matter of seconds. 'I never loved him,' she forces herself to say of Tom 'with perceptible reluctance' ... but she is unable to draw closer to the man who loves *her*, to the man who has watched the green light at the end of her dock for five years. Daisy, in a sense, washes her hands of Gatsby at the moment when the slightest show of strength could have carried her past the crisis. (30)

Fedo seems to expect female characters to take pity on the males who love them and to reciprocate that love. He also accuses these female characters of being immoral when he says, "Jay Gatsby and Anthony Patch are partly defeated by

careless women who are unable to give themselves unselfishly in love, who in fact turn from their lovers at the terrible crises of life, who lack what might be called moral strength" (27). No one in *The Great Gatsby* is more selfish than Jay Gatsby, whose obsession for Daisy Buchanan dominates the novel. Gatsby lacks sufficient strength to live on his own and yet he is valorized by both Nick's treatment of him and the critical commentary on the novel.

Leland Person calls this Good Boy/Bad Girl dichotomy a "critical double standard" (250) in the commentary on Fitzgerald's novels. He claims that Daisy's so-called corruption is an outgrowth of other character's treatment of her. He finds Daisy's story similar to Gatsby's and the novel itself about the "*mutual alienation of men and women before the materialistic values of modern society*" (251). Daisy, like Gatsby, is an idealist wishing to escape the temporal world. "I'd like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around" (95) she tells Jay when they visit his house after the tea party at Nick's. Daisy's dream of Gatsby is shattered when Tom shows him to be a "common swindler." It is at this point that her own count of "enchanted objects" also "diminishes by one." In fact, Person sees

Daisy [is]... more victim than victimizer: she is victim first of Tom Buchanan's 'cruel' power, but then of Gatsby's increasingly depersonalized vision of her. She becomes the unwitting 'grail' in Gatsby's adolescent quest to remain ever-faithful to his seventeen-year-old conception of self and even Nick admits that Daisy 'tumbled short of his dreams - not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. (250)

In effect, both Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby use Daisy. Neither of these men seem capable of being realistic about Daisy, capable of viewing her as her own person with her own desires. Each man lives with his own version of her, a version which is a projection of his own desires.

Critics have a habit of arguing over Daisy's character, constantly attacking her on the one hand while defending the character of Gatsby on the other. According to David Fedo, Daisy and Tom conspiring like two criminals after the death of Myrtle is Fitzgerald's proof of Daisy's immorality. Fedo claims that Fitzgerald blames Daisy for not siding with her former lover, for not leaving her husband to have an affair with another man, and for being a conspirator in the crime to get rid of Jay Gatsby. Women *do* comply with corrupt, powerful men -- it would be odd if they did not if that is the only way they can assume power -- but Daisy's loyalty to her husband could as easily be regarded as a sign of intelligence, a testimony to her pragmatism. It is perplexing why literary critics believe that adultery is better than faithfulness or running away with a former lover more desirable than loyalty to a husband. Daisy's insight that Tom is the stronger of the two men, the more dominant, and for her the better man in whom to place her loyalty, damns her. Daisy's refusal to behave as they believe she should, focuses the blame of the novel on her.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy's many positive qualities

are evident. Her wit, for one, endears her to the reader. This talent for clever repartee surfaces despite the intense heat, when she and Gatsby, Jordan, Nick, and Tom arrive in Manhattan for the afternoon. What to do becomes the question and Daisy quips, "We'll meet you on some corner...I'll be the man smoking two cigarettes" (126). The afternoon heat is so unbearable that she suggests they "hire five bathrooms and take cold baths..." and later, in their room, when they discover that there are no more windows left to open, she says, "Well, we'd better telephone for an axe--" (127). When Nick asks her to his house for tea, he warns her not to tell Tom. "Who is Tom?" (84) she responds coyly. It seems she has a talent to amuse -- why do some critics overlook this charm?

Nick's narration is sprinkled with comments which undermine Daisy. He accuses her of being shallow but Sarah Beebe Fryer accounts for this "shallowness" by explaining that Daisy is only wearing a mask to disguise the hurt she has incurred from her experiences with romantic love. Nick wants her to run away from Tom but she tried to do that once. She tried to run away with Gatsby but her parents prevented her from doing so. She is captive of the expectations of others -- her parents, her lover, and her husband all make demands on her. Her parents expected her to marry the right man, one who would offer her financial stability, and Tom Buchanan offers that stability even though it is discovered later that he cannot provide her with emotional security. She learns that she cannot have love and financial security as well. Both Jay Gatsby and Tom Buchanan

disappoint her. Tom, whom she loves briefly, is unfaithful to her almost from the beginning of their relationship and Gatsby, whom she also loves, is a poor man who cannot support her. The affectations that Nick emphasizes are her method of hiding the hurt from these past disappointments and her method of protecting herself from future disappointments. No wonder Daisy cries into Gatsby's shirts. She realizes that, had she waited, he could have offered her both romantic love and financial security and she realizes, too, that it is too late.

Only a cold-hearted critic could refer to Daisy, victim of an unfeeling, unfaithful, brutal husband, as villainous. Leland Person tells us that "Daisy is victimized by a male tendency to project a self-satisfying, yet ultimately dehumanizing, image onto woman" (257). Tom Buchanan says that Daisy's "trouble is that sometimes (she) gets foolish ideas in her head and doesn't know what she's doing" (132) while Jay Gatsby says incredulously, "You love me *too*?" (133)

Daisy may receive the critics' moral indignation, but her difficult marital situation evokes the reader's sympathies. "I've had a very bad time, Nick, and I'm pretty cynical about everything," (17) she says plaintively. Especially poignant is her description of the birth of her girl baby.

Listen, Nick; let me tell you what I said when she was born. Would you like to hear?...Well she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an utterly



abandoned feeling, and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. 'Alright,' I said, 'I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool - that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool. (17)

It is also hard to deny in Daisy a genuine love for Jay Gatsby. Just before her wedding to Tom Buchanan, she holds onto Jay's letter, relinquishing it only when it is turned to mush in the icy bath prepared to sober her up. She even throws away Tom's \$350,000 necklace to show she still pines for Jay. When Gatsby and Daisy are reunited at Nick's tea party, Nick observes that "her throat, full of aching, grieving beauty, told only of her unexpected joy" (90). Later, when the threesome visit Gatsby's house, Daisy and Gatsby become absorbed in each other. Nick remarks -- "They had forgotten me, but Daisy glanced up and held out her hand: Gatsby didn't know me now at all. I looked once more at them and they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by intense life" (97).

The sad story of her marriage to Tom, her love for Jay, her wit and charm should help to create sympathy for her in the mind of the reader. It is Nick who is largely responsible for creating a bad feeling toward Daisy. Lest the reader grow too sympathetic toward her, he says,

...the instant her voice broke off ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure

enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged (18).

This Daisy served up to us by Nick contradicts the many sympathetic details surrounding her character. Many critics have discussed Nick's lack of credibility and his role as "an unreliable narrator" is evident in the contradictions between his version of Daisy and the overall impression her character makes on the reader.

Nick's narration valorizes Gatsby at the same time as it undercuts Daisy. Ron Neuhaus's "Failure of the Omniscient 'I'" claims that Nick's narrative voice is full of "inflated rhetoric" (47) which cast suspicion on his honesty. For example, Neuhaus cites Nick's "participation in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War" which could have easily been expressed as 'going to war.' According to Neuhaus, Nick is a character who cannot deal with the literal and who must always construct an elaborate and moralistic rhetoric to insulate him from confrontation. It is important to keep Neuhaus's comments in mind when considering Daisy's character because Nick's presentation of her is biased and ambivalent and should be seen as such.

Daisy is Gatsby's soul-mate. Both have lost dreams. Daisy's loss of Jay is no less significant than his loss of her. Nick is disappointed with Daisy because she doesn't run away from Tom Buchanan, her child in her arms.

Her decision to remain in an unsatisfactory marriage, behaviour that could also be called expedient, is used as evidence that Daisy is morally corrupt. It would be a wonder too if Daisy did leave this brutal man. How would she dare? What would be Tom's vicious reaction to her departure?

Daisy has been called shallow but her so-called shallowness may be less a function of her character than an authorial problem with characterization. Fitzgerald referred to this difficulty with fleshing out her character when he acknowledged in a letter to Edmund Wilson that the "big fault" with the novel is the absence of any description of Daisy's feelings after she and Gatsby are reunited and the absence of any satisfactory explanation for her turning away from him at the climax of the novel (Fetterley, 78). Fryer points out that Nick's confusion about Daisy and his inability to see beneath her affectations prevent the reader from having the complete picture of her character. But Nick does not unravel her personality, because he has another interest of greater concern. He is ultimately more interested in Jay Gatsby than he is in Daisy Buchanan and these feelings of Nick's for Gatsby will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Daisy is also not a fully developed character because she functions in this novel as a talisman. As such, an air of unreality hovers about her character. She is "the unwitting symbol who comes into existence only at the moment when Gatsby's lips' touch creates her as the incarnation of himself" (Fetterley, 78). Daisy is also a

talisman in whom too much hope is invested. When critics respond to her negatively, it is because she disappoints them. It is impossible to be as valuable as Daisy is asked to be by Jay Gatsby. "You want too much," Daisy tells him. (133) Judith Fetterley points to Jay Gatsby's problem with idealizing Daisy when she states that "...the investment of the romantic imagination is prelude to the divestment of moral indignation because the one creates the conditions for the other" (77). The greatness of Gatsby's dream is directly proportional to his disappointment when this dream is denied. In other words, man requires too much of the woman he has constructed as the embodiment of his dream.

### Nicole Diver

Nicole Diver is the recipient of the same kind of blame that has plagued Daisy. David Fedo calls Dick Diver a "used" man and observes that Fitzgerald holds Nicole in contempt for her ability to survive the marital strains that trouble both husband and wife. Fedo cites Maxwell Geismar who claims Nicole uses her money to "enslave not support" her husband (31). But there is no proof in the text to show that Nicole does this consciously. Dick owns his own car and pays for his son's education and his own travel expenses. Nicole is sympathetic to Dick's problems at the end of the novel. She expresses her loyalty to him when she tells Baby, "Dick was a good husband to me for six years...All that time I never suffered a minute's pain because of him, and he always did his best never to let anything hurt me" (310).

James Tuttleton's "Vitality and Vampirism..." shows the critical bias against Nicole. The article contends that the vampire imagery points a finger at Nicole who needs the vitality of others for her survival. Tuttleton admits that his findings are insulting to women but he claims that he, "...cannot deal...with the many positive images of Fitzgerald's lovely and appealing women" (238). He attempts "rather to deal with another aspect of woman...the beautiful enchantress, the alluring and seductive but ultimately daemonic and destructive woman - figured frequently and openly as a vampire who drains the hero of his vitality" (238). He points to Dick Diver's energies which gradually disappear through the course of the novel. Tuttleton traces what he calls the "appropriation of Dick's selfhood" (243). Dick unsuccessfully tries to resist Nicole's magnetism. "Although Dick feebly resists being bought, afterward, that night, 'her beauty climbed the rolling slope, it came into the room, rustling ghost-like through the curtains'"(205). Soon enough, Dick is signing their letters "Dicole" (136) as his identity drains into her.

But Nicole is not responsible for Dick's loss of energies or self. A tradition in literature and a biased view of women make the reader see her as somehow at fault for Dick's failings. Dick's sad end is more likely a shift in perspective on Dick's part -- no longer as vital to his wife's health as she improves, he seems to feel that his role has changed, that he is less needed. This will be discussed further

in Chapter Four in which I deal specifically with Dick and his problems.

More important than Tuttleton's psychological analysis of Fitzgerald -- the claim that Fitzgerald feared for his masculinity, that Zelda had accused him of homosexuality, that he had a troubled relationship with his mother -- is the article's contention that female characters have frequently been associated with evil powers, and often seen as evil or responsible for the downfall of a male protagonist. But upon finishing a reading of *Tender is the Night*, the reader is not at all sure that the female has caused Dick Diver's loss of self. Literary critics whose comments integrate the ideological underpinnings of the culture which produces this anti-female literature, strengthen this perception of Fitzgerald's women.

Many critics believe that an adversarial relationship between the sexes is natural. This view of the sexes means that critics are all too willing to find these qualities in the relationships portrayed in Fitzgerald's novels. Critics who accept this view of the sexes help further a negative, and unnecessarily bleak picture of heterosexual sexual arrangements. According to Judith Fetterley, *Tender is the Night* "...proposes that American men are driven 'mad' by the feminization of American culture" (113). She argues that the reverse is true, that in Fitzgerald's novel women are driven mad by men. Nicole is driven mad by her father who values his girl child as an extension of himself and later, in marriage,

frustrated by her husband who overemphasizes her need to be supervised. While this can be seen as true, Fetterley, too, sets too much emphasis on the couple and to use her own phrasing, this investing too much in the couple leads to disappointment with the marital relationship.

What the reader does remember about Nicole after completing *Tender is the Night* is that Dick Diver's wife is a mysterious, elusive creature who is defined by Dick's love for her and Rosemary's perceptions of her when we first are introduced to her in Book One of *Tender is the Night*. Despite her elusiveness, the text suggests that she exerts a great deal of influence over Dick. This seems odd considering how little power the text allows her.

If beauty is a kind of power, Nicole does have that. This beauty is a magnet to Dick. Repeated reference to Nicole's beauty suggests that he is caught in her spell, a helpless object. Constant reference to this beauty, though, depersonalizes her and denies any strong definition of her character. Her face

...had been made first on the heroic scale with strong structure and marking, as if the features and vividness of brow and coloring, everything we associate with temperament and character had been molded with a Rodinesque intention, and then chiseled away in the direction of prettiness to a point where a single slip would have irreparably diminished its force and quality. With the mouth the sculptor had taken desperate chances - it was the cupid's bow or a magazine cover, yet it shared the distinction of the rest. (15)

The number of references made to her beauty has the effect of capturing her in this very limited definition. Nicole represents woman as decoration. When we first see her on the beach, she is a beautiful back set off by a strand of creamy pearls. She is also a bright flower in her garden, her lilac scarf reflecting its colour onto her face making her a bloom among blooms. But beauty is a passive quality, an asset if all one wants to do is attract.

