

**Echoes of the Silent Movie Age:
F. Scott Fitzgerald on the Silver Screen (1920-1926)**

Thesis by

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Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis is the first full-length study of the six silent film adaptations based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's work and the many ways in which they contributed to the construction of his celebrity persona. Between 1920 and 1926, four of Fitzgerald's short stories and two of his novels were filmed and shown on the silver screens of the United States and the world. Each of the chapters of this thesis explores an aspect of Fitzgerald's persona as represented in the six cinematic adaptations, of which four are presumed lost. Additionally, the chapters focusing on the four missing movies give a provisional scene-by-scene reconstruction of the films and their production by using a plurality of multimedia and multi-lingual sources, such as reviews, stills, novelizations, advertisements, treatments, pressbooks, and music cue sheets.

In spite of the reams of paper devoted to the film and literary work Fitzgerald produced in California in the 1930s, or on the sound-film adaptations based on his works, only a few pages examine his relationship with the movies at the beginning of his professional career. By focusing on how filmmakers interpreted Fitzgerald in the 1920s, this thesis contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the author's early reputation and his relationship with Hollywood long before he worked there. By treating the readers' and moviegoers' responses to these six films as public, and by reconstructing the context in which their reception acts occurred, this thesis provides a more well-rounded perspective of the construction of Fitzgerald's popular image. The reception materials of these six films reveal invaluable information on how Fitzgerald's contemporaries received and interpreted six of his works as well as on the global exhibition and distribution of their filmic transposition. By re-reading these literary texts and their cinematic adaptations almost a century after their production

and first reception, this thesis strikes echoes of the silent movie age, in an effort of recapturing those fleeting images of F. Scott Fitzgerald that silently flashed on the silver screens around the globe in the 1920s.

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Introduction

The myth of Hollywood as corrupter and destroyer of literary talent persists in the general understanding of F. Scott Fitzgerald. The popular image of Fitzgerald and Hollywood is of a washed-up writer struggling with alcoholism and depression while desperately seeking screenwork. This portrayal owes as much to Fitzgerald's own satirical character, the alcoholic hack screenwriter Pat Hobby, as to future depictions of Fitzgerald himself as a victim of what Edmund Wilson called Hollywood's "appalling record of talent depraved and wasted."¹ Fitzgerald's last years as a supposedly failed screenwriter tend to dominate and obfuscate our perception of the overall complex relation he had with Hollywood, diminishing the crucial role the movies played at the beginning of his professional career. This thesis is an enquiry into the extent to which Hollywood in the 1920s contributed to the construction of Fitzgerald's celebrity persona by adapting and distributing his work in America and abroad.

During the silent-movie era, Hollywood released and exported globally six film adaptations based on Fitzgerald's works. Between 1920 and 1926, four of his short stories and two of his novels were filmed. Metro Pictures Corporation purchased the rights to "Head and Shoulders" (1920), which was released on 16 August 1920 as *The Chorus Girl's Romance*. "Myra Meets His Family" (1920) was first released by Fox Film on 19 September 1920 as *The Husband Hunter*, while "The Offshore Pirate" (1920) was filmed as *The Off-Shore Pirate* and also released by Metro the following year on 31 January 1921. Between 1922 and 1923, Fitzgerald sold the movie rights to *The Beautiful and Damned* and "The Camel's Back" (1920)

¹ Edmund Wilson, *The Boys in the Back Room: Notes on California Novelists* (San Francisco: Colt Press 1941), p. 72.

to Warner Brothers; in 1926 *The Great Gatsby* was made into a film by Famous Players.

Various major themes emerged from the public exposure that Fitzgerald received during the early years of his career. In the 1920s, he was consistently associated with Ivy League collegiate student culture, the flapper type, the post-war younger generation, anti-Prohibition, and Irishness, to name a few. Several studies have extensively discussed the significance of these themes in the reception of Fitzgerald's persona in relation to text, but film also played an essential part in portraying those same themes on the screen.² As this thesis shows, silent Hollywood took an important role in consolidating the iconic characteristics that we still associate with F. Scott Fitzgerald. By ignoring the contribution that Hollywood in the 1920s made in filming Fitzgerald's work and persona, scholarship has missed an important part of the picture that needs to be examined in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the author's early reputation. Each of the chapters of this thesis explores an aspect of Fitzgerald's celebrity persona as represented in the six silent film adaptations, of which four are presumed lost. Additionally, the chapters focusing on the four missing movies give a provisional scene-by-scene reconstruction of the films and their production by using a plurality of multimedia and multi-lingual sources.

In Chapter One, "'Head and Shoulders' on the Silver Screen: A Rediscovery of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*," I discuss the implications of the find of the first film adapted from a work by Fitzgerald to our understanding of the author's celebrity status at the very beginning of his professional career. The first two sections offer, respectively, an analysis of William C. Dowlan's 1920 movie and a reconstruction

² See, for instance, Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity: Stein, Fitzgerald and the Modern(ist) Art of Self-Fashioning* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 121-27.

of two missing scenes. By showing how the sale of the film rights to “Head and Shoulders” predates the publication of *This Side of Paradise* and was used by Scribner’s to promote the 1920 novel, in the third section I argue that *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* contributed to establishing Fitzgerald’s fame even before the success of his first novel. The chapter ends with a brief look at Fitzgerald’s attempts to remake “Head and Shoulders” into a sound film in the 1930s.

In the first section of Chapter Two, “Myra Meets the Silver Screen: Howard M. Mitchell’s *The Husband Hunter*,” I offer a provisional reconstruction of the second film based on a work by Fitzgerald, his *Saturday Evening Post* story “Myra Meets His Family.” In the second section, I suggest that the film’s musical accompaniment reflected that U.S. cultural fascination with wealth that Fitzgerald would portray in *The Great Gatsby* five years after. In the third section I show how costumes, setting, and the actors’ posture in the film adaptation echoed the illustrations of “Myra” in the *Saturday Evening Post*. In the last section of Chapter Two I argue that Mitchell’s film fed into Fitzgerald’s reputation as the chronicler of the flapper, reinforcing the bond between the author and his famous character type in the public’s mind.

The aim of Chapter Three, “‘She Kissed Him Softly in the Adaptation’: ‘The Offshore Pirate’ on the Silent Screen,” is twofold. First, it situates Dallas M. Fitzgerald’s cinematic interpretation of the 1920 *Post* story “The Offshore Pirate” in relation to the social and political context of post-suffrage and Red-Scare America, while offering a provisional reconstruction and analysis of the film plot. Second, it shows how Metro, by aggressively publicising and distributing the 1921 film adaptation to theatres all over the world, participated in the construction of Fitzgerald as the author of youth in America and abroad.

The fourth chapter, titled “‘Thousands Have Read the Book, Millions Will See the Film’: *The Beautiful and Damned* from the Page to the Silver Screen,” examines how the film adaptation of Fitzgerald’s second novel further contributed to spreading the author’s name throughout America and the world. The first section offers an analysis of the advertising for William A. Seiter’s 1922 film and highlights how Fitzgerald benefited from Warner Brothers’ innovative promotional strategies and wide international distribution. The second section explores the extent to which the film adaptation of a semi-autobiographical novel populated by characters affected by alcoholism fed into Fitzgerald’s persona as a drinker. It also discusses how Warner Brothers publicised the fact they had “joined the Will H. Hays organization” shortly before the release of *The Beautiful and Damned* film and played up the educational value of the film adaptation.³

Chapter Five, “Adapting Fitzgerald’s Irish Legacy: ‘The Camel’s Back’ from Paper to Celluloid,” is concerned with *Conductor 1492*, the second extant film loosely based on a work by Fitzgerald, and its troping of the author’s public identity as quintessentially Irish. While in the first section I trace the complex history of the sale of the cinematic rights to “The Camel’s Back,” in the second section I focus on how *Conductor 1492* contributed to strengthening the association between Fitzgerald and his Irish heritage in the public’s mind. By substituting the original story with an Irish rags-to-riches plot and by representing the film’s characters as quarrelsome and heavy drinkers, Warner Brothers fed into Fitzgerald’s persona as a stereotypical Irishman.

Titled “‘Dreams of the Old Days’: ‘Memories’ of the Silent *Gatsby* and its Music Score,” Chapter Six sheds new light on the production, exhibition, promotion,

³ Harry M. Warner, “Warner Production Plans for Season of 1923: Why We Joined Will H. Hays,” *Moving Picture World*, 23 September 1922, p. 274.

and impact of Herbert Brenon's 1926 adaptation of the Great American Novel. The first section contests the widespread belief that the silent film was a flop and demonstrates that its promotion advertised Fitzgerald's poorly sold novel as a "world-read" best-seller in America and abroad. Cross referencing the long forgotten musical cue sheet for the film and other overlooked multilingual and "multisemiotic" materials, the central section includes a provisional scene-by-scene reconstruction of what many consider one of the most regretted lost films. It also argues that the voice of the singers accompanying the film may have become a substitute for Fitzgerald's prose. In the last section, I show how *The Great Gatsby* was promoted and received by some moviegoers as a realistic satire of the contemporary times.

In the concluding chapter, I briefly discuss the 1929 three-reel film *The Pusher-in-the-Face*, the last adaptation of a work by Fitzgerald made during his lifetime, and the author's relationship with Hollywood in the late 1920s and 1930s. The decision to confine Robert Florey's adaptation of Fitzgerald's 1925 short story of the same name to the conclusion was prompted by the fact that "The Pusher-in-the-Face" was made into a sound film and thus it does not fall within the scope of this study on Fitzgerald and silent movies. In addition, Appendix One traces the origins of some documentary footage of Scott and Zelda in Long Island that has recently circulated without attribution. Appendix Two includes a reconstruction of *The Beautiful and Damned* made with multimedia and multilingual materials.

Exploring Fitzgerald's first professional years in a strictly chronological order reveals much about the role that Silent Hollywood played in the development of his celebrity. Limiting the investigation to the specific period of time between 1920 and 1926 facilitates a clearer view and a better understanding of Fitzgerald and motion pictures before his financial and emotional hardships in the 1930s. As James L. W.

West III notes, “Most people who have written on Fitzgerald and the movies have located that interest [in Hollywood] later in his career, toward the end of the 1930s.”⁴ While Fitzgerald’s early biographies by Arthur Mizener and Andrew Turnbull, and Budd Schulberg’s semiautobiographical novel, portrayed the writer in his last years spent in Hollywood as a despairing and “disenchanted” man, later studies by Wheeler W. Dixon and Tom Cerasulo argue that his 1937-1940 screenwriting activities provided creative resources and that film work was beneficial for him.⁵ Such critics, however, at best only partially take into consideration Fitzgerald’s early relationship with Hollywood. Other major studies by Aaron Latham, Gene D. Phillips, DeWitt Bodeen, Edward Murray, David Seed, Somdatta Mandal, and Gautam Kundu convincingly explore Fitzgerald’s interest in, association with, and use of film in his late life and work, but they all dismiss the cinematic adaptations of his 1920s fiction in a few paragraphs, if not lines.⁶

If recent screen versions of both Fitzgeralds have brought some renewed attention to the question of adaptation of Fitzgerald’s works, the 1920s effort to translate his fiction into silent films remains widely unexplored. In spite of the reams of paper devoted to the film and literary work Fitzgerald produced in California in

⁴ James L. W. West III, “Polishing Up ‘Pampered,’” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 5 (2006), 13-21, p. 16.

⁵ Arthur Mizener, *The Far Side of Paradise: a Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1951); Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1962); Budd Schulberg, *The Disenchanted* (New York: Random House, 1950); Wheeler W. Dixon, *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986); Tom Cerasulo, *Authors Out Here: Fitzgerald, West, Parker, and Schulberg in Hollywood* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

⁶ Aaron Latham, *Crazy Sundays: F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972); Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986); DeWitt Bodeen, “F. Scott Fitzgerald and Films,” *Films in Review*, 28 (1977), 285-94; Edward Murray, *The Cinematic Imagination: Writers and the Motion Pictures* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1972); David Seed, *Cinematic Fictions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009); Somdatta Mandal, *Reflections, Refractions and Rejections: Three American Writers and the Celluloid World* (Leeds: Wisdom House, 2002); Gautam Kundu, *Fitzgerald and the Influence of Film: The Language of Cinema in the Novels* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008).

the late 1920s and late 1930s, or on the sound-film adaptations based on his works, only a few pages examine his relationship with the movies at the beginning of his professional career. Compared to the scholarly attention paid to David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008) and Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013), as well as to Elliott Nugent's 1949 gangster-version of *Gatsby*, and Jack Clayton's and Elia Kazan's 1970s adaptations of *Gatsby* (1974) and *The Last Tycoon* (1976), the silent film adaptations released during the writer's lifetime have received far too little examination.⁷

While a few Fitzgerald scholars discuss Herbert Brenon's silent version of *The Great Gatsby* (1926) in connection with the novel and the four later sound adaptations, and Sara Ross examines the silent version of *The Beautiful and Damned* as an example of the increasingly rapid turnover of novels into films in the 1920s, research on the silent adaptations of Fitzgerald's short stories remains surprisingly sparse.⁸ Although Alan Margolies and Ruth Prigozy dealt specifically with Fitzgerald's short stories adapted into silent film, their essays are more concerned with the source texts than with the movies, which they discussed in a few paragraphs.⁹ More recent studies by Stephanie Harrison and Candace Ursula Grissom

⁷ For discussions of recent adaptations, see Scott Ortolano, "Changing Buttons: Mainstream Culture in Fitzgerald's 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button' and the 2008 Film Adaptation," *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 10 (2012), 130-52; Candace Ursula Grissom, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film: A Critical Study of the Adaptations, 1924-2013* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Publishers, 2014), pp. 68-80 and pp. 91-100. For an analysis of *The Last Tycoon* see Joanna E. Rapf, "The Last Tycoon or 'A Nickel for the Movies,'" *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 16.2 (1988): 76-81; Stephen Matterson, "A Life in Pictures: Harold Pinter's *The Last Tycoon*," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 27.1 (1991), 50-54; Joss Lutz Marsh, "Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, and the *Last Tycoon*: The 'American Dream' and the Hollywood Dream Factory," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 20.1 (1992), 3-13.

⁸ For an analysis of the first two sound versions of *The Great Gatsby* see Wheeler W. Dixon, "The Three Film Versions of *The Great Gatsby*: A Vision Deferred," *Literature Film Quarterly*, 31.4 (2003), 287-94; Tom Morgan, "Sentimentalizing Daisy for the Screen," *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 12 (2014), 13-31; Louis Giannetti, "The Gatsby Flap," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 3.1 (1975), 13-22. Sara Ross, "1922: Movies and the Perilous Future," in *American Cinema of the 1920s: Themes and Variations*, ed. by Lucy Fischer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

⁹ Alan Margolies, "'Kissing, Shooting, and Sacrificing': F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Hollywood Market," in *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism*, ed. by Jackson R.

briefly underline the importance of rediscovering films based on Fitzgerald's short fiction, but consider only the more readily available *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, Richard Brooks's 1954 adaptation of "Babylon Revisited," and *Conductor 1492* (released thirty years earlier).¹⁰ If Grissom's focus on the silent adaptation of "The Camel's Back" offers new hope for a scholarly revival of interest in 1920s cinematic adaptations of Fitzgerald's early short fiction, as I argue in Chapter Five, her brief reading of the 1924 film is insufficiently developed. The fact that David S. Brown's 2017 biography of Fitzgerald does not even mention the silent film adaptations of the author's work is symptomatic of the current disregard for these movies.¹¹

If the first reason for neglect of the four silent film adaptations made from Fitzgerald's short fiction lies in the lack of their film prints, the second can be found in the fact that the author's commercial short stories are still considered trivial compared to his novels. This is made evident by the fact that only two scholars have studied the 1924 film based on "The Camel's Back" even though Alan Margolies rediscovered its print more than forty years ago.¹² Since Fitzgerald himself assumed the pose of dismissing his "popular efforts" in favour of his "serious fiction," scholars have been doubtless encouraged to ignore his "slick" stories. But Fitzgerald's commercial short fiction, and his most neglected novel – namely, *The Beautiful and Damned* – are also worthy of consideration, as this thesis will demonstrate, showing

Bryer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996); Ruth Prigozy, "Fitzgerald's Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age: Behind the Morality," in *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Kirk Curnutt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Candace Ursula Grissom, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film*, pp. 11-17; pp. 25-34; Stephanie Harrison, *Adaptations from Short Story to Big Screen: 35 Great Stories That Have Inspired Great Films* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005), pp. 363-69.

¹¹ Brown only mentions in passing the fact that Warner Brothers purchased the rights to *The Beautiful and Damned*, David S. Brown, *Paradise Lost: A Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 148.

¹² See Alan Margolies, "'The Camel's Back' and *Conductor 1492*," *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*, 6 (1974), 87-88; Candace Ursula Grissom, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film*, pp. 11-17.

how they helped contribute to the development of his celebrity image, one that he played into and that fed into his later “greater” works.

Given the widespread belief that Fitzgerald’s work is systematically impaired when adapted for the screen, one might reasonably think that, although his name was popularized by the association with Hollywood, his literary reputation was damaged by the 1920s film adaptations of his fiction.¹³ In fact, contemporary reviews of Metro’s silent film versions of Fitzgerald’s *Post* stories tended to declare that their adapters not only were able to successfully transfer them to the screen but also to improve them. In December 1920, an Indiana newspaper wrote that “according to all reports the picture [*The Chorus Girl’s Romance*] is funnier than the original *Saturday Evening Post* story of ‘Head and Shoulders’ from which it has been taken.”¹⁴ A few months later, a film critic praised in typical terms the work of the scenarist of *The Off-shore Pirate* for adding the narrative material that Fitzgerald’s original story lacked:

[‘The Offshore Pirate’] may be considered [...] a naïve story with scarcely a sign of sustaining highlight. Credit must be given the scenario writer [who] kept it moving [...] the subtitles are breezy enough and really bolster the picture in the weak places. The story being frail in the original, it has devolved upon the scenario writer and the director to put action and incident in it. This they have done and it makes better reading via the silversheet than the magazine page.¹⁵

¹³ On the generally accepted belief that Fitzgerald’s work has never been captured well on screen, see Stephanie Harrison, *Adaptations: from Short Story to Big Screen*, p. xv; Frank R. Cunningham, “F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Problem of Film Adaptation,” *Literature Film Quarterly*, 28.4 (2000), 187-96.

¹⁴ “Do You Like Fun,” *South Bend News-Times*, 19 December 1920, p. 9.

¹⁵ Laurence Reid, “The Off-shore Pirate,” *Motion Picture News*, 21 March 1921, p. 1989.

In his 1920 review of *Flappers and Philosophers*, Thomas Alexander Boyd also congratulated the movies for having improved Fitzgerald's material in the transfer to the screen:

'Head and Shoulders' which has been made into a movie called 'A Chorus Girl's Romance' [sic] made a better movie than a story. For the cinema it was ideal: full of punch, slap-dash humor, impossible situations, and two young lovers who were amiably superlative. With paragraphs, shaped in places like O. Henry, they made excellent material for subtitles. As a short story, however, 'Head and Shoulders' nearly ranks with 'The Offshore Pirate.' Not quite.¹⁶

Writing more than sixty years after Boyd, the literary critic Jane Tompkins argued against the commonplace idea that literary masterpieces necessarily transcend their own historical contexts. For Tompkins, a fictional text is "a product of historical circumstances" and of a context that "creates the value its readers discover." The trouble with the notion that a literary work "transcends the limitations of its age and appeals to critics and readers across the centuries," notes Tompkins, "is that one discovers, upon investigation, that the grounds of critical approval are always shifting."¹⁷ Boyd's comment, which similarly shows that literary and cinematic value are not measured transhistorically, should encourage us to push against the assumptions that Fitzgerald's work possesses an inherent and transcendent value.

The question of the disregard of these films is further complicated by Fitzgerald's complex relationship with the movies, as well as his declared distaste

¹⁶ Alexander Boyd, "Mostly Flappers" (Repr. in Jackson R. Bryer, ed., *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception* (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., 1978), p. 49).

¹⁷ Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 35.

for two cinematic adaptations of his work. Fitzgerald's often expressed contempt for Hollywood and disparaging attitude toward the film versions of his novels *The Beautiful and Damned* ("by far the worst movie [he had] ever seen in [his] life") and *The Great Gatsby* ("'ROTTEN' and awful and terrible") might have contributed to the neglect of these silent films.¹⁸ But throughout his life, Fitzgerald had been tireless in seeking opportunities to see his work translated into film, and not only for the obvious reason that it was a profitable source of income. He had been a passionate moviegoer since a young age; in the early 1920s, he told a journalist that "as a writer, [he felt] that the movies [were] a tremendously important question."¹⁹ In James L. W. West III's opinion, Fitzgerald's 1924 essay "The Most Pampered Men in the World" shows that, at the time, he was paying close attention to silent cinema: "Fitzgerald was knowledgeable about the movie business: his essay [...] gives evidence that he had watched a great many films and had thought seriously about what he had seen."²⁰ The silent adaptations of his work also added to Fitzgerald's knowledge of film and cinematic adaptation. Additionally, while Fitzgerald's scrapbooks reveal that he kept track of the reception of films inspired by his works, his correspondence shows that he monitored their box office and international distribution.²¹

Whether Fitzgerald's disdain for the movie adaptations of his work reveals

¹⁸ Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., with the assistance of Susan Walker, *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 119; Ann Margaret Daniel, "What Did F. Scott Fitzgerald Think of *The Great Gatsby*, the Movie, in 1926? He Walked Out" <<https://www.huffingtonpost.com/annemargaretdaniel/thegreatgatsbymovie1926b3024329.htm>> [accessed 23 February 2018].

¹⁹ B. F. Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald on Minnie McGlucke," *Picture-Play*, October, 1923, p. 84.

²⁰ James L. W. West III, "Polishing Up 'Pampered,'" p. 16.

²¹ Fitzgerald pasted both the synopsis and novelization of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* and the novelization of *The Off-shore Pirate* into his first scrapbook. In 2016, Princeton University made the Fitzgeralds' scrapbooks available online. All material cited from the scrapbooks refer to the following URLs: for Zelda Fitzgerald's Scrapbook:

<<http://pudl.princeton.edu/viewer.php?obj=x346d693p#page/1/mode/2up>>.

For F. Scott Fitzgerald's Scrapbooks (I-VII): <<http://pudl.princeton.edu/objects/sf268784s>>.

more about his (probably studied) condescension to Hollywood, or about the aesthetic value of the films, is not what this study is concerned with. The fact that four of the six films I focus on are not extant, and one of the two extant film adaptations is only loosely based on the source text, allows me to set aside the troublesome, and increasingly moot, issue of “fidelity.” In comparing these six film adaptations to their literary sources, the main goal of this thesis is not to evaluate whether 1920s filmmakers were “faithful” to the original works, but rather to explore how the themes most associated with Fitzgerald and his persona were interpreted by his contemporaries for the screen.

A major goal of this study is to trace how the cultural images of Fitzgerald were generated by and disseminated through these six silent film adaptations. Just as today many gain knowledge and understanding of F. Scott Fitzgerald from adaptations of his books (the most recent examples being the Amazon series *The Last Tycoon*, Luhrmann’s *The Great Gatsby*, and Fincher’s *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*), so the 1920s films based on his work heavily contributed to the cultural construction of the author – with the difference that, in the mid-1920s, movie theatre attendance in the United States averaged 46 million admissions per week from a population of 116 million, five times the per capita attendance rate today.²² According to Paul J. Niemeyer:

The most pervasive, most easily understood, and most quickly absorbed means of disseminating cultural images of authors is through the film adaptations of their books. In the last century the cinema was the most popular and successful

²² See David Pierce, *The First Comprehensive Survey of the Survival of American Silent Feature Films: The Survival of American Silent Feature Films: 1912–1929* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources and The Library of Congress, 2013), p. 11.

form of mass entertainment; and from its very inception film has been a medium that draws from all other media – especially from popular and ‘classic’ novels. This fact has often had troubling implications for literary scholars, any of whom charge that film versions of novels automatically cheapen and distort the source material, misrepresent the author’s goals, and essentially create false impressions of what the novel is about. Of great concern to some critics is what a film adaptation ‘does’ to the image of the author.²³

Scholars such as Frank R. Cunningham have addressed the complexity of adapting Fitzgerald, defending the “legitimacy of the adaptational enterprise” that “at once maintain the spirit of the original work, yet enrich the original by means of its own language.”²⁴ But the cinematic adaptations of authors such as Hemingway and Faulkner have generated more extensive commentary, which makes the lack of scholarship on Fitzgerald and silent film even more striking. A Hemingway scholar’s claim that “the publicity for films based on [Hemingway’s] work highlighted his name whereas publicity for films based on contemporary fiction by [...] Scott Fitzgerald did not” fails to take into consideration the adaptations made from Fitzgerald when he was at the height of his fame.²⁵ Statements like these, collapsing all of Fitzgerald’s career into its nadir, need to be put into perspective by examining the promotional techniques used by the studios that publicized Fitzgerald in the 1920s, before Hemingway had even emerged into fame.

²³ Paul J. Niemeyer, *Seeing Hardy: Film and Television Adaptations of the Fiction of Thomas Hardy* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), p. 3.

²⁴ Frank R. Cunningham, “F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Problem of Film Adaptation,” p. 188.

²⁵ Robert W. Lewis, “Introduction,” in *A Moving Picture Feast*, ed. by Charles M. Oliver, (New York: Praeger, 1989), p. xi.

With marketing campaigns in their infancy, major film companies such as Metro, Fox and Warner Brothers had advertising departments design and distribute pressbooks to help in what they called the “exploitation” of films.²⁶ Silent Hollywood “exploited” Fitzgerald’s talent and fame, conspicuously displaying his name in its marketing. By August 1920, when the first film adaptation of his work was released, Fitzgerald was already a celebrated author thanks to the success of *This Side of Paradise* and the popularity of the six short stories that he had already published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. In turn, promotion by Hollywood fed his popular, if not critical, success as a writer. Movie studios exaggerated Fitzgerald’s achievements by playing up his books as “best sellers,” including the one that, to his dismay, sold most disappointingly in the 1920s: *The Great Gatsby*.

In the 1920s, studios created a more egalitarian and aggressive publicity campaign for the film adaptations of Fitzgerald than his more conservative publishing house did for his books, helping his output reach larger and more diverse audiences. Just as often happens today with contemporary authors, mass audiences of the silent film adaptations of Fitzgerald first discovered his name through the highly popular films based on his work and their publicity. Although literary scholars have all but unanimously assumed that Fitzgerald’s reputation was created solely by the publication of *This Side of Paradise* and his successful magazine fiction in the spring of 1920, this thesis will demonstrate the primary role that the three silent film adaptations produced that year played in the construction of that celebrity. As I explain in Chapter One, the fact that film magazines publicised that Hollywood had bought the rights to “Head and Shoulders” days before the publication of *This Side of Paradise* suggests that Fitzgerald’s celebrity was being established in association

²⁶ On the silent era’s pressbooks, see Frank M. Laurence, “Hollywood Publicity and Hemingway Popular Reputation,” in *A Moving Picture Feast*, ed. by Oliver, p. 19.

with the movies even before the success of his first novel. Although Maxwell Perkins (and, to a lesser extent, Charles Scribner) have been largely credited with enabling Fitzgerald's meteoric success, Hollywood's role in popularizing his name and work has never been acknowledged, much less analysed.²⁷

Examined within the context of Fitzgerald's career and his early collaborations with Hollywood, rather than merely in the context of his literary body of work, the three *Saturday Evening Post* short stories that Hollywood filmed in 1920 offer invaluable insights into the construction of the author's early persona and cultural values of post-war America. The creation of literary celebrity, as Timothy W. Galow notes, "involves authorial actions, the production of specific works, the promotion of texts and their authors, and audience reception."²⁸ By showing the major role that Hollywood played in the creation of Fitzgerald's literary celebrity, this thesis argues that, each of the forms of activity that Galow mentions, namely authorship, production, promotion, and reception, needs to be considered in relation to both these silent film adaptations and their source texts authored by Fitzgerald.

While scholarship has widely explored the role that the magazine market has played as an important outlet for Fitzgerald's short fiction, the way that Hollywood and the film press contributed to bringing him popularity through the adaptations of his work has never been investigated. While, as Robert Beuka notes, "magazine publication brought him not only ever-growing paychecks, but also notoriety among readers across the country," the adaptations of his works and their publicity in American and international film magazines, as well as national and local newspapers,

²⁷ See A. Scott Berg's essay published in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, whose title speaks for itself: "The Man Who Discovered Fitzgerald," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, 23 October 1978, 15-20. The essay is an excerpt from Perkins' biography published by Berg the same year, A. Scott Berg, *Max Perkins: Editor of Genius* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978).

²⁸ Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, p. 24

expanded that fame among what was, as I shall demonstrate, in fact a global group of moviegoers.²⁹ In 1920, the *Post* had over two and a half million subscribers and, as Jeff Nilsson notes, could bring Fitzgerald into the living rooms of Americans who might never have previously encountered his work.³⁰ Although data on movie attendance was not systematically gathered before 1922, during that year forty million tickets were sold every week in the United States.³¹

If it is true, as Ruth Prigozy observed, that the press “was a strong ally in creating [Fitzgerald’s] public personas,” silent Hollywood was its “brother-in-arm” in endorsing the author’s celebrity.³² “With such a hold on the popular imagination,” notes David Pierce, “motion pictures influenced fashion and leisure, and drove the emergence of modern celebrity culture.”³³ A survey of the six film adaptations’ reception and cultural context also converges with America’s emerging celebrity culture, a context in which Fitzgerald negotiated while constructing his persona. Galow rightly notes that “celebrity can be used to generate new interpretations of, and provide fresh perspectives on, the literary field in the early decades of the twentieth century.”³⁴ But in discussing the products disseminating the images of

²⁹ Robert Beuka, “Magazines,” in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Bryant Mangum (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 284.

³⁰ Jeff Nilsson, ed., *Gatsby Girls* (Sherman Oaks: BroadLit, 2013), p. 17.

³¹ As Walker states, “statistics can readily be marshalled to offer a national perspective on film exhibition and moviegoing in the 1920s. In January 1923 there were, according to *Film Daily*, some 15,000 motion picture theaters in the United States, with an average size of 507 seats. Weekly attendance totalled 50 million, even taking into account that about 30 percent (4,500) of the theaters were open four-five days per week, and 10 percent were only open one-three days per week.” Gregory A. Walker, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896-1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), p. 194. See also Shearon Lowery and Melvin DeFleur, *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects* (New York: Longman Publishers, 1995), p. 22. For a provisional investigation on gross attendance figures for the 1920s see Douglas Gomery, “Movie Audiences, Urban Geography and the History of the American Film,” *Velvet Light Trap*, 19 (1982), 23-29.

³² Ruth Prigozy, “Introduction: Scott, Zelda and the Culture of Celebrity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Ruth Prigozy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 4.

³³ David Pierce, *The First Comprehensive Survey of the Survival of American Silent Feature Films*, p. 12.

³⁴ Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, p. 3; p. 24.

Fitzgerald, he never considers the effects that film adaptations and Hollywood trade magazines, let alone the reception of these films, had on Fitzgerald's celebrity and career.

With circulations varying from a few hundred thousand to more than two million, film magazines and industry trade papers frequently discussed Fitzgerald in association with the six silent adaptations of his work. Popular mass market magazines catered to different and wider audiences: in 1918, the leading motion picture periodical of the time was *Photoplay* (one of the sources used most consistently in this study), with a circulation of more than 200,000. Such magazines had far greater reach than many of the periodicals that published Fitzgerald's work in the 1920s, and thus helped establish and define his star image in the public's mind.

Local newspapers also cited Fitzgerald regularly, sometimes erroneously calling him a scenarist several years before he became one. An anonymous clip in Zelda Fitzgerald's scrapbook informed its readers that "after returning from a honeymoon in the West, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald will make their home in this city [New York] where Mr. Fitzgerald has been engaged to write film scenarios."³⁵ Although the article is not dated, it mentions that the Fitzgeralds had married a day earlier; they wed on 3 April 1920. This means that a month after he signed the first contract with Metro (and a week after the publication of *This Side of Paradise*), local newspapers were already stressing Fitzgerald's relationship with Hollywood.

³⁵ Into his first scrapbook, Fitzgerald pasted several articles that called him a scenarist. "Big names!" reads one anonymous piece, "the other day the Metro people announced they had signed up [...] F. Scott Fitzgerald." Another article stated Fitzgerald was "now connected with the scenario department of the Metro Pictures Corporation." *The St. Paul Daily News* also reported that he was "at present engaged in writing scenarios for the movies." F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*; "Love Story of Writer leads to Cathedral: Mr S. Fitzgerald and Miss Zelda Sayre Wed after Romance of War," Zelda Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook*.

The marketing of these silent film adaptations thus left evidence that is immensely valuable to film and literary historians, and in the case of Fitzgerald has been entirely overlooked. Throughout the 1920s, fan magazines constructed Fitzgerald much in the same manner as the silent stars who impersonated his characters. The film press and advertising materials of these six films were crucial channels for the construction of his public persona, across America and abroad. Pressbooks of these films mediated readers' and moviegoers' engagements with Fitzgerald's texts, in print as well as on screen. The press surrounding these six movies widened Fitzgerald's name recognition not only within American audiences that did not read his books or magazine stories, but also within those publics that could not always read them. Film was a medium that foreigners and the illiterate – one in every seventeen Americans in 1920 – could understand.³⁶ As George Bernard Shaw predicted in 1914, “the cinema tells its story to the illiterate as well as to the literate [...] that is why the cinema is going to produce effects that all the cheap books in the world could never produce.”³⁷

In fact, these six movie adaptations spread Fitzgerald's name and persona across the world, as by the early 1920s silent films had already become a worldwide medium. The themes of many films were universal, titles could easily be translated, film distribution was global. Fitzgerald's name frequently appeared in the international film trade and local press and foreign novelizations of the film adaptations. Silent film thus became the first medium that globally disseminated Fitzgerald, making his work known to non-English speaking countries decades before literary translators did. Galow argues that the speed with which Fitzgerald's

³⁶ Yvonne Honeycutt Baldwin, *Cora Wilson Stewart and Kentucky's Moonlight Schools: Fighting for Literacy in America* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), p. 134.

³⁷ George Bernard Shaw, “The Cinema as a Moral Leveler,” *New Statesman*, 27 June 1914, pp. 1-2.

name “travelled across a continent and the extensive opportunities that such sudden fame afforded them were relatively new phenomena in the early decades of the twentieth century.”³⁸ This study reveals for the first time the speed and the extent to which Fitzgerald’s brand spread not only across the American continent but worldwide by the mid-1920s, thanks almost entirely to film. In his 2003 *The Romantic Egoists*, Matthew J. Bruccoli claimed that Fitzgerald had only recently become a “world author,” given that since 1950 he has been translated into at least thirty-five languages, while during his lifetime there were only three translations of his books (*The Great Gatsby* was published in French, German and Swedish).³⁹ But this thesis demonstrates that, on the contrary, Fitzgerald’s name left global traces decades earlier, while he was still alive.

The discovery of one of the silent film adaptations that had been assumed lost, as described in Chapter One, radically changed the course of this project, doubling the number of extant silent adaptations of Fitzgerald’s work (albeit to just two), while instilling hope that the other four film prints might also still exist somewhere. The fact that the extant copy of *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* had been preserved in Brazil led me to expand my scope of investigation to include international collections. The varied multilingual documents recovered in foreign archives are important not only insofar as they reveal the extent to which Hollywood exported the jazz age and the work of its finest chronicler; they also enabled this thesis to offer a scene-by-scene reconstruction of the four lost film adaptations for the first time.

These reconstructions rely on reception history because they depend on the impact that the four presumed lost silent films had on Fitzgerald’s contemporaries.

³⁸ Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, pp. 1-2.

³⁹ Matthew J. Bruccoli, Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, and Joan P. Kerr, eds., *The Romantic Egoists: a Pictorial Autobiography from the Scrapbooks and Albums of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), p. 242.

Wolfgang Iser observes that “an aesthetic of reception explores reactions to the literary text by readers in different historical situations.” Any reception study is, however, “largely dependent on available evidence, as it tries to grasp prevailing attitudes that have shaped the understanding of a literary work in a given period of time.”⁴⁰ As Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey note, “the substance of any historical account is bound to be informed by the source materials deployed in its production; and indeed that conversely some forms of historical research may be frustrated by the limitations, or even the non-existence, of relevant source materials.”⁴¹ However, what could seem a limitation of this research, the lack of four of the adaptations, is, on the contrary, an advantage. This project can add to our collective understanding of Fitzgerald, and in particular to our perception of how globally his name was disseminated in the 1920s, by uncovering long-buried information from national and international archives.

In assembling the primary materials for this study, I have drawn upon a vast range of hitherto neglected visual and printed sources, which I have gathered from online archives as well as library collections in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Sweden, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Australia. In an attempt to make this study as comprehensive as possible, I visited three of the world’s most important film archives, the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, New York, the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research in Madison, Wisconsin, and MoMA’s Film Study Center in New York City, where I was also allowed to read original documents. These long forgotten multilingual and “multisemiotic” sources, which include contemporary articles in local newspapers, reviews, pressbooks, marketing materials,

⁴⁰ Wolfgang Iser, *How to do Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 57.

⁴¹ Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey, “Screen Histories: An Introduction,” in *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader*, ed. by Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 6.

music cue sheets, film stills, lobby cards, and novelizations of the films, together allow for a reception history of the 1920s adaptations of Fitzgerald's work that has never been undertaken before and that sheds new light on how these films – and consequently their original literary texts – were received by Fitzgerald's contemporaries around the world.

