

the situation and embraces the unspecific memory of her feelings instead. In the end, the narrator of “What lips my lips have kissed” finds peace or redemption in the faint echo of the emotion of love from her youth.

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Fitzgerald’s THE GREAT GATSBY

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* chronicles the excesses of the sumptuous lifestyle of the wealthy in America in the 1920s by creating a vivid tapestry of sensual images. From the gaudy displays and glistening buffets of Gatsby’s parties to the dismal drudgery displayed in the “Valley of Ashes,” Fitzgerald invites the reader to taste, see, and smell the “Roaring Twenties.” In addition, Fitzgerald provides a soundtrack that both creates dimension and atmosphere and lends depth to the thematic development of the novel.

More subtle than the glitzy images, which “mark Fitzgerald’s experiment in visual writing” (Berman 96), the music of *The Great Gatsby* echoes the actions of the players in each tightly woven scene. The first number the reader “hears” is the fictitious *Jazz History of the World* by a fictitious Vladimir Tostoff. Although “[t]he nature of Mr. Tostoff’s composition eluded” the narrator, Nick Carraway, we learn that the work “attracted so much attention at Carnegie Hall last May. If you read the papers you know there was a big sensation” (Fitzgerald 48). While complementing the characterization of Jay Gatsby as one influential enough to have the “latest and greatest” play at his “little party” (41), the fictional nature of the composer and work provides a suggestion of Gatsby’s façade. Fitzgerald uses the newness of jazz music to imply the re-creation of the order of things that Gatsby so desperately sought; the sad irony is illustrated in the effects of the work on those in attendance:

When the *Jazz History of the World* was over, girls were putting their heads on men's shoulders in a puppyish, convivial way, girls were swooning backward playfully into men's arms, even into groups, knowing that some one would arrest their falls—but no one swooned backward on Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link. (48)

The contrast between the lively debauchery and Gatsby's lonely isolation hints at the true purpose of the parties and the concealed nature of the man's passion.

The next piece of music presented by Fitzgerald reveals Gatsby's true nature and his obsession. Shortly after learning that Gatsby "had waited five years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths—so that he could 'come over' some afternoon to a stranger's garden" (72), the narrator hears *The Sheik of Araby* while driving through Central Park. His reaction that "[i]t was a strange coincidence," which in the dialogue of the scene remarks on the fact that "'Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay,'" emphasizes the remarkable connection between the song and Gatsby's character and motive. The revelations from Gatsby that he had "lived like a young rajah" (61); from Meyer Wolfsheim that Gatsby "would never so much as look at a friend's wife" (67); and from Jordan Baker that Gatsby "wants to know if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over" (72) are curiously echoed in the words:

I'm the Sheik and Araby.
Your love belongs to me,
At night when you're asleep
Into your tent I'll creep— (72)

The illicit nature of Gatsby's intentions as well as the juvenile methods he employs to carry them out are reinforced by the fact that the song is sung by "the clear voices of little girls" (72).

The Love Nest, the song that provides the background of Daisy and Gatsby's secretive rendezvous at his house, exposes the immorality of Gatsby's intentions and extravagant lifestyle. Aside from naming the location of their tryst, the song also reveals the philosophy at work in the lifestyle of the wealthy:

In the morning,
In the evening,
Ain't we got fun—
One thing's sure and nothing's surer
The rich get richer and the poor get—, children,
In the meantime,
In between time— (86)

Fitzgerald juxtaposes Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan, who, in their wealth, have nothing to do but dance, with “the electric trains, men-carrying [. . .] plunging home through the rain from New York” (86). The reality of the working world of the lower classes contrasts startlingly with “morning” or “evening” frivolity expressed in *The Love Nest*.

The next song in the novel, *Three O'clock in the Morning*, provides the melancholy atmosphere of Daisy's reluctant departure from Gatsby's. “A neat, sad little waltz of that year” (98), the song marks the exact time and yet “seemed to be calling her back inside.” Although the words are not revealed in the novel, they would have been familiar to Fitzgerald's contemporary audience and thus provide reinforcement of Gatsby's fixation:

It's three o'clock in the morning,
We've danced the whole night thru,
And daylight soon will be dawning,
Just one more waltz with you.
That melody so entrancing,
Seems to be made for us two,
I could just keep right on dancing
Forever, dear, with you. (98)

The permanence with Daisy for which Gatsby longed is forever lost after the final scene of the novel, which includes a musical score. In ironic contrast to the heated dispute that resulted from Tom Buchanan's confrontation with Jay Gatsby in “the parlor of a suite in the Plaza Hotel” (112), the principal players “were listening to the portentous chords of Mendelssohn's *Wedding March* from the ballroom below” (113). As a new marriage is celebrated below, Tom Buchanan questions if “the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife” (115).

Each scene created in *The Great Gatsby* “goes off like a flashbulb, freezing a bold array of images on the retina; the fade is delicious, stirring” (Birkerts 129). The infusion of popular contemporary musical works into the narration not only enhances the experience by adding an auditory element but also increases the level of complexity of theme and character so masterfully fashioned by Fitzgerald.

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