Nicole also possesses a voice which, like Daisy's, is an attractive aspect of her person. That she rarely uses it, shows the feminist reader how silenced she is. "...she knew few words and believed in none, and in the world she was rather silent contributing just her share of urbane humor with a precision that approached meagerness" (24-25). Briefly, immediately after her marriage to Dick, Nicole's point of view takes over for a few pages and she comments on her lack of conversation. "Tommy says I am silent...When Mary and I talk neither of us listens to the other. Talk is men. When I talk I say to myself that I am probably Dick. Sometimes I am Doctor Dohmler and one time I may even be an aspect of you, Tommy Barban" (161). Her lack of identity, seen clearly in the absence of a voice of her own, shows Fitzgerald's comprehension of her difficult status.

But the text's constant dwelling on her passivity and her beauty suggest that silent and pretty defines womanly perfection. For woman to be valued, it seems she must be quiet, unthreatening, and decorative.



Sarah Beebe Fryer says that Nicole's beauty and her silence are both a function of her immense need to keep a grip on herself in order to prevent a recurrence of her illness. Her desire for peace and decorum, though, Fryer explains, is a symptom of hysteria, and hysteria is more her problem than schizophrenia. If Fryer is correct in concluding that Nicole is hysterical rather than schizophrenic, this radically changes the character of Nicole. She becomes a character who is reacting to frustration or insecurity. She becomes a character to whom something is being done; some wrong is causing her to react this way. If her disease is really schizophrenia, this gives Dick the upper hand because it is he who appears to be the victim of a mysterious and frightening disease which can flare up at any moment and upset his life and his marriage. Fryer argues that if Nicole is hysterical and not schizophrenic, Dick must take some responsibility for her hysteria, because this may mean that it is he who is doing something wrong to her.

Cast as a consumer, Nicole is made to look shallow and acquisitive. Rosemary and Nicole engage in a little shopping expedition, during which Nicole buys from a list which runs to two pages. ( Later in the novel, Nicole is referred to as a curator, in charge of their vast possessions.) During this shopping spree, the two women draw closer when Rosemary tells Nicole how sick she became diving into icy water during a recent movie shooting. Nicole tells Rosemary the story of Baby's appendicitis. Baby appears in this incident

to be an expendable girl-child who must keep up appearances and social duties. Nicole says,

...it was just before mother died. My sister was going to a court ball and she had three of the royal princes on her dance card, all arranged by a chamberlain and everything. Half an hour before she was going to start she had a side ache and a high fever. The doctor said it was appendicitis and she ought to be operated on. But Mother had her plans made, so Baby went to the ball and danced till two with an ice pack strapped on under her evening dress. She was operated on at seven o'clock next morning. (55)

Fitzgerald shows Nicole to be acquisitive and materialistic but then appeals to reader sympathy in recounting this sad story about Baby. Sarah Beebe Fryer feels that this incident is evidence that "female children are insignificant and should be willing to risk their lives in order to achieve favor with men" (320-321). This sympathetic story of Baby conflicts with the presentation of her by the rest of the text in which she is generally shown to be powerful, aggressive, and exploitive of Dick and his talents.

As if to cheer Rosemary after this dismal story and in a subconscious gesture of solidarity among the women of the novel, Nicole keeps her husband waiting at the hotel and buys three corsages, one for herself, one for Rosemary and one for Mary North. Rosemary perceives a bond between them and when Nicole leaves, she thinks "...it was more difficult than she thought and her whole self protested as Nicole drove away" (55). The text fails to pursue its own suggestion that there is a bond between them preferring to

emphasize instead the competition between these two women.

The text could have emphasized that the bond between Rosemary and Nicole is their shared victimization but it fails to do so. Nicole is victim of Dick's fantasies, his need for love at the expense of her mental health, while Rosemary is victim of a male owned and operated movie industry. This important similarity between these two women does not become the focus of the novel because Dick's point of view is given more importance.

In many ways, Nicole represents the typical constructed Western woman. Her passivity is shown by her choice of culturally acceptable outlets for her energies.

As a young girl, she reads, dances, and plays the piano; as a mental patient, she writes letters to a soldier and practices speaking foreign languages; and as a young wife she copies recipes while she sunbathes and looks after her children at the beach. (Fryer, 1986, 322)

Because women, like men, suffer without stimulation and because Nicole impresses the doctors with her intelligence, she is given a little Freud to read, not enough to give her a good grasp of his theories, just a little. Nicole's character reveals woman's separation from any source of self-esteem. Living as she does within the small circle of family and children means that woman becomes stifled -- for her learning and growth are prevented. The resulting lack of expertise contributes directly to her lack of self-confidence. Nicole

says she wishes she had some sort of work from which she could derive some self-esteem. "(I'd) look over the whole field of knowledge and choose something and really know about it, so (I'd) have it to hang on to if I go to pieces again" (160). She compares herself to Dick who has a career, something in which to take pride. "When I get well I want to be a fine person like you, Dick - I would study medicine except it's too late" (160). Nicole's lack of self-confidence and her lack of skills or education from which she could derive some self-esteem can only be harmful to their relationship and, yet, patriarchal literature legitimatizes this inequity -- him talented/her unskilled -- within heterosexual marriage and romantic entanglements.

\* \* \* \*

Twentieth century American literature written by men has a tradition of misogyny. Abigail Williams' prurient desires are linked to witchcraft and ultimately the cause of John Proctor's death in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Curley's flirtatious wife is made to seem responsible for Lennie's death in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Willy Loman's affair with another woman causes the friction between Willy and his sons in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Beautiful Miss Catherine Barkley is sacrificed at the end of *Farewell to Arms* so that Frederic Henry can have his tragic love affair without the messiness of wife or family. These are all only a few of the cases in which females pose problems for males in American literature. It is likely that literary critics who do

not see fit to stress the positive qualities of female characters are reacting less to a specific work of literature than to what they know to be the case in American literature in general. These critics possess a readiness to view women as the enemy of men and their interpretation influences the readers of that literature. As Nina Baym has pointed out, that woman enters American literature as the enemy means "beset" man is beset by woman and this tendency has created a canon of American literature with misogynist undertones. (73)

Female characters in *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* are thought to represent the women in Fitzgerald's era but patriarchal culture mediates this representation, omitting this era's businesswomen, intellectuals, doctors, political leaders. Despite the texts' attempt to give the females their due, seen most clearly in the portrayal of Daisy's and Nicole's attractiveness and their sympathy and affection for their men, these females are stereotypical, constructed women. The attitude taken toward female characters in the novels stems in part from the cultural habit of scapegoating and blaming women. The use of female characters as metaphors or the habit of setting them apart from men, distancing or suppressing them in a variety of ways -- these are literary habits, justified by habit and supported by cultural practice. Unfortunately, any sympathy these novels show toward their female characters is far outweighed by the negative treatment they receive. The biased definition of woman presented in Fitzgerald's two novels gives the reader a negative view of women. Let the reader beware. These novels

are responsible for constructing a false and unflattering image of women.

When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction - Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away...it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. (2)

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Gatsby - A Man's Man/"A Man's Book"**

After Jay Gatsby's death, Nick Carraway has a heightened awareness of his loyalty to him. Nick says, "I wanted to get somebody for him. I wanted to go into the room where he lay and reassure him...don't worry. Just trust me and I'll get somebody for you - " (165). But there is only Nick himself to pay tribute to Gatsby at the end. His devotion to Gatsby at this point in the novel becomes the culmination of all the attraction/repulsion Nick has felt for Gatsby throughout the novel. The text suppresses this relationship in favour of the seemingly more important relationship between Gatsby and

Daisy. But this novel shows that men, not women, are more interesting to other men. The romance plot of the novel overshadows the more important relationship between Gatsby and Nick.

The process by which males are constructed pretends to deny their affinity to each other. The gender system instead lays stress on the romantic connection between men and women forcing a tie between them which is power-based and hence harmful to both sexes. Relationships between men are the real thing in a patriarchal society.<sup>1</sup>. A romantic relationship between a man and a woman is always charged with the friction that exists between unequals. Women become the love objects and men assert control over those objects. A relationship between two men, especially two like-minded men, two outsiders, yearners like Gatsby and Nick has the connotations of a companionate relationship. Such a relationship is denied to men and women within a romantic context.

This power men hold over women as love objects works to the detriment of men. Michael Kaufman, in an essay entitled "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence" (*Beyond Patriarchy*), points out that the process whereby masculinity is created requires a "suppression of a whole range of human needs" some of which are satisfied by the relationship between Jay and Nick. A woman cannot fulfil these needs because she does not have equal partner status in a patriarchal context. At first, Nick



finds Gatsby a mystery and is not interested in him, but, gradually, Nick comes to feel some real affection for Gatsby and at the end of the novel the two are united in partnership. After Gatsby's death, Nick realizes he has entered -- if only posthumously -- into a substantial relationship with Gatsby. He says, "I found myself on Gatsby's side and alone" and "...it grew upon me that I was responsible, because no one else was interested - interested, I mean, with that intense personal interest to which every one has some vague right at the end" (165).

It is odd that Nick should say Gatsby deserves some "personal" interest when one remark by Gatsby has shown how little he values the "personal." Gatsby admits to the possibility that Daisy loved Tom briefly when they were first married but dismisses this love by saying it was "just personal" (152). Nick asks, "what could you make of that remark" (152) and the reader could make of it that Gatsby senses his own love for Daisy belongs to the larger order of things, where men play a more important role than do women. Gatsby's interest in Daisy is not so much a private feeling but a public one, her function to help him increase his status among men.

The relationship between Gatsby and Nick is presented as more interesting, more complex, more vital, and in possession of more potential than that between Daisy and Gatsby. Nick has a real quality about him, personhood status, while Daisy has only symbolic value. She is

a symbol that becomes devalued, too, devalued because of the preposterous over-belief in what she represents -- the final step on the road to the achievement of the American Dream.

Gatsby becomes disillusioned when he tries to ground the ideal in a real world where ideals cannot survive. The closer Daisy gets, the worse she looks. After the tea party, Gatsby looks out at Daisy's home across the water. She "...put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said...His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one" (94). Illusion become reality has lost its allure. Nick observes -- "As I went over to say good-bye I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness" (97). Idealized as she is, woman is estranged from man and she will remain so, interpreted as she is by a sexist system.

Nick's closeness to Gatsby builds throughout the course of the novel. Nick and Jordan speculate about the identity of their host. "Who is he?...Do you know? Where is he from, I mean? And what does he do," Nick asks Jordan and she teases him - "Now *you've* started on the subject" (49). While Nick objects to her suggestion that he is interested in Gatsby, some of his comments belie this claim of lack of interest. When Gatsby tries to tell Nick his life story, Nick responds, "...his whole statement fell to pieces, and I wondered if there wasn't something a little sinister about him..." (65). When Gatsby hints that he has a secret he will tell

Nick, Nick says, "...I was more annoyed than interested" (67). But interspersed with his feigned disinterest are some revealing comments which show his growing fascination with Gatsby. Nick begins to take pleasure in his belonging in some small way to Gatsby's big house, his expensive car and his mysterious persona. When Nick and Gatsby find themselves part of a funeral procession, Nick discovers that he likes his association with the man, Jay Gatsby. "I was glad that the sight of Gatsby's splendid car was included in their [the mourners'] summer holiday" (69). After Jordan tells Nick the story of Gatsby, the young officer she'd seen in Daisy's white car, Gatsby takes on new meaning for Nick. "...He came alive to me suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor" (79). It as if Gatsby's obsession for Daisy frees Nick's admiration for him. A preoccupied Gatsby frees Nick to have his own idealized love object and that object is Jay Gatsby. Gatsby won't return Nick's affection, thankfully, and Daisy won't return Gatsby's (perhaps also thankfully). Unreciprocated love is given a high value in this novel.

After Myrtle is killed, Nick has a sense of foreboding - "I didn't want to go to the city...I didn't want to leave Gatsby. I missed that train, and then another, before I could get myself away" (154 ). Nick shouts across the lawn to Gatsby, "They're a rotten crowd...You're worth the whole damn bunch put together" (154) and Gatsby responds enthusiastically. "First he nodded politely, and then his face broke into that radiant and understanding smile, as if we'd been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact all the time" (154).

Indeed, they have been partners together, united by their bewitchment by the woman, Daisy, and Gatsby's attempts to woo her. But something evil surrounds this object of their fascination. Work beckons to Nick the morning after the accident and he says, "I didn't want to go to the city...I didn't want to leave Gatsby" (154). There is something evil lying in wait for Jay Gatsby, Nick suspects, something from which Gatsby needs protection. The text alters our perception of Daisy so that she becomes the threat to Gatsby, in effect his killer, her white body powder symbolic of the dust from the wasteland, her beautiful voice *only* full of money. From attractive and witty candidate for romantic attachments, Daisy becomes the amoral hit-and-run killer of the novel. (Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*.)

Even though Gatsby is naive and the text suggests his dreams are hollow, his dream is allowed to live on and Nick's reverence for Gatsby helps it live. Gatsby does not fail in his ultimate quest, a "gongnegtion" with other males. He gains the affection of one important male and this has been his goal all along. Daisy, as a vehicle for acceptance into male-dominated culture, is not necessarily his first choice, only a culturally acceptable choice, an imperative thrust upon young men by a sex-gender system which requires them to solidify their relationships with other men through the possession of women. Jay Gatsby wants Daisy because other men have wanted her -- "it excited him... that many men had already loved Daisy -- it increased her value in his eyes. He felt the presence of these other men all about the house,

pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions" (148).

At the point in the narrative when it becomes apparent that Gatsby will not win Daisy, the text asks us to see that this woman is an inferior candidate for partnership.