This thesis concerns itself with different types of intermediality, interrogating both the intermedial quality of film adaptation and of Fitzgerald's filmic writing. In addition, for the reconstruction of the lost films, it draws heavily on American as well as foreign novelizations, which could be said to reverse the process of film adaptation, transforming the film back into a (different) textual form. By crossing borders between media, 1920s writers of novelizations verbally represented the visual interpretation of Fitzgerald's words, thus remediating his literary texts. As Irina O. Rajewsky notes:

In the case of the film adaptation the viewer 'receives' the original literary text along with seeing the film, and specifically receives the former in its difference from or equivalence to the latter. This reception occurs not (only) on account of any prior knowledge or cultural background the viewer may have, but on account of the film's own specific constitution. It opens up additional layers of meaning which are produced specifically by this referencing or 'putting into a relation' of film and text.⁴²

Through the six adaptations of Fitzgerald's literary work and their novelizations,

⁴² Irina O. Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," *Intermedialités*, 6 (Autumn 2005), 43-64, p. 53.

American and international viewers and readers received the remediated source texts even if they had no prior knowledge of them.⁴³ By using forgotten novelizations, this thesis also seeks to bring attention to a forgotten genre. “Whereas there are numerous studies available on the interaction between literature and film,” notes Thomas Van Parys, “novelization itself has not yet been the object of in-depth research, mainly for two reasons: the contempt with which the genre is often treated and the structural changes in research programs that force the scholar to study the image first.”⁴⁴

Besides shedding light on the relations between literature and film in the 1920s, the novelization can become an essential document for the reconstruction of a lost film (or of missing scenes of an extant film, as demonstrated in Chapter One), for it is one of the few traces of its plot. During the silent era, the same film could generate different novelizations in different forms in different countries – unlike commercial novelizations today, which, due to copyright, mostly appear as translations.⁴⁵ Often including several film stills, novelizations are hybrid forms in which the narrative text and images complement each other. Given that in the silent era these texts also offered expansions of the incomplete dialogue intertitles, the several foreign novelizations used in this thesis proved essential to provisionally reconstruct some versions of the films’ title cards. When novelizations that appeared in different countries report almost literally the same passage, it has been assumed

⁴³ On the concept of remediation as the representation of a medium in another see Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding the New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1999), p. 45.

⁴⁴ Jan Baetens, “Novelization, a Contaminated Genre?” *Critical Inquiry*, 32 (Autumn 2005), 43-60, p. 45.

⁴⁵ Thomas Van Parys, “The Commercial Novelization: Research, History, Differentiation,” *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 37.4 (2009), 305-17, p. 307. For a further discussion on novelization see Jan Baetens, “La Novellisation: Un Genre Impossible?” *Recherches en Communication*, 17 (2002), 213-22; Thomas Van Parys, “The Study of Novelisation: A Typology and Secondary Bibliography,” *Belphégor: Littérature Populaire et Culture*, 10.2 (2011) <http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/vol10_no2/articles/10_02_paryst_noveli_en_cont.html> [accessed 3 June 2018].

that those words were included in one or more intertitles. It is important to acknowledge that these foreign novelizations are hypermediated texts that went through various degrees of human interpretation: the scenarist who adapted Fitzgerald's novel into intertitles; the writers that novelized and translated the intertitles; and, ultimately, the translators of these 1920s texts into English. At best, therefore, one must consider these provisional "versions" of the title cards, but where there is consistency across different versions it is assumed they are broadly accurate as to content. In addition, although the original stills from the films provide the closest visual trace of the adaptations to survive, it is equally imperative to note that some of the photographs might have not portrayed the same exact scene the viewers saw when the films were originally released. A scene might well have been cut or shot from a different angle in the final version of the film.

Another approach that has been used in Chapter Six to reconstruct Brenon's *The Great Gatsby* is cross referencing the thematic music cue sheet of the film with an array of multi-lingual reception materials. In addition to being a source of musical interest, this overlooked document provides crucial information for piecing together the film's plot and structure. The cue sheet links the beginning of each scene's melody to the intertitle and action opening each consecutive scene; it also reveals that the lyrics of some of the songs in the music score functioned as substitute for dialogue. Exhibition practices often shaped the meaning of the filmgoing experience, which in the 1920s was more complex than it is now. The musical score that accompanied silent films was one of the exhibition conditions that characterized the silent era moviegoing experience, as discussed in detail in my final chapter.

Another main goal of this thesis is to explore the extent to which Fitzgerald's (inter)national reputation was fashioned by the exhibition and distribution of the six

films across America and abroad, not merely by the films themselves. As popular as silent movies were with American audiences, foreign markets were an important source of revenue. These six film adaptations were sold extensively to film exchanges throughout the domestic and foreign markets. By the 1920s, Hollywood studios had a wide (and widely publicized) distribution; film companies like Metro and Warner Brothers had advertising departments design and distribute pressbooks to help in the “exploitation” of the six film adaptations. A survey of foreign press reveals that the studios distributed press materials not only to exhibitors across all America but also abroad. Widely-circulated national, regional and international newspapers reprinted faithfully the publicity materials included in these pressbooks, which, by praising Fitzgerald’s writing, greatly helped to cement his celebrity status and popularize his name among a large and diverse demographic of readers.

A visual and textual analysis of the advertising for these movies also sheds light on the complex interaction in the 1920s between the film industry and publishing, as well as on how Fitzgerald’s books profited from the advanced cooperation between cinemas and booksellers. By disseminating Fitzgerald’s name throughout America and across the world and by collaborating with bookstores and film magazines, Hollywood fed into both his public and literary reputation. At the same time, the aggressive marketing of these films made use of the popularity that Fitzgerald’s books and short stories were enjoying among the American reading public. As Janet Staiger notes, “authors’ names only begin to appear when the industry finds profit in identifying certain laborers – stars, directors, and writers became means for product differentiation.”⁴⁶ In the 1920s, studios hired “eminent authors” to reassure an

⁴⁶ Janet Staiger, “‘Tame’ Authors and the Corporate Laboratory: Stories, Writers and Scenarios in Hollywood,” *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 8.4 (1983), 33-45, p. 36.

“anxious, increasingly middle-class audience about the calibre of its screen entertainment.”⁴⁷ The advantage of adapting popular works by renowned writers was audience recognition with a consequent reduction in advertising expenses. As Universal Studios’ founder Carl Laemmle explained in 1915:

One reason we like to use well-known plays and volumes is because of the publicity they have already achieved and because of their adaptability to advertising, publicity, and poster mediums, tremendous forces to consider. Too, we ardently desire to present to the public what it wants, and those articles already stamped by its approval.⁴⁸

As C. Kenneth Pellow argues, “what the filmmakers did to the source material helps to explicate and cause meditation upon that source. The film can always be seen as an interpretation of the original work which will shed light upon that work.”⁴⁹ Hence, a focus on the silent film adaptations of Fitzgerald’s works can provide valuable insights into and serve as critique of their source texts and the larger social and cultural field in which they were produced. This thesis places the six films within the context of their exhibition during “the Golden Age of the Silents” (1920-1929), drawing on exhibitors’ reports and local newspapers to track how these cinematic adaptations were shown, as well as received and advertised, in both big cities and small towns.⁵⁰ The analysis of exhibitors’ verdicts reveal that the six silent films based on Fitzgerald’s works were seen in large urban areas as well as in remote rural

⁴⁷ Leonard J. Leff, *Hemingway and His Conspirators: Hollywood, Scribners, and the Making of American Celebrity Culture* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁸ Qtd. in Janet Staiger, “‘Tame’ Authors and the Corporate Laboratory,” p. 41.

⁴⁹ C. Kenneth Pellow, *Films as Critiques of Novels* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), p. 1.

⁵⁰ See Larry Langman, *American Film Cycles: The Silent Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. xiii.

towns. The 1920s witnessed a revolution in both film and exhibition: by the middle of the decade, every major city in the country had large movie houses which could seat thousands of moviegoers. A film would normally require two years to work its way from premiere to final performance, which means that cinemas screening the adaptations of Fitzgerald's works might well have exposed his work on screen for a longer time than book shops displayed his books.

Building on reader-response critic Steven Mailloux's approach to reception studies, which emphasizes the role of the reader in the interpretive process and focuses on the contexts in which a text was produced and the cultural work it accomplished, I turn to contemporary reviews of the six film adaptations and their source texts trying to decipher what effects reading and watching Fitzgerald had on his contemporary audiences.⁵¹ By drawing upon box-office data and contemporary reports, this thesis considers how film exhibition of these movie adaptations deepens our understanding of the reception and impact of Fitzgerald's work in the 1920s. Following the model first provided by Hans Robert Jauss's "aesthetic of reception," I use these six silent film adaptations to analyse the influence of Fitzgerald's work on 1920s readers and moviegoers.⁵² Reception materials of these films allow us to establish a clearer picture of Fitzgerald's first audiences for his work and to consider prevailing attitudes that have shaped contemporary understanding of Fitzgerald.⁵³ 1920s reports of these six movies reveal what the experiences of seeing Fitzgerald on screen meant to the general moviegoing public, as well as to film critics. These empirical data can be used, in Jauss's terms, "to comprehend the influence of

⁵¹ Steven Mailloux, *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 135.

⁵² See Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 22.

⁵³ See Wolfgang Iser, *How to do Theory*, p. 57.

[Fitzgerald's] work on a certain public" and "to ascertain a specific disposition of the audience" who read it and watched it.⁵⁴

In addition, the reception of these films reveals that the idea that Fitzgerald's work is cinematic is just the latest way of reading those literary works that began in 1920s reviews of their cinematic adaptations. A study of the title cards of the six silent film adaptations of Fitzgerald's work sheds light on how 1920s scenarists interacted with his much-discussed filmic writing. If the silent films based on Fitzgerald's work have attracted little scholarly attention, unsurprisingly their intertitles have attracted none. This is a neglect that is not unique to Fitzgerald studies. According to William F. Van Wert, in film scholarship there is an aversion to the study of the intertitle as something essentially anti-cinematic; in fact, in Katherine Nagels's words, "intertitles as an inherently non-cinematic device is perhaps the most commonly held perception of all."⁵⁵ "Some of the critical neglect of the intertitles in silent films," notes Van Wert, "has been, no doubt, deliberate, in order to emphasise film's independence from literature."⁵⁶

The importance of studying the intertitles of these six adaptations is all the greater given the insights they offer into the way 1920s moviegoers interacted with Fitzgerald's work through the intensely interactive demands that the silent film medium placed on them. In his 1972 essay "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," Wolfgang Iser noted that "the written part of the text gives us the knowledge, but it is the unwritten part that gives us the opportunity to picture things; indeed without the element of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text, we

⁵⁴ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 22.

⁵⁵ The word "intertitle" was never used in the silent era. Intertitles were known by a variety of names, including leaders, titles, captions, headings, and sub(-)titles, with the latter being the most common. See Katherine Nagels, "'Those Funny Subtitles': Silent Film Intertitles in Exhibition and Discourse," *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 10.4 (2012), 367-82, pp. 367-8.

⁵⁶ William F. Van Wert, "Intertitles," *Sight and Sound*, 49.2 (Spring 1980), 98-105, p. 98.

should not be able to use our imagination.” Iser argued that while with the novel “the reader must use his imagination to synthesize the information given him,” with the “film of a novel” he is confined “merely to physical perception, and so whatever he remembers of the world he had pictured is brutally cancelled out.”⁵⁷ In *The Act of Reading*, the German reception theorist further explained that the real reason why we feel disappointed when watching a film version of a book is that “we resent not being allowed to retain the images which we had produced.”⁵⁸ However, if a silent film adaptation did not allow viewers who had read the original text to retain the images of the characters they had produced, it allowed them to retain their voices. Scott Eyman points out that:

Silent film had an unparalleled capacity to draw an audience inside it, probably because it demanded the audience use its imagination. Viewers had to supply the voices and sound effects; in so doing they made the final creative contribution to the filmmaking process. Silent film was about more than a movie; it was about an experience.⁵⁹

Ukrainian-Soviet director Alexander Dovzhenko also observed that “each spectator reads the subtitles in his/her own way, imposing personal intonations into the reading. Each one [...] by reading the subtitle in his/her own way, participates in fact in the making of the film.”⁶⁰ Similarly one might ask if 1920s audiences participated in the

⁵⁷ Wolfgang Iser, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” *New Literary History*, 3.2 (Winter 1972), 279-99, p. 288.

⁵⁸ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) p. 139.

⁵⁹ Scott Eyman, *The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution 1926–1930* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p. 20.

⁶⁰ Alexander Dovzhenko, “La Parole dans le Scénario,” *Recherches Soviétiques*, 3 (1956), 81–102, p. 83.

making of these films, imposing personal intonations into the reading of the titles “giving voice” to Gatsby’s “elaborate formality of speech” or Daisy’s voice “full of money,” without the distracting “physical” element of the actors’ inflection in the novel’s sound adaptations.⁶¹ For instance, critics disapproved of Leonardo Di Caprio’s rendering of Gatsby’s voice in Lurhmann’s 3D adaptation of the novel by describing his “J.F.K.-tinged accent” as “simply and patently absurd” (*The New Yorker*) or “like it’s being delivered through a mouthful of marshmallows” (*The Wrap*).⁶² Users of Rotten Tomatoes also commented on the impact the actors’ voices had on their perception of *Gatsby*’s characters. “Eero V” complained that Di Caprio’s “pronunciation of Gatsby’s classic phrase ‘old sport’ sounds more like ‘old spore,’” while other users criticized the actor’s accent for not being “believable” (Jaelin T.) and “awkward” (Shane L. Leo). According to “Shamus W.,” “Tobey Macguire sounded like he was trying too hard,” while “Nicole O.” “purposely did not reread the book prior to watching the movie” to give Baz Luhrmann “as much leniency toward a successful interpretation as possible. Even still, I recalled dialogue and characters torn from the book and it sounded wrong.”⁶³ All this seems to suggest that the voices of the actors impersonating Fitzgerald’s characters in sound adaptations may impact audiences’ perception of the films. If sound movies “cancel out” the voices that moviegoers had pictured for the characters when they read Fitzgerald’s original texts, silent films’ intertitles allowed 1920s audiences to retain them.

⁶¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, ed. by James L. W. West III (1925. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 40; p. 93. All citations refer to this edition.

⁶² Richard Brody, “Try Again, Old Sport” <<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-great-gatsby-try-again-old-sport>> [accessed 6 May 2018]. Alonso Duralde, “‘The Great Gatsby’ Review: How Many Flappers Make a Flop” <<https://www.thewrap.com/great-gatsby-review-how-many-flappers-make-flop-89511/>> [accessed 6 May 2018].

⁶³ “The Great Gatsby Reviews” <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_great_gatsby_2013/reviews/?type=user> [accessed 6 May 2018].

The American reception of the six film adaptations reveals that their title cards were well received by both audiences and critics. Many intertitles were taken almost verbatim from Fitzgerald's source texts, which suggests that studios considered his work particularly suitable for being quickly condensed, adapted, and translated into title cards. The contracts for the movie rights to "Head and Shoulders" and "The Offshore Pirate," as well as the extant *The Chorus Girl's Romance* and film reviews of the presumed lost films, attest to the fact that film companies consistently used extracts from Fitzgerald's works for intertitles.⁶⁴ This and the fact that Fitzgerald managed to sell the cinematic rights to all of his 1920s novels – including *This Side of Paradise*, although it was never filmed – and several short stories also seem to suggest that his work lent itself better to the silent film medium than the sound one. The majority of scholars agree that the aural language of sound cinema and Fitzgerald's written style are mostly incompatible with each other, which should make the effort to explore the pre-sound cinematic adaptation of his work even more worthwhile.

Although the silent film medium has now achieved central importance in its social and artistic development of cinema, scholarship tends to focus on a restricted range of silent stars and directors. Studying these films also recalls to our attention some extremely popular silent stars of the time such as Viola Dana and Marie Prevost, most of whose output has been lost. In David Pierce's words, "history is told by the winners, and for film history, survival alone can be sufficient to enter the

⁶⁴ The contract for the film rights to "Head and Shoulders" reads "it is distinctly understood and agreed that [...] nothing herein contained shall be construed to prohibit the said party [...] from using extracts from the said literary composition for 'titles.'" "Agreement F. Scott Fitzgerald and Metro Pictures Corporation, Motion Picture Rights of 'Head and Shoulders,'" 25 February 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*. The contract for the film rights to "The Offshore Pirate" reads: "the purchaser shall have the right to use lines or excerpts from the said literary composition for the titles or subtitles in the said motion picture." "The Agreement Made on May 27, 1920, by and between Metro Pictures Corporation and F. Scott Fitzgerald," Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of South Carolina Libraries, Columbia, SC, form A.

pantheon.”⁶⁵ Only a small portion of the ten thousand feature films released in the United States during the pre-sound era survive. According to the first comprehensive survey of the survival of American silent feature films commissioned by the Library of Congress National Film Preservation Board in 2013, only 14% of the feature films produced in the United States during the period 1912–1929 survive in the format in which they were originally produced and exhibited. This means that the three quarters of “the creative record from the era that brought American movies to the pinnacle of world cinematic achievement in the twentieth century” is presumed lost. The author of the survey notes that “with so many gaps in the historical record, every silent film is of some value and illuminates different elements of our history.”⁶⁶

The vast majority of silent films did not survive the passage of time because, after the coming of sound, they lost any commercial appeal they might have had at the time of their release; as Pierce notes, “silent films were produced to make a profit, and many of them satisfied that short-term expectation.” After a film was no longer in active distribution, film studios would retain the original negative, the original work print and a projection print or two. When a film was sold to another company for a remake, the contract often required that all copies of the original be destroyed. Other factors that contributed to the loss were the studios’ poor storage conditions, the fact that film used a base of nitrocellulose that was not chemically stable (the films rot and catch fire easily), that few projection prints were required for even the most popular silent films (in 1926, the year of release of *The Great Gatsby*,

⁶⁵ David Pierce, *The First Comprehensive Survey of the Survival of American Silent Feature Films*, p. 15.

⁶⁶ In reality, as David Pierce notes, “there is no single number to quantify the survival of American silent era feature films, as they vary in format and completeness. There are 1,575 titles (14%) surviving in the ideal way – complete domestic-release version in 35mm. Another 1,174 (11%) are complete, but not ideal; they are either a foreign-release version in 35mm or the American version in a small-gauge print with less than 35mm image quality. Another 562 titles (5%) are incomplete and exist in a variety of format.” *Ibid.*, p. vii; p. 8; p. 37.

Paramount was making only 150 prints for domestic release and an additional 50 copies for foreign use), that the value of a film declined rapidly following its opening engagement, and that, once film theatres converted to sound, silent films lost their audience and thus became worthless.

Careless handling of the film prints combined with the flammable nature of their base caused many fires; in 1934, 15-acres of the 40-acre Warner Brothers Burbank studio burned, likely causing the loss of copies of *The Beautiful and Damned*, while most of the Fox Film Corporation library was destroyed in a fire in New Jersey in 1937, likely destroying prints of *The Husband Hunter*.⁶⁷ However, as American films were distributed worldwide, foreign archives have proved an important resource for recovering American silent films, as highlighted by the fact that, of the 3,311 American silent feature films that survive in any form, 886 were found overseas.⁶⁸ The rediscovery of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, which was acquired from the MoMA from a Brazilian archive, is a fitting example of the crucial role played by foreign archives in the recovery of presumed lost prints.

The six silent films that form the subject of this thesis need to be rediscovered also because they prove significant as a social record of the world of 1920s America. As Jauss notes,

An important work, one that indicates a new direction in the literary process, is surrounded by an unsurveyable production of works that correspond to the traditional expectations or images concerning reality, and that thus in their social

⁶⁷ David Pierce, "The Legion of the Condemned: Why American Silent Films Perished," *Film History*, 9 (1997), 5-22, pp. 6-7; p. 17; pp. 11-12.

⁶⁸ David Pierce, *The First Comprehensive Survey of the Survival of American Silent Feature Films*, p. 52.

index are to be no less valued than the solitary novelty of the great work that is often comprehended only later.⁶⁹

The surviving *The Chorus Girl's Romance* and *Conductor 1492*, along with the stills and lobby cards of the other four lost adaptations, captured and reflected the Jazz Age atmosphere in which they were made. Especially because Fitzgerald's work is so representative of the atmosphere of the 1920s, it is particularly relevant to explore how filmmakers transposed it to the screen. As Fred B. Millett noted, Fitzgerald's "tales of the post-war jazz age did a good deal to define, if not to create, the atmosphere of that period."⁷⁰ These silent adaptations become documentary evidence of what Fitzgerald's contemporaries wore, drove, smoke, drank and used to furnish their houses, as well as of how contemporary actors, directors, and scenarists interpreted his fiction.

This thesis adheres to a premise articulated by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer, namely that it is necessary to place films "in the contexts in which they were made, exhibited, and understood."⁷¹ Following Mailloux's model of rhetorical hermeneutics, which makes every act of reading an act historically read, I situate the six films adaptations and their source texts in the historical context of their production and use a reading strategy that emphasizes what audiences contributed to the interpretation.⁷² Such a historicizing strategy affords a more panoramic view of these adaptations and their frameworks, while trying to frame them within the historical

⁶⁹ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 12.

⁷⁰ Fred B. Millett, *Contemporary American Authors: A Critical Survey and 219 Bio-Bibliographies* (London: Harrap, 1940), p. 91.

⁷¹ Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer, "Introduction," in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, ed. by Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 5.

⁷² See Steven Mailloux, *Reception Histories*, p. 47; p. 90.

events and social forces that shaped the six films, such as, for instance, transformations in the roles of women (as discussed in Chapter Two and Three) and the Russian Revolution (as discussed in Chapter Three).

By taking into consideration the politics of gender and race in America between the wars, this study reveals how these silent adaptations reflected contemporary, social, political and national trends of the 1920s, including the Red Scare of 1919-1920, Prohibition, the Flapper generation, immigration, and ethnic conflict, showing how they intersect with the history of American film. The same theme might be treated differently from film to film. For example, the consequences of drinking during Prohibition were given a tragic spin in *The Beautiful and Damned* but treated comically in *Conductor 1492*. *The Chorus Girl's Romance* reveals America's new fascination with celebrity, while the significance of Fitzgerald's flapper is detectable in *The Husband Hunter*, *The Off-shore Pirate* and *The Beautiful and Damned*.

The readings I offer of these six films show how silent Hollywood's interpretations of Fitzgerald's work made a crucial impact on the movie-going public's thinking of Fitzgerald's celebrity persona. If Dallas M. Fitzgerald's *The Off-shore Pirate* broke with the stereotype of the passive woman and even attributed to the flapper par excellence, Ardita Farnam, more agency than Fitzgerald gave to her fictional counterpart, it also incorporated racist stereotypes. As Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater argue, "minorities and outsiders represented a convenient scapegoat for white America's fears as the Red Scare, anti-immigration laws and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan show. But also as Hollywood's presentation of African Americans and other ethnic groups in silent films as comic figures."⁷³ The insulting cinematic

⁷³ Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater, eds., "Introduction," in *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalised Voices*, ed. by Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), p. 5.

portrayals of some of the characters of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, *The Off-shore Pirate*, and *Conductor 1492*, in particular, signal the era's ethnic prejudice and racist humour, feeding into the racist portrayals that Fitzgerald himself had included in the literary sources.

It is evident how Fitzgerald's controversial work was appealing to filmmakers. Throughout the Roaring Twenties, Fitzgerald was an American figure and cultural icon, in Morris Dickstein's words, "the very embodiments of youthful energy and style for much of fashionable America."⁷⁴ While exploiting Fitzgerald's persona in the publicity for the films based on his work, silent Hollywood saw in his youthful flappers and philosophers both a commodity to be sold and a demographic market to be sold to. As Cynthia Felando observes, "it was in the early 1920s that the film industry first started to speak about the profitability of appealing to youth in the audience by depicting youth onscreen [...] to represent youth was the most effective method for selling to youth."⁷⁵ The most prominent depictions of modern youth in silent film were (often overlapping) collegiate and flapper movies, both categories that Fitzgerald dramatized in his *Saturday Evening Post* short stories.

However, the depiction of youth inevitably attracted the censor's attention. Chapter Four reveals information on the film industry policy of self-control that William Hays and his Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) instituted in 1922. As Hays declared, "Nothing [was] wrong with the moving pictures – except youth."⁷⁶ As George Bernard Shaw noted in 1914, "The

⁷⁴ Morris Dickstein, "Fitzgerald: The Authority of Failure," in *Fitzgerald in the Twenty First Century*, ed. by Jacson Bryer, Ruth Prigozy, and Milton R. Stern (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press), p. 302.

⁷⁵ Cynthia Felando, "Hollywood in the 1920s: Youth Must be Served," in *Hollywood Goes Shopping*, ed. by David Desser and Garth S. Jowett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 84; p. 90.

⁷⁶ Qtd. in Cynthia Felando, "Hollywood in the 1920s: Youth Must be Served," p. 101.

danger of the cinema is not the danger of immorality, but of morality. The cinema must be not merely ordinarily and locally moral, but extraordinarily and internationally moral.”⁷⁷ In analysing these six adaptations, one must take into account the mutations necessitated by the exigencies of the medium, by the creative choices of directors, scenario and title writers, or by the explicit prohibitions of censorship, which after the industry’s appointment of Hays in the year in which *The Beautiful and Damned* was released became stricter. Chapter Four, however, also demonstrates Warner Brothers’ attempt to legitimate the appeal of Fitzgerald’s second novel among varied audiences, including child readers. Studios’ link with MPPDA and wide-reaching publicity for Fitzgerald’s adaptation, paradoxically, allowed him to broaden rather than restrict his readership.

In the 1920s, Hays called the American film industry the “quintessence of what we mean by ‘America.’”⁷⁸ Hollywood films took over markets in Europe and around the world, establishing fashions, selling American products, spreading the nation’s way of life along with its literature and theatre through the adaptations of contemporary fiction and drama.⁷⁹ In May 1921, Fitzgerald wrote to Edmund Wilson from London, “Culture follows money [...] We will be the Romans in the next generations as the English are now.”⁸⁰ This remark epitomizes the writer’s well-known gift for guessing right; at the beginning of the 1920s, his “marvellous

⁷⁷ George Bernard Shaw, “The Cinema as a Moral Leveler,” p. 1

⁷⁸ Qtd. in Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Crown, 1988), p. 1.

⁷⁹ See George C. Herring, *The American Century and Beyond: U.S. Foreign Relations, 1893-2014* (New York: University Press, 2008), p. 141. Exports of American films to Central Europe increased from 50 reels in 1913 to 20,000 reels annually by 1926. According to a survey that year, in Germany, censors reviewed and passed 251 American features for local exhibition. In Spain, 9 of every 10 playdates were for American films. David Pierce, *The First Comprehensive Survey of the Survival of American Silent Feature Films*, p. 48.

⁸⁰ Andrew Turnbull, ed., *Dreams of Youth: The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (London: Little Books, 2011), p. 146.

intuition” – as a friend of his called it – allowed him to anticipate that the decade would have seen the United States emerging as cultural dominance and becoming a centre for the global export of mass culture.⁸¹ “The sun is rising overhead,” wrote critic Paul Rosenfeld in his 1924 collection of essays on modern American writers and artists. He continued:

The sun which once shone brightly on Europe alone and threw slanting rays merely upon New York [...] We had been sponging on Europe for direction instead of developing our own [...] But then Europe fell into disorder and lost her way [...] Through words, lights, colors, the new world has been reached at last. We have to thank a few people – for the gift that is likest the gift of life.⁸²

The beginning of the “roaring” decade was, as Sarah Churchwell notes, the “precise moment in history” when readers debated “what American literature might prove capable of”; from the beginning of his career Fitzgerald had been “treated as a symbol of modern America; he had grown accustomed to seeing his capacities linked with his nation’s.”⁸³ Scottie Fitzgerald once wrote that her father’s work covered more than the Jazz Age, identifying his subject as America between the world wars.⁸⁴ But the inter-war period, as historian Geir Lundestad notes, was also when:

⁸¹ In September 1920, a friend of Fitzgerald noted in his diary: “Fitz argued about various things. Mind absolutely undisciplined but guesses right - intuition marvellous.” Qtd. in Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 113.

⁸² Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1924), pp. 293-95.

⁸³ Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People: Murder, Mayhem and the Invention of The Great Gatsby* (London: Virago, 2013), p. 10

⁸⁴ Qtd. in Ronald Berman, *F. Scott Fitzgerald and the American Scene* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017), p. 2.

The Americanization of Europe really started [...]. Between 60 and 95 percent of the movies shown in the 1920s and 1930s in Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany (before 1933) were made in America. American jazz and literature became quite popular in Europe. As Paul Claudel, French ambassador to the United States and himself a man of letters, told the Americans in 1930: ‘your movies and talkies have soaked the French mind in American life, methods, and manners. American gasoline and American ideas have circulated throughout France, bringing a new vision of power and a new tempo of life [...] More and more we follow the Americans.’⁸⁵

In fact, Hollywood silent movies were, in Richard Koszarski’s words, “The first American cultural export to conquer the world.”⁸⁶ If it is true, as James L. W. West III stated during his presentation at the 2017 F. Scott Fitzgerald’s conference, that “*Gatsby* now represents Americans to other nations,” so the 1926 film based on “The Great American Novel” (as well as the other five silent adaptations) represented Americans to other nations. A French review of *The Beautiful and Damned* (released as *La Bourrasque* in France) called the story a “drame très américain,” while the Swedish review of *The Off-shore Pirate* (released as *Kärlekspiraten*, “The Love Pirate” in Sweden) called the film a “little comedy of American brand.”⁸⁷ Just as European observers viewed the Hollywood “dream factory” as quintessentially American since its inception, so the international reception of the silent film

⁸⁵ Geir Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation,” in *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the “American Century,”* ed. by Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 58.

⁸⁶ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment: The Age of Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 100.

⁸⁷ “Les Films de la Semaine,” *Cinémagazine*, 11 April 1924, p. 85; “Kärlekspiraten,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 10 April 1922, p. 12.

adaptations of Fitzgerald's work reveals that foreign moviegoers described the author of their stories as quintessentially American.

In the late 1920s, both the silent and the jazz era came to an abrupt end with the Wall Street Crash and the transition to sound. As David Pierce notes, "Few art forms emerged as quickly, came to an end as suddenly, or vanished more completely than the silent film."⁸⁸ It seems particularly fitting that a thesis on the cinematic adaptations of Fitzgerald's work should culminate with a chapter on the first film version of what is now considered his masterpiece. *The Great Gatsby* was the last feature film made from a work by Fitzgerald during his lifetime. It was released a year before the "first talkie," *The Jazz Singer*, heralded the demise of silent films. The end of the silent era was also effectively the end of the privileged relationship that Fitzgerald had with Hollywood. For all of his commercial success and his fame with studios in the 1920s, in the 1930s he did not manage to sell the cinematic rights to any of his works. Haunted by debts and alcohol, from 1937 to 1940 he retreated to Hollywood with an outlook to reinventing himself as a screenwriter for MGM; the same studio that a few years before had contributed to the meteoric beginning of his career.

The fact that Fitzgerald's scripts were rejected and that he prematurely died in movieland in 1940 played a role in the creation of the "Hollywood-as-vampire legend," namely the idea that the 1930s film industry sucked dry his creativity and that his association with the movies destroyed what he most cared about, his literary reputation. The presumed loss and general neglect of these 1920s silent adaptations have skewed our perspective on Fitzgerald and film. The ultimate ambition of this thesis is to develop a more precise idea of the author's early relationship with

⁸⁸ David Pierce, *The First Comprehensive Survey of the Survival of American Silent Feature Films*, p. 5.

Hollywood, and to encourage critical attention to the largely unexplored subject of silent films based on his fiction. In the opening of *The Last Tycoon*, Cecilia Brady states, “You can take Hollywood for granted like I did, or you can dismiss it with the contempt we reserve for what we don’t understand.”²⁸⁹ Taking “Silent Hollywood for granted,” the six chapters that follow ultimately argue that 1920s movies played an essential role in the construction and popularization of Fitzgerald’s literary and celebrity persona in the United States and beyond. Written almost a century after the release of the film adaptation of “Head and Shoulders,” this thesis explores the visual experience that moviegoers shared by watching F. Scott Fitzgerald on the silver screens of elegant metropolitan movie palaces or meagre country nickelodeons around the world.

⁸⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, ed. by James L. West III (1941. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 3. All citations refer to this edition.

Chapter 1 “Head and Shoulders” on the Silver Screen: A Rediscovery of *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*

This chapter deals with *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, the first and only extant silent film entirely based on a work by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It is fitting to begin a study of Fitzgerald and silent film with an analysis of the cinematic adaptation of “Head and Shoulders,” both because the 1920 short story was his first sale to a mass-circulated magazine and his first sale to Hollywood. In this chapter, I argue that William C. Dowlan’s *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* contributed to the creation of Fitzgerald’s early celebrity persona in America and abroad. In addition, I explain how I was able to locate the film print, presumed lost for almost a century, and the implications of that find for our understanding of Fitzgerald’s cultural construction.

On 24 February 1920, three days after the short story’s appearance in the *Saturday Evening Post* and a month before the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald wrote a now famous telegram to Zelda Sayre announcing: “I HAVE SOLD THE MOVIE RIGHTS OF HEAD AND SHOULDERS TO THE METRO COMPANY FOR TWENTY FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS I LOVE YOU DEAREST GIRL.”⁹⁰ Widely mentioned by scholars as evidence of the obvious association between love and money in young Fitzgerald’s mind, this note also highlights the equally obvious connection between film rights and money at the very beginning of his career.⁹¹ Fitzgerald decided that the contract deserved a place in his scrapbook; Zelda put the telegram in her scrapbook. Predating the reviews of *This*

⁹⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 37.

⁹¹ For a thorough discussion of this issue, see Scott Donaldson, “Money and Marriage in Fitzgerald’s Stories,” in *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 75-88.

Side of Paradise in Fitzgerald's first scrapbook, the six-page contract for the film rights to "Head and Shoulders" stands as proof of the chronological and historical relevance of this 1920 film adaptation in his early career.

If, as Michael Nowlin notes, "Head and Shoulders" "has received scant attention despite reams of Fitzgerald's criticism," its 1920 cinematic version has received even less consideration.⁹² Past and current scholarship has overlooked William C. Dowlan's *The Chorus Girl's Romance* because the film print was presumed lost and because the source text is deemed frivolous. In 1986, Gene D. Phillips maintained that no copies of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* had survived and that the film "had disintegrated before copies could be transferred to permanent film stock," while more recently Ruth Prigozy stated that the adaptation is "not available for viewing and is presumed lost or destroyed."⁹³ In the last chapter of his *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, Wheeler Winston Dixon reported on a research trip to the MGM studios, where he was told that no prints of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* were available and that the negative was believed lost. After his unsuccessful visit to Hollywood, Dixon, citing his 5 August 1985 interview with Herbert S. Nusbaum at MGM/UA Studios, concluded that:

Other than the facts that the film was directed by William C. Dowlan from a scenario by E. Percy Heath, I have been unable to discover any more information on the project. For the moment, then, I must assume that the

⁹² Michael Nowlin, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Racial Angles and the Business of Literary Greatness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 14.

⁹³ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 40; Ruth Prigozy, "Fitzgerald's Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age," p. 159.

negative has been lost, destroyed, or has decomposed. If I am wrong in this assumption, I would be more than pleased to be corrected.⁹⁴

Dixon was wrong in two respects. First, an assortment of primary documents from the early 1920s – including trade papers, newspapers, pressbooks, fanzines, film stills, the film contract, Fitzgerald’s scrapbooks, and even an illuminating Spanish novelization of the film – reveals detailed information on the project.⁹⁵ Second, the film print exists and has been preserved in the Museum of Modern Art archives in New York City since 1992.

Given that *Conductor 1492*, Charles Hines’s 1924 film discussed in Chapter Five, is only loosely adapted from “The Camel’s Back,” the significance of analysing *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* is increased by the fact that it is the only extant silent film entirely based on a work by Fitzgerald. Furthermore, the cinematic interpretation of “Head and Shoulders” can give a unique perspective into silent Hollywood’s practice of film exportation and adaptation and the rise of celebrity culture in the 1920s. The 1923 Spanish novelization – essential to reconstruct two missing scenes of the film, as discussed later in the chapter – and the same year’s Portuguese version of the film testify the extent to which Hollywood exported the jazz age and the work of its finest chronicler to the rest of the world.

⁹⁴ Interview with Herbert S. Nusbaum, Los Angeles, 5 august 1985 at MGM/UA Studios. Wheeler W. Dixon, *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 101.

⁹⁵ “Realidades de la Vida,” *La Novela Semanal Cinematográfica* 60, 5 December 1923, pp. 1-31. Published in Barcelona between 1922 and 1932, *La Novela Semanal Cinematográfica* was a magazine that specialized in novelizations of silent films, most often American ones. See José Luis Martínez Montalbán, *La Novela Semanal Cinematográfica* (Madrid: CSIC, 2012).

1.1 The First Film Adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's work: *The Chorus Girl's Romance*

In late October 1919, Fitzgerald sent the manuscript of "Nest Feathers" to his first literary agent Paul Revere Reynolds, with a note saying the story had "never been submitted anywhere. If you feel you can place it anywhere your regular terms will be satisfactory to me."⁹⁶ Fitzgerald told Maxwell Perkins, who had accepted *This Side of Paradise* for publication the previous autumn, that he had revised the story in January 1920 in a "thoroughly nervous alcoholic state," with the hope of getting enough money to go south because he was afraid he was developing tuberculosis.⁹⁷ His desire was soon realized: the high-paying *Saturday Evening Post* accepted the story, re-titled "Head and Shoulders" by editor George Horace Lorimer, for \$400.⁹⁸ On 21 February 1920, Fitzgerald made the first of sixty-five appearances in the weekly magazine. "Seeing my story in the *Sat. Eve Post* raised my spirits greatly," Fitzgerald wrote to Perkins on the same day. "I think there's some necessity for an author to see his work occasionally outside."⁹⁹

Thanks to the publicity given to "Head and Shoulders" by the most popular American magazine of the 1920s, Metro Pictures Corporation purchased the short story as screen material for \$2,500 only three days after its appearance in print.¹⁰⁰ As

⁹⁶ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., with the assistance of Jennifer McCabe Atkinson, *As Ever, Scott Fitz.: Letters Between F. Scott Fitzgerald and his Literary Agent Harold Ober, 1919-1940* (London: Woburn Press, 1973), p. 3.