Reduced to a golden statue, a collector's item which crowns Gatsby's material success, Daisy destroys even the possibility of illusion when she runs down Myrtle Wilson in Gatsby's car. Not only does she kill her husband's mistress, thus easing her reentry into his life, but she herself has been reduced from archetype to stereotype. At the moment of impact - the final crash of the dead dream into the disillusioning body of reality - it is surely no accident in a novel of mutual alienation that Daisy and Gatsby are both gripping the steering wheel. Daisy loses her nerve to hit the other car and commit a double suicide (thus preserving their dream in the changelessness of death); instead she chooses life and the seemingly inevitable workings of history. (Person, 256-257)

Fitzgerald half suspected that Gatsby's dream was impossible and for this reason Daisy is made to live, to let her play out her sordidness. Fitzgerald wanted to reveal that reality is as sordid as he believed it to be but he wasn't prepared to completely destroy Gatsby's dream. (He was only prepared to destroy the ideal of woman). Gatsby becomes Nick's "Daisy." Nick idealizes Gatsby and invests in him and Gatsby's death preserves the dream for Nick's reader who quits the novel still believing. Dead Gatsby does not have to "play out the seemingly inevitable workings of history."

Nick and Fitzgerald collaborate to cover up reality and so Nick has this overriding need to protect Gatsby from reality.

I couldn't sleep all night; a fog-horn was groaning incessantly on the Sound, and I tossed half-sick between grotesque reality and savage, frightening dreams. Toward dawn I heard a taxi go up Gatsby's drive, and immediately I jumped out of bed and began to dress - I felt that I had something to tell him, something to warn him about, and morning would be too late. (147)

Nick senses that mysterious forces outside of themselves are conspiring to destroy his beloved friend. But it is Gatsby's own self-deception which is the problem and Nick willingly lets him live his lie. "I suppose Daisy'll call too." He looked at me anxiously, as if he hoped I'd corroborate this. "I suppose so" (154), Nick says.

Now, if only briefly, it becomes Jay and Nick against the world. Both men had come to Long Island seeking acceptance in that world but were denied it. They have in common "their mutual need to appear at an advantage behind which lies a shared sense of disadvantage" (Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*, 81). By becoming Jay Gatsby's defender/protector, Nick helps to alleviate his own sense of being an offended outsider. Both men are outsiders who are denied entrance into their chosen world by men like Tom, who cling to power tenaciously, even killing those who would take it from them. Tom gives Jay's name to Wilson and then

justifies this to Nick. "That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car" (180). But Gatsby threw only gold dust. Characters like Tom throw dust from the wasteland. Tom is the real destroyer, not Daisy. Tom kills other humans. When he takes his leave of Nick at the close of the novel, he enters a shop to purchase a set of cuff buttons. No doubt *these* cuff links, like Meyer Wolfsheim's, will also be made of human molars. Tom is the real killer whose ruling class values destroy Jay Gatsby's chances for achieving his dream. Gatsby's death though preserves the dream, a little for another day, and Nick's admiration for Gatsby is fundamental to its preservation.

It is interesting to observe the importance of the portrayal of Tom in fueling Nick's loyalty to Gatsby. Tom's bullying attitude, his desire to expose Gatsby for a bootlegger, motivates Nick to side with Gatsby. This treatment of Tom by the text helps dispel any hesitation the reader may have about Gatsby and also helps to rationalize the bond which springs up between Gatsby and Nick. They become two pals aligned against the immovable force of Tom Buchanan, his antagonism a key factor in solidifying their relationship.

When Wolfsheim's much-awaited telegram does arrive announcing that he will not attend Gatsby's funeral, Nick says, "I began to have a feeling of

defiance, of scornful solidarity between Gatsby and me against them all" (166). Throughout the novel, Gatsby and Nick have shared common interests. Both "maintain a similarly fabulous (and safely distanced) relation to women " (Parker, 252) expressed by both of them as a tendency "to abstract women into objects of selfish wish fulfillment" (Person, 250). To push back the fear of being thirty and alone, Nick tries to make of Jordan what Gatsby has made of Daisy. When he has no "girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs," (81) he tightens his arm around Jordan. But the text undermines her as well as Daisy by showing that Jordan, too, is essentially lacking.

For Nick, his relationship with Gatsby is presented as one of growth. Nick learns to "contemplate with sympathy that which before (he) could not, or would not, understand." (Parker, 35 ) He is able to return home once he has absorbed the shocks the East has to offer. Nick finally accepts the "thwarted and perverted impulses" on which Gatsby's efforts are based, values he previously rejected. Gatsby's "impulses" a reader would do well to reevaluate but instead Daisy's values are questioned when the blame of the novel is focussed on her and her rich husband.

The text alerts us to the possibility of Nick's attraction to another young man by its fascination with and predisposition to males. At the beginning of the novel, Nick claims he has often been "privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men" (1) and later he speaks of "Thirty - the



promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning briefcase of enthusiasm, thinning hair" (136). In telling the story of Jay Gatsby Nick suggests there is another story he has left untold. In a manuscript version of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick says, "... the man I balled around with most all summer..." (Fraser, 59). He is more interested in the effeminate swank of Tom Buchanan's powerful physique than in Jordan Baker's jaunty body. (Fraser, 62) In fact, it is suggested that Nick does not even like some women. He abandoned a girl back home because of the moustache of perspiration which appeared on her upper lip when she played tennis and when a liaison developed at the office, Nick was discouraged away from it by a word from the girl's older brother. Gatsby does not like women either. "(Gatsby) knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted" (99).

Physical affection between a man and a woman exists in the novel but only briefly and coolly. For Daisy and Gatsby, "they had never been closer in their month of love, nor communicated more profoundly one with another, than when she brushed silent lips against his coat's shoulder or when he touched the end of her fingers, gently as though she were asleep" (150). Physical passion between men and women is more frequently violent and painful this novel warns. Tom bruises Daisy's little finger and later breaks Myrtle's nose in a

bloody scene in their apartment. Little physical or emotional connection exists between Gatsby and Daisy, and as Judith Fetterley points out, far from this being a "fault" in the novel, which Fitzgerald perceived it to be, it makes perfect sense because Gatsby is more in love with his "unutterable vision" than with Daisy Buchanan. Instead of intimacy between men and women, a closeness develops between two men. Like two lovers after sex, Gatsby and Nick stumble around in the darkness of Gatsby's enormous house, find two stale cigarettes in a humidor, and afterwards, sit smoking together, intimately, in the darkness. (147)

Little boys spy on Gatsby's pool and later wander up Gatsby's steps to have a curious look at his father. These references harken back to the making of boys in general, and Gatsby's boyhood in particular. Something has been left out of his construction of himself and, through Nick, he briefly regains his much-needed affiliation with other men. The forced heterosexuality of the process of man-making is one which men continually invert -- appearing to dislike each other is only pretense.

Gatsby's mentor, Dan Cody, is evidence of an older male figure in the training of young Gatsby. Looking through Jay's desk, Nick discovers "only the picture of Dan Cody, a token of forgotten violence, staring down from the wall" (166). Cody has been Gatsby's older male teacher; Cody's function to educate Gatsby in the ways of men. One of the most important lessons he has learned is that woman is the

enemy who wants to separate him from his money. Ella Kaye is the woman -- not only does she want his money, she wants his life and she gets it. "The arrangement (between Gatsby and Cody) lasted five years, during which the boat went three times around the Continent. It might have lasted indefinitely except for the fact that Ella Kaye came on board one night in Boston and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably died" (101). Cody's figure looms mysteriously after Gatsby's death. What is important to this novel is the male's relationship to other males. Females are mistrusted, objects of men's fears.

### The Making of Jay Gatsby

Nick's attraction to Jay is an important part of the process of making Jay a larger than life, irreproachable hero. Person claims that..."If it were not for Carraway's response to Gatsby, Gatsby would not emerge so validly in the novel as a mythological figure" (26). When Tom questions Gatsby's business dealings, Nick rushes to Gatsby's defense. "A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know,' 'Not Gatsby,' I said shortly" (109).

"If he'd of lived, he'd of been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He'd of helped build up the country," (169) Gatsby's father remarks before the funeral. This idealization of the masculine is one part of the process that creates the composite Jay Gatsby, hero. Gatsby is constructed after the fashion of Horatio Alger's boys whose

humble beginnings end with their taking the world by storm. Gatsby is also fashioned after the 19th century myth, "...the belief in the potential of the common man, the glorification of individual effort and accomplishment, the equation of the pursuit of money with the pursuit of happiness and of business success with spiritual grace..." (Lynn, 60). He is also the mythic antisocial western hero who distrusts the city and modern methods of making money.

Gatsby is the myth embodied of the self-made man. Nick's narration of Gatsby's story mythologizes Gatsby and Nick's affection for Gatsby lends credence to the myth. Gatsby has been seduced by a cultural prescription which later fails him. He tells Nick a fabulous story of his construction, a story based upon the shared signs of prestige in American culture. "I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West - all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition" (69). At first Nick believes him to be lying especially so when Gatsby claims the Middle West town his family is from is San Francisco. But Nick's desire to trust Gatsby sponsored by his own need for ideals is revealed when he believes Gatsby's story is "all true" based on the flimsy proof of little Montenegro's medal and the picture of Gatsby at Oxford.

Part of making the man Jay Gatsby is also making him alone -- without family and friends. Gatsby,

as orphan, has only to be reabsorbed into some family or kinship system to make the readers satisfied that he has succeeded.<sup>2</sup> In *The Great Gatsby*, the ideal is the love of a beautiful woman and the hero's intense search for this woman and his obvious aloneness obfuscate all the realities which his story glosses over -- the dubious methods by which his money has been earned, and the emotional turmoil he creates in the woman who has had to give her loyalty to someone else. David Parker refers to Gatsby's "peculiar dishonesty" (37) for he is dishonest with himself and others and the text half believes in him, half doesn't. His personality may consist of "an unbroken series of successful gestures" but he is as phoney as his party guests and as insecure as some of the female characters in his story. His personality shows what American culture is capable of producing (and destroying). Ron Neuhaus writes of Gatsby that he "is a man trying to break up a marriage in order that he may resume a relationship with a woman who is bland at her most appealing...he was a passenger witness to a hit-and-run homicide, and was not fluffed in the least by it. His criminal contacts do not bother him, and he has an almost total insensitivity to human nature" (48).

At the beginning of the novel, Jay Gatsby has accomplished all that is possible for one man to accomplish, all, that is, except for one thing. He has remade himself into the image of American culture's highest ideal -- a poor but honest boy turned wealthy and successful. *The Great Gatsby* is the story of his attempt to complete himself with that one final last challenge. Winning Daisy is the one last

test to prove his manhood and gain a small share of the power upon which huge systems and nations are founded. Not for a minute though should we believe that Gatsby's love for Daisy is unmotivated by power or the need for male dominance within a sexist system.

### Controlling women

Part of constructing masculinity within male-dominated culture is the masculine business of distancing women and setting them apart from men. Gatsby and Nick work together to discover the meaning of Daisy and their discovery means finally, at the end of the novel, that she is captured and imprisoned in their definition of her. It as if all along they hoped to find her weakness. Together they take apart Daisy and find her essentially lacking. Her voice is the vehicle through which they make their discovery of her. At first her voice is indefinite, vaguely appealing -- "...the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again" (9) -- speaking mysteriously of things beyond their comprehension -- but they are, in the end, able to define this voice whereas initially they could not. They come to realize that her voice is only "full of money" and they have finally together made her into a

...vulgar emblem of the money values which dominate their world...The recognition for Nick approaches the tension of initiation: that the voice of Daisy should have, in a commercializing - cashiering society where friendships,

families, values, and even a World Series can be bought...  
(Person, 255).

Once they have admitted that Daisy is connected in a vulgar way to materialism, and therefore less worthy of their attentions, the relationship between the two men begins to solidify.

Ironically of course the text does not allow Daisy a voice at the same time as it speaks continually of her voice. For the men in the story, her voice carries with it wonderful associations but it is not a voice which ever truly belongs to her. It seems to respond to the desires of men without ever allowing her to express *her* desires. According to Nick, she and Jordan talk of unimportant matters in an unemotional way. "Sometimes she and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter, that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire" (12-13). When she does try to voice her opinions, Tom cuts her off. She and Nick begin to talk about Daisy's child when Tom interrupts and asks Nick, "What you doing, Nick?" (10) and later, when Nick and Daisy have a little, as Tom calls it, "heart-to-heart talk on the veranda," (20) Tom warns Nick, "Don't believe everything you hear, Nick" (20).

Gatsby and Nick's struggle over Daisy represents the struggle of all American men over America herself. Theirs is a fight to keep America pure from forces which threaten to destroy American ideals. Brutal, aggressive

and powerful men threaten America. Nick wanting the world to stand at moral attention, takes up that fight against the crassness of materialist America embodied in Tom and Daisy's marriage. The two of them try to wrestle Daisy away from Tom's materialist clutch. Nick is Jay's willing and trusted accomplice. They seek to win her over to the side of idealism but fail. This is their "Father's business" -- keeping at bay the forces of corruption. Like Christ figures, together they try to chase the moneychangers from the temples but the vulgarity of materialism wins. Tom Buchanan's wealth is a force as potentially dangerous as women.

The idealization of Daisy is a way of controlling her and keeping at arm's length the mysterious force that woman represents to Man. Daisy becomes fixed, static and predictable as the archetype of beauty and purity. "Daisy, gleam(s) like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor" (150). As Nick says,

Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the Beale Street Blues while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the gray tea hour there were always rooms that throbbled incessantly with this low, sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor. (151)

Daisy's significance lies in the associations she brings to mind. She is a device, through which to experience the tenor of



the times. The characters, Gatsby and Nick, on the other hand, seem to resemble real flesh and blood humans and consequently theirs is the only true and logical bond of friendship -- a bond with the woman, Daisy, has only symbolic appeal. One cannot have a real relationship with a symbol, especially one this shallow. "Gatsby's relation to Daisy is quite 'impersonal'." (Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*, 74). The symbolic value of the female Daisy is what Gatsby has wanted all along.

He went to her house, at first with officers from Camp Taylor, then alone. It amazed him - he had never been in such a beautiful house before. But what gave it an air of breathless intensity was that Daisy lived there - it was as casual a thing to her as his tent out at camp was to him. There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender, but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor-cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered. (148)

Her house fascinates him and it is interesting too that he compares her house to his tent back at base camp. It militarizes his relationship to Daisy as if the two of them are taking up their positions before the battle about to begin. A connection with woman cannot be otherwise within the context of patriarchal romance.

Masculinity within patriarchy means man's constant seeking for power and this constant desire for power means that he becomes severed from the satisfaction of

basic human needs -- closeness with others, affection, nurturance. Making males into men means that they must either fear or idolize the female and control her the same way Gatsby and Nick control Daisy. Would Gatsby have been so obsessed with Daisy if he had not been cut off from all other sources that could fulfill these basic needs? Seduced by patriarchal values, he is destroyed by their false promises. Like a hired mourner, Nick moves in on the void created by Daisy's disappointment of Gatsby. Nick's payment for his services to Gatsby are the last remains of Gatsby's faded dream.

\* \* \* \*

*The Great Gatsby* is ultimately a book about power "...and the romantic investment and indignant divestment of women is an aspect of and mask for the struggle for power between men which is its subject" (Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*, 79). Jay Gatsby wants to be "the white girl high in the palace," the perfect host who gives out everything to excess and who needs not receive anything in return. He wants the ultimate advantage which is never to be in anyone's debt. (Fetterley) He also wants to disassociate himself from the sordidness of the wasteland, from reality. When the poor boy, James Gatz, first meets Daisy Fay, a tremendous disparity exists between them and what the poor boy wants most is to narrow the gap, to catch onto the illusion of himself as a man with power and wealth.

## "A Man's Book"

Just before the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald wrote to Maxwell Perkins that he hoped its sales would not be adversely affected by its being such "a man's book." It seems an odd comment when the novel is so concerned with romance and its setting seems so feminine. But the novel's setting -- the interior, the drawing room, a setting which is far removed from the man's world of the great outdoors or the wide open plains or the battlefields of World War One -- only *appears* to be a feminine setting. The world of this novel also seems very much a civilized setting -- Nick says that being in Daisy's presence makes him "feel positively uncivilized." But this particular setting is neither feminine nor civilized. The world of *The Great Gatsby* is a society of excess. At one of Gatsby's parties "the orchestra (is)...no five piece affair but a whole pitiful of oboes..." (40). The people of this world are artificial -- "...introductions forgotten on the spot and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names" (40). The people are too loud and their surroundings are too garish -- "the halls and salons and verandas ... gaudy with primary colours..." (40). There is plenty to the point of disgust and food stylized into art objects -- "buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to dark gold" (39). All these aspects of the setting

of *The Great Gatsby* become forces against Gatsby and Nick. They create sympathy for Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway whose masculine purity seems slightly uncomfortable in the feminine world of parties and teas, flowers and colour, fashion and manners. But this is not a feminine world either. It is a world which has been appropriated by men in the very masculine pursuit of romantic ideals and in their very masculine game of romantic love. The "entrammeling society" as Nina Baym calls it, is made out to be the problem for those heroes who desire the reader's sympathies. Society's alignment with women and society's inherent corruption, artificiality, and excess all give the novel a profound sense of we and them. Gatsby and Nick must cope in a society which is found wanting and its lack somehow connects to the image of woman.

The seemingly feminine setting of the novel means that the men located within it appear displaced. Both society and its women seem to be against them. The association of women with the restrictions of society in *The Great Gatsby* is the narrator's method by which he divests himself of Daisy and fobs off on her the blame of the novel. But Nick Carraway doesn't invent this method. It belongs to a literary tradition of associating the female with society's victimization of males. (Baym)

"Wear the gold hat if that will move her... Till she cry 'Lover, gold hatted, high bouncing lover, I must have you'." If Fitzgerald's hero can manage to play the "fool for love" and act out the conventions of romantic love --

the conversation, the dancing, the offering of presents to his idealized love object -- if all these can be endured, the reward will be great. The hero will play this game not to win woman but to win power among men and to win himself his own self-approval. *The Great Gatsby* only seems to be a very feminine novel with its frivolous atmosphere and its drawing room settings. Even though the novel is a story of the East and a return to society, it is not a "civilized" story. It is a story with vicious undertones, a story about men and what they mean to each other both politically and socially. It is a story about a fight to the death for what men value so very much -- power.

Ma chandelle est morte  
Je n'ai plus de feu  
Ouvre-moi ta porte  
Pour l'amour de Dieu. (28)

## Chapter Four

### ***Tender is the Night*** **Man Assaulted**

*Tender is the Night* is Dick Diver's novel. It concerns *his* problems with *his* failing self-esteem, the breakdown of *his* marriage, the disintegration of *his* closely knit group of friends, *his* loss of superiority in that group, and *his* loss of identity to *his* diseased spouse, Nicole Warren Diver. Like an ancient cartographer whose country of origin figures prominently, detailed and immense, at the centre of his map, with all the other foreign unknown continents smaller, insignificant, and falling off the edge of the parchment, Dick's large ego dominates the centre of this novel. Milton Stern claims that no matter what other subject Fitzgerald touches on in the novel, he never took his eye off this centre<sup>1</sup>. -- that the novel is about Dick's failing ego, about Dick-past and Dick-present, the changes wrought in a man over the brief period of five years. The other characters in the novel, the plot of the novel itself, and the novel's imagery come under the huge control of Dick's perceptions -- all are sacrificed to the story

of Dick's disintegrating self and all centre around this one fact, that this is the story of one man's maintenance of his masculine dignity.

The reader is asked to sympathize with Dick's plight. That the reader does so is testimony to the strength of Fitzgerald's construction of Dick and subsequent defense of him. Dick is an immensely attractive man by virtue of his kindness, his charm, his personal magnetism. These qualities of Dick's are a certainty, at least at the beginning of the novel. Later on, the reader, like the characters who encounter him, become disenchanted with him. As he loses his status in the world of the novel, he loses his esteem in the reader's eyes too. Like Daisy Buchanan who changes from fascinating, idealized love object to amoral killer, Dick moves from attractive and virile suitor/husband and eminent scholar/psychiatrist to unsuccessful clinician and failed husband, one who embarrasses his wife and her family, one who can no longer impress the young ladies, nor hold any authority with his patients.

Part of Dick's appeal is his charm.

...to be included in Dick Divers' world for a while was a remarkable experience: people believed he made special reservations about them, recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies, buried under the compromises of how many years. He won everyone quickly with an exquisite consideration and a politeness that moved so fast and intuitively that it could be examined only in its effect. (26)

Dick is always completely poised even when in the middle of great emotional disturbances. He comes back to his dinner party guests after seeing to Nicole's encounter with Violet McKisco when Violet tries to use the bathroom at the Villa Diana. Nicole, laughing hysterically, tells Violet, the bathroom is locked and the key thrown down the well. Dick goes into the house to calm Nicole and then returns to his guests. Showing no signs of the trauma this scene has caused him, Dick "with sure instinct separated Barban and the McKiscos and became excessively ignorant and inquisitive about literature with (aspiring author) McKisco -- thus giving the latter the moment of superiority which he required" (36). The reader begins to wonder about Dick Diver's chivalrous manners. It seems Dick must always control those others around him. The behaviour of both Nicole and the McKiscos must be kept within a certain set of parameters. Nicole could suffer a recurrence of her disease; the McKiscos, guests of the Divers, must be kept contented as a matter of Diver pride.

Dick has this talent for making his friends feel that they belong to a special accepted group of people. When they are seated at Voisins in Paris, other patrons, acquaintances of theirs, enter, greet the Diver party and then move on. When these other friends are beyond hearing range, Dick "...recreate(s) the unity of his own party by destroying the outsiders softly but permanently with an ironic coup de grace" (52). Is this the behaviour of a dignified, extremely personable man or is his behaviour a sign that Dick's charm is beginning to slip?



Dick can charm anyone, even those characters whom he despises. This is exactly the method Dick uses when he leaves Baby on the steps of her hotel after showering her with a series of compliments that leaves her "shimmering." Baby, the enemy, can be brought within Dick's control by a series of flattering remarks and thus Dick can exert his superiority over her. Fitzgerald reveals the possibility that Dick's excessive charm should cause us some concern when he writes in his notebook, "One advantage of politeness... is to be able to deal with women in their own grounds to please or torture the enemy, as it may prove necessary. And not to fire random shots and flowers from the pure male camp many miles away." (*Fool For Love*, 118)

The reader's doubts about Dick are planted by Fitzgerald's constantly undermining his hero. Dick is not always wise, nor in fact is he always nice, and yet the reader's allegiances are with him. Toward Nicole, he is motivated by self-concern. Dick's treatment of Nicole when they first encounter each other as doctor and patient is one instance of his selfishness. He regards her as a young, attractive woman ripe for his love instead of a terribly, vulnerable mental patient. His perception of her as a potential girlfriend shows his capacity for altering his own perspective in order to fulfil his need for love. Also, the questionable motives which induce him to enter the psychiatric profession -- there was a female student in St. Hilda's at Oxford who

attended the same psychology classes -- reveal an underlying weakness in Dick's character. The text half suggests he is the problem but overriding this suspicion is a plot in which Nicole is made to seem like the problem for Dick, and a point of view which privileges him.

The many weaknesses in Dick's character made apparent to the reader from the outset of the novel, may be the author's method of disparaging his hero's character, but the comments made against Dick also work to endear him to the reader. As Baby thinks to herself, "he put himself out too much to be really of the correct stuff...But for her he was too intellectual" (156) Dick's character is all the more charming with its "flaws." With these imperfections, Dick becomes the victim of the modern disease of ego fragmentation -- he can no longer sustain his personality. His centre will not hold and this alone is capable of invoking our sympathies. Dick becomes one more modern man succumbing to the pressures of modernity, his "fall" synonymous with the failures of all American men circa 1935.

The issues and topics addressed by the novel become Dick's problems. Nicole's disease, the psychological repercussions of immense change at the beginning of this century, changes in the role of the sexes -- these become Dick's responsibilities. But his handling of these problems, despite what we are told of his competency in these matters, seems crude, even amateurish, and more than a little self-centred. So little attention is paid by Dick to Nicole's cure and

so much attention paid to the problem of making her behave and not be an embarrassment to Dick. Marriage to her becomes like marriage to a time bomb. At any time she may snap and bring Dick humiliation. It is not her cure he works so hard for, but her control. His marriage to her means that he is saddled for life. Dr. Dohmler warns Dick that "Miss Nicole...is in no condition to survive what she might interpret as a tragedy" (138). A break with her would cause the recurrence of her disease and so Nicole becomes a millstone for Dick.

Nicole's is one of several "diseases" of the modern world which become Dick's responsibility. Along with his other cases at the clinic, Dick is asked to "cure" the problem of homosexuality when a Chilean father brings his son to him. Dick is not optimistic about what can be done for the boy but in talking with him, Dick thinks hopefully, that he does see "some manliness" (242) in him and Dick warns the young man -- "You'll spend your life on it, and its consequences, and you won't have time or energy for any other decent or social act. If you want to face the world, you'll have to begin by controlling your sensuality..." (242). His response seems inadequate, hardly the response of a trained psychiatrist and Dick's words show the high value which is placed on heterosexuality in the novel. Dick's treatment of homosexuality is yet another instance of distancing and setting apart other characters, women especially, but other men as well.

A typescript version of *Tender is the Night*

includes this passage.

The place was full of fairies - we were in a world of fairies - I never saw so many or such a variety together. There were tall gangling ones and little pert ones with round thin shoulders, great broad ones with the faces of Nero and Oscar Wilde, fat ones with sly smiles that broadened into leers, nervous ones who hitched and jerked, opening their eyes very wide, handsome, passive dumb ones who turned their profiles this way and that, noble-faced ones with the countenances of senators that dissolved suddenly into girlish fatuity; pimply stodgy ones with the most delicate gestures of all; raw ones with red lips and frail curly bodies...self-conscious ones who looked with eager politeness towards every noise; satyrs whose lips curled horribly; English ones with great self-control, Balkan ones - a small cooing Japanese. (Collins 168-169)

The omission of this description from the novel that is now in circulation suggests that Fitzgerald wished to soften his criticism of homosexuality. Angus Collins' article reveals how much homosexuality was an issue for Fitzgerald in his attempt to complete *Tender is the Night*.

The morning of the duel between Tommy Barban and Albert McKisco, Rosemary rises early to find Campion on the stairs in the entrance to her hotel. He is crying - "His face was repulsive in the quickening light. Not by a flicker of her personality, a movement of the smallest muscle, did she betray her sudden disgust with whatever it was. But Campion's sensitivity realized it and he changed the subject rather suddenly" (40). The character, Campion is ridiculed by the text when he becomes the duel's unwitting victim.

Campion claims he is offended by violence but shows up at the duel with a movie camera and then becomes sick watching the event. "Campion lay gasping on his back in the shrubbery...while Rosemary suddenly hysterical with laughter kept kicking at him with her espadrille" (50). The homophobia evident in Rosemary's reactions to Campion reveals the text's ambivalence about the right kind of masculinity. The duel (Tommy says it was a "farce"), is made to look like a silly masculine ritual. The morning's activities -- poor, sad McKisco melodramatically putting his papers in order, his drinking to bolster his courage, his introduction to Tommy's duelling pistols -- are Fitzgerald's way of satirizing the process of constructing a gender so fragile that it must constantly protect itself in such a fashion. On the one hand there is fear of changes in sex roles and on the other is this partial critique of the nonsense of a gendering process which sanctions such ridiculous masculine rituals as duels.