⁹⁷ John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds., *Dear Scott/Dear Max The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), p. 24.

⁹⁸ Henry Dan Piper, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait* (London: Bodley Head, 1966), p. 65.

⁹⁹ John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds. *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁰ Fitzgerald's first contract with Metro Pictures Corporation is dated 25 February 1920 and was signed in New York. However, the telegram Fitzgerald sent to Zelda to announce the selling of the film rights is dated 24 February, which suggests that the agreement was effective from the day after the signing of the contract. Rose Adrienne Gallo is mistaken when she says that "after the exceptional popular success of *This Side of Paradise* and *Flappers and Philosophers*, Hollywood became interested in filming [Fitzgerald's] works" and that "*Flappers and Philosophers* elicited an immediate response from Hollywood." Fitzgerald sold the rights to "Head and Shoulders" before the publication of *This Side of*

Bayard Veiller, Metro's chief of the Story Producing Department, boasted to *Motion Picture News* shortly after the release of the adaptation, "although Mr. Fitzgerald was practically unknown at the time the story was published [...] it was immediately purchased and prepared for production."¹⁰¹ The agreement was made through Alice Kauser, a New Yorker dramatic and cinematic agent whose office was at 1402 Broadway, very close to Metro's address at 1476.¹⁰² Given that Fitzgerald took "Myra Meets His Family" by himself to a movie agent, as discussed in Chapter Two, it is very likely that he personally dealt with Kauser for the sale of the cinematic rights of "Head and Shoulders."¹⁰³

In early April, scenarist E. Percy Heath started working on the scenario of the film, which began production under fellow St. Paulite William C. Dowlan's direction two months later, at the end of June.¹⁰⁴ In the same month, Fitzgerald wrote to Ober: "I'm glad this contract has in it about using the original name. I don't think 'The Chorus Girl's Romance' is half as good a title as 'Head + Shoulders.'" He then corrected himself in a postscript: "My mistake. I see that they only agree to use the

Paradise and the rights to "The Offshore Pirate" before *Flappers and Philosophers* was published. Rose Adrienne Gallo, *F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978), p. 132.

¹⁰¹ "'Just Stories' are Wanted: Veiller States Metro Will Pay No Attention to Author's Name," *Motion Picture News*, 2 October 1920, p. 2652.

¹⁰² In *Who's Who in Literature*, Kauser is listed both under "America Dramatic Agents" and "America Kinema Agents." Mark Meredith, ed., *Who's Who in Literature* (Liverpool: Literary Year Book Press, 1927), p. xiii. As indicated by the envelope in the Special Collections section of the University of Virginia Library, Fitzgerald's letters addressed to Mr. David A. Balch were sent to Metro Pictures, 1476 Broadway, New York City.

¹⁰³ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ On 10 April 1920, *Motion Picture News* wrote: "Percy Heath, who recently [was] added to the scenario staff at the Metro studios in Hollywood [is] already busy on the construction of continuities for forthcoming Metro releases. Mr. Heath has begun work on Viola Dana's next starring production, 'Head and Shoulders,' a story by F. Scott Fitzgerald," "Heath and Gates Begin Scripts for Metro," *Motion Picture News*, 10 April 1920, p. 3300. On 26 June 1920, *Motion Picture News* wrote "'Head and Shoulders' is now being produced by Metro at the West Coast Studios in Hollywood," "Metro Purchases Story from Fitzgerald," *Motion Picture News*, 26 June 1920, p. 100. An article titled "Film Version of Young St. Paul Writer's story booked at Astoria" in the *St. Paul Daily News* reads: "Fitzgerald picture, scheduled for October 3, is directed by St. Paul Man and Played by Brooklyn Actress, which prevents it from being complete old home celebration," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

title in their paid publicity – not as title to the picture.”¹⁰⁵ The agreement, in fact, stated that Metro had to use the title “Head and Shoulders” for “purposes of exploitation” and for “titles.”¹⁰⁶ According to a letter Fitzgerald sent to an employee of Metro Pictures, David A. Balch, a second tentative title for “Head and Shoulders” was “The Prodigy.”¹⁰⁷ Metro decided not to use either this alternative title or the original one, opting instead for the more predictable *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*.¹⁰⁸ The first film adaptation based on a work by Fitzgerald was released on 16 August 1920.¹⁰⁹

In a second letter to Balch, Fitzgerald complained: “I don’t think the new title is any good but you know best.”¹¹⁰ Balch’s answer does not appear to have survived. However, from what he wrote to R. W. Stallman four decades later, we know that the content of the missing letter also concerned the change of the film’s title. “These motion-picture people [...] could do things like that,” confided Balch to Stallman. “I had recommended Fitzgerald [to Metro]; so I winced at this change, apologizing for it more or less when I wrote him.”¹¹¹ Fitzgerald and Balch were not alone in wincing at the re-titling. The *New York Review* stated that “the new title is the only fault to be found in the entertainment” of the film, while *Wid’s* wondered “Why kill a good title and one that has been well-advertised in such a medium as the *Post* and fasten on a

¹⁰⁵ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ “Agreement F. Scott Fitzgerald and Metro Pictures Corporation, Motion Picture Rights of ‘Head and Shoulders,’” 25 February 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

¹⁰⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁸ Ironically, the narrator of “Head and Shoulders” lampoons Horace’s professors who “made Marcia a chorus girl.” In the short story, she is, in fact, an actress. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, ed. James L. W. West III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 76. All following citations refer to this edition.

¹⁰⁹ As indicated in a list of features films released from 1 September 1919 to 1 September 1920, *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* was released on 16 August 1920, not on 6 August as stated by *IMDb*, *Wid’s Year Book: 1920–1921* (New York: Wid’s Films and Film Folks, 1921), p. 339.

¹¹⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, Letter to David A. Balch, 24 June 1920, ALS, 2 pp. Papers of F. Scott Fitzgerald, 6177-c. Box-folder 1:27, pp. 1-2.

¹¹¹ R. W. Stallman, “Two New Scott Fitzgerald Letters,” *Modern Fiction Studies*, 11.2 (1965), 189-91, p. 189.

cut-and-dried commonplace one such as *The Chorus Girl's Romance*? Is it because of some ancient illusion that the public quivers at the idea of a chorus girl?"¹¹² Another explanation could be that Metro used the "cut-and-dried" title because it was familiar to the audiences of the time. A few years earlier, on 7 October 1913, the Gaumont Company had released a short film called *A Chorus Girl's Romance*, and on 12 June 1915, Bison Motion Pictures had released a feature film with the title *The Chorus Girl's Romance* directed by Henry MacRae.

As popular as silent movies were with U.S. audiences in the 1920s, foreign markets were an essential source of revenue. In particular, the year 1923 saw a great exportation of films from the United States to Brazil. In March 1923, *Exhibitors Herald* quoted a report from the Brazilian Board of Censorship showing that 79% of the films imported to Brazil were from the U.S., with an increase of 8% over the previous year.¹¹³ As part of a Brazilian-American agreement on the exchange of motion pictures, also in the same year *The Chorus Girl's Romance* was imported to Brazil and released with Portuguese intertitles.¹¹⁴ For the Brazilian release, the film title was changed to the possibly even tawdrier *Dà-me um Beijo, Sim?* (Would You Give Me a Kiss?), presumably referring to Horace's decision not to kiss Marcia

¹¹² John Morrell, "John Morrell Says: Metro Turns Out Good Job for Viola Dana in 'A Chorus Girl's Romance.'" Pressbook for *The Chorus Girl's Romance* compiled by the Community Motion Picture Bureau. Motion Picture and Television Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; "Author and Leading Man Assist Viola Dana to Great Comedy Success," *Wid's Daily*, 22 August 1920, p. 3.

¹¹³ "79% of Films in Brazil, American," *Exhibitors Herald*, 31 March 1923, p. 26. In June of the same year, the American film trade magazine mentioned Brazil again, this time to describe Brazilians preferences in matters of film styles: "American pictures are most popular in São Paulo, Brazil, according to the consul there...society pictures of moral and instructive trend are most popular, it is stated, and Westerns, while still liked in the industrial sections, no longer appeal to the higher-class audiences," "Society Picture Popular," *Exhibitors Herald*, 9 June 1923, p. 35.

¹¹⁴ By the 1920s, Argentina and Brazil had become Hollywood's third and fourth largest export markets, the first and second being Britain and Australia. As Nowell-Smith points out, Hollywood had an 80 percent market share in Brazil, while Brazilian production could only manage 4 percent, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema: The Definitive History of Cinema Worldwide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 429. Oddly, in "Head and Shoulders" there are many references to Brazil, starting with Marcia's misunderstanding of Horace's sentence "Bergsonian trimmings" with "Brazilian trimmings," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 66.

during their first meeting because he believes such a kiss “intrinsically irrational” (Intertitle 50).¹¹⁵ In assembling the main intertitles of the film, the Brazilian editor stripped Fitzgerald of the credit as author of the story, which, combined with the change of the title and its translation into Brazilian, made the adaptation more difficult to locate in later decades.

In 1987, part of the film (34 minutes) was screened during the 11th São Paulo International Film Festival, but only the adapter’s name, E. Percy Heath, was included in the festival program.¹¹⁶ No one involved in the festival had any reason to know that the film was based on a short story by the now globally famous Fitzgerald. The movie then remained forgotten in the Brazilian archives until January 1992, when a copy of the negative was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art.¹¹⁷ In February of the same year, MoMA organized several screenings of their recent acquisitions at the Roy and Niita Titus Theaters. When *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* was projected on 25 February with Portuguese intertitles, once again no one realized it was the film adaptation of “Head and Shoulders” as the original title and the identity of the author were, by then, lost.¹¹⁸ After that screening, the film was re-buried in the MoMA archives for twenty-four years until February 2016, when I watched it in a projection room of the Celeste Bartos Theater. As an Italian native, I had the advantage of being able to understand the numerous (121 in total) Portuguese title cards.

¹¹⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 68.

¹¹⁶ Cinemateca Brasileria confirmed to me that they hold an incomplete copy of the film. For the festival program, see <<http://39.mostra.org/en/filme/2353-Da-Me-um-Beijo,-Sim>> [accessed 23 February 2018].

¹¹⁷ Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. 1611. “From the Archives: Recent Acquisitions. 24 January-29 February 1992.” The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

¹¹⁸ “Goings on About Town,” *New Yorker*, 2 March 1992, 15-22, p. 16.

The fact that *The Chorus Girl's Romance* was released in the Americas and Spain testifies to the breadth of film distribution at that time, which not only extended to most of the U.S. but also crossed national and linguistic boundaries.¹¹⁹ As Edward S. Van Zile noted in his 1923 history of the movies, silent films were an “Esperanto of the Eye,” that could be comprehended not only by “illiterates and morons” but also had become a worldwide means of intercommunication. “In the twinkling of an eye,” motion pictures overcame lack of education and language differences, allowing illiterate and foreign moviegoers to have access to works by Fitzgerald – even if unaware of it – in the only way they could: on the screen.¹²⁰

Shortly after signing the contract, the director of publicity at Metro, J. E. D. Meador, sent Fitzgerald a synopsis of the plot. Showing his interest in the film, Fitzgerald pasted the synopsis into his scrapbook and ticked the name of the characters that were kept from “Head and Shoulders”: Marcia Meadow, Horace Tarbox, Charlie Moon (Horace’s cousin), Dr. Tarbox (Horace’s father), and Prof. Dillinger (a Yale professor, only mentioned once in Fitzgerald’s story).¹²¹ “Head and Shoulders” is the story of Horace Tarbox (“The Head”) an infant prodigy who enters Princeton at the age of thirteen and wants to become an authority on modern philosophy. When he falls in love and marries the actress and dancer Marcia Meadow (“The Shoulders”), he leaves the university to find a job as a clerk. When Marcia has to stop dancing because of her pregnancy and starts writing a book, Horace takes on additional work as an acrobat. In a comical reversal of roles, Marcia (now “The Head”) becomes an acclaimed writer, praised for her use of vernacular – as Fitzgerald

¹¹⁹ The Spanish version of the film was released under the title *Realidades de la Vida* on 12 November 1924 and distributed by the film company Julio César.

¹²⁰ Edward S. Van Zile, *That Marvel – The Movie: A Glance at its Reckless Past, Its Promising Present, and its Significant Future* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1923), p. 159; p. 194.

¹²¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 61; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

famously was – and Horace (now “The Shoulders”) keeps doing his “wondrous flying-ring performance” in the theater.¹²²

The Chorus Girl's Romance follows the original story closely. The film adaptation opens with an intertitle introducing the male protagonist: “Of the 122 sons of millionaires registered at Yale, only one, Horace Tarbox, was there with the sole purpose of studying,” followed by a studio picture of actor Gareth Hughes dressed in collegiate clothes.¹²³ The rediscovery of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* calls attention to the forgotten career of its male lead, one of the first Welsh Broadway and Hollywood stars. Sharing the fate of many other silent actors, Hughes fell into oblivion as only a few of the forty films he starred in during the silent era survived. His youthful and frail appearance meant he was often cast as the “juvenile lead,” as he described himself in a 1924 interview.¹²⁴ Several titles of the silent films in which Hughes starred were linked to the theme of youth: *Eyes of Youth* (1919), *The Lure of Youth* (1921), and *The Whirlwind of Youth* (1927). Although Hughes was twenty-six at the time of the release of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, contemporary reviewers agreed that he was well-cast as eighteen-year-old Horace.¹²⁵ After the success of the film, he signed a contract stipulating that he would “appear exclusively in Metro productions for a term of years. This announcement just made by Metro Picture Corporation follows closely in the wake of the reviews that resulted from the youthful Mr. Hughes’s appearance with Viola Dana in her newest starring vehicle *The Chorus*

¹²² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 85.

¹²³ All intertitles have been translated from Portuguese into English by the author of this thesis with the help of Pedro Dalla Bernardina. As William F. Van Wert notes, in the opening of many American silent films of the time “the title names a character and the ensuing visual shows him in some brief pose or vignette, as though all characters had to be named before any real action could take place.” William F. Van Wert, “Intertitles,” p. 101

¹²⁴ David Berry, *Wales and Cinema: The First Hundred Years* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), p. 102.

¹²⁵ “John Morrell Says”; “The Chorus Girl’s Romance: The Best Light Comedy of the Year,” *Motion Picture News*, 28 August 1920, p. 1751.

Girl's Romance.”¹²⁶ The *Washington Herald* also congratulated Hughes on his performance: “As Horace Tarbox the grind, [he] is perfect in a role of great possibilities which he fully realizes.”¹²⁷ The *Washington Times* pointed out that he contributed “an exceptionally clever characterization.”¹²⁸

Like his fictional counterpart (and author), the movie’s Horace attends Princeton as an undergraduate. And like his fictional counterpart (but not his author), the character graduates at seventeen years old and, according to Intertitle 2, goes to Yale “to take his degree as Master of Arts.” But “He wasn’t as smart as he seemed,” reveals the third intertitle, which both introduces Viola Dana as Marcia Meadow and marks the first difference between the story and the film. While Fitzgerald characterized Marcia as semi-illiterate, unable to understand most of Horace’s humorously erudite references, scenarist E. Percy Heath represented her as clever and, arguably, smarter than Horace, sentimentalizing her in Intertitle 5, as a young girl with “a beautiful heart” and a drunken father to take care of when she was twelve years old.¹²⁹

Also associated with juvenile roles, Dana entered the movies as a child actress who was known for having “waited until she was five years old for [her] debut.”¹³⁰ According to an unidentified clipping in his scrapbook, Fitzgerald took credit for

¹²⁶ “Gareth Hughes,” *Motion Picture News*, 2 October 1920, p. 2653.

¹²⁷ “Crandall’s Metropolitan – Viola Dana in ‘The Chorus Girl’s Romance,’” *Washington Herald*, 30 August 1920, p. 10.

¹²⁸ “Metropolitan: ‘Chorus Girl’s Romance,’” *Washington Times*, 28 August 1920, p. 8. On the day after Fitzgerald’s twenty-fourth birthday, *Motion Picture News* announced that, “as the result of his exceptionally good work in *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, Gareth Hughes has been placed under a long term contract by Metro and will appear in leading man parts,” J. C. Jessen, “Production on the West Coast,” *Motion Picture News*, 25 September 1920, 2485-88, p. 248. Only a week later, Metro confirmed that, “his exclusive services were secured by the company following the tremendous personal hit made by Hughes,” Lillian R. Gale, “Live Notes From the Studios,” *Motion Picture News*, 2 October 1920, p. 2661.

¹²⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, pp. 61-67.

¹³⁰ “Viola Dana Waited Until She Was Five Years Old For Debut,” *Washington Times*, 30 October 1920, p. 17.

choosing Dana for the role: “It was I who suggested that Viola Dana play the chorus girl part in this story [...] and I don’t think I made a very bad choice. She’s just the sort of chorus girl I had pictured in my mind when I wrote it.”¹³¹ This article, if accurate, would suggest Hollywood films began influencing Fitzgerald’s creative process and providing cinematic models for his characters at the very beginning of his career. The *Wilmington Evening Journal* seems to support such hypothesis noting: “Many in seeing this picture will recognize the story ‘Head and Shoulders.’ It is surprising how well Viola Dana fits into the characterization of the chorus girl heroine. It seems almost as if the part was written especially for her in the very beginning.”¹³² On the other hand, the news that the “flapper historian” had personally chosen Dana might have been a marketing gimmick used by Metro to substantiate their choice of the actress and support their promotion of *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* as a movie about post-war youth portrayed by youth and written by a young man.¹³³ Contemporary reviews of the film validated this tactic by hailing Dana’s performance as a “screen delight that sparkles with the zest of youth.”¹³⁴

After introducing the two main characters and actors, the film presents contrasting scenes in which Horace lectures his own professors and Marcia dances a waltz with her partner Steve Reynolds under the scrutiny of Mr. Bergfeld, the impresario of the Frivolities chorus. Also watching her is the Admirable Anderson (called Peter Boyce Wendell in “Head and Shoulders”), a journalist who, as Intertitle 11 reads, is “right in his praise of Marcia’s divine grace.” After having proved her

¹³¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

¹³² “The Screen: A Chorus Girl’s Romance,” *The Evening Journal*, 6 December 1920, p. 9.

¹³³ Regarding Fitzgerald’s association with the youth culture in the 1920s, see Kirk Curnutt, “F. Scott Fitzgerald, Age Consciousness, and the Rise of American Youth Culture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, as well as his *Cambridge Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 29-30 and his “Youth Culture and the Spectacle of Waste,” in *Fitzgerald in the Twenty First Century*.

¹³⁴ “Viola Dana in ‘The Chorus Girl’s Romance,’” *Jewish Monitor*, 3 September 1920, p. 3.

“shimmy skills,” Marcia is offered a job at the Gaiety (the Divineries in Fitzgerald’s story).¹³⁵ She then has an initial conflict with her dancing partner who tries unsuccessfully to enter her dressing room. Starting with serial queen melodramas of the 1910s, which often presented imperilled heroines, Hollywood depicted women as helpless victims being threatened by men. As Barbara Wilinsky notes, “this quality of danger to women was used often to promote the films.”¹³⁶ Metro also exploited an image of violence to advertise the movie in popular film magazines and repeated the formula in *The Off-shore Pirate*, as discussed in Chapter Three.¹³⁷

The next scene shows the Frivolities chorus girls arriving at the Yale University Club, to the great delight of the students who try to bribe Charlie Moon (in “Head and Shoulders” Charlie is Marcia’s cousin; in the film he is Horace’s cousin) to meet Marcia – it is not explained why he knows her – and her colleagues. Students and dancers eventually go to a restaurant where Charlie asks Marcia in Intertitle 31 to resurrect “an Egyptian mummy” who in Intertitle 33 “has been sleeping [...] for 200 years.” Charlie then offers Marcia “a bottle of her favourite perfume” (Intertitle 34) if she visits Horace and “manages to make him kiss [her]” (Intertitle 35). This suggests that the title writer opted for a less controversial and more gendered reward than the “five thousand Pall Malls” that Charlie bargains with Marcia in “Head and Shoulders.”¹³⁸ The first part of the film ends with Marcia accepting the challenge.

¹³⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 71.

¹³⁶ Barbara Wilinsky, “Flirting with Kathlyn: Creating the Mass Audience,” in *Hollywood Goes Shopping*, ed. by David Desser, and Garth S. Jowett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 47.

¹³⁷ On the cover of its August 15, 1920, issue, *Wid’s Daily* published a still showing Marcia’s dancing partner holding her by the shoulders. “The Chorus Girl’s Romance,” *Wid’s Daily*, 15 August 1920, p.1

¹³⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 62. An article published in *Moving Picture World* proves that in 1922 theatre managers still decided to book films on the basis of whether older patrons might approve of seeing young girls smoking on the screen: “A slight thing will often bring their voluble condemnation. I recently decide not to book a picture now on the market, because of the heroine’s

The first meeting between the “head” and the “shoulders” in the adaptation is very similar to the one in the short story, to the point that the intertitles quote Fitzgerald’s text exactly. When Horace mistakes Marcia for the housemaid, Intertitle 37 reads, “Leave the clothes on the bed, in the other room”; when Marcia pretends she is a canteen singer, Intertitle 41 reads “You perfectly know who I am. I came to get back those letters I wrote to you in 1883.” To Horace’s objection, Marcia replies in Intertitle 43, “Don’t be a fool. Don’t you remember that I was a vivandiere during the war in 1812?” When they say good-bye, Horace again quotes his fictional counterpart by telling Marcia in Intertitle 50, “I hope I haven’t given you the impression that I consider kissing intrinsically irrational.” Intertitle 56 later in the film repeats a joke from Fitzgerald’s story: “Before Marcia’s visit, Horace saw girls as creatures he needed to give his seat to in the trams.”¹³⁹ Despite Bruccoli’s claim that “Fitzgerald’s magazine stories depend upon verbal elements that were lost on the silent screen,” reviewers in 1920 acknowledged Metro’s effort to retain his original writing style.¹⁴⁰ *Variety* wrote a few days after the release of the film, “the title writer has done some good work [and] preserved something of Mr. Fitzgerald’s subtlety of expression.”¹⁴¹ In 1924, *Camera!* still recalled the film’s title cards as “characteristically colorful in their slang as the original story by F. Scott Fitzgerald.”¹⁴² Screenwriters of sound film adaptations of Fitzgerald’s work have rarely received the same praise.

insatiable desire for cigarettes,” Mary Kelly, “Around Chicago Picture Theatres: Clermont Has Clean Policy,” *Moving Picture World*, 24 April 1924, p. 570.

¹³⁹ In Fitzgerald’s story, Horace thinks that women are creatures that “brought laundry and took your seat in the street-car and married you later on when you were old enough to know fetters.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 63; p. 68.

¹⁴⁰ Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), p. 166.

¹⁴¹ “A Chorus Girl’s Romance,” *Variety*, 13 August 1922, p. 35.

¹⁴² George Landy, “The Chameleon Titler,” *Camera!*, 9 February 1924, p. 17.

Before Marcia leaves Horace's college room, he promises her to attend one of the Frivolities shows, while she hides from two students entering the male dormitory.¹⁴³ The next scene shows Marcia sitting in her living room, reading a newspaper, with other dailies scattered on the tea table. The set is carefully designed according to Fitzgerald's description in "Head and Shoulders," with the "row of professional pictures" of Marcia hanging on the wall and the "several chairs which matched."¹⁴⁴ While the set designer adhered to the source text for this scene, the scenarist did not. Heath adds a scene in which Marcia is holding a newspaper, whose title in Intertitle 54 invites readers to learn about her: "Shoulders that are worth a fortune [...] she should insure her shoulders for \$100,000." Conveniently turning the page, she finds an article about Horace, the "American boy that confuses his own professors" and whose ideas are "superior to those of Schopenhauer" (Intertitle 55). After having read both articles, Marcia takes up a black book. Once she starts cutting out the articles, the audience understands that she is pasting the clippings into a scrapbook, a fact which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Perhaps agreeing with John A. Higgins's complaint that Fitzgerald devoted two-thirds of "Head and Shoulders" to the courtship, the scenarist condensed the two occasions when Horace goes to Marcia's show into one single event.¹⁴⁵ The camera moves from Marcia's shimmy surrounded by the Frivolities girls in "floppy flower-faced hat(s)" to the audience, recording the predictable reactions of lustful men, reproachful women, and a disappointed Horace.¹⁴⁶ When Marcia sees the latter's face

¹⁴³ In "Head and Shoulders" the scene is described as follows: "Two doors near her opened curiously at the sound of a feminine voice. A tentative cough sounded from above. Gathering her skirts, Marcia dived wildly down the last flight and was swallowed up in the murky Connecticut air outside," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 68.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 74.

¹⁴⁵ John A. Higgins, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Study of the Stories* (Jamaica: St. John's University Press, 1971), p. 19.

¹⁴⁶ In the film, the Frivolities are dressed like Marcia in "Head and Shoulders," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 69.

in the audience, she stops dancing, and runs away from the stage. The scene echoes the lines in the story:

Unconquerable revulsion seized her. She was suddenly and horribly conscious of her audience as she had never been since her first appearance. Was that a leer on a pallid face in the front row, a droop of disgust on one young girl's mouth? These shoulders of hers – these shoulders shaking – were they hers? Were they real? Surely shoulders weren't made for this!¹⁴⁷

While Fitzgerald's passage seems a sarcastic comment on Victorian and prudish reactions to modern dancing, the adapter reinterpreted these lines to reassure the more conservative members of the audience that the film was criticizing rather than celebrating the shimmy. However, rather than hiding the fact that the film included a shimmy scene, Metro widely publicized it. The publicity for *The Chorus Girl's Romance* emphasized the sentimental elements of the film's message, such as Dana's "soul laid bare," while also guaranteeing details on her "naughty little shoulders."¹⁴⁸ The film's pressbook suggested ideas for cut-outs that promised moviegoers that *The Chorus Girl's Romance* would provide an answer to the most pressing question "do nice girls shimmy?"¹⁴⁹ After Marcia's show, a close-up of Horace's face expresses not too subtly his opinion that nice girls do not, indeed, shimmy. While in

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁴⁸ "The Chorus Girl's Romance," *Wid's Daily*, 15 August 1920, p. 1; "The Adorable Viola Dana," *Great Falls Daily Tribune*, 23 September 1920, p. 11.

¹⁴⁹ An Atlanta exhibitor used one of these shimmying cut-outs to publicise the film in his theater. A police officer ordered the theater manager to turn off the mechanism that enabled the shoulders of the Viola Dana cutout to move, and a strip saying "censored" was tacked across the cutout. Local newspapers covered this event and helped the theater have "one of the most successful weeks from a box office standpoint." "Shimmying Cutout Draws Atlanta Police Interference," *Exhibitors Herald*, 11 December 1920, p. 54.

Fitzgerald's story Marcia's line is "At's all life is. Just going round kissing people" and she is the one that takes the initiative and kisses Horace, the scenarist reverted to more conventional roles.¹⁵⁰ In Intertitle 67, Horace asks Marcia, "Could you forgive me? I hope you don't think that I took advantage of the situation." Intertitle 68 assured the audience that Marcia forgave him because she "didn't know that kissing could be such a nice thing."

Here the scenarist added a predictable plot complication. Enriched by the adapter with a title, a mansion, and some millions, the austere Dr. Tarbox orders his son to marry the woman he chose for him, the bespectacled Miss Wilson. After refusing the arranged marriage with a quite unsuccessful joke on myopic people, Horace asks Marcia to become his wife. The following contrasting scenes show the different reaction to their wedding from the point of view of the Yale professors ("He sacrificed his future as a world authority on Philology" [Intertitle 77]), of the Frivolities ("This is terrible! Marcia destroyed her successful career to marry a simple student!" [Intertitle 78]), and of Horace's father ("I don't want to hear about him anymore! He will have to face the consequences of his madness" [Intertitle 79]). The next scenes portray an aproned Mrs. Tarbox darning socks and her worried husband struggling to get numbers right as a clerk in an office. Marcia's colleagues enter her new home and tease her because she is doing housework. Adhering to Fitzgerald's short story, the film shows Horace losing his job at the exporting firm and Marcia getting back to work at the theatre.

The plot twist arrives at this point, although in a slightly different way from the story. While in "Head and Shoulders" Marcia convinces Horace to "get some

¹⁵⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 65.

exercise” to improve his health, in the film he decides to go to the gym for the more “manly” reason of defending his wife.¹⁵¹ When Marcia’s dancing partner again threatens her outside the theatre, Horace tries to stop him but is knocked unconscious. This was seen as a cinematic expedient to make Horace “get some muscles,” as Metro’s synopsis explained, and find work as an acrobat.¹⁵² When soon after this Marcia discovers that she is pregnant, Intertitle 88 pays tribute to the original story: “This is how the ‘Head and Shoulders’ company was dissolved, leaving ‘the head’ in charge of everything.” While it is impossible to prove that the Portuguese intertitles were translated directly from the English ones, the similarity between the Spanish version of the film and the American synopsis would suggest that was the case.

The film then diverges again from Fitzgerald’s story when Marcia tries to get Horace’s book *The Syllogism and Scholasticism* published but receives a rejection letter from Jordan Publishers. For this scene, Metro may have drawn on Fitzgerald’s personal experience with rejection slips. Only a few months before the release of the film, Fitzgerald claimed in a brief *Saturday Evening Post* profile that he had received 122 rejection slips.¹⁵³ Rather than concealing the rejection of his work, after the success of *This Side of Paradise* Fitzgerald famously bragged about his past failures. Metro might have become aware of these rejections not only through news coverage but also because they themselves had sent at least one of them. As Fitzgerald complained to Perkins in January 1920, he had submitted “\$1000 worth of movies to the *metro* [sic] people” only to be rejected.¹⁵⁴ Written seemingly by Metro to

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁵² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

¹⁵³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City: Personal Essays, 1920-1940*, ed. by James L.W. West, III (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds., *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 25.

advertise the adaptation, an unidentified article in Fitzgerald's scrapbook titled "Author asks Author How to Write Story" reported the by-then famous story of his rejection slips:

Robert L. Terry [...] a short story writer, who recently appealed for advice to F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of the *Saturday Evening Post* story done in pictures as 'The Chorus Girl's Romance' starring Viola Dana. As Mr. Terry's letter to the precocious author implies, he had come to a point in a short story where he felt assistance from a proven literary success might assist him, and so communicated with Mr. Fitzgerald. The reply to Mr. Terry's note read: 'Dear Mr. Terry: your letter was very vague as to what you wanted to know. Study Kipling and O. Henry and work like hell. I had 122 rejection slips before I sold a story. Sincerely, F. Scott Fitzgerald.'¹⁵⁵



After the rejection of Horace's *The Syllogism and Scholasticism*, Marcia decides to try to publish her own book. In "Head and Shoulders," Marcia asks Horace to take her *Sandra Pepys, Syncopated*

Figure 1 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* to "that Peter Boyce

¹⁵⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*. Kipling and O. Henry are the two authors sets of whose books Marcia bought "from a blue-eyed agent and read occasionally," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 74.

Wendell who put [her] letter in his paper.”¹⁵⁶ In *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, however, it is the maid Genoveva (Fig. 1) who brings the manuscript to the same editor who refused Horace’s philosophy book. Employed as a housemaid by Horace and Marcia, Genoveva is, as racialized Intertitle 94 reads, a “beautiful wildflower imported from Africa.”

Discussing the vast preponderance of blackface during the early silent-era, Gerald R. Butters, Jr., reports that, of the one hundred silent films with African American male portrayals he viewed, less than 5 percent has African American men playing themselves on screen.¹⁵⁷ When Horace falls from the trapeze after having received the news from Genoveva that he has become a father, he is replaced on the stage by white actors in blackface. As Jacqueline Najuma Stewart notes, to feature black actors and white actors in blackface within the same frame was a common practice in silent films. While in the post-war era it became more usual to see screen portrayals of African Americans on screen, still it might have affected some moviegoers to see the “faithful black house servant” Genoveva portrayed by a black actress given that, as Stewart observes, the role was played almost exclusively by white actresses in blackface.¹⁵⁸ Thomas Cripps argues that, while many black male roles were portrayed in blackface, African American actresses “found easier access to white movies because American racial lore found black women benign, unthreatening, and earth-mother wise.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁵⁷ Gerald R. Butters, Jr., *Black Manhood on the Silent Screen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 57.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 135.

Genoveva is stereotypically characterized as illiterate: she is portrayed with her eyes wide open after reading the incomprehensible title of Horace's book. Although the maid's character is not present in the source text, her racist caricature inevitably fed into Fitzgerald's reputation for ethnic stereotyping.¹⁶⁰ The representation of the black servant as a comic and illiterate figure was also a reassuring form of anecdote both in literary magazines and films of the time.¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, Genoveva is a positive and pivotal character, resisting the silent era's "prevailing belief that Black actors could not carry off substantial, sympathetic, dramatic roles."¹⁶² The maid actively aids the young couple by paying their bank creditors with her own money and helps make Marcia "the head" of the family by taking her book to the publishing house. Still, Metro decided that Genoveva did not deserve a place in the list of the film's characters.

Another storyline added by Heath to the film is the conflict between Horace and his father. In "Head and Shoulders," Fitzgerald only hinted at the possibility that Horace's parents could question his marrying Marcia, but in the adaptation the elder Tarboxes are given a more important role.¹⁶³ Anticipating Adam J. Patch's decision to disinherit his grandson in *The Beautiful and Damned*, Dr. Tarbox threatens Horace with the same weapon. While Fitzgerald's second novel ends with Anthony and Gloria sailing for Europe, an intertitle in *The Chorus Girl's Romance* lets readers know that shortly after their son's wedding, Horace's parents have left for Europe to avoid gossip.

¹⁶⁰ See Suzanne del Gizzo, "Ethnic Stereotyping," in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 224-33.

¹⁶¹ On the caricature of black characters in literary magazines see Elsa Nettels, *Language, Race, and Social Class in Howells's America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), p. 75.

¹⁶² Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies*, p. 57.

¹⁶³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 75.

The last scenes of the film adaptation follow the story very closely: the impresario Mr Bergfeld offers Horace's \$300 a week to work at the Hyppodrome and publisher Jordan gives Marcia an advance payment of \$500 to write a second book. Alice Hall Petry reads "Head and Shoulders" as a "smoke screen that enables [Fitzgerald] to probe his concern about his own imminent marriage and its possible impact on his career."¹⁶⁴ According to Petry, Horace's decision to leave the university to work as a clerk (but eventually end up as an acrobat) to support Marcia mirrored Fitzgerald's decision to work as a copywriter with Barron Collier to convince Zelda to marry him. The scenarist of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* chose not to follow Fitzgerald's bitter ending of "Head and Shoulders," in which Horace advises Anton Laurier not to answer raps (referring to the time when Marcia knocked at his door at the Yale dormitory).¹⁶⁵ In the film, Horace has no hard feelings towards Marcia achieving what he did not manage to do – publishing a book – and seems content with his job as an acrobat, which provides him with the strength to punch the villain Steve Reynolds at the end of the film.

Finally, the happy couple is again represented reading articles about themselves in the newspaper, with their daughter playing at their feet. While Marcia and Horace's baby girl has a minor role in Fitzgerald's story – functioning more as a fictional device to oblige Marcia to stop dancing and start writing – in the film her character is emphasized by many domestic scenes showing the couple lovingly taking care of her. The relevance given by the scenarist to both Horace's old and new family was presumably meant to appeal to audiences' middle-class values. The last missing

¹⁶⁴ Alice Hall Petry, *Fitzgerald's Craft of Short Fiction: The Collected Stories, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), p. 18.

¹⁶⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 62; p. 86.

scene of the film shows Dr. Tarbox coming back from Europe to find out that he is a grandfather. Justice is restored: Horace's name finds its way back into the will.

1.2 Reconstructing the Missing Elements of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*

Despite its complex history, the film print held at MoMA is only missing two scenes: the first fight between Horace Tarbox and Steve Reynolds and the reconciliation between Horace and his father. Traces of these scenes and their explanatory intertitles remain in a 1923 Spanish novelization of the film, in a two-page synopsis that Fitzgerald pasted in his first scrapbook, in 1920 film reviews, and in some film stills circulated by Metro for publicity and others preserved at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research (WCFTR). The first missing scene, which is particularly important to understanding the plot twist, was reconstructed using a combination of the four sources. A passage from the novelization reads:

A suitor was expecting Marcia at the exit of the theatre, the dance partner that we met at the beginning of the story, who had no idea that Horace was there waiting for his wife [...] Horace could not help but see the suitor threatening Marcia. In an attempt to defend his wife, Horace tried to make the suitor stop but he is punched in the face and falls on the floor.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ "Realidades de la Vida," *La Novela Semanal Cinematográfica*, p. 20. The Spanish novelization has been translated into English by the author of this thesis with the help of Pierluigi Calligaro.

The synopsis that Metro sent Fitzgerald describes the same scene that was novelized for Spanish audiences: “as she leaves the stage entrance one night, Steve Reynolds, former dancing partners and a rejected admirer of



Figure 2 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*

hers, proves offensive. Horace intervenes and is promptly beaten up.” Metro’s synopsis also enables us to provisionally reconstruct the title card following the fighting scene, when Marcia tells Horace, “You go to the gym until you get some muscles. I don’t like to see my husband licked.”¹⁶⁷ A review included in the film’s pressbook summarizes the scene: Marcia is “shocked to see that he is unable to



Figure 3 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*

defend her and promptly upbraids him for his lack of manliness. ‘Why not go to a gymnasium and develop, those shoulders?’ She queries. ‘I can’t respect a man who is licked’ is her final record.”¹⁶⁸ Two film

¹⁶⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

¹⁶⁸ “John Morrell Says.”

stills provide a visual record of the scene, showing Horace before (Fig. 2) and after (Fig. 3) the punch.

The same method can be used to reconstruct the second missing scene from the film, which shows Dr. Tarbox coming back from Europe to find out that he is a grandfather. As pictured in a film still (Fig. 4), the Spanish novelization reads:

Horace's father arrived uninvited. It was difficult to understand the reason for his visit from his unaltered austere face [...] 'I want to hold my granddaughter' he said [...] 'She has a nice head, hasn't she?' Horace asked his father. To which Marcia answered: 'and a nice pair of shoulders, too! With the two things together, she'll go places!'¹⁶⁹

Thus, while the extant print is incomplete, something of the unity of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* can be appreciated thanks to these external sources.



Figure 4 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*

1.3 F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1920s Celebrity Culture, and Silent Hollywood

In February 1936, Fitzgerald wrote in "The Crack-Up," "one should [...] be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise. This

¹⁶⁹ *Realidades de la Vida*, pp. 30-31.

philosophy fitted on to my early adult life, when I saw the improbable, the implausible, often the ‘impossible,’ come true.”¹⁷⁰ What must have seemed impossible to the twenty-three-old Fitzgerald had come true in 1920: in a single year he published one widely popular novel and one almost-as-popular collection of short stories whose contents included four stories that had appeared in the mass-circulation *Saturday Evening Post*, two of which had been seen on movie screens around the world. But while *This Side of Paradise* and the short stories collected in *Flappers and Philosophers* have been studied at length in relationship to Fitzgerald’s early success and celebrity, the film adaptation of “Head and Shoulders” remains unexplored territory even though the sale of its film rights predates the two books and was used by Scribner’s to publicize the young author’s first novel.

While the publishing house surely took a chance on Fitzgerald first by accepting *This Side of Paradise* for publication in mid-September 1919, Metro purchased “Head and Shoulders” as screen material on 25 February 1920, when Fitzgerald was still an unknown writer. *This Side of Paradise* was published in March 1920; in October 1920, *Motion Picture News* reported an interview with Bayard Veiller, chief of the story producing department at Metro Pictures Corporation. When asked by the trade paper what Metro’s requirements were for plots used during film productions, Veiller replied: “Just stories. Stories possessing dramatic values, comedy, action-picture possibilities, regardless of the name or fame of the writer.” Whilst the article said names did not matter, it proceeds to drop one, naming none other than F. Scott Fitzgerald as an example of “Veiller’s knack of story finding.” “Although Mr. Fitzgerald was practically unknown at the time the story was

¹⁷⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*, p. 139.

published,” *Motion Picture News* reports, “[‘Head and Shoulders’] was immediately purchased and prepared for production.”¹⁷¹ In 1920, not only the film press but also literary magazines established Fitzgerald’s fame in association with the movies before the success of his first novel. Only a few days after the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, the book section of the *New York Tribune* acknowledged that “in spite of his youth [Fitzgerald was] well on the road to fame [not only because] ‘The Saturday Evening Post’ ha[d] accepted a series of stories [but also because] the movie rights ha[d] been bought by one of the most famous motion picture corporations.”¹⁷²

The fact that in early 1920 Metro was focused on discovering new writers presumably played a role in its signing a contract with a young and unknown Fitzgerald. In January of that year, Richard A. Rowland took the film company out of the commitment to the stars once and for all and declared that Metro would produce films foregrounding the story rather than popular actors. A month before Fitzgerald sold the rights to “Head and Shoulders,” Marcus Loew, who already owned a chain of a hundred theatres, merged with the impoverished producer-distributor company Metro.¹⁷³ An article on *The St. Landry Clarion* mentions *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* among the fourth round of Metro “Fewer and Better pictures,” the special production that Loew assured “continuous and adequate representation for.”¹⁷⁴ The fact that a month before Fitzgerald signed the contract Metro had joined the Loew enterprises meant that the adaptation of “Head and Shoulders” was screened in one of the largest exhibiting chains in the United States.

¹⁷¹ “‘Just Stories’ are Wanted.”

¹⁷² “Book Gossip,” *New York Tribune*, 4 April 1920, p. 10.

¹⁷³ Tino Balio, ed., *The American Film Industry* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), p. 114. See also Jackson Schmidt, “On the Road to MGM: A History of Metro Pictures Corporation, 1915-1920,” *The Velvet Light Trap*, 19 (1982), 46-52, p. 50.

¹⁷⁴ “Critics Agree on Merit of Metro’s Third Round of ‘Fewer and Better’ Pictures,” *The St. Landry Clarion*, 8 May 1920, p. 2.

As Bryant Mangum notes:

In the course of writing ‘Head and Shoulders’ [...] Fitzgerald managed to do something the repercussions of which he could not possibly have envisioned: with Marcia Meadow [...] He introduced the large American magazine-reading public to the Fitzgerald flapper, and from the moment that *The Saturday Evening Post* arrived on newsstands and in mailboxes a week after St. Valentine’s Day 1920, he became the creator of the flapper in fiction.¹⁷⁵

Six months later, however, in August 1920, Metro introduced Marcia Meadow to the even larger public of American movie-goers, consolidating his celebrity and his status as “creator” of the American flapper, as discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

While one might expect that Fitzgerald’s conservative publishing house would try to hide the fact that one of its authors was selling his work to Hollywood, contemporary articles suggest it was quite the contrary. On one of the opening pages of his first scrapbook, the “early adult” Fitzgerald pasted an article titled “New Notes on Scribner Books and Authors,” dated March 26, 1920. Appearing on the day of the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, this article is mainly remembered because it includes the phrase a “novel about flappers written for philosophers.” Less quoted is the second part of the article, in which Scribner’s lets readers know that “the movie rights [of Fitzgerald’s *Saturday Evening Post* stories] have been bought by one of the most famous motion picture corporations.” A few pages later in the scrapbook, there is another clipping about *This Side of Paradise* with a note in pencil, “Publishers.”

¹⁷⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Best Early Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Bryant Mangum (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. xxi.

Again, “Charles Scribner’s Sons” informs readers that one of Fitzgerald’s stories is headed to film screens. Not only did Scribner’s not resist acknowledging Fitzgerald’s relationship to Hollywood; they actually used it to promote what would become one of the most totemic novels of the year, if not of the decade.

In addition to being the only extant silent film entirely based on a work by Fitzgerald, *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* documents the celebrity culture of the time when the Fitzgeralds first started to achieve fame. As evidence of the beginning of their celebrity, as already mentioned, the telegram that announced the sale of the movie rights of “Head and Shoulders” and the contract with Metro registering the sale were among the first documents the Fitzgeralds pasted in their scrapbooks. Fitzgerald’s ambivalence about celebrity culture is iconically represented in “Head and Shoulders,” where he both mocks and admires the fact that an almost illiterate dancer can become the new sensation of the literary elite. The 1920s’ intelligentsia, and in particular Heywood Brown and Edmund Wilson, repeatedly criticized Fitzgerald’s self-consciousness and the fact that he kept a scrapbook. As Sarah Churchwell notes:

The Fitzgeralds’ scrapbooks, registering [...] celebrity, have been variously ignored or dismissed as a symptom of their vanity: in the early 1920s their friends Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop created a burlesque ‘exhibit of Fitzgeraldiana for Chas. Scribner’s Son’s,’ which sarcastically comprehended his ‘entire seven-book library,’ including a notebook and two scrapbooks.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Sarah Churchwell, “‘The Most Envied Couple in America in 1921’: Making the Social Register in the Scrapbooks of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald,” in *First Comes Love: Power Couples, Celebrity Kinship and Cultural Politics*, ed. by Shelley Cobb and Neil Ewen (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 31.

A few weeks after the release of *This Side of Paradise*, Broun disapproved of Fitzgerald's narcissism, comparing him to an actor posing for a camera: "He seems himself constantly not as a human being, but as a man in a novel or in a play. Every move is a picture and there is a camera man behind each tree."¹⁷⁷ Discussing Fitzgerald's self-fictionalization in *This Side of Paradise*, Wilson also mocked his Princeton friend's vanity claiming that he had produced "an incredible monster, half romantic hero and half F. Scott Fitzgerald."¹⁷⁸

While the literary elite condemned the practice of registering one's own celebrity status, Hollywood endorsed it. Like the Fitzgeralds, Marcia keeps her own scrapbook as a material record of her and Horace's celebrity status. Although it is unlikely that in the summer of 1920 Metro was aware of the fact that the Fitzgeralds were keeping scrapbooks, this scene is an important historical trace of the emerging celebrity culture of the post-war period, when a Miss "Nobody from Nowhere" could make it to the first pages of newspapers thanks to the effects of the new mass media.¹⁷⁹ Like the Fitzgeralds, Marcia is representative of early 1920s society that was, in Churchwell's words, "increasingly shaped by aspirational emulation."¹⁸⁰ By positively representing at the beginning and at the end of the film the main characters eagerly and self-consciously reading articles about themselves, *The Chorus Girl's Romance* endorsed and celebrated the value assigned to fame in the 1920s, while

¹⁷⁷ Regarding this review of *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald later wrote "[Broun] comment[ed] that I seemed to be a very self-satisfied young man, and for some days I was notably poor company," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City: Personal Essays*, p. 188.

¹⁷⁸ Edmund Wilson, *Letters on Literature and Politics: 1912-1972*, ed. by Elena Wilson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 45.

¹⁷⁹ By 1923, the fact that the Fitzgeralds kept a scrapbook became a public fact. In a 1923 interview, Zelda showed the journalist her "fat scrap book – a memory book filled with souvenirs of the 'high lights.'" "What a 'Flapper Novelist' Thinks of His Wife" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in his Own Time: A Miscellany*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Popular Library, 1971), p. 258).

¹⁸⁰ Sarah Churchwell, "The Most Envied Couple in America in 1921," p. 32.

playing into Fitzgerald's relationship to that celebrity status in the moviegoing public's mind. The first film adaptation of a work by Fitzgerald constitutes thus an important cultural artifact that documents the construction of the author's celebrity persona in America and abroad.

1.4 The Aftermath of the Film

After the success of the 1920 film adaptation of "Head and Shoulders," Fitzgerald tested the theatrical and cinematic potential of his short story three more times. Two years after the release of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, Fitzgerald considered selling the stage rights to the story. In the "Record of Published Fiction" section of his Ledger, Fitzgerald reported under the column showing the publication history of the 1920 short story: "Bayard Vieller [sic] offer turned down."¹⁸¹ This note probably refers to an episode that took place in 1922, when Fitzgerald wrote to his literary agent:

As I wired you, I don't think I'd want to sell *Head + Shoulders* outright. I've several times been on the point of trying to make a play of it + have hesitated only because its [sic] already been a movie. Would he [Veieller] possibly [sic] interested in a royalty arrangement. He's a clumsy butcher anyhow.¹⁸²

As Bruccoli indicates in the notes to the letter, the "clumsy butcher" was Veiller, the already mentioned chief of Metro's Story Producing Department during the release

¹⁸¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Ledger*
<http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/Fitzgerald_Ledger_USC_Transcription_2013.pdf>
[accessed 24 February 2018].

¹⁸² Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 45.

of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*. Fitzgerald turned down the offer, not knowing how hard it would be to sell the rights to his work in the 1930s. On 24 March 1934, Fitzgerald reconsidered the idea of readapting "Head and Shoulders," this time as a talkie. In a two-page letter to Sam Marks of the Metro Goldwyn Mayer Scenario Department, he wrote:

It's just occurred to me, in regard to a letter I have from Carl Laemmle asking if I had any old silent productions that I thought could be done over into a talkie, that you own the first two stories I ever sold to pictures [...] The first one, 'Head and Shoulders' you made with Viola Dana and Gareth Hughes (it was the start of his short-lived career) under the title of 'The Chorus Girl's Romance.' I believe it was a big hit at the time [...] If you still have the originals in your library it might be worth while to look them up.¹⁸³

Written during a crucial year in Fitzgerald's personal and professional life, this letter shows on the one hand his familiarity with the film, its actors, and its success at the box office; on the other, it demonstrates his early attempt to form a working relationship with MGM before 1937. As previously mentioned, when Wheeler Winston Dixon made inquiries in 1985 about the fate of the print of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, he discovered that MGM believed the negative to be lost.¹⁸⁴ It is possible that in 1934 Fitzgerald had the same answer from Sam Marks. Fitzgerald, however, did not stop trying to make a sound version of the story. A year later, on 15 November 1935, he asked Ober if he had seen Bartlett Cormack, a Hollywood agent,

¹⁸³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, Letter to Samuel Marx, 24 Mar. 1934. TLS, 2 pp. F. Scott Fitzgerald Papers, C0187, Box 51a, "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios"/Subseries 2a. Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books & Special Collections, Princeton U, Princeton, NJ, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Wheeler W. Dixon, *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 101.

about trying to sell the film rights for “Head and Shoulders.” Ober suggested that Fitzgerald give up hope of readapting the film: “I tried to see Cormack when I was in Hollywood but didn’t manage to see him [...] but I don’t think there is anything to be done for I find that the companies very rarely are willing to release silent rights for a reasonable sum.”¹⁸⁵

Almost a decade after Fitzgerald’s death, MGM revisited the author’s idea of remaking “Head and Shoulders.” In February 1949, the *New York Times* announced that

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s short story, ‘Head and Shoulders,’ filmed in 1920 under the title ‘The Chorus Girl’s Romance’ with Viola Dana, will be remade by Metro as a talking picture. The studio recently acquired the sound film rights to the story from the Fitzgerald estate.¹⁸⁶

Again, the project was not completed. In July of the same year, Paramount did release the first sound version of *The Great Gatsby* starring Alan Ladd. The next year inaugurated the decade of the “Fitzgerald revival,” spurred by Budd Schulberg’s bestseller *The Disenchanted* (1950) and Arthur Mizener’s biography *The Far Side of Paradise* (1951).¹⁸⁷ The Fitzgerald legend was beginning to be resurrected, but the movie based upon his first story appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* would remain lost for decades to come.

¹⁸⁵ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, pp. 230-31.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas F. Brady, “Lana Turner Set for ‘Abiding Vision,’” *New York Times*, 14 February 1949, p. 15.

¹⁸⁷ See Ruth Prigozy, “Introduction: Scott, Zelda and the Culture of Celebrity,” p. 15.

Chapter 2 Myra Meets the Silver Screen: Howard M. Mitchell's *The Husband Hunter*

The second silent film adapted from a work by Fitzgerald, the presumed lost *The Husband Hunter* (d. Howard M. Mitchell), was released one month after *The Chorus Girl's Romance*. Fitzgerald composed a first version of the film's source text, originally titled "Lilah Meets His Family," while he lived in New York from February to August 1919 and tried unsuccessfully to publish it.¹⁸⁸ When he moved to St. Paul a few months later, Fitzgerald rewrote and retitled the story "Myra Meets his Family" and sent it to Harold Ober with a note saying "this is an odd sort of thing I just finished."¹⁸⁹ Shortly after, Fitzgerald admitted to his agent: "About Myra – I am afraid it's no good and if you agree with me don't hesitate to send it back."¹⁹⁰ Ober liked the story. After having wired Fitzgerald the *Saturday Evening Post's* reply – they bought the story for \$400 – Ober complimented "Myra" as "clever" and "full of surprise," adding: "I don't remember when I have read a story that has kept me guessing right up to the end as this one did."¹⁹¹

Fitzgerald's answer to Ober is one of the earliest recorded manifestations of his self-deprecating attitude when it came to his commercial short fiction: "Dear Mr. Ober, you could have knocked me over with a feather when you told me you had sold Myra – I never was so heartily sick of a story before I finished it as I was of that

¹⁸⁸ See F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Price Was High: The Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 11

¹⁸⁹ In January 1920, Fitzgerald wrote to Perkins: "I came home in a thoroughly nervous alcoholic state & revised two tales that went the complete rounds of magazines last April." Kuehl and Bryer identify one of these stories with "Myra Meets His Family." See John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds. *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 24; Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁰ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 7.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

one.”¹⁹² “Myra Meets His Family” was Fitzgerald’s second story to appear in the *Saturday Evening Post* (20 March 1920). He decided the story did not deserve a place in *Flapper and Philosophers*, which was published nine days before the release of *The Husband Hunter*.¹⁹³ In the “Record of Published Fiction” section of his ledger, Fitzgerald listed “Myra” as “Stripped and-Permanently Buried.”¹⁹⁴ His desire of never “republishing [Myra] in book form” was respected until 1979, when Bruccoli reprinted it in *The Price Was High* together with other previously uncollected stories that were – pronounced the scholar – “not Fitzgerald’s best” but “worth collecting because he wrote them.”¹⁹⁵

In view of such comments, the general neglect of “Myra Meets his Family” and its film adaptation is not surprising. But, regardless of its aesthetic value, the 1920 short story brought Fitzgerald before the reading and the moviegoing public for the second time, expanding and exporting his popularity in America and abroad. Gene D. Phillips’s remark that Fitzgerald had sought to interest Metro in the film rights to the short story with the “accolade [for *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*] from the trade press in mind” is incorrect.¹⁹⁶ Fox purchased “Myra” shortly after its appearance in the *Saturday Evening Post*, three months before the release of the film adaptation of “Head and Shoulders.” The fact that the studio bought a story by a twenty-three-year-old author who had just published his first book and whose work

¹⁹² *Ibidem*. According to Bruccoli, Fitzgerald despised the story as “it relies on unlikely plotting [...] Perhaps he saw too great a contrast between ‘Myra’ and ‘The Ice Palace,’ one of his finest stories which was written during the same month.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Price Was High*, p. 11.

¹⁹³ The other two stories that were omitted from the collection were “The Smilers” and “The Popular Girl”.

¹⁹⁴ On Fitzgerald’s use of the notation “Stripped and-Permanently Buried” see John A. Higgins, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 19.

¹⁹⁵ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 30; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Price Was High*, p. xii. In 2012, James L. W. West III also decided to include “Myra” in his edition of *Flappers and Philosophers* as it might have been among “the other three stories [Fitzgerald] sent to Perkins,” to be considered for inclusion in his first collection of short stories. The other two might have been “The Camel’s Back” and “The Smilers.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. xvi.

¹⁹⁶ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 41.

had never been filmed before suggests silent film studios ascribed cinematic potential to Fitzgerald's early short fiction.

Within six months of its source text's publication, *The Husband Hunter* brought the Fitzgerald brand to the more remote parts of the United States and across the world, while feeding into his reputation as the flapper historian and creator of a character type. From 1920 onwards, Fitzgerald was constantly associated with the flapper culture in reviews, interviews, and articles about him, a fact that has been extensively explored by scholars in relation to the literary press coverage.¹⁹⁷ From the very beginning of Fitzgerald's professional career, when reviews first categorized *This Side of Paradise* as a "flapper book," until his death, when his obituaries remembered him as the "protagonist and exponent of the flapper age" – rather than as the author of *The Great Gatsby* – Fitzgerald's name remained inextricably bound to the flapper character.¹⁹⁸ One just needs to browse the titles of the interviews Fitzgerald gave in the 1920s ("Fitzgerald, Flappers and Fame," 1921, "What a 'Flapper Novelist' Thinks of His Wife," 1923, "Has the Flapper Changed? F. Scott Fitzgerald Discusses the Cinema Descendants of the Type He Has Made So Well Known," 1927) and of the reviews of his books ("The Flapper's Tragedy," "Mr. Fitzgerald Sees the Flapper Through," both 1922) to appreciate the extent to which the author's name was indissolubly linked with the character type that made him famous.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ See, for instance, Ruth Prigozy, "Fitzgerald's Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age: Behind the Morality," pp. 135-36.

¹⁹⁸ In 1923, Fitzgerald claimed he had learned *This Side of Paradise* was a flapper book from George Jean Nathan's review of the novel. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "How I would Sell My Book if I Were A Bookseller" (Repr. in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald In His Own Time*, p. 168). Arnold Gingrich, "Salute and Farewell to F. Scott Fitzgerald" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, p. 477).

¹⁹⁹ Frederick James Smith, "Fitzgerald, Flappers and Fame"; "What a 'Flapper Novelist' Thinks of His Wife"; Margaret Reid, "Has the Flapper Changed?"; Henry Seidel Canby, "*The Beautiful and Damned: The Flapper's Tragedy*"; John Peale Bishop, "*The Beautiful and Damned: Mr. Fitzgerald Sees the*

Just as in the early 1920s literary magazines commented on the fact that Fitzgerald had “created what would be recognized anywhere as a ‘Fitzgerald type’ of youth or girl,” the film press noted that Hollywood was buying “the Fitzgerald story” as vehicle for Eileen Percy’s flapper roles.²⁰⁰ Opening with an intertitle describing the “twentieth-century flapper,” *The Husband Hunter*, along with the film magazines covering it and its publicity, also contributed to establishing Fitzgerald’s reputation as the “father of the flapper” in the early 1920s. Fox contributed to the development of Fitzgerald’s early persona as the “god of Flapperdom” – as a contemporary critic dubbed him – while exploiting what Scott F. Stoddart called Fitzgerald’s “genius of characterization” to pave the way to stardom to Percy.²⁰¹

Scholars have tended to agree with Fitzgerald’s and Bruccoli’s low opinion of the short story, which stands, in Kirk Curnutt’s words, as a “now-forgotten narrative.”²⁰² While Stephen W. Potts dismisses the story as “an insignificant piece, with little or no literary value,” Bryant Mangum sees Myra merely as a piece to “entertain a middle-brow reading audience,” dealing with subjects and settings Fitzgerald felt comfortable with: “youth, the wealthy, and the glamorous.”²⁰³ After having analysed the structural difficulties of the story, John A. Higgins concludes that “it is easy to see why Fitzgerald found himself ‘never so heartily sick of a story

Flapper Through (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, p. 243; p. 258; p. 277; p. 317; p. 320).

²⁰⁰ P. B. Young, “Married Crowd is Trivial as the Flappers according to Fitzgerald” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 81); “Fitzgerald Story Is Eileen Percy Vehicle,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 22 May 1920, p. 39.

²⁰¹ I. W. L., “Flappers and Others” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 46); Scott F. Stoddart, “Redirecting Fitzgerald’s Gaze: Masculine Perception and Cinematic License in *The Great Gatsby*,” in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Perspectives*, ed. by Jackson R. Bryer, Alan Margolies, and Ruth Prigozy (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press), p. 103.

²⁰² Kirk Curnutt, “F. Scott Fitzgerald: Professional Author,” in *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Curnutt, p. 57.

²⁰³ Stephen W. Potts, *The Price of Paradise: The Magazine Career of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (San Bernardino: The Borgo Press, 1993), p. 26; Bryant Mangum, “The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald,” in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, p. 65.

before [he] finished it.”²⁰⁴ According to Alan Margolies, “Myra” was among those of Fitzgerald’s stories that suffered because they were written with an eye on sales to Hollywood: the story’s ending “with its Al Jolson-like conclusion [...] could be easily converted to the silent screen.”²⁰⁵

And so it was. Starring Eileen Percy and Emory Johnson, *The Husband Hunter* was released on 19 September 1920. As in the case of *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, producers might have preferred to change the original title of the story into the trite *The Husband Hunter* as it was something that was familiar to the audiences of the time: a Western picture by the same title had been released the year before.²⁰⁶ Broadly adhering to the source text, the film tells the story of Myra Hastings (instead of Myra Harper), who is openly on the trail of millionaires. The prey Myra catches (Kent Whitney instead of Knowleton Whitney - Fitzgerald would reuse the name “Knowleton” for a character in the Josephine Perry Stories) decides to put her to a test by introducing her to his eccentric family – hired actors playing the parts of his mother, father, sister and butler – with the idea of terrorizing her. Myra first proves her love to Kent by enduring all his mythical family’s oddities and then, once she finds out the trick, punishes her fiancée by staging a fake wedding ceremony. Fitzgerald’s story is eventually changed to afford a happy ending, with Myra deciding to forgive Kent and marry him.²⁰⁷

There is evidence that Fitzgerald followed the coverage of the cinematic adaptation of “Myra.” In June 1920, Fitzgerald clipped an article from a film magazine into his scrapbook announcing that Eileen Percy was working on the film.

²⁰⁴ John A. Higgins, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 20.

²⁰⁵ See Alan Margolies, “Kissing, Shooting and Sacrificing,” p. 65; p. 68.

²⁰⁶ “Neal Hart in his latest western picture ‘The Husband Hunter,’” *Bisbee Daily Review*, 13 February 1919, p. 6.

²⁰⁷ Matthew A. Taylor, “*The Husband Hunter* (Fox): Farcical Development of Fitzgerald’s Comedy Drama,” *Motion Picture News*, 25 September 1920, p. 2497.

On the same page as the book cover of *Flappers and Philosophers*, he also pasted a clipping saying that Percy was “starring for Fox out California way with *Her Honor the Mayor* and *The Husband Hunter*, two popular magazine stories.” Next to the clip, he wrote with a blue pen: “From Myra Meets His Family.” Unsurprisingly, Fitzgerald also clipped a review of the film reading: “No doubt the author is not to blame for the changed title and may not be to blame altogether for the fact that the end of the picture does not live up to its beginning, or to what the beginning leads one to anticipate.”²⁰⁸

Predictably, *The Husband Hunter* has been even more neglected than its source story, especially as the movie is not extant and the few scholars who mentioned it only cite negative reviews. Mitchell’s 1920 film is presumed to be among the thousands of Fox silent movies that are lost. Aubrey Solomon points out in *The Fox Film Corporation 1915-1935* that:

From 1914 (when it was still called ‘the box office attraction company’) through 1935, the Fox Film Corporation distributed 1,173 features (including foreign versions) and many thousands of newsreels and short subjects, an output which represents a sizable contribution to cinema history. There is a tragic, but understandable, reason for the neglect of this body of work. A major percentage of the Fox releases were produced before the introduction of sound. Once sound arrived, no studio felt any obligation to invest money in preserving obsolete vestiges of the industry’s beginning. As well, nitrate-based negatives are prone to deterioration and a catastrophic fire in a film vault in New Jersey in 1937 destroyed three quarters of Fox features released before 1930. These

²⁰⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

films no longer exist in any form, so it's impossible to re-evaluate them critically.²⁰⁹

The Husband Hunter is only briefly discussed in studies on Fitzgerald and film. While Alan Margolies quickly refers to Mitchell's film by citing a single reviewer that "criticized both director and editor," Gene D. Phillips dedicates less than one page to the 1920 movie adaptation, and describes the plot of Fitzgerald's story rather than the synopsis of the film adaptation.²¹⁰ Wheeler W. Dixon deals with the movie in a single paragraph; Aaron Latham omits it completely.²¹¹

Contemporary reports show that *The Husband Hunter* was projected across America at least until January 1922, while other sources reveal the national and international range of the film's exhibition. The adaptation of "Myra Meets His Family" was shown from New Castle, Pennsylvania, to Bryan Texas; from Brazil to Australia, under a variety of different circumstances.²¹² A 1922 advert let the readers of the *Coconino Sun* know that "good squash, eggs, chickens, tomatoes, potatoes and wheat" were accepted as payment for cinema tickets.²¹³ By the time the film reached Flagstaff, Arizona, a year and a half after its first release, the prints most likely had deteriorated. Audiences in rural towns with a population of 3000 such as Flagstaff saw prints in advanced stage of use, long after its debut.²¹⁴ This explains the need of

²⁰⁹ Aubrey Solomon, *The Fox Film Corporation, 1915-1935: A History and Filmography* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), p. 1.

²¹⁰ Alan Margolies, "Kissing, Shooting and Sacrificing," p. 67; Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. 41-42.

²¹¹ Wheeler W. Dixon, *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 101. Latham mentions only briefly the fact that cinematic adaptations of "Head and Shoulders" and "The Offshore Pirate" have been made. Aaron Latham, *Crazy Sundays*, p. 33.

²¹² "Nixon Theatre," *New Castle News*, 18 October 1920, p. 13; "We Would Like to Introduce a New Screen Beauty: Eileen Percy," *The Eagle*, 11 October 1920, p. 3.

²¹³ "Tonight," *Coconino Sun*, 6 January 1922, p. 6.

²¹⁴ According to the U.S. Decennial Census, in 1920 Flagstaff had an estimated population of 3,186 inhabitants. "Census of Population and Housing, 1920. Detailed Tables: Population of Counties,

the owner of another small cinema (this one in Beaver Dam, Kentucky, with a population of 700) showing *The Husband Hunter* to reassure his patrons that “when you come to our theatre you see no old shows with rotten film, but the very newest – many times before they have been shown in the larger cities.”²¹⁵ As Richard Koszarski notes, silent film was “a system of local theaters linking America’s small towns and great cities.” But small theatres were the real backbone of national film exhibition:

In 1923 the *New York Times* reported that while one-third of the population was concentrated in 190 large cities, these cities contained only one-fourth of the country’s motion-picture theaters. Although the average size of the country theaters was smaller [...] their preponderant numbers still provided the bulk of the nation’s seating.²¹⁶

Thanks to silent cinema, the screen version of “Myra Meets His Family” not only entertained the “middle-brow reading audience” of the *Saturday Evening Post* and the patrons of the metropolitan movie palaces – the demographic long ascribed to Fitzgerald by the scholarship – but also far more mass audiences, including those who could only afford to pay cinema tickets by bartering goods. Fitzgerald’s name was consistently shown in the publicity surrounding the film, advertising showings

Incorporated Places, and Minor Civil Divisions,” p. 180. It is possible to consult the 1920 census at <https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>. See Maureen Furniss, “Sound and the Silent Film,” in *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalized Voices*, ed. by Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), p. 115.

²¹⁵ “Ideal Theater,” *The Hartford Herald*, 27 July 1921. According to the U.S. Decennial Census, in 1920 Beaver Dam had an estimated population of 788 inhabitants, “Detailed Tables,” p. 222.

²¹⁶ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, p. 13; p. 324.

in cinemas of small town such as Bemidji, Minnesota, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, Columbus, Indiana, Ottawa, Kansas, and many more.²¹⁷

The film was not only shown in small towns and big cities throughout the U.S. but also overseas. In November 1920, Ober sold “Myra” to the British literary market.²¹⁸ The story was reprinted in the July 1921 issue of *The Sovereign*, which might have helped Fox export the film adaptation to the UK film market. *The Husband Hunter* had its British release on 12 January 1922.²¹⁹ The film was also shown on South American screens: it was released in Mexico as *Un Lío Matrimonial*, “A Matrimonial Mess,” and in Brazil as *The Caçadora de Maridos*, “The Hunter of Husbands.”²²⁰ Under its original title, *The Husband Hunter* was also exported to Australia, as revealed by an impressive coverage of the film in the local press. Although Fitzgerald’s short story was never printed in Australia during the author’s lifetime, several Australian newspapers mentioned the fact that the film was “a screen adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s story ‘Myra Meets His Family.’”²²¹

2.1 A Provisional Reconstruction of “5 Reels of Gorgeous Jazz”

Compared to the traces used to reconstruct the other three presumed lost films in Chapter Three, Four and Six, the surviving written and visual primary materials available for piecing together *The Husband Hunter* are scarce. Thus far, I have been unable to locate either novelizations or pressbooks for the film. Nonetheless, four

²¹⁷ “Rex To-Day,” *The Bemidji Daily Pioneer*, 5 January 1921, p. 3; “A Picturization of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Famous Story,” *The Caledonian Record*, 28 October 1920, p. 6; “The Screen,” *The Republic*, 1 November 1920, p. 4; “Pastime: Today Only,” *The Ottawa Herald*, 22 April 1921, p. 3.

²¹⁸ See Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 21

²¹⁹ “The Husband Hunter,” *Kinematograph Weekly*, n. 730, 21 April 1921.

²²⁰ See María Luisa Amador and Jorge Ayala Blanco, eds., *Cartelera Cinematográfica, 1920-1929* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1999), p. 98; “O Film da Semana,” *Para Todos*, 4.177 (1922), p. 8.

²²¹ See, for instance, “City Pictures,” *National Advocate*, 20 April 1921, p. 2; “Sutcliffe’s Pictures,” *The Cairns Post*, 25 November 1921, p. 8.

pages of the scenario by Joseph Franklin Poland preserve the opening scenes and subtitles of *The Husband Hunter*.²²² Audiences watching the film in the early 1920s would have read an introductory subtitle that stressed from the beginning of the story Myra's affinity with flapper culture:

There exists an erroneous belief that in the game of love, man is the pursuer, woman the fugitive. Absurd! From the first woman down to the Twentieth century flapper eve's daughters, while pretending to flee, have relentlessly pursued their male victims.²²³

The scenarist suggested dissolving from the opening subtitle into the title of the opening scene ("For instance, when the world was young..."), to then present the scene of a primitive man clad in an animal skin and a woman who, from the shelter of the tree, peers at him. A close-up on the woman's face reveals that the flapper is a fashionable ancestor of Myra, so that, as Poland explains, "When we introduce her in the modern story, we will have the impression that all the centuries of man-hunting have had their effect on her." After having pointed out her "male victim," the "flapper eve's daughter" follows him toward his cave by keeping among the trees. The primitive Myra throws herself on the ground and pretends to sleep; when the man arrives, he stares at her "as if fascinated." She flees – not too swiftly – away from him but the man runs after her. Predictably, he reaches Myra and:

²²² Describing silent era scenarios, Anthony Slide notes that "the development of screenwriting during the silent era is the history of both the script and the subtitle. From a one-page affair read by the director to his actor prior to shooting in the preteens, the script developed into a sophisticated form by 1920, often indicating both action and appropriate subtitles in its pages. Subtitles similarly developed from sometimes ungrammatical, unwieldy descriptions, to pertinent signposts to the plot." Anthony Slide, *Early American Cinema* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1994), p. 180.

²²³ Joseph Franklin Poland, "The Husband Hunter: Photoplay in Five Parts," Moving Image Section, Motion Picture and Television Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, p. 1.

Takes her in his arms and kisses her – this is just what she has wanted – and her arms go around him in a tight grip so that when, alarmed at what he has done, he tries to get away, she will not let him – he realizes now that she considers him her property and he is crushed – he drops his arms from her, and she puts her arm proudly through his – then [...] he walks in a subdued manner, like a typical married man, while she holds triumphantly to his arm – she has caught her man.²²⁴

The scenario fragment ends by indicating the location of the next scene: the palm room of the Biltmore. In a non-fiction piece, Fitzgerald suggested that the iconic New York hotel where he and Zelda honeymooned a couple of months before the release of *The Husband Hunter* was a “flapper hangout.” Defending his characters from the charge of being one-dimensional flappers, Fitzgerald wrote in 1923: “I do not consider any of my heroines typical of the average bob-skirted ‘Dulcy’ who trips through the Biltmore lobby at tea time.”²²⁵

Exhibitors Herald introduces the descendent of the primitive flapper as “a clever and beautiful young girl,” who “tells her friend Lilah Elkins that she has decided to marry.”²²⁶ A review of the film in Fitzgerald’s scrapbook shows that, for the “Palm Room” scene, the scenarist reused the opening passage from “Myra Meets His Family” in which Lilah asks Myra

²²⁴ Joseph Franklin Poland, “The Husband Hunter,” p. 4.

²²⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, “How I would Sell My Book if I Were A Bookseller,” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, p. 168).

²²⁶ “Eileen Percy in *The Husband Hunter*,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 2 October 1920, p. 86.

‘Well, you are husband hunting, aren’t you?’

‘I suppose so – after a fashion.’²²⁷

The two intertitles presenting the Biltmore Hotel scene are also preserved in the review; the first line quotes almost word for word the source story:

‘I hear you are husband hunting again this season.’

‘Yes but not other women’s husbands, so our paths won’t meet.’

The prey, this time, is Kent Whitney, the son of an “oil can millionaire” who is registered as a guest at a “summer hotel,” where the husband hunter makes sure to



Figure 5 John Springer Collection, Getty Images, film still of *The Husband Hunter*

register too. The review continued by describing the way in which *The Husband Hunter* “reels along its celluloid way” and by stressing that “captions of the early scenes of the picture are a joy in themselves.”²²⁸ From the traces left in the film’s press, the remainder of the movie’s plot seems to have adhered to the source story more closely. An extended synopsis in *Exhibitors*

²²⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 231.

²²⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

Herald preserved the film’s plot describing the “early scenes of the picture” in these terms:

Myra lures the unsuspecting young man to pursue her by always managing to be in his path when he goes to play golf, tennis [Fig. 5], or any sport. He thinks her a regular fellow, and they become engaged. Bob Harkness, a friend of Kent, who was once engaged to Myra, tells Kent that Myra does not really love him and that she engages herself to all the fellows just for the fun in it. Following Bob’s suggestion, Kent decides to test her love. Myra visits the couple she believes are his parents. She arrives at the country home of the Whitneys in a terrific storm [Fig. 6] and is met at the station by a queer elderly man in a rickety auto, who says he is the son of the regular chauffeur.