Another instance of Dick's being asked to "cure" a problem occurs when Mary North-Minghetti becomes involved in a questionable "situation." She and Lady Caroline Sibley-Biers dress as sailors and pick up two young women for their amusement. Dick is called to intervene with the police authorities and enlists the help of Monsieur Gausse who is much disturbed by the business of ladies dressing as men. "I have never seen women like this sort of women. I have known many of the great courtesans of the world, and for them I have much respect often, but women like these women I have never

seen before" (304). Gausse is so outraged that he hurls a string of condemnations at Lady Caroline and then kicks her "in the most celebrated of targets" (304). With the help of some bribe money, Dick patches things up with the authorities and order is maintained by Dick, the sexes returned to their rightful places, at least temporarily. Women as courtesans Monsieur Gausse can accept but cross-dressing offends him. A variety of changes in gender roles is addressed by the novel -- Dick, at the centre is expected to control these changes.

That friction between men and women is universal and natural is a given in this novel. Dick's resignation to this friction influences the imagery of the novel, specifically the military images which connect women to military men; romance to war. The recurring images of battle, the military vocabulary and the comparison of Nicole to a warrior and Dick to a general, reveal the gloomy view of relations between the sexes and add credence to the expression "the battle of the sexes." Dick's reverence for the military battlesite at Amien is a prelude to the many other battle/military references which follow. Dick surveys the site through his field glasses, "his throat straining with sadness" (55).

In this instance, Rosemary represents a woman's view and she is made to look dull by comparison to the two friends, Abe and Dick, who understand what this battlesite meant. "She looked out obediently at the rather bare green plain with its low trees of six years' growth. If Dick had added that they were now being shelled she would have believed him that

afternoon" (56). Dick's interest in Rosemary, who appears to be this rather dull-witted individual, is intended to show his capitulation to mediocrity and ignorance -- those forces that Dick, in his sophistication, has always opposed.

It is not simply the soldiers whose loss Dick and Abe mourn but their values, their "loves" which have passed away here. "Why, this was a love battle - there was a century of middle-class love spent here. This was the last love battle," (56) Dick explains to Abe. The alignment of these two words "love" and "battle" are chilling, compressing the meaning that both love and war have political connotations. We had thought that love, that one connecting point which is allowed to exist between men and women was an affectionate and private matter but discover here that it is ultimately confrontational. Fitzgerald is poking fun at Dick's naivety and sentimentality as he surveys this former battleground, and his comparison of love and battle resonates with the suggestion that all absurd cultural habits (namely the conventions of romantic love and the conventions of war) have some common ground.

What becomes particularly evident in a feminist reading of *Tender is the Night* is that Dick's problems are those which would normally be associated with women. That sympathy is evoked for a man in the novel precisely because of his feminine role is astonishing to the feminist reader. Dick gives up his career to take care of an ill spouse, is financially dependent on that spouse, and manages with aplomb the domestic and social life of his small family. These duties and his being so

intensely occupied with them, evoke sympathy for him. These duties and responsibilities taken on by a woman would be considered normal and her rightful role but in Dick's case he is made to look heroic for bearing these burdens. This feminization of Dick Diver becomes the focus of the novel, one more instance of gender roles out of control. The text's underlying message is that role reversal, while possible, cannot be successful. Men must be men and women must be women, opposite and separate, or human pain will inevitably result as it does for Dick Diver.

At the same time as the text yearns for more stability in gender roles, it argues for the acceptance of its own definition of masculinity, one which looks strikingly like femininity. Dick's refined good manners and sensibilities make up the text's version of the ideal man. In his hostessing and in his maintenance of social ties, he resembles a Mrs. Dalloway. That he eventually loses out to a more manly man like Tommy Barban suggests that Fitzgerald's version of the ideal hero will not be tolerated in the patriarchal context established by the novel.

Nicole Diver is the first of several characters who are pushed to the outer rim of the reader's attentions by Dick's crowding them out of the centre. The reader knows less about her than about Dick and though we receive more details about her character than any other, she still appears superficial, mysterious. We are introduced to Nicole, "the young bird with wings crushed somehow..." (126) through her letters and so we



come to have a first glimpse of her as a mad person, a bizarre character whom we cannot "experience" directly but must interpret through her letters. "Excuse all this..." she writes, "...highly nervous state like mine.. phonograph records... I broke them all...then...I was very busy being mad...I am completely broken and humiliated...wasting my time pretending..."(120). These few phrases show her insecurity, vulnerability and self-absorption. These letters evoke sympathy for her but at the same time distance and estrange her from the normality that is Dick Diver. Dick also meets her through these letters and through the photographs of herself which she encloses with them. Her beauty works here to ensnare Dick -- she is a very young and beautiful girl, mad, fragile and exotic. Her appeal as a love object is immense and this appeal becomes even more intense when Dick meets her at the clinic. "...as she crossed the threshold her face caught the room's last light and brought it outside with her. She walked to a rhythm -- all that week there had been singing in her ears, summer songs of ardent skies and wild shade, and with his arrival the singing had become so loud she could have joined in with it" (132). The reference to the moon gives her a supernatural affinity and the singing in the rhythm of her walk gives her a transcendent otherworldliness. "How do you do, captain," she said, unfastening her eyes from his with difficulty, as though they had become entangled" (132).

This strikingly passionate response to each other is that thralldom which is the beginning of romance between a

man and a woman. It is a staple of romantic literature, that familiar "love at first sight" aura is theirs from the beginning. This is one of the stages in romance referred to earlier in the paper. One aspect of this thralldom is the inequity of the man and the woman. This is the case for well-Dick, sick-Nicole; old-Dick; young-Nicole. It is as if their romance can flourish only when these huge disparities exist between them. It suggests too that the depth of feeling between a man and a woman is heightened by their difference, a notion whose corollary is that equality will somehow remove that magic bond which is vital to a romantic relationship.

Before long, Nicole, the once immensely attractive love object becomes a problem for Dick. This new stage is yet another staple of literature -- the problem with loving a woman is that too soon her allure pales, man tires of her, and marriage to her becomes a "dance of death." The former object of wonder too soon becomes a burden. Baby asks Dick to accompany Nicole back to the clinic. He does so and at the end of the day, when he leaves her, "he knew her problem was one they had together for good now" (56). Dick is trapped by the lovely Nicole Warren.

The marriage of Nicole Warren and Dick Diver, the romantic couple who are the focus of this novel, reveal some of the worst examples of friction between the sexes. Immediately after their marriage, Nicole's point of view takes over in the middle of Dick's perspective. "How do you do, lawyer. We're going to Como tomorrow for a week and then

back to Zurich...Can the estate really afford to give me all that? ...Isn't it funny and lonely being together Dick. No place to go except close..." (158-161) Nicole's voice appearing at this point suggests that, in marriage, Dick's identity becomes subsumed by hers.

That the couple have become too much one person is suggested by their name "Dicole." This name reinforces the text's suggestion that Nicole captures Dick, her unwilling victim. Dick describes their marriage -- the "dipping of all colors into an obscuring dye, such as his love for Nicole had been" (166). His suggestion that his identity has been lost to Nicole is one more of the novel's role-reversals. Loss of identity in marriage is far more frequently the case for women than for men but not in *Tender is the Night*.

Friction between Nicole and Dick worsens after Rosemary enters the picture. She creates more stress for the couple. Dick's attraction to her has to be kept a secret from Nicole, who, even more than most wives, is considered too unstable to withstand the shock of Dick's infidelity.

Presently he must encounter her and the prospect gave him a leaden feeling. Before her he must keep up a perfect front, now and to-morrow, next week and next year. All night in Paris he had held her in his arms while she slept light under the luminol; in the early morning he broke in upon her confusion before it could form, with words of tenderness and protection, and she slept again with his face against the warm scent of her hair... (165)

Dick's wife, once a lovely, attractive young woman whom he desired, becomes oppressive to him. The text emphasizes her weakness of character to show what a trouble she is for Dick. He thinks about the emptiness of Nicole's life and "always when he turned away from her into himself he left her holding nothing in her hands and staring at it calling it many names, but knowing only the hope that he would come back soon" (180).

The suggestion that Nicole is unscathed by the breakdown of their marriage reveals further her superficiality. She is portrayed as incapable of depth and hard as "Georgia pine" (273). The last thirty or so pages of the novel show her growing annoyance with Dick and her increasing psychological independence of him.

Nicole's increasing strength becomes a problem for Dick while his increasing weakness becomes a problem for her. Nicole watches him try to lift another man out of the water, his "water trick." At first she is sympathetic but when he fails to lift the other man onto his shoulder, he begins to irritate her. She says, "Don't you think, that's enough for now?"...Nicole felt the sweat glands of her forehead open as she strained with him...Nicole saw Dick floating exhausted and expressionless, alone with the water and the sky, her panic changed suddenly to contempt" (282). In this scarcely veiled failure to achieve an erection, Nicole's loss of respect, though, is not so much caused by Dick's failure to perform his manly antics. It is not only his loss of virility which annoys her but also her loss of him to Rosemary. "This physical

showing off for Rosemary irritated her most of all" (281). Later, the group is sympathetic to Dick but "Nicole was annoyed - everything he did annoyed her now" (283). The text asks us to believe that a strong wife does not need a weak husband.

Nicole's dependence on Dick rather than her annoyance with him is evident here. Her loss of security which is suggested by Dick's flirtation with Rosemary causes her emotional reaction to this incident. But the loss of security which Nicole would experience if her husband had an affair seems to be dismissed as unimportant while her animosity toward Dick is stressed by the text.

Nicole has an affair with Tommy and is seemingly incapable of comprehending the full effect of her behaviour on her family and on her husband. "She realized, thinking with Dick's thoughts, that from a superficial view it was a vulgar business to enter, without emotion, into an indulgence that menaced all of them. On the other hand, she blamed Dick for the immediate situation..." (289). Before going to Tommy, she vainly compares her older body to the memory of herself five years earlier. She checks to see if she still stands up to the close scrutiny of her figure, inspects her body to see whether it has slipped since her marriage to Dick. She decides that she has lasted well enough and is still attractive enough to get her man. Her inability to think for herself and her vanity justify Dick's perception of her as an enemy.

Nicole's insincerity is revealed in the suggestion that she uses her illness to score points in her favour.

In these six years she had several times carried him over the line with her, disarming him by exciting emotional pity or by a flow of wit, fantastic and disassociated, so that only after the episode did he realize with consciousness of his own relaxation from tension, that she had succeeded in getting a point against his better judgment. (188)

This presentation of the marriage relationship as a competitive sport and Dick's controlling perspective, reveals hostility to women and a sadness that this is the inevitable end of relations between the sexes. The friction between men and women which begins with thralldom and ends with marriage is a given in this text, the phrase "dance of death" used to suggest the competition and antipathy which are naturally associated with marriage. A feminist reader is sensitive to these assumptions, questioning whether these phenomena are in fact literary creations made legitimate especially in literature by men or whether they reflect a cultural reality forced upon the sexes by a constructed hostility between men and women.

In Book Three, Dick recedes into the background as Nicole is brought forward but more knowledge of her does not endear her to the reader. In Book Three, Nicole is not the object of reader affection even though she has reader attention. When Dick was the centre of attention in Book Two, he had our sympathy and when Nicole is the centre, Dick still

has our sympathies.

Nicole says to Baby as they watch Dick for the last time on the beach that Dick never hurt her in their six years of marriage, never caused her a minute's pain but this comment, which might be perceived as kindness on her part, serves rather to underscore Nicole's superficial perception of her marital situation. Baby's comment about Dick's departure serves to show Baby once again to be even more Dick's enemy. If there was any doubt that the Warrens used him, she makes it clear that these people have exploited Dick. "That's what he was educated for," Baby says, "We should have let him confine himself to his bicycle excursions... When people are taken out of their depths, they lose their heads, no matter how charming a bluff they put up" (310).

The breakdown of Dick's marriage is only one of several in a series of humiliations which he encounters in the course of his "intricate destiny." There are a number of forces opposing Dick Divers' manhood and identity. There is Franz's altered opinion of him, altered directly as a result of a woman's (Franz's wife's) intervention and disparaging comments about Dick. There is Franz's subsequent easing Dick from the clinic, Dick's beating in Rome, Baby's rescue of him, the failed water trick, Abe's death, Dick's father's death and Albert McKisco's rise to fame. One assault after another is made upon the beleaguered Dick until he can no longer recover.

Nicole is only one of the women whose personality and character are affected by Dick's ego-centric position in the novel. Women in general receive a volume of negative authorial comment. "Attractive women of nineteen and of twenty-nine are alike in their breezy confidences...the former are ages of insolence, comparable the one to a young cadet, the other to a fighter strutting after combat" (289). Here the battle metaphor is reinforced, the suggestion being that women are somehow militarized in their encounters with men, that relations between men and women are hostile.

Lindel Ryan comments that ...

In Fitzgerald's fiction, the men - even in their futility, even in approaching death - come at least to acknowledge the sterility of their illusions. The women do not. They never seem to recognize the blight of their lives. Fitzgerald sees them as weak, frail creatures, unfit for the spell of their beauty; they are actually human beings. But Fitzgerald never excuses their inadequacies, always pointing to the romantic ideal. Women need to be strong in this world, he seems to say, and strength to him meant being loyal to and supportive of the men who count on their love. (33)

Women are also incapable of intellectual thought. When Nicole leaves Dick, she has to look at the situation with his perceptions. Then, Dick tries in vain to make a point about Rosemary's acting ability in a recent picture but neither Rosemary nor Nicole can be made to comprehend Dick's point. An intellectual idea apparently is beyond their grasp (286) and Dick's comment of course would be very important to hear because Dick perceptions are always correct, always profound.



Book Three of the novel is devoted to Rosemary's and Nicole's perceptions and the effect is that these two women seem to have taken charge, pushed Dick into the background as if they had been waiting in the wings for their cue to take over the power which they have wanted all along. This authorial device of shifting points of view makes it appear that with Dick's disintegration, his hold on his position of superiority slipping, the women are free to move in. In effect Dick becomes sandwiched between Rosemary's point of view at the beginning of the novel and Nicole's and Rosemary's at the end -- surrounded by women almost trapped in their midst.