Once arrived at the Whitneys, Kent’s supposed father serves Myra crackers and milk like in Fitzgerald’s story. Film stills preserved scenes from the costume party



Figure 6 John Springer Collection, Getty Images, film still of *The Husband Hunter*

organized at the country home (Fig. 7 and 8); Myra is asked to sing the “Ponzi’s good-bye” song, as discussed in more detail below.²²⁹ After overhearing Kent saying his supposed parents are Broadway

²²⁹ Matthew A. Taylor, “*The Husband Hunter*.”

actors, Myra “indicates on the morrow that she knows what’s what. Kent is sorry. She forgives him, and they go to Boston to be married by her cousin.” Following the source text, Mitchell shows Myra, as *Exhibitors Herald* notes, “turning the tables on Kent.” After the fake ceremony, the couple set out on their wedding trip. But before the train starts, Myra “goes to get her vanity case from their compartment and leaves the train.”²³⁰



A humorous and unusual scene from “The Husband Hunter,” Eileen Percy’s Fox picture, that suggests striking street exploitation.

Figure 7 *Exhibitors Herald*, 6 November 1920, p. 52

“Myra Meets His Family” followed Fitzgerald’s famous “golden popular-romance formula” or, rather, a sub-formula of it.²³¹ As in the other two *Post* stories

adapted for the screen in the 1920s (“The Offshore Pirate” and “The Camel’s Back”), the plot pattern of “Myra Meets His Family” is concerned with an elaborate and expensive deception staged by young persons to win the love of their sweethearts.



Eileen Percy’s Fox production, “The Husband Hunter,” provides exhibitors with an opportunity to stage a real innovation in presentation and exploitation, a masquerade in which the public will be invited to participate. Stage or lobby may be used, as conditions dictate. The advertising promise of the affair is unlimited and unlimited publicity should be gained by sheer force of novelty. The affair may be identified, if desirable, with a local club or other organization given to dancing.

Figure 8 *Exhibitors Herald*, 13 November 1920, p. 52

Warned about the flapper’s reputation as a “husband hunter,” in the source story Knowleton tests Myra’s love. But while the other three short stories by Fitzgerald that were made into silent films share a happy ending, “Myra” has what John A. Higgins’s defines “a trickster-tricked” conclusion. As

²³⁰ “Eileen Percy in *The Husband Hunter*,” *Exhibitors Herald*.

²³¹ John A Higgins, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 20.

Higgins notes, “the *homme manqué*, who wails ‘I’m not fit to tie your shoe strings’ is thoroughly vanquished by the *femme fatale*.”²³² The heroine exacts her revenge by staging a fake wedding and then leaves the hero on a train. The original story ends with Myra heading back to the “flapper rendezvous” where it all started, the Biltmore Hotel. Predictably, the scenarist, as *Motion Picture News* reported, changed “Mr. Fitzgerald’s story [...] somewhat to afford a happy ending.”²³³ Kent gets off the train and follows Myra: “All tricks aside,” notes *Exhibitors Herald*, “they decide to marry and find happiness together.”²³⁴

Comments on Mitchell’s film version of “Myra” were very mixed but most of them underlined the frothiness of the story and compared and contrasted it with Fitzgerald’s original work. While *Exhibitors Herald* suggested its readers publicise *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* by “stressing [Fitzgerald’s name] in advertising [as] a strong bid for high grade patronage,” *The Husband Hunter* was described by the trade press as “not by any mean a picture for high class houses” a “rough comedy [whose] very lowness and foolishness seem to constitute its merits with many audiences.” *Wid’s Daily*, however, made sure to let readers know that the lowness of the story was not the author’s fault but was due to the fact that Fox

had taken too many liberties with Fitzgerald’s story. Fitzgerald certainly has not signed his name to this type of stuff in print recently and in his original work there was probably a vein of satire which is altogether missing here. His name will attract the magazine reading public but it is the public which will

²³² *Ibidem*.

²³³ “The Husband Hunter,” *Motion Picture News*, 25 September 1920, p. 2497.

²³⁴ “Eileen Percy in *The Husband Hunter*,” *Exhibitors Herald*.

hardly be pleased with the manner in which the work of the author has been treated.²³⁵

This passage reflects the clearly growing sense in 1920 that Fitzgerald was a talented writer and that his name, just as that of the movie stars impersonating his characters, was an immediate appeal to audiences. Perhaps trying to prevent comments such as the *Wid's* one, Fox circulated a note to reassure exhibitors and moviegoers that the director had been “faithful” to Fitzgerald’s story:

According to a statement from the Fox headquarters in New York *The Husband Hunter* was shown to capacity business at each performance [...] during its run at the Academy of Music in New York the latter half of the week of September 19th [...] Director Howard M. Mitchell has lost none of the quaint satire which made the story so enjoyable in the reading.²³⁶

Reporting on the impact of *The Husband Hunter* on their patrons, many exhibitors from Alabama to Minnesota considered themselves satisfied with having booked the film print. James A. York from Monroeville, Ala., hailed the picture as “a splendid comedy. You will make no mistake in booking it”; Smith Read from DeKalb, Tex., “one of the snappiest comedies we have shown in some time [...] book this one and clean up on a clean comedy”; R. M. Parkhurst from Harrisburg, Ariz., commented

²³⁵ “Viola Dana in *The Chorus Girl's Romance*,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 11 September 1920, p. 89; “Not the Type For a Very High Class Theater: Box Office Analysis for the Exhibitor,” *Wid's Daily*, 19 September 1920, p. 26.

²³⁶ “Eileen Percy Improves On Her First Hit,” *Motion Picture News*, 16 October 1920, p. 3016.

that “everyone left the house with a big smile. It’s a dandy little program picture.”²³⁷ Less enthusiastic but quite precise O. R. Hans from Hastings, Minn., who described the film as a “fair program picture” that “will satisfy about 80 per cent.”²³⁸ E. E. Sprague from Goodland, Kans., noted that “his patrons insist that [Percy was] a real vest pocket edition of Olive Thomas, both in appearance and manner.”²³⁹ In the same year she played in *The Husband Hunter*, Percy had co-starred with Thomas in the successful film *The Flapper*. By associating the two actresses, the Kansas exhibitor was arguably noting Percy’s flapper traits in the film, a point to which I will return.

2.2 Ponzi’s Good-bye Song

In her study of *The Great Gatsby* and the news stories that inspired it, Sarah Churchwell reports a passage from the *New York Times* regarding the “‘get-rich-quick promises’ [that] had always lured venturesome souls [...] from the days of Columbus, who sought a shorter route to the fabled wealth of the Indies, down to the days of Ponzi.”²⁴⁰ Carlo Ponzi was an Italian swindler who immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s and invented the so-called “too-good-to-be-true Ponzi scheme.” Early in 1920, Ponzi set up the Securities Exchange Company in Boston and advertised in the local newspapers to pay 50% interest in 45 days or 100% interest in 90 days. Investigated by the press, U.S. district attorney and the state bank examiner, he was arrested in August of the same year, a month before the release of *The Husband Hunter*.²⁴¹

²³⁷ “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 13 November 1920, p. 94; “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 8 January 1921, p. 81.

²³⁸ “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 5 February 1921, p. 84.

²³⁹ “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 2 April 1921, p. 76.

²⁴⁰ Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, pp. 259-60.

²⁴¹ See Gary Giroux, *Business Scandals, Corruption, and Reform: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2013), p. 464.

While Ponzi has an obvious connection with Fitzgerald's most famous character, Jay Gatsby, and his "array of prohibition era get-rich-quick schemes," his figure has a less explicit relation to Myra's cinematic counterpart and a song she "sang" in the film adaptation.²⁴² According to surveys of the time, music accompanying silent-film showings was considered the most appealing feature of the cinematic experience. From big downtown palaces to small local theatres, the majority of 1920s picture houses hired musicians to attract customers. As Richard Koszarski notes, "The one element that linked all silent-movie exhibitions (and that remains the most difficult to recapture for modern audiences) was the musical setting."²⁴³

A review of Mitchell's film helps recapture some information on its musical accompaniment: "Ponzi's good-bye is sung. It consists of a lot of noise and a few bad notes. There are numerous others along the same lines."²⁴⁴ Only a month before the release of the film, Ponzi's name had appeared in the headlines of the major newspapers of the country.²⁴⁵ In 1920, three songs were copyrighted with the word Ponzi on their title: "Oh, Mister Ponzi. You've found the end of the rainbow for me" by Dan J. Sullivan, "Wise Wizard Charlie Ponzi" by Salvatore Liuni and "Evviva Carlo Ponzi" [Hurray for Carlo Ponzi] by Natale Di Palma.²⁴⁶ While it is highly improbable that Fox used the latter, which had Italian lyrics, there are reasons to believe that one of the other two tracks was used as accompaniment for the film.

²⁴² Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, p. 157.

²⁴³ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, p. 31; p. 41.

²⁴⁴ Matthew A. Taylor, "The Husband Hunter."

²⁴⁵ On August 13, 1920, the *New York Times* titled its first page: "Ponzi Arrested: Liabilities Put at \$7,000,000," *New York Times*, 13 August 1920, p. 1.

²⁴⁶ *Catalog of Copyright Entries. Part 3: Musical Compositions including: List of Copyright Renewals, List of Notices of User* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), p. 2081; p. 2313; p. 2517.

According to John A. Higgins, “Myra” stands as proof that Fitzgerald was in thrall to wealth.²⁴⁷ “Any significance [the story] may have in the study of Fitzgerald lies in its showing with what awe he at this time regarded the power of money,” he declared. “If one has it, one can arrange anything – as Gatsby will. If one lacks it, one must seek it by any means, even a mercenary marriage – as Daisy Fay will – for it is the golden key to happiness.”²⁴⁸ But others argue that “Myra Meets His Family” reflects Fitzgerald’s satirical contempt towards the rich. James L. W. West III groups Knowleton Whitney under the same category as Philip Dean and Percy Washington, as in all the three characters “the anticipation of money has produced a curious enervation and an insensitivity to the needs and desires of others. These characters please only themselves, wait for their money, and drift.”²⁴⁹

Long before Higgins and West debated the point, by adapting a story by Fitzgerald about fortune hunting and scoring it with a song about having thirst for (effortless) wealth, Fox also ascribed the fascination with riches to the young author. Both Ponzi’s scheme and Myra’s fortune-hunting reflect that growing obsession with wealth in American culture that Fitzgerald condemned five years later in *The Great Gatsby* in his “sharpest and most devastating attacks on the upper classes.”²⁵⁰ Fox might have used Sullivan’s or Liuni’s song as a humorous association between Myra’s love/game scheme to “hook” Knowleton and Ponzi’s too-good-to-be-true scheme. The lyrics of Dan J. Sullivan’s “Oh, Mister Ponzi. You’ve Found the End Of The Rainbow For Me” read:

²⁴⁷ See Scott Donaldson, *Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald: The Rise and Fall of a Literary Friendship* (Woodstock: Overlook, 1999), p. 209.

²⁴⁸ John A. Higgins, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 20.

²⁴⁹ James L. W. III West, “The Question of Vocation in *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, p. 53.

²⁵⁰ Alberto Lena, “Deceitful Traces of Power: An Analysis of the Decadence of Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*,” in *F. Scott Fitzgerald’s the Great Gatsby: New Edition*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Blooms Literary Criticism, 2010), p. 40.

All my life I've toil'd and toil'd so hard from sun to sun,
Always going never knowing when my work was done,
Always dreaming idle dreams that never would come true.
Now they're lined with gold and thanks to you [...]
You've made my life, Just like a Movie. I thrill and thrill in ecstasy.
Oh! Mister Ponzi, you're a wizard, Mister Ponzi,
You've found the end of the rainbow for me. Oh! Mister me.
Dreaming golden dreams, I hope I never wake up,
Let me drink of happiness until I drain the cup,
Here's good luck to you and yours until the end of time.²⁵¹

Just as Myra in the film “lures the unsuspecting young man to pursue her by always managing to be in his path when he goes to play golf, tennis or any sport,” the wizard Carlo Ponzi lured the tired workers to believe he could bring their idle, golden dreams to life. The fact that the song refers to “a life like a movie” might be another proof that the song was the “lot of noise and few bad notes” to which *Exhibitors Herald* referred.²⁵² However, the lyrics of Salvatore Liuni’s “The Wise Wizard Charlie Ponzi” suggest that this was more likely the song included in the score of *The Husband Hunter*:

Ponzi became a millionaire,
Got money from everywhere [...]

²⁵¹ “Oh, Mister Ponzi. You’ve Found the End of the Rainbow for Me” <<http://www.jefsewell.com/page/3>> [accessed 20 November 2016].

²⁵² Eileen Percy in *The Husband Hunter*.

Wall Street was getting so scared,
They thought he'd buy their underwear [...]
When the law reaches over there,
he starts to shimmy like a bear;
Then they bring him in the jail;
Because his bondsman had failed [...]
Because they stop that little swindle:
Then they brought him to an end.
Ho! Charlie Ponzi, You're a little son of a gun;
You're a real wise guy: But the law's got you so tight.
With your ways, with your eyes,
Lots of people you hypnotize.²⁵³

Liuni's song also described Ponzi as the enchanter who hypnotized lots of people to steal their "dough from everywhere." There are two verses in the lyrics that are particularly relevant. First, although *Motion Picture News* did not mention the title of the song, it referred to it as "Ponzi good-bye." Liuni's verse "They stop that little swindle: then they brought him to an end" might be considered as a "good-bye" to the "little son of a gun." Second, the verse "when the law reaches over there, he starts to shimmy like a bear" could also help locate the scene in the film adaptation in which the song was most likely played by the orchestra or pianist. Reporting on *The Husband Hunter*, an exhibitor from DeKalb, Texas, wrote "Oh, man, Eileen can shake a wicked shoulder."²⁵⁴ In the film, as well as in the original story, Myra sings

²⁵³ "The Wise Wizard Charlie Ponzi"

<<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ih/as/loc.natlib.ih.as.100007367/default.html>> [accessed 22 November 2016].

²⁵⁴ "What the Picture Did For Me," *Exhibitors Herald*, 8 January 1921, p. 81.

a popular song and performs a shimmy dance. In the short story, Knowleton's father asks Myra "do you sing?" to which she answers "Why – I have. I mean, I do, some [...] well, mostly popular music." Fitzgerald uses this fictional expedient to introduce the "informal neighbourhood vaudeville" party organized by Mr. Whitney in the third section of the story. Myra and Knowleton sit in the audience and watch a succession of performances on the stage, a scene anticipating Jordan and Nick watching the series of theatrical acts in Gatsby's blue garden, sipping champagne from "glasses bigger than finger bowls."²⁵⁵

A stage had been erected in the ballroom and Myra sat beside Knowleton in the front row and watched proceedings curiously. Two slim and haughty ladies sang, a man performed some ancient card tricks, a girl gave impersonations, and then to Myra's astonishment Mr. Whitney appeared and did a rather effective buck-and-wing dance.

Myra is then "dropped unprepared" to the stage by Mr. Whitney:

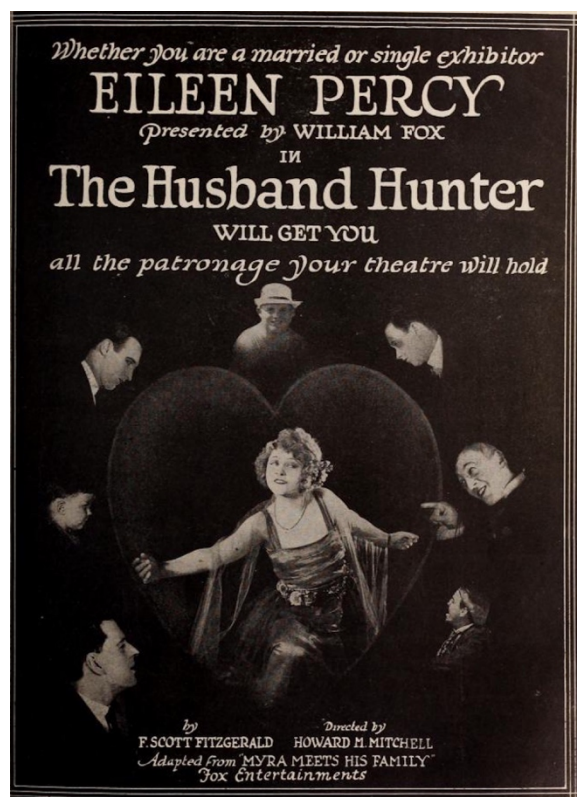
He held out his hand, and wonderingly she took it. Before she realized his intention he had half led, half drawn her out on to the stage [...] 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he began, 'most of you know Miss Myra Harper. [...] Miss Harper is not only beautiful but talented. Last night she confided to me that she sang. I asked whether she preferred the opera, the ballad or the popular song, and she confessed that her taste ran to the latter. Miss Harper will now favor us with a popular song.'²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 39.

²⁵⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, pp. 240-44.

The flapper decides reluctantly to sing a song titled “Wave That Wishbone?” The fact that I could not locate this tune in any 1920s database and that Ruth Prigozy did not include it in her comprehensive list of “Popular Songs in Fitzgerald’s Works” leads me to believe that Fitzgerald invented the song’s title.²⁵⁷ The story continues by describing Myra ragging and shimmying:

Myra smiled radiantly, nodded at the orchestra leader and began the verse in a light clear alto. As she sang a spirit of ironic humor slowly took possession of her – a desire to give them all a run for their money. And she did. She injected an East Side snarl into every word of slang; she ragged; she shimmied, she did a tickle-toe step she had learned once in



an amateur musical comedy; Figure 9 *Exhibitors Herald*, 9 October 1920, p. 15

and in a burst of inspiration finished up in an Al Jolson position, on her knees with her arms stretched out to her audience in syncopated appeal.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ See Ruth Prigozy, ““Poor Butterfly”: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Popular Music,” *Prospects*, 2 (1977), 41-67. In Neal Miller’s TV adaptation of “Myra Meets His Family,” Sean Young’s Myra also sings a song called “Wave that Wishbone” to an unreceptive audience. Having found no track of the song Young sings in the film, I can only assume the TV producers wrote the lyrics themselves.

²⁵⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 244.

In one of the advertisements for the film (Fig. 9), Eileen Percy is frozen like her fictional counterpart in an “Al Jolson position, on her knees with her arms stretched



Figure 10 Motion *Picture News*, 2 October 1920, p. 2653

out to her audience” of men staring at her. The image in the middle of another advertisement (Fig. 10) shows Myra also performing on the stage, perhaps while shimmying to the “Ponzi good-bye” song.

2.3 Sketches of Flappers from Paper to Screen

An unidentified review of *Flappers and Philosophers* that Fitzgerald pasted in his scrapbook noted:

The most interesting studies in his book of short stories are his sketches of girls. Probably no more recent pieces of writing are as truthful and as characteristic. What Mr. Fitzgerald believes girls are, or could become is what most young fellows, who possess what is called background, think they are or could become.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ A. L. S. Wood, “Flappers and Philosophers” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 55).

Besides being proof of the insistence of the 1920s press on Fitzgerald's ability to create realistic character types, this passage is also interesting in its use of the expression "sketches of girls." When this review was published in late 1920, several illustrators had bridged the worlds of art and literature by translating Fitzgerald's literary sketches into illustrations for the *Saturday Evening Post*. From February to May 1920, the flappers and philosophers of four of his short stories had been sketched in black and white and embedded in his popular works.²⁶⁰ The three short stories adapted into silent films in 1920 had all been illustrated for the magazine in the same year: "Head and Shoulders" by Charles B. Mitchell, "The Offshore Pirate" by Leslie L. Benson, "Myra Meets His Family" by May Wilson Preston.²⁶¹

In *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, Kamilla Elliott argues that, "Novels and films tend to unravel the very word and image divide they have been conscripted to uphold, since novels contain pictures and undertake pictorial effects and films contain words and undertake verbal effect." Fitzgerald's illustrated stories in the *Saturday Evening Post* and the intertitled silent films they were adapted into are a fitting example of the 1920s lively "interchange between words and images." Using different silent adaptations of *Vanity Fair* and Thackeray's illustrations of the novel as a key study, Elliott claims that, although few scholars have credited illustrations with shaping film art, all three extant silent films of the novel reveal influences of its author's drawings. Expanding on this, I argue that, while Fitzgerald famously borrowed cinematic techniques from Hollywood films, filmmakers used his *Post* stories both for their words and their illustrations. Just as in the silent film versions

²⁶⁰ The short stories are: "Head and Shoulders," "The Offshore Pirate," "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," and "The Ice Palace."

²⁶¹ "Head and Shoulders," *Saturday Evening Post* 192, 21 February 1920; "The Offshore Pirate" *Saturday Evening Post* 192, 29 May 1920; "Myra Meets His Family," *Saturday Evening Post* 192, 20 March 1920.

of *Vanity Fair*, intertitles, set designs, framing and costuming of the three films adaptations of Fitzgerald's early fiction show their debt not only to his writing but also to the three illustrators that visualised it.²⁶² As Elliott notes, "illustrations appear as frozen moments in novels, while verbal intertitles emerge as frozen moments in films."²⁶³ In the 1920s, filmmakers were already comparing and contrasting illustrations and intertitles. Silent director Charles Gaskill commented on a newspaper of the time:

The interscript (subtitle, caption, heading, reading matter et cetera) in a motion picture is precisely the reverse of the illustration in a story book. Its office is also more. It must be used not only to define the action; it must indicate the logic, the poetry, the sentiment, the philosophy and other abstract qualities found in the picture – it must illuminate.²⁶⁴

Film stills of the three adaptations of Fitzgerald's short stories shot in 1920 seem to show that the "frozen moments" of the *Post* illustrations and their captions were reused by Metro's and Fox's scenarists and title writers. A still of *The Husband Hunter* is a surviving trace of how Mitchell arguably followed closely one of Preston's illustrations of "Myra" in at least one scene of the film. The scene frozen in the still (Fig. 11) shows Myra and Kent sitting in their dinner dresses at a table in his mansion. The amazement in their faces is caused by the hero's father. In

²⁶² Michael North has described two different ways in which Fitzgerald's fiction absorbs the influence of photography and film. Michael North, *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-Century Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For other studies on Fitzgerald as a cinematic author see also Wheeler W. Dixon, *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald*; Scott F. Stoddart, "Redirecting Fitzgerald's 'Gaze.'"

²⁶³ Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, p. 18.

²⁶⁴ Qtd. in Anthony Slide, *Early American Cinema*, pp. 182-83.



Figure 11 Granger, History Picture Archive, film still of *The Husband Hunter*

Fitzgerald’s story, he “had raked across the tablecloth with his fingers and swept his silver to a jangling heap on the floor” – the reason for his anger being that the young couple did not plan to live with him after the wedding.

Costumes, furniture, silver cutlery and the characters’ amazed expression imitate those depicted in the illustration of the slick magazine (Fig. 12). As the film print and intertitles are presumed lost, it is not possible to ascertain whether other scenes of *The Husband Hunter* had been shaped by Preston’s other two illustrations of the story. But this surviving film still shows how the episode of the quarrel between Kent and his father was costumed, set, and posed almost precisely like in Preston’s drawing.



Figure 12 Preston’s illustration of “Myra,” Fitzgerald’s *Scrapbook I*

A still from *The Off-shore Pirate* film also shows its debt to Leslie L. Benson’s sketch of Ardita Farnam in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Benson depicted the flapper *par excellence* sitting in a white dress and white heeled shoes that were “perched on the arm of a settee adjoining the one she occupied” (Fig. 13).²⁶⁵ A still reprinted in a Brazilian film magazine preserves a scene of the film in which Viola

²⁶⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 5.

Dana as Ardita is sitting on a very similar settee, clad in an identical white dress and heeled shoes and in a similar pose. The film's director Dallas M. Fitzgerald, however, replaced the controversial novel by Anatole France that her fictional counterpart is reading in the source story with a more fashionable hat (Fig. 14),

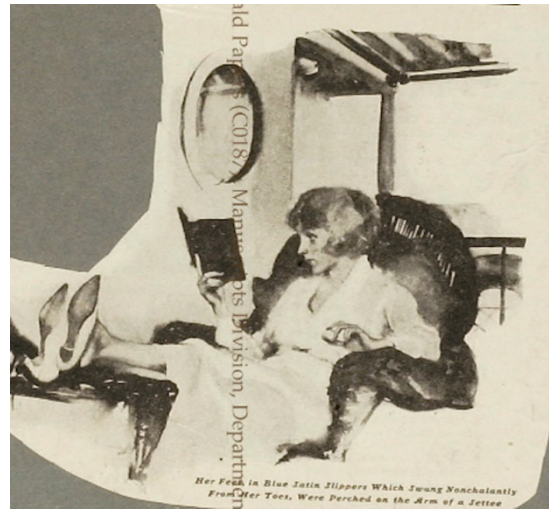


Figure 13 Benson's illustration of "The Offshore," Fitzgerald's *Scrapbook I*

suggesting that Metro deemed a book titled *The Revolts of the Angels* may offend some moviegoers.

As shown in the previous chapter, the director of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* also adhered to Fitzgerald's text in the reproduction of the film's sets and costumes. But a still from the film also reveals the influence of Charles B. Mitchell's illustration of the short story. In the scene in which Marcia leaves Horace's college room after



Figure 14 "Pirata de Alto Bordo," *A Scena Chorus Girl's Romance* quoted in the *Muda*, p. 23

having tried getting a kiss from him (Fig. 15), actor Gareth Hughes seems like he is mimicking his illustrated fictional counterpart (Fig. 16) by looking at Marcia from on top of the stairs with arms folded on the handrail. Again, the two actors' costumes are almost identical to those of the illustrated characters. Additionally, the caption on the bottom right of Mitchell's illustration reads as intertitle 50 of *The*



Figure 15 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*

previous chapter: “I hope I haven’t given you the impression that I consider kissing intrinsically irrational.”

This means that not only

the director decided to pose, costume, and set the scene like the illustration, but he also arguably used the caption as an intertitle to “illuminate the action,” to borrow director Gaskill’s words. By “faithfully” representing “Myra Meets His Family”’s words in the intertitles and imitating Preston’s illustrations in *The Husband Hunter*, Fox may have sought to entice those moviegoers who had just read the story and seen its illustrations in the mass-market magazine.

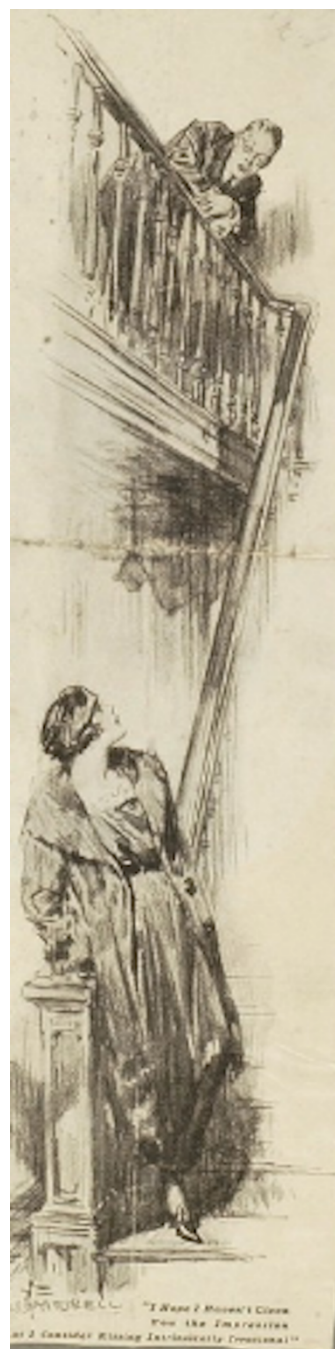


Figure 16 Mitchell's illustration of “Head and Shoulders,” Fitzgerald’s *Scrapbook I*

2.4 Myra as Character Type and the “Drawing Power” of Fitzgerald’s Name

This section analyses the extent to which Fox took part in the construction of Fitzgerald’s persona as the chronicler of the flapper, while using the young author’s gift for characterization to shape Percy’s flapper persona. Reception materials of *The*

Husband Hunter suggest how, from the very beginning of his career, Fitzgerald's name had become a bankable commodity for the film industry. On 22 May 1920, *Exhibitors Herald* titled an article "Fitzgerald Story Is Eileen Percy Vehicle," suggesting that the author's brand had already a drawing power.²⁶⁶ Less than two months after the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, the film trade press was already associating the young author with a specific type of story, the "Fitzgerald Story," and considered newsworthy that Fox had acquired film rights to his work.

The reception and advertising of *The Husband Hunter* testifies to the growing of Fitzgerald's name at the very beginning of his career. The fact that Fitzgerald was the author of the original story apparently added marketing value to Mitchell's film adaptation. Recommending how to promote *The Husband Hunter*, *Motion Picture News* wrote: "do not neglect by any means the fact that the author is F. Scott Fitzgerald and that the story was originally published in the *Saturday Evening Post*." In the "Program Reader," the trade magazine asserted: "The story is from the pen from none other than the popular F. Scott Fitzgerald."²⁶⁷ By September 1920, Fitzgerald had become a big enough name to be singled out by the Hollywood press for marketing purposes.

Not only was Fitzgerald by this time a successful novelist but also a successful *Post* author. As a reviewer pointed out: "The fact that the story created quite a sensation in magazine circles through its publication in the *Saturday Evening Post* is calculated to aid greatly in the picture's exploitation."²⁶⁸ *Wid's Daily* "Box Office analyst" assured exhibitors Fitzgerald's "name will attract the magazine reading

²⁶⁶ "Fitzgerald Story Is Eileen Percy Vehicle."

²⁶⁷ Matthew A. Taylor, "*The Husband Hunter*."

²⁶⁸ "Eileen Percy Scores Heavily in Fox's 'The Husband Hunter,'" in *The Husband Hunter*, scrapbook, compiled by the Community Motion Picture Bureau. Motion Picture and Television Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, p. 3.

public.”²⁶⁹ Four months after the release of *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, an Indiana newspaper reported on Fitzgerald’s “drawing power”:

Speaking of the drawing powers of a famous story, the name of F. Scott Fitzgerald attached to ‘The Chorus Girl’s Romance’ has drawn thousands to the photoplay-houses where it has been shown [...] no author in this generation has created a greater sensation than Fitzgerald and producing companies are discovering that his stories are the very best screen subjects.²⁷⁰

One of the reasons why studios may have deemed Fitzgerald’s stories good screen subjects was the fact that they provided ready material for subtitles. Both the foreign and trade press suggest that the film’s subtitles, defined by *Motion Picture News* as “certainly modern,” had managed to preserve Fitzgerald’s linguistic style and wit.²⁷¹ The title cards “voicing” the Palm Room scene mentioned above are an example of the extent to which the scenarist relied on Fitzgerald’s words. This directorial choice did not prove universally popular among film critics. *Variety* commented that:

What there is to Mr. Fitzgerald’s ability is in the turn of the phrase, the presentation of an idea in English. This grace Joseph Franklin Poland has tried to keep in his screen adaptation, but in keeping it he has made a picture that largely illustrates Fitzgerald’s bright remarks.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ “Not the Type For a Very High Class Theater.”

²⁷⁰ “Do You Like Fun.”

²⁷¹ Matthew A. Taylor, “*The Husband Hunter*.”

²⁷² “The Husband Hunter,” *Variety*, 12 November 1920, p. 36.

Far from ascribing literary ability to Fitzgerald, this comment reads like a veiled reproach of his widely recognized ready wit. While *Variety* criticised the scenarist's effort to keep the popular author's "gracious writing style" as it took over the action of the film adaptation, a British film trade magazine appreciated the fresh quality of the (numerous) intertitles of *The Husband Hunter*. Unlike the American review, *Kinematograph* considered the subtitling "brilliant":

A very welcome element of novelty gets one guessing all through the five reels of 'The Husband Hunter' [...] the photoplay is refreshingly light without being disappointingly thin. Its general effect is to cause one to hesitate between amazement and amusement, with a slight emphasis – thanks to the subtitling on the latter. A feature of the production is the subtitling; normally this would be excessive in quantity, but the brilliance of the matter, its humour and its cynicism, makes each piece of letter press excellent entertainment.²⁷³

Although different in tone, the two reviews both testify to the fact that intertitles based on Fitzgerald's "bright remarks" were generally well received.

In addition to providing material for subtitles, there is evidence that may suggest Fox purchases "Myra Meets His Family" as it was the "very best screen subject" for a flapper movie. The studio bought "Myra Meets His Family" as a vehicle for Eileen Percy, recently signed by the studio to be guided in the "right direction." *The Husband Hunter* was Percy's second film with the studio; she had just starred, as mentioned above, as one of the school girls in Olive Thomas's vehicle *The Flapper*. The next pages suggest that Fox might have bought "Myra" as a vehicle

²⁷³ "The Husband Hunter," *Kinematograph Weekly*.

for Percy to capitalize on the titular character's association with flapperdom. Some recently reprinted letters exchanged in 1920 between film pioneer William Fox and Sol M. Wurtzel, the production supervisor of Fox's Los Angeles studio, trace Fox's fashioning of Percy's persona to the flapper character during the shooting of *The Husband Hunter*. The correspondence also reveals Fox's and Wurtzel's concern with competitor studios, in particular with Metro, to which Fitzgerald had sold the rights to his first *Post* story, "Head and Shoulders," in late February 1920. Two months later, Wurtzel wrote to Fox his considerations on Metro's strategic plan:

It is my opinion that if the Fox Film Corporation were next season to follow out the system of the Metro film company this year, that is of making only big plays, big books, and making fewer pictures, that is to say six or seven a year, the returns from them would be far greater than the returns of a larger amount of pictures with stories that are not as big and productions that are not as big [...] It is my opinion that the film companies who have made the biggest success on special productions are those companies who were able to foresee and foretell what the public demanded, and be the first one on the field with it instead of allowing a competitor to come in and then catch up with him; for naturally the public takes to the picture that is first in the field.²⁷⁴

Foreseeing the cinematic potential of the young author, Metro had been the first in the field to produce a picture based on Fitzgerald's work and, more specifically, on his much requested flapper fiction. Fox replied to Wurtzel:

²⁷⁴ Wurtzel was responsible for every part of the William Fox studio's operations, i.e. hirings, firings, budgets and, most importantly, productions. Lilian Wurtzel Semenov and Carla Winter, eds., *William Fox, Sol M. Wurtzel and the Early Fox Film Corporation, Letters 1917-1923* (Jefferson: North Carolina: McFarland Press, 2001), p. 1; p. 137.

The policy of the Fox Film corporation for the next season will be to make a number of pictures, that you mention, with the following stars: William Farnum, Pearl White [...] Shirley Mason [Viola Dana's sister] and if we succeed with Eileen Percy [...] If it is possible to make with her pictures of the Constance Talmadge type [...] she will be included in our star series.²⁷⁵

Now most remembered for her role in D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, Talmadge was known for her tomboyish, "flapper deluxe" roles. Her screen persona was that of a carefree, "outdoor girl who loved activities" but she was also cast as a vamp in *In Search of a Sinner* (1920).²⁷⁶ By January 1927, Fitzgerald himself was hired by United Artists to write an original flapper comedy for Talmadge, which shows the extent to which her star persona was strongly linked to flapper roles. The fact that Fox was envisioning pictures of "the Constance Talmadge type" for Percy means he was in need of "flapperish" stories. The letter that Fox wrote to Wurtzel continues:

I am unable to write anything about [the two stories you sent] at this time. Rest assured that I will read them both carefully and then decide as to whether are not they are material for special production, at which time I will write you again and tell you what my plans are in the matter [...] Give me the price [for these stories] the next time you write. Find out what the author will want for them. In stating the price, kindly enclose me the original letter signed by the author of the stories offering them for sale, stating the price, which I am sure will be

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 140.

²⁷⁶ Elizabeth Stevenson, "Flappers and Some who Were not Flappers," in *Dancing Fools and Weary Blues: The Great Escape of the Twenties*, ed. by Lawrence R. Broer, John Daniel Walther (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990), p. 135.

reasonable [...] I am assuming that these stories have not been submitted to anyone else, so that the idea therein contained has not been adopted by someone else.

Given that Fox did not mention the title of these two stories, it is impossible to determine whether the film producer was looking at a copy of “Myra Meets His Family” when he wrote to Wurtzel. However, the date of the letter, 15 April 1920, might suggest so: two weeks later, on April 28, Fitzgerald signed the contract for the rights to his second *Post* story.²⁷⁷ From mid-March 1920, Ober had been trying to sell the short story to film studios, as proved by a letter Fitzgerald sent him from Princeton – where he was waiting for the publication of *This Side of Paradise* – saying: “You can get me on the phone here, Princeton 98 W, in case there are any movie offers on ‘Myra Meets His Family.’” Discussing the film rights to “The Camel’s Back” – another *Post* story he was struggling to sell to Hollywood at that time – Fitzgerald reminded Ober of his “success story” in selling “Myra” to Fox:

You remember that there was one story for which you got no offers. It was called ‘Myra Meets His Family.’ So after waiting six weeks you told me to go ahead and see if I could get rid of it. So I took it to a Miss Webster, a movie agent of no particular standing, and she managed to get me \$1000 for it from the Fox Film Co.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ “Witnesseth this agreement made the 28th day of April, 1920, by and between F. Scott Fitzgerald ... and Fox Film Corporation ...”, Matthew J. and Arlyn Bruccoli Collection of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Columbia Rare Books & Special Collections.

²⁷⁸ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, pp. 16-17.

A few weeks later, the trade press reported that Fox had issued a short notice headed “Eileen Percy to star in Fox Films.” *Exhibitors Herald* reported:

As a matter of fact, Mr. Fox started the charming Eileen Percy on the road to stardom [...] now, in confirming the news of her rise, the Fox organization recalls for the benefit of those who may not have followed the work of this talented young actress, the foundation upon which Fox found her standing prepared for her promotion [...] Her next two plays have been obtained by Fox. They are ‘Myra Meets His Family,’ a *Saturday Evening Post* story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and ‘Beware of the Bride’ [...] surely a good start for such a charming new star.²⁷⁹

The stories that Fox bought as vehicle for Percy were indeed “of the Constance Talmadge type” and she was included in Fox’s “star series.” This notice reveals the studio’s aim to stress the fact that they were paving Percy’s way to stardom and obtaining Fitzgerald’s flapper stories – or, even better, stealing them from competitors.