Woman is "the other" in this text as she is in *The Great Gatsby*. Dick remarks, when he realizes that Mrs. Speers and Rosemary had planned together to seduce him, "Women are necessarily capable of almost anything in their struggle for survival and can scarcely be convicted of such man-made crimes as 'cruelty'. So long as the shuffle of love and pain went on within the proper walls, Mrs. Speers could view it with as much detachment and humor as a eunuch" (163). This is reminiscent of Nick Carraway's comment in which he suggests that women must be judged by different standards being after all different altogether from men. This deliberate separation of men and women forces a distance, an estrangement between the sexes, suggesting that the division of men from women is a natural phenomenon, the division between them a hostile barrier.

Certain women, traditional women, women who acquiesce to male superiority, are favoured by the text. There is Dick's comment about Mrs. Speers, the kind of woman a man can appreciate, her deference to men her appeal.

Saying good-bye, Dick was aware of Elsie Speers' full charm, aware that she meant rather more to him than merely a last unwillingly relinquished fragment of Rosemary. He could possibly have made up Rosemary - he could never have made up her mother. If the cloak, spurs and brilliants in which Rosemary had walked off were things with which he had endowed her, it was nice in contrast to watch her mother's grace knowing it was surely something he had not evoked. She had an air of seeming to wait, as if for a man to get through with something more important than herself, a battle or an operation, during which he must not be hurried or interfered with. When the man had finished she would be waiting, without fret or impatience, somewhere on a highstool, turning the pages of a newspaper. (164)

The opinion in this comment is overwhelming - that Mrs. Speers is an ideal woman, her main strength that she knows her place, a woman, separate and secondary to her man.

In addition to Elsie Speers, the text favours the "trio of women" at Dick's dinner party.

The trio of women at the table were representative of the enormous flux of American life. Nicole was the granddaughter of a self-made American capitalist and the granddaughter of a Count of the House of Lippe Weissenfeld. Mary North was the daughter of a journeyman paper-hanger and a descendant of President Tyler. Rosemary was from the middle of the middle class, catapulted by

her mother onto the uncharted heights of Hollywood. Their point of resemblance to each other and their difference from so many American women, lay in the fact that they were all happy to exist in a man's world - they preserved their individuality through men and not by opposition to them. They would all three have made alternatively good courtesans or good wives not by the accident of birth but through the greater accident of finding their man or not finding him. (52)

These words are dense with meaning and their meaning is not at all favourable to women, no matter what their intent. The women are appreciated for their servility, their ability to cooperate with men. They are known by their lineage from their male ancestors, their female parents' contribution seemingly insignificant. Alterations in their class status will be accomplished not by their own efforts but by the efforts of the men with whom they may become associated. What happens to them is entirely dependent on forces outside themselves -- entirely dependent on "accident." Fitzgerald may be correct here but the bias in these remarks must be pointed out and the inevitability of woman's secondary status is objectionable.

The text's approval of the "trio" explains its disapproval of women who are not happy to exist through men. Independent women who are not happy to live through men are criticized through the figure of Baby. It is she who purchases Dick and therefore is given the blame for his control by the Warren fortune. Baby is presented as a conniving, strong-willed woman whom Dick finds fearsome and unappealing.

Baby was a tall fine looking woman, deeply engaged in being almost thirty. Symptomatically she had pulled two men with her from London, one scarcely down from Cambridge, one old and hard with Victorian lecheries. Baby had certain spinsters' characteristics - she was alien from touch, she started if she was touched and suddenly, and such lingering touches as kisses and embraces slipped directly through the flesh into the forefront of her consciousness. She made few gestures with her trunk, her body proper - instead, she stamped her foot and tossed her head in almost an old-fashioned way. She relished the foretaste of death, prefigured by the catastrophes of friends - persistently she clung to the idea of Nicole's tragic destiny. (171)

This comment denies the possibility that independent, competent women might also be sexually attractive or otherwise appealing. Baby can only attract old men or men too inexperienced to realize she is unattractive.

Beth Warren, Baby, is another woman the novel dislikes and her strength and dominance are only one of several forces opposing Dick and eating away at his fragile sense of self. In Rome, Baby wonders aloud whether the family did the right thing by encouraging the relationship between Dick and Nicole. When Dick says "It's possible that I was the wrong person for Nicole," Baby responds, "You think she'd be happier with somebody else? Of course it could be arranged" (215). When Dick laughs, Baby realizes she has insulted him and assures him that they're "grateful" for all he's done for Nicole. Baby, looking after her sister's best interests, is a problem for Dick. Baby's remarks belittle Dick's affection for his wife and take away his prestige, reminding him that he is Nicole's paid

keeper. Dick's perception of this conversation between himself and Baby obscures the fact that Dick could very well have been "bad" for Nicole. Certainly his attraction to Rosemary does not help his marriage but, more importantly, his attitude toward Nicole, his treatment of her disease may have been wrong. This possibility does not become the focus of the novel though because Dick's wounded pride is the novel's very important subject.

After this conversation with Baby, when Dick realizes that Collis is eavesdropping on their discussion, Dick encourages Baby to speak of her personal life and criticizes her for the attitudes that are revealed therein. He disagrees with her that the English are a pleasant race and he disagrees when she claims he, Dick, can keep a party moving with just a sentence from his lips. This is Dick Diver in his disagreeable stage, but enough loyalty to him has been created in the course of the novel to make these comments reflect badly on Baby rather than on Dick.

Baby's strength of character, evident in her ability to free Dick from a Roman jail, serves further to heighten Dick's victimization by the Warren family. They are in the position of controlling him this episode reveals. Rather than used to show the wonderful strength of one woman, this incident reveals that a woman is usurping Dick's power, placing him in a weakened position. It was once Dick who rescued beleaguered Americans from foreign jails but now

Baby Warren has taken over Dick's role, and Dick, in his new feeble state, must rely on the help of another. To ensure this effect, that is, to ensure sympathy for Dick as well as for all men who encounter Baby during this episode, Fitzgerald remarks, "The American Woman, aroused, stood over him; the clean -sweeping irrational temper that had broken the moral back of a race and made a nursery out of a continent, was too much for him" (230), too much for the authority at the embassy who attempts to refuse Baby. This is one of several comments in the text which leads Judith Fetterley to conclude that the feminization of America is the problem of the novel, responsible for the fall of the novel's hero. Women offer so much promise to men, but then bring only trouble the novel warns. Rosemary appears at the end of the novel to bring the couple further doom. Strong women are especially the problem. They can ruin man. Strong women need men who are stronger than themselves. It seems inequity is a priority. Hence these women's choice of men who are brutes -- Daisy's choice of Tom Buchanan and Nicole's choice of Tommy Barban. Only these brutes are equal to the challenge of these new, harder women.

The idea that women want to take power is illustrated in the novel's presentation of Woman as Trap. Dick is the innocent who comes under Nicole's power - "By no conscious volition of his own the thing had drifted into his hands" (138). It is Nicole's idea to listen to the phonograph records she has received from America. She lures him away from Senora, the chaperone-like character, and in playing the

recordings, brings Dick the "essence of a continent," those American songs whose sentiments run the gamut of courtship, romance, thralldom, disappointment, and loss. Nicole seems to be playing with Dick's affections in this instance. They hear "A woman never knows/what a good man she's got/Till after she turns him down" a song whose sentiments foreshadow the end of the novel and make it seem as if Nicole controls both the beginning as well as the end of their relationship, a relationship in which *she* will turn down a "good man."

Clearly making a play for Dick who seems helpless against all her energies, the text says,

she smiled at him, making sure that the smile gathered up everything inside her and directed it toward him, making him a profound promise of herself for so little, for the beat of a response, the assurance of a complimentary vibration in him...Now there was this scarcely saved waif of disaster bringing him the essence of a continent. (135)

During this episode, Nicole seems to do all the talking, moving, flirting while Dick is portrayed as still, the helpless focus of her desires and powers.

Later on, after the couple have met Rosemary, Nicole is again made to seem like the stronger of the two. Nicole, seemingly toying with Dick's affections, is talking with him when Rosemary overhears this conversation...

"So you love me?"

"Oh, do I!"

It was Nicole - Rosemary hesitated in the door of the booth - then she heard Dick say:

"I want you terribly - let's go to the hotel now."

..."I want you."

"I'll be at the hotel at four" (53).

Dick looks like the anxious party here, for it is he who says, "I want you now" and it is Nicole who delays, saying, "I'll be at the hotel at four." His desire to make love, whether sponsored by insecurity in their relationship or love for his wife, makes him look like the innocent party while Nicole's hesitation makes it appear as if she has the upper hand.

It is Baby who throws Dick together with Nicole, and this too looks like women are controlling him. Poor, helpless Dick is unable to withstand the powers of these conniving women. Baby asks Dick to accompany Nicole to the sanitarium and after he does so, at the end of their day together, "he knew her problem was one they had together for good now" (156). Despite the seduction of Nicole Warren by her father Devereux Warren, it is made to appear that Nicole seduces Dick and her sister is her willing accomplice.

On the beach, when Rosemary first "chooses" Dick, Nicole notices that Rosemary has set her sights on her husband. But, little emphasis is placed on what to most wives would be a disturbing revelation. Sympathy is instead evoked for Dick. Rosemary "chooses" Dick on the beach. A weakened Dick Diver is helpless against these powerful women. Baby



hires him to care for her sister and now Rosemary, another woman, is deciding his fate. He is made into "the Other" by Rosemary's perspective of him and this treatment of Dick is used by the text to evoke sympathy for him. It suggests these women are making decisions for him and he is helpless against their will.

Silently she admired him. His complexion was reddish and weather-burned, so was his short hair - a light growth of it rolled down his arms and hands. His eyes were of a bright, hard blue...His voice, with some faint Irish melody running through it, wooed the world, yet she felt the layer of hardness in him, of self-control and of self-discipline, her own virtues. Oh, she chose him, and Nicole, lifting her head saw her choose him, heard the little sigh at the fact that he was already possessed. (18)

Dick is the sexual object in this passage and his use as object creates sympathy for him.

The women, specifically Baby, Nicole and Kaethe are treated as "others" by this text but they are not the only "others." Dick maintains his superiority, his topmost position in the hierarchy of characters, by being contrasted with lesser men. Collis Clay, Tommy Barban, Albert McKisco. Two characters who remain virtually unscathed by Dick's perspective are Abe first of all and Rosemary to a lesser extent, although the text treats her rather ambivalently.

In this novel, it is Dick's possession by a wealthy

family that is being protested. The fact that his wife is an economic possession who has been used more by her own family, while certainly not insignificant in the novel, does not become the main focus of the novel, even though it is far more serious than Dick Diver's identity problems. Because of the tremendous need of the moneyed ruling class to protect its wealth, Dick is purchased to care for Nicole, heir to the Warren fortune. The same values are at work when Daddy Warren's value system one which supports business ethics over human concerns leads to the sexual relationship between himself and his daughter.

Daddy Warren takes Nicole as one would plunder the riches of a vulnerable young and fertile country. Devereux Warren ("of the Warren family of Chicago"), a fine upper class American, "un homme très chic," (124) brings his sixteen year old daughter to the Dohmler psychiatric clinic. He claims she is experiencing difficulty living a normal life, that she fears men whom she believes are making advances toward her. Warren is distressed because his little girl once "happy as the day is long," "a perfectly normal, bright, happy child," (125) has begun to behave strangely and be suspicious of men. Warren leaves his daughter at the clinic with no apparent intention of returning for her. A while later, though, Doctor Dohmler forces the truth from him.

Nicole is the victim of incest the father eventually admits. "The father ...penetrates (his daughter) as he might penetrate a market, accumulating her sexuality to his

own" (Godden, 25). Pamela Farley shows us that this act is made into a metaphor by the text of *Tender is the Night*.

Underneath the sentimental appeal of daddy and his little girl a vicious malignancy is revealed by Fitzgerald. "People used to say what a wonderful father and daughter we were -- they used to wipe their eyes. We were just like lovers -- and then all at once we were lovers." With this act, Fitzgerald establishes the terms of a vast metaphor for the complex consciousness of an industrial nation growing to maturity. (Farley, 203)

As a literary device, one which admittedly resounds throughout the novel, echoed in the numerous references to Dick's affinity for young girls, the title of Rosemary's movie, the problem of incest is somehow dealt with, tabled so to speak, and rendered impotent by its being fixed as a literary metaphor. Lindel Ryan quotes from Judith Howard Montgomery's unpublished doctoral dissertation which refers specifically to *Tender is the Night* when it "recommends that the American ethos of possession, which lies at the very core of the American dream of material success, be modified to exclude the possession of human beings" (Ryan, 88). This helps us to see that *Tender is the Night* is a novel of protest, but it is not a protest against injustice done to women. Dick's laying claim to a problem which is a problem for American women, diverts attention from the real victims of this ethos and makes men its victims instead. This novel represents Fitzgerald's "criticism of America" and, more specifically, his criticism of the American dream, but his is only a partial protest. That Fitzgerald makes this victimization a problem

for his male hero, and buys into the distancing of other characters, especially women, means that his novel tacitly supports the very problem he criticizes. Male dominance is maintained and it is maintained at the expense of others - the other sex, other men, other races. These are some of the more entrenched aspects of the American Dream he would not so easily criticize.

Ryan says "the father's incestuous act develops the ethos of possession to a sinister conclusion" (88). The novel warns that this disease could be the logical extension of the spread of the ethos. "Nicole's schizophrenia, her fragmented self, results from the definition of her identity completely through her relationships with men" (88). That Dick's fragmented self and the definition of his self through his relationship with others is made the focus of the novel rather than his wife's disease means that the novel sanctions the very thing it sets out to criticize.

Re-vision - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction - is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves...We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us.

-Adrienne Rich

## Chapter Five

### A Feminist Reading of F. Scott Fitzgerald

#### Conclusion

The androcentricity of Fitzgerald's two novels is what dominates in a feminist reading of them. Male concerns and male problems are the focus of these novels.

In *The Great Gatsby*, the homosocial subtext, that is, Nick Carraway's fascination with Jay Gatsby approaches a thralldom similar to that between Gatsby and Daisy. Only very fleetingly does this homosocial subtext become homosexual when the male is eroticized, for example in the case of Nick's emphasis on the "effeminate swank" of Tom Buchanan's powerful body, one which holds more interest for him than

does Daisy Buchanan's body which is not described by the novel. A whole cluster of references point to the importance of this relationship between Nick and Gatsby -- a male role model/mentor, Dan Cody, the presence of little boys inspecting Gatsby's mansion after his death, the misogyny of both Gatsby and Nick and the bond between Gatsby and Nick which is their shared exclusion from Eastern society.

In *Tender is the Night*, Dick's problems and concerns dominate the novel. Despite Fitzgerald's attempt to represent different points of view in the three separate books of the novel, it is more often than not Dick's voice we hear, not Rosemary's, in Book One, and only very rarely and quietly Nicole's voice -- one occasion is immediately after her marriage to Dick when she speaks briefly.

What is especially odd is that both novels place males in the role of females. Jay Gatsby, like a 19th Century heroine, searches for acceptance into kinship and society through marriage and fails in his attempt. In reading about Dick, the reader sympathizes with women's problems -- loss of identity to a spouse, fatigue from caring for others, a life in domestic service, sacrifice of career to care for a spouse, and dependence on the finances of a spouse. The feminist reader feels somehow tricked as if these heroes should have been women -- the problems are all there but that men receive attention, for what are known as women's issues, seems unfair.

Judith Fetterley observes how unusual it is to read of Dick's domestic and interpersonal difficulties -- duties and responsibilities which are perceived of as problems because they are suffered by a man.

The significance of Dick Diver's story is that it happens to a man. Who would notice if these things happened to a woman? Were Dick Diver not male, there would be no story for Fitzgerald to tell. So the wife gives up a career in medicine and devotes herself to saving her husband; so she drinks a bit much so she blurts things out at dinner parties and perhaps offends someone important; so she may eventually have to be dumped - so what? This is the stuff of soap opera, not great books. What gives *Tender is the Night* its scope and its tone, indeed its very idea is the fact that this happens to a man. (120)

Fetterley's tone has alienated her brand of feminist commentary from mainstream literary criticism but the sentiment -- the sense that androcentricity dominates this novel and furthermore, that it cannot be said to be a universal concern -- is undeniable. Because Dick is a man, the suggestion is not that we should pity anyone who suffers these indignities but that we should pity the man who must endure them.

What happens in these two novels as a result of this androcentricity is that other characters, women especially, are pushed aside, distanced, or suppressed. The idealization of woman in these texts, rather than an admiration of her or respect, is a method of *dealing with* her, labelling her and making her static. She becomes, not a fellow human being, but

separate and fixed in the hero's definition of her. Within our gender system, the inequity and hostility between the sexes is an accepted and natural thing and it is similarly represented as such in Fitzgerald's novels.

Many "others" besides women are either distanced, set apart, or criticized by these novels. Homosexuality is a problem in *Tender is the Night* and the text makes clear that this is one of modern society's diseases when the young Chilean boy is referred to Dick for "cure." The characters Royal Dumphy and Campion are present in the novel, one might think as a sign of Fitzgerald's desire to experiment with new choices of sexuality but very little is done with them, their presence neutralized -- they are tokens -- sophisticated people of the 1930's have at least one of them to dinner, but no more than that.

Other men -- both weak men and strong men -- are arranged up and down the hierarchy of characters and along the continuum of varying degrees of masculinity. George Wilson is a weak man, "sick" in his weakness, his inability to control his wife leading directly to the hero's, Jay Gatsby's, death. Albert McKisco is a weak man, absurd in his attempt to preserve his masculine dignity by fighting a duel. Later on, though, to show the reversal of strong man growing weak and weak man growing strong and to increase the pathos surrounding Dick Diver, McKisco becomes prominent as a writer and gains a degree of notoriety one would have thought impossible at the beginning of the novel.



Tommy Barban's is an unattractive sort of masculinity, his brusque personality reminiscent of that other brute, Tom Buchanan. That both win the girl in the end, that is, are successful in the very area that the heroes of these two novels fail, suggests that these men, are the prevailing definition of successful manhood of Fitzgerald's day. Their success with the ladies of the novels increases reader pity for Jay Gatsby and Dick Diver and contributes to the perception of these two as tragic heroes. Barban's and Buchanan's hold on the power that both heroes want increases reader allegiance to Gatsby and Diver.

*The Great Gatsby* suffers from the tyranny of the romance plot -- that relentless falling in and out of love that Virginia Woolf protested -- a topic whose hold on novels gives the reader an intense desire for another kind of plot to alleviate the tedium.

The psychological novelist has been too prone to limit psychology to the psychology of personal intercourse; we long sometimes to escape from the incessant, the remorseless analysis of falling into love and falling out of love, of what Tom feels for Judith and Judith does or does not altogether feel for Tom. We long for some more impersonal relationship. We long for ideas, for dreams, for imaginations, for poetry. "The Narrow Bridge of Art" (1927)

*The Great Gatsby* also -- perhaps unknowingly -- provides its own critique of the romance plot by valorizing a different relationship than the heterosexual romantic coupling

of Gatsby and Daisy. The reader's inability to take this critique seriously is a result of the hold of literary conventions on us -- "This must be a romance, a love story - I recognize it because it is like others I have read." The relationship between Nick and Gatsby creates a tension between the two "couples" of the novel (Gatsby/Nick; Gatsby/Daisy). The fact that Gatsby and Nick are same-sex companions and, furthermore, that cross-sex relationships are portrayed as difficult, means that theirs seems the favoured relationship. Homosocial wins out over heterosocial/sexual in *The Great Gatsby*.

*Tender is the Night* is overpowered by the literary convention -- the centrality of the main character. Fitzgerald tries to mitigate Dick's influence by shifting perspectives in three successive books of the novel but Dick's point of view still dominates. An authorial voice can be heard. In each separate book, it struggles with the point of view of the character in charge of that book. It is a difficult task Fitzgerald set for himself because the voices of the two women, Nicole and Rosemary, are especially difficult to render. Rosemary is too young and Nicole is too daft to be able to tell the whole story themselves. The technique of the three different books resembles the communal protagonist used by Virginia Woolf in *The Waves* (1937) which is her attempt to get away from this tyranny of the main character. However, Fitzgerald's use of this device achieves the effect of centring Dick even further in the novel. *The Great Gatsby's* use of Nick as narrator is also an attempt to solve the problem of the

centrality of the main character and it too achieves the opposite effect -- it makes Gatsby more egocentric in his illusiveness because ultimately the reader has the sense of knowing Nick Carraway while Jay Gatsby remains a mystery.

Both of Fitzgerald's novels are characterized by what feminists call male writing, that which supports patriarchal ideology because its authors are, for the most part, of that ideology as opposed to outside it and therefore in a position to critique it. In Fitzgerald's novels are all the aspects of a sex gender system -- polarization of men and women, male dominance, homosocial relationships, and rigidly enforced heterosexuality, that suggest a desire for a return to a simpler age when there was less of a range of gender appropriate behaviours.

In Fitzgerald's novels it is clear that romance is a man's business -- a game which women play but are not its primary participants. Women are mythologized in these novels and the myths about women are used and strengthened by their presence in these texts. Weak, dependent, superficial, pragmatic; mysterious, odd, dangerous; a predator, a threat to man; and yet, fascinatingly beautiful and irresistible, are the many aspects of women displayed within these novels. Strong and independent women are portrayed as only a little attractive (Jordan) or completely unattractive (Baby). The pragmatism of these independent women, their assumption of power and their new found freedom is occasionally given

grudging admiration but more frequently cause for disparaging them. Woman's difference from man, her mysteriousness attracts him to her, one might even say traps him.

I have looked to Virginia Woolf for a comparison of male and female writing with the idea in mind that Woolf's philosophy and the practice of her philosophy in her work might reveal the alternative narrative techniques which existed at the exact time of Fitzgerald's two novels. Woolf's writing is characterized by its critique of the sex gender system through its critique of the romance plot (*Mrs. Dalloway*). The use of a communal protagonist and multiple voices are in evident in *The Years*. *Mrs. Dalloway* has a central non-romantic couple who share the position of main character. Homosexual characters (*The Years*) and one very important androgynous character (*Orlando*) bring a new perspective, freshness, and even humour to modern literature.

Fitzgerald's two novels, when compared to Woolf's, display a criticism of modern life, the suggestion that change is bad for humans. In two of Woolf's novels, *The Years* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, there is an acceptance of newness. These novels welcome the bustle and pace of urban life. Eleanor, a character in *The Years*, walks happily through London streets and Mrs. Dalloway feels she is part of the throng, alive to its vibrancy. The sense of doom about urban life that is characteristic of a great deal of modern literature is absent in these two novels by Woolf. If there is any such sense, it is about traditional values, the repression of the family, the

oppression of romantic love, the power of authority. In *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, change seems a thing to be feared and this applies most of all to those changes which mean differences in the roles of men and women.

However, if we take Woolf's writing to be typical female writing, the many similarities between Woolf's and Fitzgerald's work might tempt us to call his writing female writing. For one thing, both of Fitzgerald's heroes define an unusual kind of masculinity, one that resembles femininity. In this regard, Fitzgerald blends some of the qualities of both sexes. These "androgynous heroes" prompted Leslie Fiedler to comment that

thematically, archetypally even, such chief male protagonists as Gatsby and Dick Diver are females; at least, they occupy in their stories the position of Henry James' Nice American Girls. It is they who embody innocence and the American dream, taking up the role the flapper had contemptuously abandoned for what was called in the twenties freedom; but they do not know this, projecting the dream which survives only in themselves upon the rich young ladies whom they desire. (Lindel, 86)

Fitzgerald's male heroes like his female characters, are judged according to their ability in the romantic sphere. Dick wants to be loved if he can. Jay Gatsby wants to be loved above all. Their interest in being loved softens or feminizes them in the mind of the reader, but this feminization creates sympathy for them. Jay Gatsby's greatest moment is a kiss from a beautiful girl and his diffidence and shyness much more the kind of qualities

assigned to women. Dick Diver spends a life in service to others, hostessing, and patching up interpersonal problems. Dick's work is like that work which has been assigned to women -- "creating forms which structure and make safe the days and nights, providing a sense of community which gives meaning to lives and enhances the self-image of those included in it" ("Who Killed Dick Diver?"115). More like a bride than a bridegroom, Dick is courted and won by the Warren family. These texts, then, by presenting these "feminine" males as their main characters and presenting theirs as the controlling point of view, suggest that womanly men are desirable. The texts, though, rather than valorizing these characteristics as alternate gender possibilities, show the heroes to be failures. These heroes are, in effect, failures because of their femininity. These feminized men suffer in a social system whose overvaluation of masculinity precludes the rejection of feminine forces. By killing Jay, and ruining Dick's self-esteem, the novels tell us that patriarchal society does not tolerate their qualities -- refinement, diffidence, courtly manners -- in men.

The texts show Jay and Dick both failures because of their femininity but does not support those male characters who are in fact dominant and fully in charge. "The negative attitude toward conventional masculinity is deeply embedded in the imaginative structure of *Tender is the Night* " ("Who Killed Dick Diver?"126). While Richard Diver loses his self-esteem as a man because of his dependence on

love, his woman's role and his feminine qualities, neither Tom Buchanan, an undeniably masculine figure, nor Tommy Barban, the military man, are in the least flatteringly portrayed. Despite this lack of attractiveness, the texts show these males to be the winners thus evidencing a textual/cultural uncertainty about gender appropriate behaviour.

Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* criticize romance and heterosexual relationships but theirs is a criticism which cannot be called critique. One implies the inevitability of some cultural habit doubting that change will occur while the other believes that alternatives are possible. Fitzgerald's use of a narrator in *The Great Gatsby* and three separate "voices" in *Tender is the Night* show that Fitzgerald struggled with the same literary questions as did Woolf -- how to tell the story best, how best to reveal character, and how to prevent the tyrannical hold of the main character on the novel. His willingness to try new devices coexists with a great deal in his work that accepts traditional ways of being. Hostility between men and women, polarization of men and women, the inevitability of male dominance -- these underlying statements grate against his experimentation -- the use of alternative characters (androgynous or homosexual characters), the respect of the women in the novels, the handling of modern subjects like incest and psychiatry.

Rose Gallo observes this duality in F. Scott Fitzgerald's work, what she calls his "dichotomous world

view" (141). Malcolm Cowley has described this duality as Fitzgerald's "double vision." Gallo observes an "inner tension" between the two sides of Fitzgerald's nature. She claims that Fitzgerald, both a romantic and a moralist, "was sustained...by the illusion that life was a romantic business' but that "the price of self-indulgence was self-destruction" (Gallo,141). Fitzgerald's own version of "binary" philosophy serves to show how rooted he is in patriarchal thought. This duality reflected in his novels can be diagrammed according to the following oppositions:

Victorian/Modern  
West/East  
Culture//Corruption  
Fantasy/Reality  
Ideal/Material  
Past/Present  
Well/Sick

In keeping with patriarchal practice, Fitzgerald aligns these oppositions with that other opposition, Male/Female. Also in keeping with patriarchal practice, the "female" side of these oppositions tends to be the least favourable, within Fitzgerald's two novels.

But Fitzgerald's doubleness can be experienced in still another way. While *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* are both in their way manly novels, they are also sensitive to other versions of their stories. Within



the novels there is another voice trying to make itself heard and while it may be a very quiet, little voice, its presence is undeniable. It may manifest itself in a sympathetic attitude to female characters, or the novels' habit of undermining their heroes. Perhaps it is the presence of this other voice which makes critics speak of Fitzgerald's ambivalence; certainly, it is to the presence of this other voice that a feminist reading is sensitive.