Fitzgerald had carefully painted Myra as pertaining to a specific type of girl. As Ruth Prigozy noted, “she is part of a class or group of young women,” namely the quintessential flappers, “never boring, looking for fun.”²⁸⁰ The “strong, wilful, selfish, beautiful, alluring, independent and ruthless young woman” that, as Kirk Curnutt notes, “the clamoring editors wanted” was also what the film studios wanted, as evidenced by the fact that, within two years, Fitzgerald managed to sell four of his

²⁷⁹ “Fox’s New Star, Eileen Percy” *Exhibitors Herald*, 29 May 1920, p. 66.

²⁸⁰ Ruth Prigozy, “Fitzgerald’s Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age,” p. 140.

flapper stories to Hollywood.²⁸¹ As Prigozy underlined, *The Husband Hunter* shared with the other film adaptations of Fitzgerald's short fiction its "subject matter and main character [...] the flapper, who had become associated in the public's mind with Fitzgerald's short stories." The Fitzgerald scholar, who considered "Myra Meets His Family" as a "more polished work with a far more complex heroine" than "Head and Shoulders," stated that, although the plot is ingenious, "the most attractive aspect of the story is Myra herself."²⁸²

Discussing the "kinaesthetic pleasures" offered to silent film audiences, Lori Landay notes that "the flapper film offered its spectators the opportunity to identify emotionally with the star."²⁸³ Trying to exploit this subjective quality of the relationship between spectator and the flapper star on the rise Eileen Percy, Fox advertised *The Husband Hunter* mainly as a motion picture for young people, and, especially, for young women. The St. Johnsbury (Vermont) *Caledonian Record* advertised the film as "5 reels of Gorgeous Jazz"; the Arizona *Coconino Sun* as "a special for Young ladies"; the *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune* in Nebraska as "a rollicking society comedy in which a girl outwitted two men who had pushed Cupid out-of-doors."²⁸⁴ The theme of the heroine "outwitting" the hero was also used in the publicity for *The Off-shore Pirate*, as the next chapter shows.

Although Fox was suggesting exhibitors target female audiences, with ads warning "Women! Watch your husbands closely! The Husband Hunter is in town," they indirectly attracted men along.²⁸⁵ This type of film advertising went back to the

²⁸¹ Kirk Curnutt, "F. Scott Fitzgerald: Professional Author," p. 57.

²⁸² Ruth Prigozy, "Fitzgerald's Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age," p. 131; p. 139.

²⁸³ Lori Landay, "The Flapper Film: Comedy Dance, and Jazz Age Kinaesthetics," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. by Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 243.

²⁸⁴ "Tomorrow," *Caledonian Record*, 28 October 1920, p. 6; "Today," *Coconino Sun*; "Eileen Percy in 'The Husband Hunter,'" *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, 19 October 1920, p. 10.

²⁸⁵ "Pastime Today," *The Public Ledger*, 8 February 1921, p. 4.

mid 1910s and the first film serials such as *The Adventures of Kathlyn* (1913). The promotion of this serial, Barbara Wilinsky observes,

was specifically designed to attract women [...] ‘Warning! Kathlyn will entice your husband from his fireside many an evening;’ [...] ‘Young Ladies: Watch your Sweethearts! Kathlyn is coming.’ All of these ads used the appeal of vicarious adventure and curiosity to stimulate women to go out and see *Kathlyn* [...] the ads addressed women directly [...] particularly those that warned of Kathlyn’s charms, but they can also be seen to have an attraction for men. The thought of seeing a beautiful woman whom their wives are being warned about might have made men interested in seeing the films and more willing to take their wives to the moving picture theater in the evening.²⁸⁶

On the screen, Myra seemed less chaste than on paper, which would make it easier to understand why Fitzgerald’s stories, which might seem “puritanical by today’s literary standards,” were perceived as risqué by 1920s standards.²⁸⁷ *Exhibitors Herald* noted that “the story begins racily and contains bit of dashing, sparkling comedy.”²⁸⁸ For the initial scene set in the primitive era, the scenarist instructed the costumer that Percy should be “very sparsely clothed.”²⁸⁹ A picture taken during the

²⁸⁶ Barbara Wilinsky, “Flirting with Kathlyn,” pp. 44-45.

²⁸⁷ Matthew J. Bruccoli, “Introduction,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Price Was High*, p. xv.

²⁸⁸ “Eileen Percy in *The Husband Hunter*,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 2 October 1920, p. 86.

²⁸⁹ Joseph Franklin Poland, “The Husband Hunter: Photoplay in Five Parts.”

shooting of the first scenes of the film (Fig. 17) preserved an outdoor set that is not described in the film's synopsis. An Australian newspaper helps contextualize the beach setting and pose of the



Figure 17 WCTFR, set still of *The Husband Hunter*

actresses, who are dressed and postured like the burlesque-style titillating Sennett Bathing Beauties films of the time: “Some of the scenes are laid in most beautiful surroundings by Palm Beach – New York’s great seaside pleasure resort. We get most intimate views of the gay life in this and other localities.”²⁹⁰ The beach scenes that stuck in the mind of the Australian reviewer were added to Fitzgerald’s original story, showing how the scenarist took liberties from the source story at the beginning of the film. By portraying Percy and other supporting characters clad in similar skimpy bathing suits and undergarment as the Bathing Beauties, Fox inevitably associated the film with the extremely (in)famous Sennett’s racy sketches. A local newspaper preserved the memory of another potentially compromising scene in the film:

When the story opened Myra’s plan to win Kent Whitney is well under way. A storm forces Myra and Whitney into a deserted house in the woods and results in the couple being quarantined, they [sic] being informed that scarlet fever has

²⁹⁰ “The Husband Hunter,” *Sunday Times*, 27 February 1921, p. 22.

existed in the shack. Rather than expose Myra to any possibility of being compromised Kent proposes, and of course is accepted.²⁹¹

Fox crafted Percy's persona as the "typical flapper" also by associating her with sporting activities. Flappers were represented as sporty and athletic and Fox included in *The Husband Hunter* a scene showing Percy playing tennis in a tennis outfit. On 31 July 1920, *The Seattle Star* reprinted a promotional film still of the film (Fig. 5) and announced: "When Eileen isn't working on a film production she can be found on the tennis court near her home in Hollywood engaged in a closely contested match. If Eileen is as versatile when playing tennis as she is while acting, no one need complain."²⁹²

The witty advertising slogan "a novel about flappers for philosophers" that Fitzgerald coined in 1920 to publicize *This Side of Paradise* and title his first collection of short stories is one of his earliest and most successful attempts to typify his audience and the characters that epitomized it. Most of the contemporary reviewers of Fitzgerald's first novel also acknowledged that Amory Blaine and the three girls he meets during his journey on this side of paradise (Isabelle Borge, Rosalind Connage, and Eleanor Savage) were the embodiment of the post-war youth, the true-to-life American flappers and philosophers.²⁹³ Shortly after the novel's publication, both positive and negative reviews complimented Fitzgerald's ability to create male and female types with which young readers could easily identify. The

²⁹¹ "The Husband Hunter," *Pullman Herald*, 24 December 1920, p. 11.

²⁹² "Miss Eileen Percy, the Captivating Fox Star, Is Devoted to Tennis," *The Seattle Star*, 31 July 1920, p. 3.

²⁹³ As Rena Sanderson notes, "the girls Amory finds most interesting – Isabelle, Rosalind, Eleanor – are 'popular daughters': they are white, wealthy, lovely, bright, athletic, confident, spoiled, outspoken, and young flirtatious debutantes." Rena Sanderson, "Women in Fitzgerald's Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, p. 149.

reviewers for the *Chicago Daily News* and the *New York Tribune* focused on the male types in the novel. Harry Hansen, the literary editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, noted:

Fitzgerald has taken a real American type – the male flapper of our best colleges – and written him down with startling verisimilitude. He has taken a slice of American life, part of the piecrust. Only a man on the inside could have done it [...] this lad is himself, and again – strikingly American.²⁹⁴

At the time of the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, the American nation was coming to terms with its emerging identity. As early as in March 1920, Hansen was noting that Fitzgerald was defining the American national type and that his writing focused, in Ronald Berman's words, "centrally about the creation of American identity."²⁹⁵ *New York Tribune* literary reviewer Heywood Broun, one of the most vehement critics of *This Side of Paradise*, also reluctantly gave Fitzgerald credit for having "painted a faithful portrayal of the type of young man who may be described as the male flapper."²⁹⁶ Other critics praised the writer's depiction of the female flapper instead. The *St. Louise Post-Dispatch* wrote: "Young Mr. Fitzgerald has all of the small talk and the slang of the 'flapper' at his command and he seems to know the young girl of today exceedingly well." The review continues by mentioning that

²⁹⁴ Harry Hansen "Whew! How that Boy Can Write!" (Repr. in *The Critical Reception of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Bryer, p. 1). According to *The Philadelphia Sunday Press*, not only did Fitzgerald typify the male flapper, but also his mother. According to the reviewer, Beatrice Blaine is "a woman as ludicrously typical as Amory is ludicrously individual." N. B. C., "Old and New Standards in First Novels" (Repr. in *The Critical Reception of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Bryer, p. 6).

²⁹⁵ Ronald Berman, *Fitzgerald-Wilson-Hemingway: Language and Experience* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), p. 3.

²⁹⁶ Nonetheless, Broun quickly added that "to our mind the type is not interesting." Heywood Broun, "Paradise and Princeton" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 10).

“moving picture magnates have already offered \$25,000 for the film rights [to *This Side of Paradise* in which] young Fitzgerald introduces to the reading public the character of the P. D. [Popular Daughter].”²⁹⁷ This passage is telling in two respects. First, only a few days after its publication, *This Side of Paradise* had already caught Hollywood’s attention. Second, reviewers immediately realized what made Fitzgerald’s early work so appealing to young audiences and, consequently, to film studios: his typified characters and their true-to-life slang.²⁹⁸ In its review of *Flappers and Philosophers*, the *New York Herald* complimented Fitzgerald for “his faculty of characterizing people in a sentence” and “his facility in the use of the limited but pungent vocabulary of his type.”²⁹⁹ In the article “*This Side of Paradise* is True-to-life Novel,” one of the college students reviewing the book for *The Dartmouth* also remarked that it “abounds with slang”; he then suggested a possible reason for the cinematic appeal of the novel:

Dartmouth students have a not peculiar antipathy for the collegiate life commonly given us in the modern novel or movie. Rightly so, for nothing is more horrible than Paramount’s conception of a football hero, Selznick’s idea of a famous stroke oar, or even Booth Tarkington’s laughable picture of an undergraduate Bolshevik. But now comes the first book which is ‘regular.’ *This Side of Paradise* fulfils the demands of readers who know undergraduate

²⁹⁷ “Good Afternoon! Have you a Little P.D. in your Home?” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 2).

²⁹⁸ A reviewer of *Flappers and Philosophers* rejoiced at Fitzgerald’s inimitable “photographs from life [...], the flapper vocabulary, the flapper standards.” “The Ringmaster,” unidentified clipping in Fitzgerald’s *Scrapbook I* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 53).

²⁹⁹ David Coyle, “Short Stories by Scott Fitzgerald” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 43).

life at first-hand, and who wish to have it described in an entertaining yet always faithful manner.³⁰⁰

This passage suggests that, to young readers, the most important trait of *This Side of Paradise* was a “fidelity” to American youth culture that other model novels and films lacked. As Timothy W. Galow notes, “Fitzgerald’s own personal association with Princeton gave him credibility to represent the younger generation, and it made him valuable to those supposed ‘outsiders’ looking for a symbolic mean to understand the new subculture.”³⁰¹ In the eyes of fellow Ivy League students, Fitzgerald, unlike Hollywood filmmakers and old novelists, captured the post-war college youth with the double authority of a Princetonian and a twenty-three-year-old “philosopher.” As the *Washington Sunday Star* observed, Fitzgerald was in the position to go “inside himself, shut and [lock] the door and then [sit] down to watch himself and make notes on his interior behavior.”³⁰²

Associating Fitzgerald with Hollywood in her review titled “A Chronicle of Youth by Youth,” Margaret Emerson compared the typified heroines of *This Side of Paradise* with Hollywood actresses, by saying that the novel’s flappers adopted the manners of the “Queens of the Movies.”³⁰³ Reviewers of Fitzgerald’s second book *Flappers and Philosophers* also likened Fitzgerald’s heroines with screen actresses, and his readers with moviegoers. One day before the release of *The Husband Hunter*, a critic commented:

³⁰⁰ R. F. McPartlin, “Princeton Scene of Novel – *This Side of Paradise* is True-to-life Novel” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 16).

³⁰¹ Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, pp. 123-24.

³⁰² *Washington Sunday Star* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 25).

³⁰³ “The debutante of old days, the Victorian “virgin doll” has been transformed to the “baby vamp” who, if she is too hard-headed to follow in morals the Queens of the Movies, has at least adopted their manners.” Margaret Emerson Bailey, “A Chronicle of Youth by Youth” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p 27).

If you can picture a vast amphitheatre of beaming mamas and papas, with the witty sayings from *Flappers and Philosophers* following exploits by Arditia, Bernice and Marcia Meadow flashed on a movie screen, you will have this book and its audience before you.³⁰⁴

Just as Fitzgerald did with the advertising slogan for *This Side of Paradise*, reviewers were pigeonholing the heroines/actresses of the book and its reading/movie-going audience. Myra's name is missing from the list of flappers flashing on the movie screen because, as noted above, Fitzgerald did not include "Myra Meets His Family" in *Flappers and Philosophers*. However, from the beginning of the story, it is clear that Fitzgerald is characterizing Myra as the typical flapper with "witty sayings," most likely with the hope that her "exploits" would also flash on many American silver screens. The story opens by introducing "the Myra," whom "every boy who has attended an Eastern college in the last ten years has met half a dozen times":

When Myra is young, seventeen or so, they call her a wonderful kid; in her prime – say, at nineteen – she is tendered the subtle compliment of being referred to by her name alone; and after that she is a 'prom trotter' or 'the famous coast-to-coast Myra.' You can see her practically any winter afternoon if you stroll through the Biltmore lobby. She will be standing in a group of sophomores just in from Princeton or New Haven, trying to decide whether to dance away the mellow hours at the Club de Vingt or the Plaza Red Room. Afterward one of the sophomores will take her to the theater and ask her down

³⁰⁴ Sybil Vane, "Flapper and Philosophers" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 15).

to the February prom – and then dive for a taxi to catch the last train back to college.³⁰⁵

This introduction depicts Myra as a representative of a specific type, a flapper stock character. This “essayistic opening,” which Fitzgerald used in several of his short stories to make the reader identify with the character from the first page, apparently had a certain appeal to Hollywood filmmakers.³⁰⁶ Fitzgerald’s flapper stories made into films respectively in 1921 and 1924 (“The Offshore Pirate” and “The Camel’s Back”) present the same type of introduction and the same typified character. A passage from “The Offshore” reads:

But this is not a story of two on an island, nor concerned primarily with love bred of isolation. It is merely the presentation of two personalities, and its idyllic setting among the palms of the Gulf Stream is quite incidental. Most of us are content to exist and breed and fight for the right to do both, and the dominant idea, the foredoomed attempt to control one’s destiny, is reserved for the fortunate or unfortunate few. To me the interesting thing about Ardita is the courage that will tarnish with her beauty and youth.³⁰⁷

Using a now well-known postmodernist technique, Fitzgerald playfully established a direct relationship with the reader by suggesting the characteristic that makes Ardita a representative of an era and of a specific social class. In “The Camel’s Back,” which Fitzgerald sold to Warner Brothers in 1922, the narrator also starts by addressing

³⁰⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 229.

³⁰⁶ Alice Hall Petry, *Fitzgerald's Craft of Short Fiction*, p. 4.

³⁰⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 27.

directly “the tired reader” and continues by presenting the “male Flapper” who, as Gatsby, “resemble the advertisement of the man”:

I want you to meet Mr. Perry Parkhurst, twenty-eight, lawyer, native of Toledo. Perry has nice teeth, a Harvard diploma, parts his hair in the middle. You have met him before – in Cleveland, Portland, St. Paul, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and so forth. Baker Brothers, New York, pause on their semi-annual trip through the West to clothe him; Montmorency & Co. dispatch a young man post-haste every three months to see that he has the correct number of little punctures on his shoes. He has a domestic roadster now, will have a French roadster if he lives long enough, and doubtless a Chinese tank if it comes into fashion. He looks like the advertisement of the young man rubbing his sunset-colored chest with liniment and goes East every other year to his class reunion.

As Myra and Arditia, Perry’s lover is also representative of the spoiled, rich, modish flapper. Fitzgerald’s depiction of Betty Medill seems to cast away any doubt about his hope that “the tired reader” was a film producer and possible buyer of the cinematic rights to the story: “I want you to meet [Perry’s] Love. Her name is Betty Medill, and she would take well in the movies. Her father gives her three hundred a month to dress on, and she has tawny eyes and hair and feather fans of five colors.”³⁰⁸ This was not the only reference to filmmaking in the stories that Fitzgerald sold to Hollywood in the early 1920s. In “The Offshore Pirate,” Fitzgerald specifically alluded to silent films in a mocking way. At the beginning of the story, Arditia lampoons her uncle, who does not approve of her boyfriend, by saying: “Thrilling

³⁰⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, ed. James L. West III (1922. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 33.

scandals by an anxious uncle [...] have it filmed. Wicked clubman making eyes at virtuous flapper. Virtuous flapper conclusively vamped by his lurid past.” And when Ardita’s lover, Toby Moreland, thinks she is asking him too many questions, he tells her: “Going to write a movie about me?”³⁰⁹

As Alan Margolies states, “It seems possible that these were more than just metaphors. For by this time Fitzgerald was writing a few stories with film sales in mind.”³¹⁰ In point of fact, however, it was far more than “a few stories,” as what Fitzgerald was offering film producers were character types that “would take well in the movies” and that speak in modern slang easily adaptable into fresh and witty intertitles. By “presenting personalities” like Myra, Ardita, Betty, and Perry, and by suggesting what their most interesting characteristic is (i.e. Ardita’s “courage that will tarnish with her beauty and youth”), Fitzgerald was giving hints to filmmakers on how best to represent his male and female flappers and make them appealing to the young audiences.³¹¹ In buying the rights to “Myra Meets His Family,” Fox probably took into consideration that if Fitzgerald, as the Dartmouth student wrote, was “fulfilling the demands of readers who know undergraduate life at first-hand,” he would likely fulfil the demands of the coetaneous moviegoers who also wanted to be entertained in a “faithful manner.” American film industry trade paper *Motion Picture News* stressed the fact that Percy played the well-known character type of the “husband hunter”:

The girl who is openly and frankly on the trail of unattached millionaires. She catches one who decides to put her to a test by introducing her to his eccentric

³⁰⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 8; p. 15

³¹⁰ Alan Margolies, “Kissing, Shooting, and Sacrificing,” p. 68.

³¹¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 27.

‘family.’ The ‘family’ is surely a test for any girl [...] The comedy situations are the big thing, backed by the types [...] Miss Percy plays Myra – one of the types known to society as a ‘husband hunter.’³¹²

By stressing that *any girl* might identify with Myra in her fear of meeting *the* fiancé’s family, this review suggests that what had made *This Side of Paradise* and *Flapper and Philosophers* successful, namely Fitzgerald’s ability to faithfully portray young types (and their slang), was what made his work so appealing to 1920s’ filmmakers.

Kenneth Eble points out that the closing line of “Myra” – “Tell the driver the Biltmore, Walter” – “typifies the ‘flapper’ story by which Fitzgerald won his dubious but imperishable reputation as ‘Chronicler of the Jazz Age.’”³¹³ Eble arguably stresses the fact that Fitzgerald’s reputation was “dubious” as other social observers such as H. L. Mencken had also promulgated the persona and image of the flapper in their cultural discourses of the new woman in the 1910s and 1920s.³¹⁴ In a 1923 interview, B. F. Wilson of *Metropolitan Magazine* reported to Fitzgerald that “quite a few people attribute[d] the flapper” to him. Replying to the journalist’s question whether it was true that the flapper had “sprang from [his] books and stories,” Fitzgerald put the statement into perspective by sharing the credit with William Makepeace Thackeray and Stephen McKenna for having “brought the flapper into existence.”³¹⁵ While the importance interviews such as this had in establishing Fitzgerald’s persona as the flapper historian has been widely acknowledged, the role that *The Husband Hunter* played in solidifying Fitzgerald’s place as the uncontested

³¹² Matthew A. Taylor, “The Husband Hunter.”

³¹³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 253; Kenneth Eble, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 55.

³¹⁴ See Lori Landay, “The Flapper Film: Comedy Dance, and Jazz Age Kinaesthetics,” pp. 224-25.

³¹⁵ B. F. Wilson, F. Scott Fitzgerald Says: ‘All Women Over Thirty-Five Should Be Murdered’ (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, pp. 263-64).

“flapper king” has never been considered.³¹⁶ In a review of *The Beautiful and Damned* adaptation released two years after *The Husband Hunter*, *The Atlanta Constitution* pointed out:

If the up-and-coming American girl is looking for an advocate to encourage her independence of spirit, thought and action, she can do no better than seek out F. Scott Fitzgerald, the fascinating novelist who has done more than any living man to interpret the genus ‘flapper’ [...] Mark the wave of popularity which followed the publication of ‘Head and Shoulders,’ which came to the screen under the title *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*.³¹⁷

This article suggests the extent to which in the early 1920s the press was strongly associating Fitzgerald with the adaptations based on his work. The Texan *Courier-Gazette* also noted:

F. Scott Fitzgerald, the 25-year-old author of *The Beautiful and Damned*, did more than merely write one of the cleverest stories ever done by an American; he immortalized the flapper. As a result, when you think of a flapper your mind travels instinctively to *The Beautiful and Damned*, either in its novel or screen adaptation; and when you think of the novel or picture of this name, your thoughts revert to the much-discussed flapper.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ See Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, pp. 285-86.

³¹⁷ “Metropolitan Offers Story of Jazz Set.”

³¹⁸ “F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘His Popular Novel,’” *The Courier-Gazette*, 17 March 1923, p. 7. The same article appeared in the 18 February 1923 issue of the *Des Moines Capital*.

Mentioning the same article, Kathleen Drowne observes that by the time *The Beautiful and Damned* came out Fitzgerald was “riding the wave of popular flapper fiction [and] was already widely regarded as an expert in the area of young modern women.”³¹⁹ However, while Drowne quotes the same passage mentioned above, she does not focus on the fact that the anonymous writer had credited both the novel and its screen adaptation for having created such a strong bond between the flapper and Fitzgerald in the mind of the American people.

In 1927, Fitzgerald responded to a question from *Motion Picture Magazine* on “the cinema descendants of his original brain-daughter, the flapper.” The “flapper historian” lucidly explained: “just as the screen exaggerates action, so it exaggerates type [...] the actresses who do flappers really well understand them thoroughly enough to accentuate their characteristics without distorting them.”³²⁰ By changing the title of the film adaptation from “Myra Meets His Family” into the more generalizing *The Husband Hunter*, Fox “exaggerated” the type Fitzgerald created in his first novel and early short stories and accentuated the characteristic of *the* Popular Daughter, *the* flapper, *the* Myra etc., while voicing Fitzgerald’s characters with intertitles (partially taken from his story) that reflected the language of post-war youth. In 1920, at the very beginning of his professional career, Fitzgerald could not know the extent to which he would soon feel trapped by that flapper heroine that silent Hollywood helped him typify by bringing it from the slick pages of the *Saturday Evening Post* to countless silver screens across the United States and beyond.

³¹⁹ Kathleen Drowne, “Postwar Flappers,” in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, p. 245.

³²⁰ Margaret Reid, “Has the Flapper Changed?” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, pp. 279-80).

Chapter 3 “She Kissed Him Softly in the Adaptation”: “The Offshore Pirate” on the Silent Screen

Nationally released on 31 January 1921, Dallas M. Fitzgerald’s *The Off-shore Pirate* was the third silent film adapted from a text by F. Scott Fitzgerald.³²¹ In the span of six months, Hollywood had already produced three films based on Fitzgerald’s works. “The Offshore Pirate” was the second short story by Fitzgerald purchased by Metro Pictures Corporation as a vehicle for Viola Dana. With an agreement signed two days before the story’s appearance in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the studio acquired its cinematic rights and quickly filmed it under the same name but different punctuation.³²² Adapted by prolific screenwriter Waldemar Young, *The Off-shore Pirate* was exported to several foreign countries, including Australia, UK, Sweden, Canada, Mexico and Brazil. Although the adaptation of “The Offshore Pirate” is presumed lost, Brazilian and American novelizations, as well as many other publicity and reception materials, survive.³²³

The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, it situates *The Off-shore Pirate* in relation to the social and political context of post-suffrage and red-scare America, while offering a provisional reconstruction of the film. Second, it shows how the film participated in the construction of Fitzgerald as the author of youth in America and abroad. From 1920 onwards, both Fitzgerald and his work were insistently associated

³²¹ The director had no relation to F. Scott Fitzgerald.

³²² The word “off-shore” was hyphenated in the movie title. “The Agreement Made on May 27, 1920,” p. 1.

³²³ “Pirata de Alto Bordo,” *A Scena Muda*, 3.152 (1924), 23-25; Ralph H. Leek, “*The Offshore Pirate*: Story Version written for *Screenland*,” November 1920, 34-44, p. 35. *Screenland* was the same popular film magazine that invited Fitzgerald to write a piece on the movies three years later. The essay, titled “The Most Pampered Men in the World,” was only published posthumously. See James L. W. West III, “Polishing Up ‘Pampered.’”

with the younger generation. Advertisements, reviews, interviews, and Fitzgerald's own non-fiction all underscored his youth and youthful characters. The critical consensus regarding the two books he had published during *The Off-shore Pirate's* presence in cinemas (*This Side of Paradise* and *Flappers and Philosophers*) may be summed up in one reviewer's catch phrase: "chronicle[s] of youth by youth."³²⁴ On 1 April 1920, one of the first reviews of *This Side of Paradise* called Fitzgerald "an extremely youthful author" who "had stepped into fame despite the fact that he is barely 23 years of age" and "seems to know the young girl of today exceedingly well." Burton Rascoe titled his positive review of the novel "A Youth in the Saddle" and praised the book for telling "the truth about prep school boys and American collegians by a young man who has just emerged from their experiences." The *Philadelphia North American* argued less favourably that whatever recognition *This Side of Paradise* obtained "will be because of the qualities which the writer's youth lend to it," while the *New York Evening Post* signalled half-humorously the novel's "youthful Byronism."³²⁵

Literary critics continued to establish the association between Fitzgerald and youth in their reviews of his second book. Fanny Butcher hailed the young author for having "crystallized his generation" in the *Flappers and Philosophers* stories, which she declared important inasmuch as they represented "youth, uncompromising, unclothed [...] conscious of its powers and joyous of them." The *Minneapolis Journal* ascribed Fitzgerald's popular success to his "youthful outlook," while the *New York Sun* and the *Boston Evening Transcript* respectively dubbed the octet of stories as

³²⁴ "Margaret Emerson Bailey, "A Chronicle of Youth by Youth" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 26).

³²⁵ "Good Afternoon! Have you a Little P. D. in Your Home?"; Burton Rascoe, "A Youth in the Saddle"; "F. Scott Fitzgerald Is Writer Worth Watching; "A Remarkable Young American Writer" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 2; p. 3; p. 5; p. 12).

“records of that period when youth is suddenly transformed into manhood” and “moral stimulants for the younger generation.” An unidentified clipping in Fitzgerald’s scrapbook focused in particular on the first story of the volume, “The Offshore Pirate,” noting “there is the element of youth to be accounted for and it is youth that wins, wins gloriously and for no other reason than because it is youth.”³²⁶

As Kirk Curnutt observes, “the scrupulous attention fixed on youth also created a demand for spokesman to mediate the widening generation gap – a role that no one in this period played better than Fitzgerald.”³²⁷ According to Timothy W. Galow, from the beginning of his career Fitzgerald assumed the dual public role as “a representative example of the brash and vaguely immoral younger generation and as a brilliant young artist who was unique in his ability to capture the vicissitudes of contemporary youth.”³²⁸ But while scholars convincingly demonstrate how Fitzgerald’s fiction and its reception associated him with the youth of the United States, the contribution that *The Off-shore Pirate*, along with its reception and publicity, made in cementing his youthful persona has been left out of the picture. Jarom Lyle McDonald also comments on how the critical reception of Fitzgerald’s books portrayed him as “the representative of and the interpreter for an ever-incomprehensible generation.” However, although McDonald states that “more powerful than print culture” was “the rapidly growing world of motion pictures” and that 1920s youth absorbed “stories and pictures that reflected Hollywood’s view of

³²⁶ Fanny Butcher; “Fitzgerald Again,” I. W. L., “Flappers and Others”; “The Ringmaster” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 38; p. 41; p. 47; p. 53).

³²⁷ Kirk Curnutt, “F. Scott Fitzgerald, Age Consciousness, and the Rise of American Youth Culture,” p. 30.

³²⁸ Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, p. 124.

youth culture,” he surprisingly does not mention the silent adaptations of Fitzgerald’s stories and their reception in this context.³²⁹

If it is true, as Galow notes, that Fitzgerald’s early *Saturday Evening Post* stories “quickly became essential texts for many teenagers in the United States,” certainly the same can be said for their even more popular celluloid adaptations.³³⁰

Almost exactly a year before the film’s release, the still unpublished and unknown Fitzgerald had delivered a copy of a story then called “The Proud Piracy” to Harold Ober with a note describing it as “very odd.”³³¹ The *Saturday Evening Post* accepted a revised and retitled version of the tale and published it in the 29 May 1920 issue.³³² Although H. L. Mencken and Heywood Broun did not praise “The Offshore Pirate” in their reviews of *Flappers and Philosophers* in which the story was collected, scholars have recently reconsidered it.³³³ Bryant Mangum defines “The Offshore Pirate” as “more carefully conceived and artfully crafted than [it] had been thought by Fitzgerald’s contemporaries,” while Alice Hall Petry states that troubling questions about love, marriage, courtship and financial problems can “barely maintain the illusion that the story is mere entertainment, a frothy diversion for *Post* readers.”³³⁴ Robert Sklar went so far as to argue that “The Offshore Pirate” is not only more significant than Fitzgerald’s other early stories, but also ranks above *This Side of Paradise* for its more substantive debate over values.³³⁵ John A. Higgins

³²⁹ Jarom Lyle McDonald, “Youth Culture,” in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, pp. 254-56.

³³⁰ Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, p. 1.

³³¹ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 11.

³³² “The Offshore Pirate” was the sixth story by Fitzgerald published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1920.

³³³ William H. Nolte, ed., *H. L. Mencken's Smart Set Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 286; Heywood Broun, “Books” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 45-46).

³³⁴ Bryant Mangum, “The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald,” p. 59; Alice Hall Petry, *Fitzgerald's Craft of Short Fiction*, p. 21.

³³⁵ Robert Sklar, *The Last Lacoön* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 68.

stresses the association between “The Offshore Pirate” and Hollywood, arguing: “The characters, the theme, the whole wildly implausible story are all wrapped in the ‘golden mist’ of Hollywoodian unreality.”³³⁶

Despite the recent scholarly interest in “The Offshore Pirate,” its silent film version remains overlooked, while the few scholars who consider it rely on a very limited range of sources. Aaron Latham dedicates less than a paragraph of his study of Fitzgerald in Hollywood to the film, noting that Metro purchased Fitzgerald’s short story for its link to the world of entertainment.³³⁷ Gene D. Phillips and Rose Adrienne Gallo also briefly mention the 1921 adaptation but they both base their analysis on a single review of the film that was republished in *The Romantic Egoists*.³³⁸ More recently, Alan Margolies and Ruth Prigozy included *The Off-shore Pirate* in their discussion of Fitzgerald’s relationship to Hollywood, but Prigozy only focused on the cinematic possibilities of the source story and its flapper character, while Margolies discussed what he calls the negative reception of the film, a conclusion based upon a single review.³³⁹

Adhering closely to the source text, the film’s plot revolves around Ardita Farnam, a young flapper who “considers men in the same class with doormats until a Russian saves her jewellery in a stage robbery.”³⁴⁰ To save her from the adventurer, her uncle tries to convince her to meet Toby Moreland, the nephew of a friend of his, but Ardita refuses. While she is left alone on the yacht, Curtis Carlyle makes his appearance in company with six thugs/band players and, after several vicissitudes,

³³⁶ John A. Higgins, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 26.

³³⁷ Aaron Latham, *Crazy Sundays*, p. 36.

³³⁸ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film and Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. 42-43; Matthew J. Bruccoli, Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, and Joan P. Kerr, eds., *The Romantic Egoists*, p. 74; Rose Adrienne Gallo, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 132.

³³⁹ Alan Margolies, “Kissing, Shooting, and Sacrificing,” p. 68; Ruth Prigozy, “Fitzgerald’s Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age,” pp. 141-42.

³⁴⁰ “Viola Dana in Offshore Pirate (Metro),” *Exhibitors Herald*, 5 February 1921, p. 82.

manages to win her heart. In the end he is discovered to be indeed Toby Moreland. Contemporary critics detected the story's cinematic potential as soon as it was collected in book form in *Flappers and Philosophers*. A review of the collection that Fitzgerald saved in his scrapbook claimed "The Offshore Pirate" had exactly "those elements of mystery, love and adventure [...] that have already caused [its] adaptation for the movies."³⁴¹ The date of composition, characters, setting and narrative elements of the story suggest that Fitzgerald designed it to appeal to Hollywood. He wrote it between January and February 1920, just as he signed his first contract with Metro for the rights to "Head and Shoulders." As Margolies notes, "The Offshore Pirate"

contained tableaux and lighting effects that would have appealed to a movie cameraman [...] at one point in Fitzgerald's story Ardita Farnam and Toby Moreland are silhouetted in front of a blazing sun, reminiscent of the backlighting effects found in many of the films of the time.³⁴²

Given Fitzgerald's passion for films, he may have been broadly aware of Hollywood's stated interest in stories with ocean settings and swimming characters. The beach became a favoured leisure spot for recreation at the beginning of the twentieth century; Mack Sennet's "Bathing Beauties" movies and *The Husband Hunter* scene in Palm Beach described in the previous chapter are apt examples of how 1910s and 1920s Hollywood movies capitalized on American audiences'

³⁴¹ Unidentified clipping in Fitzgerald's *Scrapbook I* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 57).

³⁴² Alan Margolies, "Kissing, Shooting, and Sacrificing," p. 68.

fascination with beaches and “bathing Venuses.”³⁴³ It is no coincidence that, in marketing the film, Metro Pictures played up its “idyllic setting” and put it at the centre of their movie. This is also reflected by trade magazines such as *Wid’s Daily*, which suggested exhibitors buy *The Off-shore Pirate* on the basis that its “stills will attract because of the setting.”³⁴⁴

Perhaps betraying Fitzgerald’s desire to attract Hollywood’s attention, the short story includes a tongue-in-cheek authorial intrusion that explains: “This is not a story of two on an island nor concerned primarily with love bred of isolation. It is merely the presentation of two personalities, and its idyllic setting among the palms of the Gulf Stream is quite incidental.”³⁴⁵ “An allusion by the author himself,” noted Wolfgang Iser, “certainly has a function for the context different from one that is made in direct speech by one of the characters.”³⁴⁶ According to Iser, when dealing with the author’s own comments on the text, readers find that they are dealing “not only with the characters in the novel but also with an author who interposes himself as a mediator between the story” and them. Now he demands the attention of the reader just as much as the story itself does.³⁴⁷ In the case of “The Offshore Pirate,” Fitzgerald might have interposed himself to “package personality.”³⁴⁸ As the cultural historian Warren I. Susman points out, the social role demanded in the new culture

³⁴³ D’ Haeyere notes that: “films featuring the Bathing Beauties perfectly conveyed the new popularity of the beach as a top spot for tourism and leisure. The separate bathing areas for men and women of the previous decades were abandoned for mixed-sex beaches, providing a new stage for informal movement and the study of human anatomy. Summer entertainment on the beach allowed for an uncovering of the body, the semi-nudity motivated by the place, the activities, and the weather conditions.” Hilde D’ Haeyere, “Splashes of Fun and Beauty: Mack Sennett’s Bathing Beauties,” in *Slapstick Comedy*, ed. by Tom Paulus and Rob King (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 211.

³⁴⁴ “They’ll Sure Like the Star in This: Box Office Analysis for the Exhibitor,” *Wid’s Daily*, 13 February 1921, p. 18.

³⁴⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 27.

³⁴⁶ Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 23.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁴⁸ See Kirk Curnutt, “Fitzgerald’s Consumer World,” in *A Historical Guide*, ed. by Curnutt, p. 123.

of personality developed in the twentieth century was that of a performer. Every American who wanted to impress “was to become a performing self.” According to Susman, “Film’s role in the culture of personality cannot be exaggerated [...] a screen player was to be marked for her[his] admirers as a personality.”³⁴⁹ Provided with the right scenery and light effects, Ardita and Toby appear as film personalities performing perhaps for Hollywood producers in the play directed and narrated by Fitzgerald, who, by manifesting his authorial presence, drew the reader’s attention to the fact that the story offered “a personality package” and “an idyllic setting” for a film. Two days before the appearance of “The Offshore Pirate” in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Fitzgerald had already sold its cinematic rights with an agreement that included an option on his future output.