Daisy's sympathy and love for Gatsby and Nicole's love for Dick show that the novels are partially willing to give female characters their due. Judith Fetterley argues that *Tender is the Night* does not half believe in some of its own premises and Fitzgerald's portrayal of Jay Gatsby contains some very unattractive information. Both novels wryly suggest that there is something wrong with male dominance and control. Fetterley's reading of *Tender is the Night* suspects that Fitzgerald understood "his sanity and his career were purchased at the price of Zelda's and purchased by his manipulation of the power accorded men over women" ("Who Killed Dick Diver?" 127). Dick's retirement from the patriarchal battlefield is partly biographical, both Fitzgerald's and Dick's solution to an impossible situation, one which was hurting the women in their lives as much as themselves.

In Fitzgerald's novels, a male perspective is always posturing for control, most often gaining it but sometimes not. Even though *The Great Gatsby* undermines its hero through the portrayal of his naivete, his

association with criminals, and his shady business dealings, Nick's narration ensures that Gatsby appears as an object of wonder to the reader. His story, concerned with man's connection to other men and America's role in his self-construction, shows that he belongs to a tradition which hurts men and those around them. *Tender is the Night*, is likewise more concerned about the loss of a tradition which reveres Individual Man than it is about a woman's sacrifice to the values of an incestuous father. The marriage at the centre of this novel reveals that love between a man and a woman only endures so long as the male is dominant, the female subordinate.

In *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, the romantic heterosexual couple seems important. However, this couple is not so much valued as used as a metaphor for the much larger struggle of power among men. Affection between men and women is portrayed as fraught with difficulty while affection between some men is shown to be more natural, even preferable. Men must dominate others, believing that a great reward awaits them after their long struggle to manhood. But the novels show that this great reward is rarely forthcoming. The heroes of Fitzgerald's, though, are incapable of seeing that their problem lies within the cultural values which they have adopted as their own. One of those cultural values is the creation of woman as an ideal so fantastical that it cannot withstand the harsh light of reality while at the same time mistrusting and fearing women

and both of these are aspects of an unflagging adherence to the assumptions of a power-based, male dominant gender system.

Within these texts the women's stories, are given an inferior position. In *Tender is the Night*, Nicole's exploitation by a lecherous father and her resulting mental instability are more tragic than Dick's career and marital difficulties. However, the tragedy of her past is denied when she is turned into a metaphor for the disease of the nation and when her disease is shown as a problem for Dick rather than a problem for her. Dick's problems are given prominence by the novel because they are considered a subject of greater importance within a male-dominated culture.

In *The Great Gatsby*, it is Daisy's story that loses out to Jay Gatsby's. Her story is that she loved the poor boy, Jay Gatsby, and clung to his memory as long as she could. But a likely and very suitable marital candidate came along in the form of Tom Buchanan. She was overcome by the vastness of his wealth and the security this wealth afforded her. She was wooed by Tom but succumbed to expediency. This text reminds us that marriage is first and foremost an economic institution and that, for women especially, marriage is an economic necessity. Daisy tries to run away with Jay Gatsby but practicality prevails when her parents forbid her to see him.

John Callahan (*Illusions of a Nation*) connects the failures of the male heroes in Fitzgerald's novels

with their treatment of females. He warns of the American male habit of viewing women as "the Other," a habit which causes problems for men as well as women. Callahan warns that

...there must be a commitment to otherness and to that harmony dependent upon connecting oneself to the world...The process of defining women more as symbols than as persons removes the male imagination from the complexity of human contact. Such men annihilate their own personalities; they become invisible to the world and to themselves. (215)

Fitzgerald's work reveals much about the construction of men and women and the ways in which this construction affects their relationships with each other. That gender is created, only a social construct, means that in literary texts and in culture, it can be unmade and remade. Perhaps the discomfort caused by "given" sexual arrangements or strictly defined and polarized gender roles, those same problems which are the concerns of Fitzgerald's novels, can be eliminated. If gender is constructed, this means that fixed definitions of men and women are also constructs. The effect on literature of this knowledge can be immense and radical. Feminist philosophy wishes that Fitzgerald had placed more of an emphasis on this knowledge, that he had given more volume to the tiny voice within his texts that suggest alternatives to the various gender and literary assumptions -- that his criticism of various aspects of the sex/gender system had become critiques.

A feminist reading reveals the patriarchal clamp on American literature and idealistically hopes to break its hold over us. A feminist reading shows that "in the background of patriarchal texts are women trying to escape into readability..." (Greene & Kahn, 257) and in the foreground of literary texts are men who suffer the consequences of the confinement of those women. In *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, are both men and women trying to escape literary and cultural traditions.

1: Notes to pages 1-34

1. In Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*, the chapter, "Sexual Sociology," 180-183, accounts for the male personality explaining that women's mothering is responsible for a number of masculine qualities which we take as natural. "Women's mothering in the isolated nuclear family of contemporary capitalist society creates specific personality characteristics in men that reproduce both an ideology and psychodynamic of male superiority and submission to the requirements of production. It prepares men for participation in family life, and for their participation in the capitalist world of work.

Masculine development takes place in a family in which women mother and fathers are relatively uninvolved in child care and family life, and in a society characterized by sexual inequality and an ideology of masculine superiority. This duality expresses itself in the family. In family ideology, fathers are usually important and considered the head of the household. Wives focus energy and concern on their husbands, or, at least think and say that they do. They usually consider, or at least claim, that they love these husbands. Mothers may present fathers to children as someone important, someone whom the mother loves, and may even build up their husbands to their children to make up for the fact that these children cannot get to know their father as well as their mother...

Masculinity is presented to a boy as less available and accessible than femininity, as represented by his mother. A boy's mother is his primary caretaker. At the same time, masculinity is idealized or accorded superiority, and thereby becomes even more desirable. Although fathers are not as salient as mothers in daily interaction, mothers and children often idealize them and give them ideological primacy, precisely because of their absence and seeming inaccessibility, and because of the organization and ideology of male dominance in the larger society.

Masculinity becomes an issue in a way that femininity does not. Masculinity does not become an issue because of some intrinsic male biology, nor

because masculine roles are inherently more difficult than feminine roles, however. Masculinity becomes an issue as a direct result of a boy's experience of himself in his family - as a result of his being parented by a woman. For children of both genders, mothers represent regression and lack of autonomy. A boy associates these issues with his gender identification as well. Dependence on his mother, attachment to her, and identification with her represent that which is not masculine; a boy must reject dependence and deny attachment and identification. Masculine gender role training becomes much more rigid than feminine. A boy represses those qualities he takes to be feminine inside himself, and rejects and devalues women and whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world.

Boys and men develop psychological and cultural/ideological mechanisms to cope with their fears without giving up women altogether. They create folk legends, beliefs, and poems that ward off the dread by externalizing and objectifying women: 'It is not...that I dread her; it is that she herself is malignant, capable of any crime, a beast of prey, a vampire, a witch, insatiable in her desires... the very personification of what is sinister.' (Men) deny dread at the expense of realistic views of women. On the one hand, they glorify and adore: 'There is no need for me to dread a being so wonderful, so beautiful, nay so saintly.' On the other, they disparage: 'It would be too ridiculous to dread a creature who, if you take her all round is such a poor thing.'

## 2: Notes to pages 35-84

1. De Beauvoir explains patriarchal attitudes to women. She quotes from *Stages on the Road of Life* - "To be a woman is something so strange, so confused, so complicated, that no one predicate comes near expressing it and that the multiple predicates that one would like to use are so contradictory that only a woman could put up with it...This comes from not regarding woman positively, such as she seems to herself to be, but negatively, such as she appears to man. For if woman is not the only Other, it remains none the less true that she is always defined as the Other. And her ambiguity is just that of the concept of the Other...(and) the Other is Evil..." Hippocrates proclaimed that on earth ... it is the male principle that is truly creative: from it came form, number, movement...woman's fecundity is regarded as only a passive quality.

But more often man is in revolt against his carnal state; he sees himself as a fallen god: his curse is to be fallen from a bright and ordered heaven into the chaotic shadows of his mother's womb. This fire, this pure and active exhalation in which he likes to recognize himself, is imprisoned by woman in the mud of the earth...

She also dooms him to death...Wherever life is in the making - germination, fermentation - it arouses disgust because it is made only in being destroyed... Among primitive peoples childbirth is surrounded by the most severe taboos; in particular, the placenta must be carefully burned or thrown into the sea, or whoever should get possession of it would hold the fate of the newborn in his hands. That membranous mass by which the fetus grows is the sign of its dependency...this same flesh frightens him; he would ignore it and see in his mother only a moral personage. The adolescent is discountenanced, he blushes, if while roaming with his companions he happens to meet his mother, his sisters, any of his female relatives: it is because their presence calls him back to those realms of immanence whence he would fly...he disowns family, mother, maternal bosom. He would like to have sprung into the world like Athena fully grown, fully armed, invulnerable ...

Woman-Mother has a face of shadows; she is the chaos whence all have come and... Man is frightened of this night, the reverse of fecundity, which threatens to swallow him up. He aspires to the sky, to the light, to the sunny summits...in many legend do we see the hero lost forever as he falls back into the maternal shadows - cave, abyss, hell.

In all civilizations and still in our day woman inspires man with horror; it is the horror of his own carnal contingency, which he projects upon her. The little girl, not yet in puberty, carries no menace, she is under no taboo and has no sacred character... But on the day she can reproduce, woman becomes impure; and rigorous taboos surround the menstruating female...evil powers have been attributed to the feminine flow...(Also) man finds it repugnant to come upon the dreaded essence of the mother in the woman he possesses; he is determined to dissociate these two aspects of femininity.

Woman is her husband's prey, his possession...the virgin would seem to represent the most consummate form of the feminine mystery; she is therefore



its most disturbing and at the same time its most fascinating aspect ...Virgin lands have always fascinated explorers...

Many men of today feel a sexual repugnance in the presence of maidenhood too prolonged and it is not only psychological causes ...the curse is in their flesh itself, that object for no subject, which no man's desire has made desirable ...turned from its proper destination, it becomes an oddity...Virgins unsubdued by man, old women who have escaped his power, are more easily than others regarded as sorceresses; for the lot of woman being bondage to another, if she escapes the yoke of man she is ready to accept that of the devil.

...since woman is destined to be possessed, her body must present the inert and passive qualities of an object...Costumes and styles are often devoted to cutting off the feminine body from any possible transcendence:...high heels, corsets, panniers, farthingales, crinolines were intended less to accentuate the curves of the feminine body than to augment its incapacity...Make-up and jewelry also further this petrification of face and body. In woman dressed and adorned, nature is present but under restraint, by human will remolded nearer to man's desire.

Woman is the object of man's desire but she does not satisfy this desire. Man takes great pride in his sexuality only in so far as it is a means of appropriating the Other - and this dream of possession ends only in frustration...Desire, which frequently shrouds disgust, reveals disgust again when it is satisfied...man has not even found final satisfaction in his loved one's arm. Soon desire is reborn in him...The man captivated by her charms no longer has will-power, enterprise, future; he is no longer a citizen, but mere flesh enslaved to its desires... (162-187)

2. For a detailed analysis of the sex-gender system and the role of the female therein, see Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. Ed. Rayna R. Reiter. New York: Monthly Review, 1975: 157-210.

3. Fitzgerald's notes on Nicole "...reveal his conception of her character in specific historical terms, for in trying to define her role in the novel, he concentrated not upon her psychiatric development per se, but upon the sequence

of significant dates in her life. She is born in 1901; in 1914 her courting begins; in June 1917, the "catastrophe" occurs; and in February 1918, she takes up residence in the Clinic.

To middle October bad period

After armistice good period

He returns in April or May 1919

She discharged June 1, 1919. Almost 18

Married September 1919. Aged 18.

(*The Far Side of Paradise*, Appendix B, 350)

These particular dates cannot be viewed merely as an author's memory log to aid in keeping the narrative straight. Their most salient feature is their uncanny correspondence with the most significant dates of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Even more explicitly, the significant dates in Nicole's personal history correspond to those marking America's involvement in the great events of the early century (1901), and her sexuality, which proves so disturbing and rife with conflict, emerges in 1914, coincident with the beginnings of the war. Nicole is raped by her father in June 1917, the exact month in which American troops first landed in France, perhaps the first historical event discomfiting America's traditional posture of splendid isolation from European affairs... (Grenberg, 213-214).

### 3: Notes to pages 85-107

1. Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men* provides an account of the predominance of homosocial relationships as revealed in various works of literature.
2. "Access to a fulfillment that reiterates the status quo is always facilitated by having a character who begins so marginalized, so removed from common sources of satisfaction (family, friends, social situation). that if a plot simply provides such a character with access to what must usually be taken for granted, the atmosphere of gratitude will finally impede any criticism from occurring. The critique of social conditions that orphans symbolize (poverty, vulnerability, exclusion) will be muted by the achievement of the blessed state of normalcy, so thrillingly different from deprivation. Through the mechanism of orphans, novels can present standard family, kinship, and gender relations as if they were

a utopian ideal" (DuPlessis, 9).

4: Notes to pages 108-138

1. Milton Stern in *Critical Essays on Tender is the Night* quotes Matthew Bruccoli -- "*Tender is the Night* is Dick Diver's novel: the reader who cannot calculate the velocity of Dick's dive loses much of the meaning of that novel." ( "A Mighty Collation: Animadversions on the Text of F. Scott Fitzgerald," *Editing Twentieth Century Text*, 34). Stern says, "Exactly so. The velocity. The rate. The steadiness. Not even the chronology is as important, for it makes less difference that one places an action in 1925 or 1926, 1928 or 1929 ...than if one misses the steadily increasing pressures that create the sharp and woeful change from Dick Diver in 1917 to Dick Diver at the end of the book. Fitzgerald never took his eye from that change and worried and worried about the presentation of it. He knew what the center of his book was at least as well as those who comment on it...."

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