3.1 Reconstructing *The Off-shore Pirate*: “A Glorious High Adventure of Youth”

As Ruth Prigozy noted, “From the lush visual opening of the story, cinematic possibilities are evident.”³⁵⁰ However, while the story begins with a suggestive description of the yacht *Narcissus* drifting offshore, both the Brazilian novelization and the synopsis in the 12-page pressbook for *The Off-shore Pirate* reveal that the film opens on terra firma.³⁵¹ While in “The Offshore Pirate” Fitzgerald states with another authorial intrusion that to him the interesting thing about Ardita is “the courage that will tarnish with her beauty and youth,” the publicity for the film reveals

³⁴⁹ Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 280-82.

³⁵⁰ Ruth Prigozy, “Fitzgerald’s Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age,” p. 131,

³⁵¹ For the film’s outdoor scenes, Metro allegedly used a “million Dollar private yacht” named *Edythe*. “Professional Notes,” *Camera!*, 25 September 1920, p. 19.

that, from the very beginning of the film, Metro foregrounded her wealth and social status.³⁵² An opening intertitle of identification most likely introduced Viola Dana's character, reading approximately, "Life to Ardita Farnam – young, rich, and beautiful – is just one darn proposal after another."³⁵³ The next scene showed the heroine rejecting "a score of rivals for her dainty little hand." Her suitors, nonetheless, continue to come back because, according to the film's pressbook, "she is heiress to a million dollars."³⁵⁴ This emphasis on Ardita's wealth was consistent with Fitzgerald's reputation as the chronicler of high society flappers. However, if in the short story Fitzgerald indicated that "men keep gathering" because of Ardita's "courage as a rule of life" and the "magnificent proud tradition [she]'d built up round [her]," the adapter characterised her film counterpart's admirers as more interested in her inheritance than her bravery. As unequivocally put in the pressbook, her ensemble of suitors who "make love via deep plunge in the waters or via a canoe" wooed her because she was

³⁵² An advertisement reads: "How could a man win her? With wealth? She had enough money for a young Liberty Loan." "Olympic," *Altoona Tribune*, 28 February 1921, p. 9. The campaigns to sell the Liberty Loans was supported by Hollywood stars of the time such as Charlie Chaplin, Marie Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks.

³⁵³ Given that Viola Dana was introduced by an intertitle of identification in *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, I assumed Metro used the same procedure in films produced in the same period. As Brad Chisholm notes in his study on the categorization of silent era intertitles, "By the 1920s a standard procedure for introducing characters had been established in Hollywood. A long to medium shot of a person or a group of persons is followed by an intertitle of identification, which is itself followed by a closer shot that isolates the named character [...] In many cases, the actor's name is listed in this identifying intertitle, thereby enabling the artifice of the opening credits to spill into the beginning of the narrative." Brad Chisholm, "Reading Intertitles," *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 15.3 (1987), 137-42, pp. 137-38. Although it is impossible to determine the exact wording of the film's intertitles, I propose a reconstruction of their content by comparing the synopsis of the film to the two novelizations. These primary materials preserved an (albeit hyper-mediated) version of the character's exchanges in the film and suggest the content of the dialogue title cards. When I found that the same sentence within inverted commas was recurring in at least two of the sources, I concluded that it might have appeared as a dialogue intertitle.

³⁵⁴ *Evening Star*, 28 February 1921, p. 9; "The Story," in Meador, J. E. D., "Viola Dana in *The Off-Shore Pirate* by F. Scott Fitzgerald," pressbook, Metro Pictures, 1921, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 1-12, p. 2.

a Farnam – the Santa Barbara Farnams – and as such, a person of importance. Some day she would have the sole right to dispose of the Farnam possessions. So it was easy to see why there were so many who thought she needed a strong man to look after her – and her millions!³⁵⁵



Figure 18 “Pirata de Alto Bordo,” *A Scena Muda*, p. 25 of thing,” an anonymous article that Fitzgerald pasted into his scrapbook reports that the next scene is shot at night.³⁵⁶ Ardita is driving in her roadster when she is held up by a couple of thugs who “proceed to relieve her of her jewellery” (Fig. 19).³⁵⁷ While the Brazilian

After some “delightful snapshots of our flapper heroine refusing in quick succession several swains” by playing pranks on them, jumping from diving boards (Fig. 18), “splashing, winking and all that sort



Figure 19 J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 12

³⁵⁵ Laurence Reid, “The Off-shore Pirate”; Ralph H. Leek, “*The Offshore Pirate*,” p. 35.

³⁵⁶ Laurence Reid, “The Off-shore Pirate”; “What the Movie Fan Wants to Know,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

³⁵⁷ “The Story,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 2.

novelization presents an unassertive Arditia asking the robbers to spare her life, the American novelization stays closer to Fitzgerald’s characterization of the heroine, describing her defiance, as she demands: “Well? Without the slightest trace of fear.”³⁵⁸

As Metro’s synopsis of the film explains, at this point “a strange man suddenly appears and, coming to her rescue, overpowers the thugs and sends them running at the point of their own guns, which he wrests from them in the struggle.” The audience soon understands that, far from being a hero, “the handsome stranger” is the villain Ivan Nevkova (Edward Cecil), who shortly after “meets the two thugs, pays them for their services and compliments them upon their good acting.” In addition to the “score of rivals” for Arditia’s inheritance, Young thus adds a new character to the source story, a Russian villain “who is in America in search of a rich wife” (Fig. 20).³⁵⁹ While in Fitzgerald’s story the “wicked clubman” to whom Arditia



is engaged is neither named nor ethnically marked, in transferring to the screen he becomes a Russian evil stock character, whose first name resonates with that of the sixteenth-century autocrat “Ivan the

Figure 20 Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 35.

³⁵⁸ Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 34. The passage in the Brazilian novelization reads, “Without daring to protest – which would have been useless – Arditia only asks them to spare her life,” “Pirata de Alto Bordo,” *A Scena Muda*, p. 23. The Brazilian novelization has been translated from Portuguese into English by the author of this thesis with the help of Pedro Dalla Bernardina.

³⁵⁹ “The Story,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 2.

terrible.”³⁶⁰ The film trade magazine *Camera!* mocked Metro’s stereotyping of the “wily Russian” – as described by another reviewer – by noting that “Edward Cecil enacts with fitting mystery the Russian heavy. It goes without saying that his front name is Ivan.”³⁶¹

As Margolies notes, most likely the filmmakers had added the tale of a Russian fortune hunter mainly to add material to the plot.³⁶² However, by foregrounding the villain’s ethnic identity, Metro remained closer to the more conventional movie plot of the time. According to Oksana Bulgakowa, in the 1920s “the choices of the narratives and the Russian characters were motivated by the contextually determined stereotypes and adjusted to the dominant styles of the [American] filmic tradition.”³⁶³ With the entrance of the United States into the World War, the fears of radical aliens begin to be transferred to the movie screens, fears only aggravated by the end of the conflict, when the Revolution had forced hundreds of thousands of Russians to emigrate to America. The zenith of Red Scare hysteria, as Michael Slade Shull observes, “was reached between August 1919 and February 1920 – the public’s emotional gamut stretching from abject to bitter scorn, to petty ridicule and cruel burlesque.”³⁶⁴ Americans began to base their ideas of Russians, in Kevin Brownlow’s words, on “the sensational half-truths of newspapers” and the “biased portrayals of Communist activity in films.”³⁶⁵ Steven J. Ross notes,

³⁶⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 7.

³⁶¹ Laurence Reid, “The Off-shore Pirate”, “Current Reviews. ‘The Off-shore Pirate,’” *Camera!*, 9 April 1921, p. 5.

³⁶² Alan Margolies, “Kissing, Shooting, and Sacrificing,” p. 67.

³⁶³ Bulgakowa, Oksana, “The ‘Russian Vogue’ in Europe and Hollywood: The Transformation of Russian Stereotypes Through the 1920s,” *The Russian Review*, 64.2 (2005), 211-35, p. 213.

³⁶⁴ Michael Slade Shull, *Radicalism in American Silent Films, 1909–1929: A Filmography and History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2000), p. 72.

³⁶⁵ Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade’s Gone By* (New York: Knopf, 1968), p. 21.

nowhere was cooperation between producers and government agencies more evident than in movies depicting the dangers of the Red menace. Conservative and liberal filmmakers responded to the Americanism Committee's plea to publicize 'the seriousness of the Bolshevistic threat' with dozens of films about Russia in the aftermath of revolution.

Constituted in early 1920, the Americanism Committee of the Motion Picture Industry of the United States began circulating suggested scenarios to producers aimed at combatting the "revolutionary sentiment so assiduously and insidiously being fomented in this country."³⁶⁶ In the short article titled "America First," Metro optimized *The Off-shore Pirate's* pressbook to publicize their filmic contribution to the anti-red campaign, the presumed lost two-reelers *Strangers Beware* and *The Price Mystery* (1920) that they had produced with the supervision of the Americanism Committee to "aid in inculcating patriotism."³⁶⁷ While a 1920 review described *Strangers Beware* as "anti-Red," records archived by the Chicago Board of Motion Picture Censor reveal that it also attacked another group of immigrants. In 1921 it was banned in Illinois for its tendency to create "hatred for the Irish."³⁶⁸ Of the other "Americanization picture," *The Price Mystery*, it suffices to know that it was

³⁶⁶ Steven J. Ross, *Working-class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 130-35.

³⁶⁷ "America First," in J. E. D. Meador, "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 8. Film critic Carl Sandburg described the plot of *Strangers Beware* as dealing with "the immigrant coming to this country, and failing to get the spirit of the country." Carl Sandburg, "Two Anti-Red Films" (Repr. in Anne Bernstein, ed., *The Movies Are: Carl Sandburg's Film Reviews and Essays, 1920-1928* (Chicago: Lake Claremont, 2000), p. 19). See also "Metro Making First Americanism Picture," *Exhibitors Herald*, 7 August 1920, p. 66.

³⁶⁸ See M. Alison Kibler, *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles over Race and Representation 1890-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), p. 170.

advertised as starring Yusof, an actor “known as the Terrible Turk.”³⁶⁹ The fact that in the pressbook for *The Offshore Pirate* Metro promoted two films that were meant to “Americanize” and “combat Reds” strongly suggests that the adapter’s choice of marking Ivan as Russian was an effect of the 1920s Red Scare.³⁷⁰

Other two films shot in the same year as *The Off-shore Pirate* exemplify the kind of stereotypes of Russians that had developed in silent films in 1920: an unidentified animated cartoon, showing the statue of Miss Liberty rebuking a cargo of “Reds,” and Fred Niblo’s *Dangerous Hours*.³⁷¹ In the latter, whose self-explanatory working title was *Americanism (Versus Bolshevism)*, so many distortions of the Red Revolution appeared that the magazines were moved to protest. “Please, oh please,” *Picture Play* begged producers that year, “look up the meaning of the words ‘Bolshevik’ and ‘Soviet.’ Neither of them mean ‘anarchist,’ ‘scoundrel’ or ‘murderer’ – really they don’t.”³⁷²

Although in *The Off-shore Pirate* film there was no political connotation attached to Ivan’s ethnicity, he is portrayed as a stereotypical character that circulated in feuilletons, novels, and films of the time: the deceiving Russian émigré. The sensationalist press reported stories of Russian impostors, swindlers, and adventurers who had assumed false identities. Silent Hollywood’s interest in Russian impersonation stems from the stories of thousands of émigrés who had been forced to change, in Oksana Bulgakowa’s words, “Destiny, personae, and social roles (an aristocrat becomes a taxi driver or waiter).”³⁷³ Fitzgerald himself explored the theme

³⁶⁹ The film co-starred Mary Louise Beaton, who also played in *Strangers Beware*. “Ogontz Schoolgirl now Playing Three Big Parts at Once,” *Evening Public Ledger*, 18 May 1921, p. 14; “Amusements,” *The Sunday Star*, 5 September 1920, p. 14.

³⁷⁰ “Crandall Urges Aid in Combating Reds,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 23 October 1921, p. 72.

³⁷¹ See Michael Slade Shull, *Radicalism in American Silent Films*, p. 72.

³⁷² Qtd. in Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade’s Gone By*, p. 264.

³⁷³ Oksana Bulgakowa, “The ‘Russian Vogue’ in Europe and Hollywood,” pp. 224-26.

of Russians' unstable post-war identity in two short stories: "Love in the Night" (1925), the first story he wrote after completing *The Great Gatsby* and partly salvaged for *Tender is the Night*, and "The Hotel Child" (1931). Like *The Off-shore Pirate* film version, the former story included a yacht, a Russian character – in this case the offspring of a Russian aristocrat modelled on Prince Vladimir Engalitcheff who is reduced to work as a taxi driver – and a wealthy American girl.³⁷⁴ In "The Hotel Child," Fifi Schwartz's brother John drinks in a café with a Russian woman who claims to be a countess.

This emphasis on the Russian villain shifted the thematic content of Fitzgerald's text. *Bemidji Pioneer* sums up the film's plot as "the story of a group of people who adopt desperate measures to save [...] an heiress from the wiles of a scheming Russian."³⁷⁵ *Wid's Daily* also stressed the importance of the Russian adventurer in the film's narrative by indicating the "character of story" as "millionaire planning to marry no account foreigner tricked into falling in love with young American." The reason she wanted to marry the "Mr. Nobody" was that she "wanted a man with a past rather than a future."³⁷⁶ In the American novelization of the film, portions of which likely appeared in the intertitles, Ivan is also characterized as a stereotypical Russian impostor and swindler. A scene not present in Fitzgerald's original story shows Ardita at a polo match – the aristocratic sport par excellence – falling under the spell of the mysterious man and ignoring her friend's warning that she was "making a mistake [...] you don't know that man – you couldn't. That's Ivan Nevkova – the notorious Ivan – the least said the better."

³⁷⁴ See Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, pp. 105-6.

³⁷⁵ "'Offshore Pirate' at Rex Theater-Sunday," *Bemidji Pioneer*, 19 March 1921, p. 4.

³⁷⁶ "Pleasing, Clean Comedy Offering But Needs Cutting," *Wid's Daily*, 13 February 1921, p. 17.

From the next scene, the film adheres more closely to Fitzgerald's source story. Ardita is on board the boat with her uncle John (Edward Jobson), who is trying to convince her to come ashore to Colonel Moreland's home (Fig. 21).³⁷⁷ In an article titled "Jazz Manners Offend," an Iowa newspaper reported their exchange in the source text as an example of how "profane words now drop like toads and snakes from the lips of the young women in popular fiction: she retorts 'Oh, shut up' and when he does not to take the hint, she fires [a] lemon at him. As he still continues to talk, she gives a cry of anguish, 'O-o-oh! Will you stop boring me? Will you go away? Will you jump overboard and drown?'"³⁷⁸



Figure 21 Ralph H. Leek, "The Offshore Pirate," p. 36

If, as Heywood Broun noted (albeit bitterly), "The Offshore Pirate" was received by his contemporaries as "the material which show[ed] Fitzgerald's amazing knowledge of the talk of flappers," its adaptation apparently lost that "certain snap" that carried the short story off.³⁷⁹ The scenarist presumably toned down the dialogue between Ardita and Mr. Farnam in comparison to Fitzgerald's story, suggesting that film audiences were not as accustomed to profanity and "Jazz

³⁷⁷ "At the opening of the polo season at Coronado," reads the American novelization, "there was a gathering of the cream of Southern California's upper social circles." Ralph H. Leek, "The Offshore Pirate," p. 35.

³⁷⁸ "Jazz' Manners Offend," *Times-Republican*, 20 August 1920, p. 9.

³⁷⁹ Heywood Broun, "Books"; I. W. L., "Flappers and Others" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 45- 47).

manners” as magazine readers. Showing that profane language was still considered too racy by some theatre owners in 1920, an exhibitor from Winchester, Indiana, complained about *Blackmail* (another film starring Viola Dana released by Metro three months before *The Off-shore Pirate*): “As we have the very highest class patronage, the subtitles using ‘hell’ and ‘damn’ on last reel should have been cut out.”³⁸⁰ The fact that both the American and Brazilian novelizations of *The Off-shore Pirate* do not include strong language leads one to think that the film also did not. Whereas in her review of *Flappers and Philosophers* Fanny Butcher rejoiced that Ardita’s line of conversation was the snappiest “yet displayed this season,” theatre owners were pleased by the “cleanliness” of the film, to the point that an exhibitor announced that the “good clean program picture” was played for a benefit for a church club.³⁸¹

Other little changes from the source text suggest Metro’s intention to portray a less confrontational relationship between the flapper and her uncle. The American novelization reveals that in the film Ardita is interrupted by her uncle while she is reading a love letter instead of Anatole France’s controversial novel *The Revolt of the Angels*, which Mr. Farnam calls “abominable” in the short story. In addition, according to the synopsis and the two novelizations, neither lemons nor dreadful books were seeing flying on the screen: Ardita politely declines her uncle’s invitation, saying she is waiting for Ivan to come and visit her.³⁸² To her uncle’s supposed threat that he will go to the Morelands by himself and leave her alone on the yacht, Ardita answers haughtily “nothing could be more satisfactory,” while in

³⁸⁰ “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 14 May 1921, p. 83.

³⁸¹ Fanny Butcher, “Fitzgerald Again” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 38-39); “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 19 November 1921, p. 81; “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 31 December 1921, p. 74.

³⁸² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 6; p. 7; p. 9.

the story she shouts angrily, “I won’t go ashore! Won’t! Do you hear? Won’t!” In the Brazilian novelization, the young flapper is portrayed as even tamer and sentimentalized as a poor orphan whose “parents died when she was a child, and she was left alone in this world under the care of her uncle.”³⁸³

Nonetheless, Young’s characterization of Ardita is more complex and multifaceted than one might expect. Despite her apparent submissiveness, in both the American and Brazilian novelizations Ardita “insists she is going to marry the Russian and [her uncle] leaves her to go ashore.”³⁸⁴ As a reviewer noted, Ardita was characterized as “a rich and independent girl who is determined to have her own way – *even* in matrimonial matters.”³⁸⁵ The caption of an image from the film reports the heroine asserting her independence by telling her uncle: “I’ll marry whom I please.”³⁸⁶ This sentence, which may have appeared in an intertitle, needs to be contextualised within the social climate that prevailed in the United States immediately after the ratification of women’s suffrage (26 August 1920). In the time between the publication of Fitzgerald’s “The Offshore Pirate” in the *Post* (May 1920) and the release of its film adaptation (January 1921), the 19th Amendment had taken effect.

The Off-shore Pirate shared characteristics with both flapper films and serial-queen melodramas, in that they all represented a complex image of modern femininity. Lory Landay defines the significance of the contradictory flapper films for the construction of femininity in these terms:

³⁸³ “Pirata de Alto Bordo,” p. 24.

³⁸⁴ “The Story,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 2.

³⁸⁵ Laurence Reid, “The Off-shore Pirate.”

³⁸⁶ “Two Column Scene Cut or Mat No. 48-C,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 3

On one hand the narrative of the flapper film explores women's liberation from Victorian restrictions, and seems to represent an emerging alternative or even oppositional culture, on the other it contains female independence within the traditional confines of romance and marriage.³⁸⁷

Discussing "The Offshore Pirate," a reviewer of *Flappers and Philosophers* noted: "With reason the old generation will not feel satisfied with the character analysis of the flapper-heroine, [...] but the younger generation may hail the type as a brave and beautiful exponent of emancipated womanhood."³⁸⁸ The reception and promotion of *The Off-shore Pirate* reveals that the film adaptation did engage mostly a female audience. An exhibitor from Wellington, Ohio, reported that the film "pleased Viola Dana fans and most women."³⁸⁹ The pressbook included an advert reading "Girls! Keep your Eyes Open" and a publicity postcard suggesting exhibitors address "dear Madam."³⁹⁰ Metro's primary target, women and Dana's fans, might have influenced Ardita's heroic characterization to satisfy female audiences.

In the tradition of the popular serial-queen melodrama, which gave narrative pre-eminence to an intrepid young heroine who exhibits a variety of traditionally "masculine" qualities, in *The Off-shore Pirate* Ardita is seen driving a roadster and a boat, bargaining with six jazz players to break free, diving, taking the oars of a lifeboat and rescuing the male protagonist.³⁹¹ In one of the few scholarly considerations of *The Off-shore Pirate* movie, Jared Andrew Griffin compares

³⁸⁷ Lori Landay, "The Flapper Film: Comedy Dance, and Jazz Age Kinaesthetics," p. 225.

³⁸⁸ "Stories by Fitzgerald" (Repr. in *The Critical Reception of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Bryer, p. 40).

³⁸⁹ "What the Picture Did For Me," *Exhibitors Herald*, 24 September 1921, p. 93.

³⁹⁰ J. E. D. Meador, "Mail Campaign"; "Stunts and Teaser to Attract the Public," in "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 5; p. 8.

³⁹¹ On the serial-queen melodrama, see Ben Singer, "Female Power in the Serial-Queen Melodrama: The Etiology of an Anomaly," *Camera Oscura*, 8.1 (1990), 90-129.

Fitzgerald's literary flapper with her cinematic counterpart, arguing that the adaptation colludes with Ardita's "feminine libertine ideal" and "violent revolutionary" image constructed by Fitzgerald.³⁹² Ruth Prigozy also argued:

Fitzgerald's flappers are complex young women, but the film embodiments of the type are reflections of the stars who played them who [...] beneath the surface remain pure, conventional, and decidedly moral [...] the film flappers might look and even speak like Ardita, but her sense of daring life to offer its ultimate reward – despite the moral consequences – is missing from the flapper of 1920s films. The main distinction is that the film flappers want fun and flirtation, but there is never a sense that they are seeking anything deeper than the ultimate reward: money and marriage.³⁹³

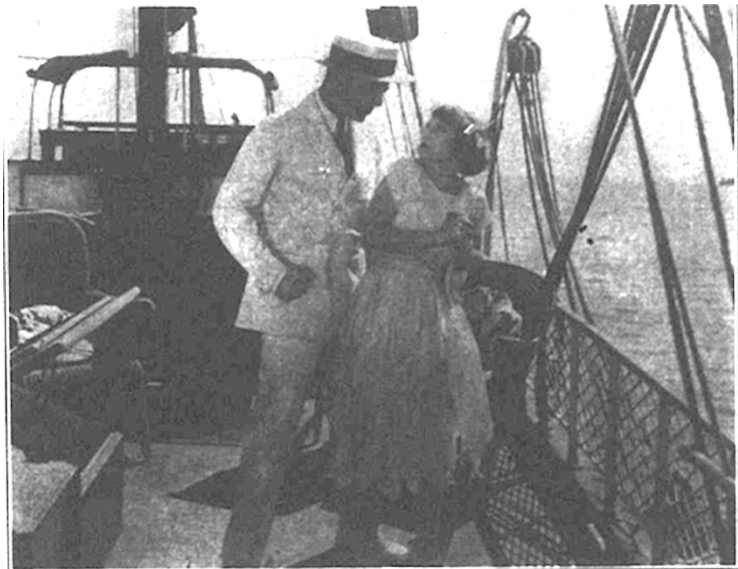
Contrary to Prigozy's and Griffin's opinion that the screen Ardita is more passive than the literary one – an opinion based mainly on the film's source story and pressbook – the reception of the film suggests that the reflection of Dana's stardom and models of spectatorship made the film flapper less conventional than her fictional counterpart. Viola Dana's screen persona was that of a daring and defiant flapper, a reputation strengthened by her personal relationship with reckless aviator Ormer Locklear, who tragically died while shooting a flight scene in August 1920. Virtually all the advance stories in *The Off-shore Pirate's* pressbook fashioned Dana's persona as an "irrepressible" and "effervescent" actress who sped in her new boat *Intrepid*, "challenged everything on the Pacific," and felt as at home "on the water as she is

³⁹² Jared Andrew Griffin, "American Apocalypse: Race and Revelation in American Literature 1919-39" (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Texan Christian University, 2009), p. 52; p. 60.

³⁹³ Ruth Prigozy, "Fitzgerald's Flappers and Flapper Films of the Jazz Age," p. 132; p. 143.

when driving her high powered car or doing stunts with an aeroplane.”³⁹⁴ As Landay points out, “the flapper film performed the cultural work of reflecting, shaping, and (as comedy is wont to do) mocking emerging definitions of a modern femininity.”³⁹⁵ *The Off-shore Pirate* surely was a commercial comedy whose main goal was to reach the broadest audience rather than to advance women’s independence. Nonetheless, showing Ardita in “unladylike comportment,” i.e. smoking, driving, swimming, outwitting men, took its place among new representations of post-war and post-suffrage femininity.

After her uncle leaves, according to a review in Fitzgerald’s scrapbook, Ardita is “abducted on her own yacht by a handsome jazz band leader (Jack Mulhall as Curtis Carlyle/Toby



Moreland) and his six negro jazz artists.”³⁹⁶ Figure 22 J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 4

The first meeting between Ardita and the fake pirates is treated lightly and humorously in the short story. The heroine welcomes the seven men with a good example of her “snappy line of conversation”:

‘Is this the varsity crew from the county nut farm?’

³⁹⁴ “Viola Dana Plays Engrossing Role”; “Viola Dana Stars in ‘Offshore Pirate;’” “Viola Dana Victor in New Speed Boat”; “Ocean Acrobatics Please Viola Dana,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 5; p. 7.

³⁹⁵ Lori Landay, “The Flapper Film: Comedy Dance, and Jazz Age Kinaesthetics,” p. 225.

³⁹⁶ “What the Movie Fan Wants to Know.”

‘Are you an idiot – or just being initiated to some fraternity’

‘I thought the country was dry [...] have you been drinking finger-nail enamel?’³⁹⁷

The film’s synopsis in the pressbook shows that in the adaptation Toby’s arrival on the boat did not happen as smoothly as in the source text. Just as one of the posters of *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* showed Marcia being threatened by her dancing partner, a still captures a scene from *The Off-shore Pirate* in which Curtis grabs Arditia menacingly by the arm (Fig. 22). In fact, *Exhibitors Herald* underscored the character’s “cave man methods.”³⁹⁸

Dallas M. Fitzgerald might have followed a common practice in serial-queen narratives by placing, as Ben Singer notes, “the heroine in positions of danger as a necessary part of her emancipation and ‘masculine’ agency.”³⁹⁹ Coupling Arditia’s image as an emancipated woman who drives roadsters and wants to choose her husband with that of a defenceless victim, Metro used the same still for an advertisement included in the pressbook with a caption reading: “I’m going to be boss of this ship, do you understand?” A note explained that this three-sheet was a “humdinger when it comes to a live wire poster that will pull the folks in off the sidewalk as though you had a giant magnet concealed in your box office.”⁴⁰⁰ As David S. Shields observes, “individual stills captured tensions [and struggle] at work [...] in theatre lobbies enough appeared to highlight the conflicts in play [...] the

³⁹⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, pp. 10-11.

³⁹⁸ “Viola Dana in Offshore Pirate (Metro).”

³⁹⁹ Ben Singer, “Female Power in the Serial-Queen Melodrama,” p. 117.

⁴⁰⁰ “Three-sheet No. 48-Y,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 12.

greatest visual interest lay in scenes that did not present the happy couple.”⁴⁰¹ Metro assured the more cautious theatre owners not to “be afraid to use this kind freely. It is a sure-fire winner.”⁴⁰² The two scenes – both not present in the original text – that show Ardita threatened and bullied first by thugs and then by Toby capitalized on the American audience’s appetite for violent spectacle. Although in both episodes the physical attack is not carried out, according to J. David Slocum, “the threat of violence posed by a narrative can often be more powerful than any graphic single image in provoking viewer responses.”⁴⁰³

Jim Kendrick points out that “the audiences for early cinema cut across class divides [...] all of whom apparently desired on some level – conscious or subconscious – to see violence both enacted and re-enacted.”⁴⁰⁴ *The Off-shore Pirate* fed the 1920s audiences’ appetite for film violence also by taking part in the contemporary construction of “black violence” on the silent cinema screen.⁴⁰⁵ To stretch the original story, in the middle of the film Waldemar Young included several plot complications – or what a contemporary reviewer called “inevitable film fights” – between the six jazz band players and the white crew of Ardita’s yacht.⁴⁰⁶ From the beginnings of cinema, the African American cinematic image has been characterized by its potential for violence exemplified by the portrayal of Gus in *Birth of a Nation*,

⁴⁰¹ David S. Shields, *Still: American Silent Motion Picture Photography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 10.

⁴⁰² “Posters,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 12.

⁴⁰³ J. David Slocum, “Introduction: Violence and American Cinema: Notes for an Investigation,” in *Violence and American Cinema*, ed. by J. David Slocum (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 4.

⁴⁰⁴ Jim Kendrick, *Film Violence: History, Ideology, Genre* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), p. 34.

⁴⁰⁵ See Ed Guerrero, “Black Violence as Cinema: From Cheap Thrills to Historical Agonies,” in *Violence and American Cinema*, ed. by Slocum, pp. 211-25.

⁴⁰⁶ “What the Movie Fan Wants to Know.” Directing the first “rough-and-tumble” scene of the film, according to the pressbook, Dallas Fitzgerald “told the half dozen black-skinned sailors who were scheduled to trounce the white seamen to ‘make it snappy.’” “Spike’ Robinson is too Real in Picture Battle,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 7.

which defined African American cinematic masculinity for decades.⁴⁰⁷ However, while the aggressor in Griffith's film was done up in blackface and was meant to raise the threat of rape and miscegenation, the six African American characters in *The Offshore Pirate* are played by phenotypically black actors who, rather than being a menace to the white young girl, help her break free from her (albeit fake) captor.

Charlene Regester argues that during the silent era many African Americans actors were ignored in films' publicity materials and denied screen credit.⁴⁰⁸ As in the case of the actress starring as Genoveva in *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, the six black players did not receive credits for their work in *The Off-shore Pirate*. However, while their characters did not appear in Leslie L. Benson's illustrations of the story in the *Saturday Evening Post*, several stills and articles in the film's pressbook foregrounded their cinematic presence in it.⁴⁰⁹ While in "The Offshore Pirate" Fitzgerald leaves the black characters mostly in the background, "patient, resigned, acquiescent," in Robert Forrey's words, "eagerly comply[ing] with all the white man's commands," the director and scenarist of the film adaptation provided them with a more active – yet equally stereotyped – role.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ See Paula J. Massood, "From Homeboy to *Baby Boy*: Masculinity and Violence in the Films of John Singleton," in *New Hollywood Violence*, ed. by Steven Jay Schneider (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 185.

⁴⁰⁸ Charlene Regester, "African American Extras in Hollywood during the 1920s and 1930s," *Film History*, 9.1 (1997), 95-115, p. 105.

⁴⁰⁹ Although both the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) and the American Film Institute (AFI) catalogs indicate only four credited actors for the film, *Camera!* hailed *The Off-shore Pirate*'s cast as the "Cast of the Week" and published a longer list of names, which, however, did not include those of the African-American actors. "Casts of the Week," *Camera!*, 25 September 1920, p. 6. This was not unusual in the 1920s, a time when, as Massood notes, most black performers were not credited for the small roles they played; if they were credited, it was for roles such as Uncle Toms and Mammies. For a more detailed analysis of African American stardom in silent era Hollywood see Paula J. Massood, "African American Stardom Inside and Outside of Hollywood: Ernest Morrison, Noble Johnson, Evelyn Preer, and Lincoln Perry," in *Idols of Modernity: Movie Stars of the 1920s*, ed. by Patrice Petro (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

⁴¹⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 31; Robert Forrey, "Negroes in the Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald," *Pyhlon*, 28 (1967), 293-98, p. 295.

“The Offshore Pirate” and its film version are evidence of the period’s preoccupation with racial distinctions and the consequent writers’ and directors’ penchant for race-based humor. The connotation of the six African American characters was drawn from theatrical stock characters. Reinforcing their association with variety entertainment, the American novelization reports that the Six Black Buddies were the “biggest hit of vaudeville.”⁴¹¹ Silent films were made initially for vaudeville audiences and their humour relied on audiences’ knowledge of familiar characters such as the subservient, lazy, gambling, irrational, and superstitious stage blacks.⁴¹² After the “black crew” put the “white crew” in iron, for instance, adhering to Fitzgerald’s story, Curtis and Ardita have dinner served by one of the six jazz musicians seemingly dressed as a waiter (Fig. 23).

The next scene finds the two protagonists talking on the deck of the yacht; Curtis tells Ardita about his past as a musician and shows her the bracelet that he “cleaned up” from Mimi Merrill, Ivan Nevkova’s mistress. “From below,” according to the American novelization, “came



Figure 23 J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 4

⁴¹¹ Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 42

⁴¹² See Charles Musser, “Role-playing and Film Comedy,” in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. by Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 49; Eileen Bowser, “Racial/Racist Jokes in American Silent Slapstick Comedy,” *Griffithiana*, 53 (May 1995), 35-43, p. 39. Even black film companies like Historical Feature Films, the Ebony Film Corporation and Harry Dickson utilized time-worn stereotypes in order to sell their product. See Barbara Lupack, *Early Race Filmmaking in America* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 109.

the sound of rolling dice.”⁴¹³ Gerald R. Butters, Jr., notes that shooting craps was “a popular theme in a number of early films and continues to be an activity associated with African-American men in popular media.”⁴¹⁴ The scene of a crap game between the white and black sailors was most likely added to create more comedy situations in the film. The comic effect was achieved by giving the six jazz band players stereotypical features that were instantly recognizable to the 1920s audiences, i.e. African Americans as gamblers (*The Washington Times* mentions their “African penchant for the ‘Mississippi Marbles’”), subjected to superstition (while playing dice, according to the *Exhibitors Herald*, they pray to “the goddess of chance”), inclined to irrationality (“When I gets mad I loses all control” says Trombone Mose in the American novelization), and banjo players (while in the short story they play trombone and saxophone).⁴¹⁵ *Motion Picture News* stated that the film’s plot was entirely dependent on the jazzy crew: “Were it not for the dusky sailors with the huge dice and their manner of carrying on the burden of the plot the picture would have sagged [...] badly.” The trade magazine also hailed Waldemar Young “for incorporating the hokum of the colored crew” and mistakenly pointed out that these characters did not appear in the original.⁴¹⁶

Another way race-based humour was conveyed in “The Offshore Pirate” and its film adaptation’s intertitles was through stereotyped language. The popular literary magazines of early 20th century such as the *Saturday Evening Post* in which the story appeared, according to Elsa Nettels: “perpetuated the stigma of [black] dialect in its crudest form in the publication of jokes [...] in which Negroes exhibit

⁴¹³ Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 42.

⁴¹⁴ Gerald R. Butters, Jr., *Black Manhood on the Silent Screen*, p. 29.

⁴¹⁵ “Metropolitan: ‘The Offshore Pirate,’” *The Washington Times*, 28 February 1921, p. 17; “Viola Dana in Offshore Pirate (Metro),” *Exhibitors Herald*, 5 February 1921, p. 82.

⁴¹⁶ Laurence Reid, “The Off-shore Pirate.”

ignorance, greed, stupidity, and servility in grossly fractured English.”⁴¹⁷ As Robert Sklar notes, in Fitzgerald’s short story, “much of the humor and color [...] comes from Negro songs, Negro dialect, and the incongruities of the Six Black Buddies.”⁴¹⁸ In the American novelization, the African American characters repeat almost verbatim the “incongruities” of their literary counterparts. While several time in Fitzgerald’s original story, Babe submissively answers to Curtis’s order with “Yas-suh!,” in Ralph H. Leek’s novelization Mose replies “Yas, sah! Yas, sah! Absotively.” When in the source story Ardita asks Babe what is the name of the island they landed on, he replies “No name ‘tall, [...] Reckin she jus’ island, ‘at ’s all.” In the film, according to the novelization, Babe replies similarly “It aint got no name, lady, it’s jus’ island.”⁴¹⁹

As Jeffrey Hadler notes, an “orthographic device” was used to foist upon the words a “peculiar pronunciation.” These intertitles stereotyped the representation of the African-American voice by following what Hadler calls the Remus orthography, “a written language riddled with apostrophes, misspellings, and omitted letters and words.”⁴²⁰ The six jazz band players’ lines in Fitzgerald’s story and in the American novelization also derived from vaudeville entertainers, who created a language that was meant to be, in William J. Mahar’s words, “one obvious indicator of the nonacculturation of blacks.”⁴²¹ Some stage actors did not wear costumes to convey ethnic identities; as Gavin Jones observes, instead of putting on blackface white

⁴¹⁷ In the year in which “The Offshore Pirate” was published, *Harper’s* offered his readers examples of “the magniloquent language in which our ‘colored brethren’ are so apt to indulge.” See Elsa Nettels, *Language, Race, and Social Class in Howells’s*, pp. 74-75.

⁴¹⁸ Robert Sklar, *The Last Lacoön*, pp. 69-71.

⁴¹⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 21; Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 42.

⁴²⁰ Jeffrey Hadler, “The History of the Representation of the African-American Voice: the Origins of the Remus Orthography,” *Journal of Folklore Research*, 35.2 (1998), 99-126, p. 99; pp. 108-09.

⁴²¹ William J. Mahar, “Black English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy: A New Interpretation of the Sources of Minstrel Show Dialect,” *American Quarterly*, 37.2 (Summer 1985), 260-85, p. 263.

performers just needed to “put on black dialect to portray African Americans.”⁴²² However, while theatregoers could hear the actors’ malapropisms, silent film audiences (and magazine readers) needed to read them.

White filmmakers of pre-sound films made African American characters use an awkward and strongly caricatured dialect in intertitles.⁴²³ Spectators of *The Off-shore Pirate* only needed to read some familiarly misspelled words in the title cards to identify their users as black characters. The pressbook reported that the director supposedly did the casting himself by approaching a group of African Americans in Los Angeles and saying he needed twelve of them to star in his film. Apparently he instructed them to: “‘Just act natural’ and they did. Even the title writer found he had to write no lines for the players. Their own interpolations furnished plenty of live language for the titles.”⁴²⁴ This press article reflects the prejudice holding that African American extras were very versatile. Anthony Slide reports that an assistant to Lon Chaney was quoted in the 1920s as claiming, “negroes are natural actors. You can pull one of the mob and they can act.”⁴²⁵ It also shows that Metro was trying to convince exhibitors of the “authenticity” of the intertitles that had to evoke what the white audiences regarded as the “natural” voice of the African American community.

Virtually all the reviews of the films hailed the black characters’ comic performance and considered the scenes in which they appeared the most amusing passages of the film. According to *Life*, “the comic values of the situation are well

⁴²² Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 162.

⁴²³ See Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies*, p. 30.

⁴²⁴ “Prancing Marbles Lure For Ebony-Hued Actors,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 6.

⁴²⁵ At the time, the casting of African Americans, Russians, Jewish, Mexicans was done by having runners go into a particular neighbourhood and gather up willing extras. See Anthony Slide, *Hollywood Unknowns: A History of Extras, Bit Players, and Stand-Ins* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2012), pp. 196-98.

developed by six highly talented negro performers.”⁴²⁶ While *Variety*’s review noted that “the best portions of the picture are those with the six black aces,” *Wid’s Daily* suggested that cinemas put stills in their lobby “showing the six colored jazz boys and promise they’ll keep them amused.”⁴²⁷ An exhibitor from Jasper, Indiana, seemed to agree with the trade magazines and advised his colleagues to buy the picture as the “colored boys will amuse any audience.”⁴²⁸

Eileen Bowser notes that “it is difficult to know how the racial cruelties in these little film comedies were perceived by their audiences. It is very likely these films were seen by black audiences [...] for the most part, their audiences saw the films that whites saw.”⁴²⁹ This is the case of *The Off-shore Pirate*, which was screened on 29 July 1921 at the Regent Theatre in Baltimore.⁴³⁰ Opened in 1916, the Regent was the biggest theatre in Baltimore for African American audiences. Originally seating 500 persons, a few months before *The Off-shore Pirate*’s release the theatre had expanded its seating capacity to 2,250.⁴³¹ Announcing that the Regent was going to reopen the doors in January 1921, *The Afro-American* commented that the theatre represented “the importance which the Negro player, and the Negro player-goers is assuming in the theatrical world.”⁴³² The owners of the Regent hired only black employees and, according to Amy Davis, “movies that were deemed racist were not screened.”⁴³³ Perhaps because of the relevance it was given to the (albeit caricatured) black characters in the film, in Baltimore *The Off-shore Pirate* was screened for an African American audience. This implies that, while Fitzgerald’s

⁴²⁶ Robert E. Sherwood, “The Off-shore Pirate,” *Life*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*.

⁴²⁷ “Offshore Pirate,” *Variety*, 4 March 1921, p. 40; “They’ll Surely Like the Star in This.”

⁴²⁸ “What the Picture Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 28 October 1922, p. 81.

⁴²⁹ Eileen Bowser, “Racial/Racist Jokes in American Silent Slapstick Comedy,” p. 37.

⁴³⁰ “Display Ad 9,” *Afro-American*, 22 July 1921, p. 8

⁴³¹ Amy Davis, *Flickering Treasures: Rediscovering Baltimore’s Forgotten Movie Theaters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), p. 105.

⁴³² “Regent,” *Afro-American*, 24 December 1920, p. 4.

⁴³³ Amy Davis, *Flickering Treasures*, p. 105.

original short story mainly reached a white readership through the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post* issue and of *Flappers and Philosophers*, once adapted and reinterpreted for the screen it extended the scope of its audience.

Toward the end of the film, Waldemar Young made four major changes to the original plot. First, he decided not to visualize the suggestive passage in which Ardita and Toby find a break in the cliff and pulled the boat ashore. An anonymous article that Fitzgerald pasted into his scrapbook usefully outlined the changes, omissions, and additions made by the director and the scenarist to the source story:

Dallas [...] changed the scene from Florida to the inevitable California coast, and has [...] strange to say, omitted the most fascinating part of Scott's story, the alluring moonlight scene on the desert island where Curtis and Ardita, clad in their bathing suits (and quite unchaperoned) converse intimately, perched high on the cliff above the phosphorescent water into which they occasionally dive. It would have been a striking startling scene upon the silver sheet; a pity that the director felt compelled to deprive us of it in order to supply the usual scenario mechanics.⁴³⁴

⁴³⁴ "What the Movie Fan Wants to Know."

Second, while in Fitzgerald's "The Offshore Pirate" Babe and the other black characters acquiesced in Toby's masquerade until the end of the story, in the film they bargain with Ardita to become



Figure 24 J. E. D. Meador, "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 2

her allies: "She distributes money among them and the blacks finally consent to overpower their white leader."⁴³⁵ The next scene shows the six musicians putting up a battle with Carlyle, who does not want to surrender. The still shown in Fig. 24 is a visual reminder of how the film challenged the traditional gender and racial norms by representing a woman and her African American allies disempower a white man. In a reversal of roles, at the end of the film adaptation the white kidnapper becomes the kidnapped and is "put in irons" – as Ardita ordered in the caption of the still that was likely the transcription of an intertitle – by his black "servants" and prisoner. The role reversal of the races was the basic racial gag in silent cinema, especially in the unexpected substitution of a black person for a white person, which is revealing of the culture of racial segregation. As Eileen Bowser notes, gags in silent film comedies

frequently do depend on upsetting or subverting the accepted conventions [but] the jokes we think of as racist were not necessarily received that way by contemporary spectators. The conventions being subverted were unconsciously

⁴³⁵ "The Story," in J. E. D. Meador, "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 2.

accepted by most white spectators, and possibly even by some of the black spectators.⁴³⁶

What might have been less common for silent film audiences was to see the white woman protagonist ally with black characters – although their help came with a price, which necessarily characterized them as greedy stock characters. Alice Hall Petry argues that Fitzgerald’s “The Offshore Pirate,” far from aligning itself with the literature of piracy that enables the reader to fantasize about illicit sexual conduct, portrays Ardita and Carlyle as asexual. The element of sexuality in the story, according to Petry, is rather displaced to “the Six Black Buddies,” who are “primitive figures whose words and actions are freighted with sexuality” on whom Toby’s father needs to keep an eye.⁴³⁷ Griffin examines *The Off-shore Pirate*’s pressbook to analyse the “process, experience, and reception of whiteness” in the adaptation of Fitzgerald’s text. He maintains that the promotional materials reveal that the adaptation – just as the short story, according to Petry – emphasised “the violence between racial and gender anxieties” and characterised the six black characters as “an apocalyptic threat to normative American whiteness,” while “Carlyle/Toby presents no real danger to Ardita.”⁴³⁸ But the evidence I have gathered strongly suggests that, in fact, in the film the threat is posed by Carlyle rather than by the six black players. It is the normatively white Carlyle who grabs Ardita’s arm and intimidates her with his fisted hand (as shown in Fig. 22) and by “saying,” as mentioned above, he is going to be “the boss of this ship.” Challenging the image of

⁴³⁶ Eileen Bowser, “Racial/Racist Jokes in American Silent Slapstick Comedy,” p. 43.

⁴³⁷ Alice Hall Petry, *Fitzgerald’s Craft of Short Fiction*, p. 25. At the end of the short story, Toby’s father says “we’ve been keeping pretty close to you in case you should have trouble with those six strange niggers.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 34.

⁴³⁸ Jared Andrew Griffin, “American Apocalypse: Race and Revelation in American Literature 1919-39,” p. 14; p. 54.

black people as a menace to white women, in the tradition of the “Brute Gus,” Waldemar Young changed the plot of the original story by making the six jazz artists help Ardita to take back command of the boat, putting her (white, American) assailant in irons and locking him in a stateroom.⁴³⁹

In another reversal of gender roles, perhaps echoing serial-queen melodramas, the end of the film also emphasised the heroine’s prowess and valour as opposed to the hero’s defencelessness and vulnerability. An island appears on the screen and the third change in the original plot is introduced when Ardita suggests they put the offshore pirate ashore to give [him] a chance to escape. When they open the door of the stateroom, the prisoner tries unsuccessfully to fight the six Jazz band



players but he is soon tamed and “rushed into a lifeboat.” The American novelization describes Ardita, now in love with the off-shore pirate, watching “with real regret as the *weakened* Carlyle, unable to handle the oars, dropped back into the boat, to drift with the waves.”⁴⁴⁰ Showing her agency and strength as opposed to the male protagonist’s weakness and exhaustion, she

Figure 25 “Pirata de Alto Bordo,” *A Cena Muda*, p. 25

⁴³⁹ As explained in the film’s synopsis, “she approaches the negroes, unknown to their white captain, and bargains with them to become her allies. She distributes money among them and the blacks finally consent to overpower their white leader.” “The Story,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Offshore Pirate*,” p. 2.

⁴⁴⁰ Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 43.

springs into the water, reaches the boat and grasps the oars. She then takes her “exhausted charge” to the beach of the island by “drawing [him] down upon the sand.” Carlyle “smiled weakly toward her, but required all the assistance she could give him.” She grabs him in her arms and kisses him (Fig. 25) and arguably he whispers in a title card a line from Fitzgerald’s story: “It’s a sort of glory.”⁴⁴¹



Figure 26 *Exhibitors Herald*, 26 February 1921, p. 76

Ardita and Carlyle see a cutter rapidly approaching the island: “A squad of sailors approached and, with level pistols, took [the offshore pirate] from her arms, snapped handcuffs upon his wrists (Fig. 26) and carried him back to the yacht.”⁴⁴² This last major

change that Young made to Fitzgerald’s story is perhaps the best example of Ardita’s agency in the film: she knows from the beginning about her uncle’s and the Morelands’ deception. Shortly after Toby took over the command of the yacht, the audience had seen him tossing Ardita a cigarette with his initials. At the end of the film, it is revealed that she had immediately noticed the T. M. but decided “to see the thing through the finish.” When Uncle John and Colonel Moreland join the two protagonists (Fig. 27), contrary to the source text, they do not need to explain the whole story; “Ardita declares with a laugh that she knew it all along – ever since the pirate gave her the cigarette with the initials

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

on it.”⁴⁴³ Another catch phrase included in the pressbook underlines the contrast between the film and the short story: in the adaptation it is Ardita who “outwits [Carlyle/Toby] at his own game of high-handed buccaneering.”⁴⁴⁴ The American novelization ends with a word of victory for Ardita. While in the short story the heroine is, in Michael Nowlin’s words, “seduced and humiliated” by Toby’s scheme, in the film Ardita tells Toby: “I’m going to know every time you lie to me.”⁴⁴⁵ This sentence, which likely appeared in an intertitle, also shows more agency on Ardita’s part than her fictional counterpart, who slightly submissively says in the source text: “I want you to lie to me just as sweetly as you know how for the rest of my life.”⁴⁴⁶

Just like the serial queens, the cinematic Ardita manifests athletic talents (she jumps from diving boards, rows boats, saves men from drowning, etc.), she belies “lady-like” behaviour (she smokes, drives roadsters full speed, etc.) and refuses a

marriage proposal imposed by her family, which implies, as Shelley Stamp notes in her study of serial heroines, that “only women who renounced familial and marital obligations could pursue such



Figure 27 Swedish Film Institute, film still of *The Off-Shore Pirate*

⁴⁴³ “The Story,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 2.

⁴⁴⁴ “Something about ‘The Offshore Pirate,’” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 9.

⁴⁴⁵ Micheal Nowlin, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Racial Angles*, p. 27; Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 44.

⁴⁴⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 35.

unconventional endeavors.” In addition, just like the silent era serials, *The Off-shore Pirate* offered what Stamp calls “an alarmist tale in which independence is always circumscribed by the shadow of danger, the determinacy of familial ties, and the inevitability of marriage.”⁴⁴⁷ The film furnished a “cautionary delight” in that, once Ardita severs the tie from his family telling her uncle she will not meet the Morelands, she is kidnapped by pirates. Fitzgerald’s short story and its film adaptation inevitably end with Ardita deciding to marry the man her uncle chose for her. Still, the strong, capable, film Ardita shows more agency than her fictional counterpart; the film ultimately proved, as a catch phrase for Dallas M. Fitzgerald’s movie adaptation read, “that the woman always wins even against stacked cards.”⁴⁴⁸

Originally, Fitzgerald’s “The Offshore Pirate” ended with the explanation that it was all Ardita’s dream but neither Harold Ober nor the *Post* appreciated this conclusion.⁴⁴⁹ Afraid that the story’s ending would disappoint readers, the editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, George Horace Lorimer, asked Fitzgerald to change it.⁴⁵⁰ Fitzgerald rewrote the last line, ending the story: “reaching up on her tiptoes she kissed him softly in the illustration,” emphasizing the constructedness of this tale of the jazz age. Fitzgerald later boasted to Harold Ober: “The last line takes Mr. Lorimer at his word. It’s one of the best lines I’ve ever written.”⁴⁵¹ According to Nicholas M. Evans, “this shift in tone away from verisimilitude and toward fictive self-consciousness, disrupting the suspension of disbelief, represents one last game that

⁴⁴⁷ Shelley Stamp, “An Awful Struggle between Love and Ambition,” pp. 212-15.

⁴⁴⁸ “Teaser Paragraphs,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 9.

⁴⁴⁹ See Atkinson for an analysis of the last page of “The Proud Piracy,” which described Ardita telling her uncle and the maid Felice the dream she just had. Jennifer McCabe Atkinson, “The Discarded Ending of ‘The Offshore Pirate,’” *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*, 6 (1974), 47-49.

⁴⁵⁰ Fitzgerald himself had a wavering judgment about the initial story’s ending. As he wrote to his first literary agent, Paul Revere Reynolds, “if you think the end spoils it clip it off. I’ll leave that to your judgment [...] Personally I like it as it is.” Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 11.

⁴⁵¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 35. Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 12.

Fitzgerald plays with his readers.”⁴⁵² His metafictional conclusion to “The Offshore Pirate” draws attention to the story’s status as a printed work in a magazine. As Heidi M. Kunz notes: “This intriguing coda stretches the conventions of reading. Fitzgerald fuses his verbal image with a visual one outside the story proper in a metatextual gesture.”⁴⁵³ The American novelization suggests that Young used the ending of Fitzgerald’s short story. An exchange between Ardita and Carlyle was taken almost verbatim from “The Offshore Pirate”:

‘Will you swear that all this was a product of your own brain?’

Toby solemnly nodded in assent.

‘What an imagination!’⁴⁵⁴

The fact that Metro, just as Fox did in *The Husband Hunter*, used lines from Fitzgerald’s story for intertitles suggests he was using a language to make the story palatable for magazine readers and, perhaps counting on audience overlap, movie audiences. According to Miller, the secret of the popular success of Fitzgerald’s stories was that “they served as escape for all the bored five-and-ten clerks who dreamed of being glamorous Fitzgerald flappers courted lavishly by disguised millionaire philosophers.”⁴⁵⁵ Taking the hint that those clerks were also potential moviegoers, Metro turned Ardita’s tale into a film. This “odd story” was invented,

⁴⁵² Nicholas M. Evans, *Writing Jazz: Race, Nationalism, and Modern Culture in the 1920s* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2000), p. 179.

⁴⁵³ See Heidi M. Kunz, “‘Love in the Night,’ Without Polish Eyes to See It,” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 7 (2009), 37-51, p. 41.

⁴⁵⁴ Ralph H. Leek, “The Offshore Pirate,” p. 44. The film’s source text reads, “‘Will you swear,’ she said quietly, ‘that it was entirely a product of your own brain?’ ‘I swear,’ said young Moreland eagerly [...] ‘What an imagination!’ she said softly and almost enviously. ‘I want you to lie to me just as sweetly as you know how for the rest of my life.’” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁵ James E. Miller, Jr., *The Fictional Technique of Scott Fitzgerald* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1957), pp. 44-45.

“invented out of thin Florida air,” perhaps with the hope that that illustration might be turned into an adaptation.⁴⁵⁶

3.2 *The Off-shore Pirate* and the Construction of Fitzgerald as the “Most Realistic Delineator of Modern Types of American Youth”

Shortly after the contract for *The Off-shore Pirate* was signed in May 1920, film magazines noted that Metro had purchased a second story by Fitzgerald, while his first one was being produced at the West Coast Studios.⁴⁵⁷ The studio had reason to buy other work by Fitzgerald before knowing whether *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, which came out the following August, would be successful. A month after they purchased the rights to “Head and Shoulders,” Scribner’s published *This Side of Paradise*. The immediate and overwhelming success of Fitzgerald’s debut novel seems to have provided a strong incentive for Metro to capitalize on the fact that they had purchased his first story published in the *Saturday Evening Post* before his name was known to the book- and mass magazine- reading public. They soon made sure to pass on this information to the film trade press. On 11 September 1920, the self-proclaimed “digest of the motion picture industry” *Camera!* reported the film “has been selected by Metro as Viola Dana’s next starring vehicle.” “The story,” added the film magazine, “was selected and purchased by Bayard Veiller, chief of Metro’s West Coast story producing department, almost immediately after its publication in

⁴⁵⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁷ “Metro Purchases Story From Fitzgerald.” At the end of June, Waldemar Young had almost completed the continuity. On September 11, the casting of Dana’s supporting company was under way; two weeks later the filming began. On October 18, 1920, Viola Dana and 20 members of her company came back from Catalina Island after having filmed exterior scenes. J. C. Jessen, “News Notes from the West Coast,” *Motion Picture News*, 26 June 1920, p. 109; “Where to Find People you Know,” *Camera!*, 18 September 1920, p. 5; “Coast Brevities,” *Wid’s*, 18 September 1920, p. 2;

the *Saturday Evening Post*.⁴⁵⁸ Shortly after, *Motion Picture News* also reported that, thanks to “Veiller’s knack of story finding” mentioned in Chapter One, *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* had “become one of the decided hits of the year” and that “another of Mr. Fitzgerald’s stories, soon will be filmed by Metro.”⁴⁵⁹

Both articles were published after *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* had been released and become a success – Fitzgerald recalled many years later that the film had been “a big hit at the time.”⁴⁶⁰ To publicise the adaptation of the second work by Fitzgerald, Metro could thus boast that they were responsible both for having discovered the young author before his publishing house had and for having turned his story into a cinematic hit. Benefitting from the overnight success of *This Side of Paradise*, the pressbook ballyhooed Fitzgerald’s talent and youth, calling to the exhibitors’ particular notice the fact that:

This production is the second F. Scott Fitzgerald story that has served Viola Dana as a starring vehicle, the first being *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*. Do you recall that production? It established a record for attendance throughout the country, and it established pretty firmly the fact that Viola Dana, the actress, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, the author, were a pair for any motion picture exhibitor to draw to. As actress and author they are the best bets in the theatrical and literary world.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ “Viola Dana to do Fitzgerald Story,” *Camera!*, 11 September 1920, p. 4.

⁴⁵⁹ “‘Just Stories’ are Wanted.”

⁴⁶⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, Letter to Samuel Marx, March 24, 1934. TLS, 2 pp. F. Scott Fitzgerald Papers, C0187, Box 51a, “Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios”/Subseries 2a. Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.

⁴⁶¹ “Attention Please,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 2.

Metro's press article suggests that Hollywood was playing up and playing into Fitzgerald's celebrity in the publicity for *The Off-shore Pirate*. Taking credit for discovering the youthful Fitzgerald and stressing, again, the young author's promising talent, Metro also informed exhibitors: "Fitzgerald wrote the story, and he is the best young writing bet in the world to-day."⁴⁶² Another press article proudly described him as

one of the most promising of the year's literary finds. First call upon all of Mr. Fitzgerald's efforts for the screen is given to Metro Pictures Corporation under a contract that will continue for a term of years. 'The story is becoming more and more important in the production of pictures' said Mr. Veiller [...] 'Wherever it is possible to obtain a writer who can give us the sort of stuff required for the camera, whether his name is well known or unknown, we will take him.'⁴⁶³

The film's publicity converged with Fitzgerald's developing public image as the chronicler of youth. Just as Fitzgerald's book publishers capitalized on his young age by describing him as "the youngest writer for whom Scribners have ever published a novel," who "in spite of his youth [...] is on the road to fame," so Metro marketed *The Off-shore Pirate* around its author's youth and youthful subject matter.⁴⁶⁴ The younger generation of the jazz age proved a significant market for motion pictures

⁴⁶² "Why it is Good," in J. E. D. Meador, "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 2.

⁴⁶³ "Veiller Praises Fitzgerald," in J. E. D. Meador, "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 7.

⁴⁶⁴ See A. Scott Berg, *Max Perkins, Editor of Genius*, p. 19. The *Philadelphia North American* reported Scribner's words in an early April review of *This Side of Paradise* titled "F. Scott Fitzgerald is Writer Worth Watching" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 5).

during the 1920s and Fitzgerald was the writer who “treated the concerns of youth seriously,” in the right moment.⁴⁶⁵

While Fitzgerald was known as the spokesman for the youngsters, the film press of the time frequently insisted on Viola Dana’s youthful look. Dewitt Bodeen argued that the basic problem in adapting Fitzgerald’s stories for the screen was the fact that “very few actors who have names are young enough to interpret them believably [...] from [Seiter’s *The Beautiful and Damned*] on, every screen version of a Fitzgerald story has been flawed by miscasting.” However, Dana, who had started as a child actress, was only twenty-one when she starred in *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* and *The Off-shore Pirate*. As Bodeen concluded, “no problem with age this time.”⁴⁶⁶ “The word which is synonymous with Viola Dana,” wrote *Photoplay*, “is youth [...] Viola’s secret is THE SECRET of youth.”⁴⁶⁷ Metro apparently saw in Fitzgerald’s “The Offshore Pirate” – a story that mentioned the word “young” nineteen times and the word “youth” four – the right vehicle to capitalize on Dana’s already established youthful persona.

As Tom Cerasulo notes, “artists fashion their works – and their artistic personas – with markets in mind. Fitzgerald had caught on with the youth of his generation.”⁴⁶⁸ To catch on with that same youth market, Metro also advertised the subject, the author and the star of Dallas M. Fitzgerald’s film adaptation as the ideal embodiment of youth. One of the advert cuttings in the pressbook described “The Offshore Pirate” as a “glamorous high adventure of youth.”⁴⁶⁹ Metro’s claim that these advert cuttings

⁴⁶⁵ Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, p. 112.

⁴⁶⁶ DeWitt Bodeen, “Hollywood and the Fiction Writer,” Preface to Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. xv-xvii.

⁴⁶⁷ Randolph Bartlett, “A Melody for the Viola,” *Photoplay*, October 1917, p. 71.

⁴⁶⁸ Tom Cerasulo, *Authors Out Here*, p. 36.

⁴⁶⁹ “Two Column Ad Cut or Mat No 48-BB,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 10.

were “written by expert ad writers [especially employed for hitting] the high spots of the picture’s dramatic story,” suggests the centrality of the subject of youth to the film adaptation.⁴⁷⁰ The film’s reception also testifies to the adaptation’s focus upon youth. The *Leavenworth Times* described *The Off-shore Pirate* as “Viola Dana’s exhilarating comedy of youth”; the *Los Angeles Times* reprinted the pressbook article calling the film a “glorious high adventure of youth”; the *South-Bend News-Times* hailed the twenty-four year old author of the source story as “the most realistic delineator of modern types of American youth.”⁴⁷¹

Several regional and national newspapers and the film trade press reprinted the articles included in *The Off-shore Pirate*’s pressbook. Metro suggested exhibitors submit these advanced stories written by “trained newspaper men” several days before the film’s release.⁴⁷² The Minnesota newspaper *Bemidji Daily Pioneer* published verbatim an advance story from the pressbook reading: “opinion in other cities where the picture has been seen pronounces it to be wonderfully acted and convincing. This is due [...] to the fact that it is an adaptation from a story by the well-known fiction writer F. Scott Fitzgerald.”⁴⁷³ The South Carolina *Herald and News* reprinted another press article in which the studio attributed the “novelty and freshness” of the theme both to “its original author and [not too surprisingly] to Metro.”⁴⁷⁴ To publicize a screening of *The Off-shore Pirate* in his cinema, an

⁴⁷⁰ “Ad Cuts that Hit” in “J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 10.

⁴⁷¹ “Orpheum: Viola Dana in ‘The Off-shore Pirate,’” *Leavenworth Times*, 3 July 1921, p. 7; “Tally’s Broadway,” *Los Angeles Times*, 4 April 1921, p. 23; “The Off-shore Pirate,” *South-Bend News-Times*, 1 March 1921, p. 7.

⁴⁷² “Advance Stories,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 5.

⁴⁷³ “‘Offshore Pirate’ at the Rex Theater – Sunday.” The same advance story was republished in the *Clearwater Republican*, 20 May 1921, p. 5 and in the *Bisbee Daily Review*, 2 August 1921, p. 4. See ‘Offshore Pirate New Dana Vehicle,’ in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 5.

⁴⁷⁴ “Viola Dana Plays Engrossing Role: in ‘The Offshore Pirate’ coming to Newberry, Has Part of Girl Kidnapped by Pirates,” *The Herald and News*, 5 July 1921, p. 6. The pressbook included an article under the same title but with a blank space to be filled in with the name of the cinema screening the film: “Viola Dana Plays Engrossing Role,” in J. E. D. Meador, “Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*,” p. 5.

exhibitor submitted to *The Seattle Star* an article copied word for word from Metro's booklet playing up Fitzgerald's youth and early success:

The Off-shore Pirate is the tale of a modern Captain Kidd [...] F. Scott Fitzgerald is the author of the story. He is a brilliant young writer – still in his early twenties – whose fiction is now so prominent in the leading national magazines.⁴⁷⁵

Metro distributed the pressbook articles constructing twenty-four-year-old Fitzgerald as the best literary bet also to cinemas abroad. A 1920 Metro's advert reads, "pictures speak a universal language. In every country there is a demand for Metro pictures. Popular delight in these marvellous creations, both here and abroad, is growing by leaps and bounds." Among the seven pictures soon to be shown at their self-proclaimed "best" photo-play houses all over the world was *The Off-shore Pirate* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.⁴⁷⁶ In 1921, the same year that *The Off-shore Pirate* was released in America, Metro exported the film to Australia and the United Kingdom (under the same name), and to Sweden (under the title *Kärlekspiraten*).⁴⁷⁷ In 1922 the film was exported to Canada; in 1924 it was screened in Brazil (under the title *Pirata de Alto Bordo*) and in Mexico (as *Pirata de Agua Dulce*).⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ "Something about 'The Offshore Pirate,'" in J. E. D. Meador, "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 9; "Clemmer," *The Seattle Star*, 15 April 1921, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁶ "Why the Great Metro Productions are Like No Other Pictures in the World," *Variety*, 31 December 1920, p. 84S.

⁴⁷⁷ "Offshore Pirate: A Pav. Attraction," *Advertiser*, 24 August 1921, p. 8; "The Shows," *Call*, 2 December 1921, p. 4; *Kinematograph Weekly*; "Kärlekspiraten."

⁴⁷⁸ On the Canadian release of the film, see "Next Week at The Capitol," *The Winnipeg Tribune*, 30 April 1921, p. 40; "What the Picture did for Me," *Exhibitors Herald*, 29 July 1922, p. 69. The film was released in Mexico on May 17, 1924. See details on the Mexican release of the film and the cinemas that screened it across the country in Maria Luisa Amador, Jorge Ayala Blanco, *Cartelera Cinematografica 1920-1929*, p. 214.

The Australian reception of the film suggests that Metro widely distributed publicity materials for the film also abroad, presumably to English-speaking countries. On 24 August 1921, Adelaide's *Advertiser* reported the same advance story from the pressbook reprinted by the *Bemidji Daily Pioneer*.⁴⁷⁹ A few months later, Perth's *Call* stressed the name of the author of "The Offshore Pirate" by noting that this was "the second story by the brilliant young writer F. Scott Fitzgerald to be produced by Metro."⁴⁸⁰ These articles published in Australian newspapers suggest the extent to which Fitzgerald's international reputation was fashioned through the exhibition and distribution of *The Off-shore Pirate* abroad. By advertising the film based on Fitzgerald's story, Metro's aggressive marketing campaign played up and displayed F. Scott Fitzgerald's name in the international as well as national press coverage of the film and in the so-called "best photo-play houses all over the world."⁴⁸¹

While the fact that American and foreign newspapers reported these materials reveals the extent to which Fitzgerald's global reputation was enhanced by Metro, it also raises their own questions of reliability. As Anthony Slide notes:

Thanks to competent publicists from the 'teens through the present, newspapers and magazines publish stories on the film industry that might just as well be identified as fiction than fact. Back in the silent era, publicists actually wrote stories for the fan magazines under their own names – and nobody questioned the integrity of those pieces. Today, journalists rewrite what a publicist

⁴⁷⁹ "Offshore Pirate: A Pav. Attraction"; "'Offshore Pirate' at Rex Theater-Sunday"; "Off-shore Pirate New Dana Vehicle," in J. E. D. Meador, "Viola Dana in *The Off-shore Pirate*," p. 5.

⁴⁸⁰ "The Shows."

⁴⁸¹ "Why the Great Metro Productions are Like No Other Pictures in the World."

provides. But the end result is the same. Hollywood is a community built on lies and deceit. It would not otherwise be Hollywood.⁴⁸²

The American and Brazilian novelizations of the 1921 film adaptation also participated in the construction of Fitzgerald's public persona in the United States and around the world. While *Screenland's* novelization is authored by Ralph H. Leek, the Brazilian one, oddly enough, is signed by Scott Fitzgerald himself. As discussed in Chapter One, when *The Chorus Girl's Romance* was exported to Brazil in 1923, the editor cut Fitzgerald from the credits. The fact that a year later the film magazine misquoted that the novelization of *A Pirata de Alto Bordo* was by Fitzgerald may suggest that his name had acquired a certain significance for Brazilian audiences. Appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post* illustrated by Leslie L. Benson, collected in *Flappers and Philosophers*, adapted into a silent film and re-adapted into local and foreign novelizations, Fitzgerald's text was visualized, represented, adapted, translated and re-mediated innumerable times within the space of three years thanks to the emerging symbiotic and multifaceted relationship between cinema and literature in the 1920s.

During the silent era, the novelization had a double goal, as Van Parys notes: namely as "promotional material before the film release as well as a prolongation of the movie experience to capitalize on its potential success."⁴⁸³ According to Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, in the 1920s movie fans "wanted to know as much as possible about the plots of current films, having a desire for translation of visual elements of film to

⁴⁸² Anthony Slide, *Silent Topics: Essays on Undocumented Areas of Silent Films* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005), p. vi.

⁴⁸³ Thomas Van Parys, "The Commercial Novelization," p. 312.

the written word, to re-experience their favourite films in story form.”⁴⁸⁴ The silent film audiences who attended screenings of *The Offshore Pirate* in cinemas around the globe also prolonged their (re)experience with the multiple forms in which Fitzgerald’s text and his youthful persona was reinterpreted from 1920 through the mid-1920s.

⁴⁸⁴ Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), pp. 134-35.

Chapter 4 “Thousands Have Read the Book, Millions Will See the Film”: *The Beautiful and Damned* from the Page to the Silver Screen

Directed by William A. Seiter and produced by Warner Brothers, *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922) was the fourth cinematic adaptation of a work by Fitzgerald and the first film based on his long fiction.⁴⁸⁵ First serialized in *Metropolitan* magazine from September 1921 to March 1922, Fitzgerald’s second novel was published in book form on 4 March 1922. According to James L. W. West III, the second serial’s instalment of the novel that appeared in the *Washington Herald* and *New York Daily News* “put the text of *The Beautiful and Damned* into the hands of thousands of readers who likely would never have purchased the clothbound edition.”⁴⁸⁶ But film could reach even farther. One publicity slogan for the movie version of *The Beautiful and Damned* (perhaps optimistically) promised, while “thousands have read Fitzgerald’s book, millions will see the film.”⁴⁸⁷ Exported to all continents, Seiter’s 1922 film and its multilingual novelizations delivered Fitzgerald’s remediated story – and his name – to global audiences that numbered in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, including those who did not buy the clothbound edition or the

⁴⁸⁵ Although during the Silent Era there had been three attempts to adapt *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald’s first novel was never filmed. A film agent tried to purchase the rights to the novel only two months after its publication but the deal failed to materialize. In 1922, Fitzgerald received a second offer from Outlook Photoplays but this attempt to bring the book to the screen also failed. A year later, Fitzgerald sold the rights to Paramount and wrote a screen treatment of the novel that was never filmed. See Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction Film and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁸⁶ James L. W. West III, “Introduction” in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, ed., James L. W. West III (1922. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. xxiii. All future citations to the book refer to this edition. See also James L. W. West III, “The Second Serials of ‘This Side of Paradise’ and ‘The Beautiful and Damned,’” *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 73.1 (1979), 63-74.

⁴⁸⁷ “A Best Seller Faithfully Reproduced,” *Film Daily*, 26 November 1922, pp. 12-13.

magazines in which the serializations appeared and those who could not read them because of illiteracy or language barriers.

Part of the Warner Brothers Screen Classics Series, the film had a double American premier. It was given a preview presentation at the Paramount Theatre, Los Angeles, on 27 November 1922 – barely eight months after Fitzgerald’s book had been published – supposedly to “one of the largest and most representative audiences on the west coast.”⁴⁸⁸ The eastern premiere was held at the 3,500-seat Strand Theatre, New York City, on 10 December. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald were among the audience, but not enjoying the show.⁴⁸⁹ For the World Premiere of the film at the Strand, the Warner publicity department aided the theatre’s management by placing 20,000 four-page rotogravure sections specially devised for the picture in the Sunday issue of the *New York Call*.⁴⁹⁰ This was only one of the exceptionally numerous and assorted ways in which the film was advertised. To promote *The Beautiful and Damned* and the other seven films of the Screen Classics Series, the studio inaugurated a sweeping campaign aimed at selling pictures directly to the public and to the most diverse audiences.⁴⁹¹ Harry M. Warner boasted that a quarter of a million dollars had been used in fan magazine advertising to acquaint the public with supposedly “the greatest array of attractions that have ever been produced by an independent organization.”⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁸ “At the Los Angeles showing were present the members of the cast, directors, authors and city officials [...] William A Seiter, who directed the picture, and Olga Printzlau, who is responsible for the adaptation, were also present,” “*Beautiful and Damned Gets Double Premier*,” *Moving Picture World*, 23 December 1922, p. 757.

⁴⁸⁹ As Fitzgerald wrote to his friend C. O. Kalman shortly after the premiere. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 119.

⁴⁹⁰ “*Beautiful and Damned Opens Eastern Premiere Run at New York Strand*,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 30 December 1922, p. 132.

⁴⁹¹ The six other film adaptations in the series were based on *Main Street*, *Brass*, *Rags to Riches*, *The Little Church around the Corner*, *Heroes of the Street*, and *A Dangerous Adventure*.

⁴⁹² “Warner Announces Big Campaign,” *Motion Picture News*, 7 October 1922, p. 1787.

An analysis of the advertising for *The Beautiful and Damned* sheds light on the early 1920s complex interaction between literary and visual media and the impact it had on Fitzgerald's national and international reputation, while showing how the studio exploited Fitzgerald's already established success, both on screen and in print. In July 1922, *The Seattle Star* noted that "the photodramatization of *The Beautiful and Damned* [had] been logically timed: the public will be waiting to see [it]. If [it is] not exhibited under some silly title that will not be recognized."⁴⁹³ As opposed to Metro's and Fox's decision to change the titles of the 1920 adaptations of Fitzgerald's short stories into (questionably) catchier ones, Warner Brothers kept the original name of the recently published and already popular novel, a title which was unequivocally linked to its now-celebrated author. In fact, as *Variety* argued, "the title [was] the film's best seller."⁴⁹⁴ In Sara Ross's words, "the more sensational and notorious the title was in print, the better its box office potential."⁴⁹⁵

This, however, is only true for the film's national release, as the American audiences for the two media could be characterised as overlapping. In all the non-English speaking countries where the film was exported, its source text had never been printed. Deprived of its box office potential, the title was, thus, changed into *La Bourrasque* (The Storm) in France; *El Precio de la Belleza* (The Price of Beauty) in Spain and Mexico; "Tredje Bröllopsdagen" (Third Wedding Anniversary) in Sweden.⁴⁹⁶ Despite the title change, Fitzgerald's name appeared in foreign novelizations and advertisements of Seiter's film. In fact, the film adaptation of *The*

⁴⁹³ James W. Dean, "Movies are Catching Up to Literature," *The Seattle Star*, 1 July 1922, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁴ "The Beautiful and Damned," *Variety*, 15 December 1922, p. 40.

⁴⁹⁵ Sara Ross, "1922: Movies and the Perilous Future," p. 73.

⁴⁹⁶ For the Finnish release (1924), however, they kept the original title *Kaunis ja Kirottu* (literally "Beautiful and Damned." Kansallinen Audiovisuaalinen Instituutti, Finland's National Audiovisual Institute, holds a postcard from the film showing Marie Prevost dressed as a bride. Estimates during 1923-5 consistently put the American share of the Scandinavian market at 70 %. Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907-1934* (London: BFI Publishing, 1985), p. 128.

Beautiful and Damned disseminated Fitzgerald's name and persona around the world decades before posthumous translations did.

The image of Fitzgerald represented in *The Beautiful and Damned*, however, was not necessarily a positive one; indeed, the film may well have fed into the still-popular perception of the author as a debauched alcoholic. From the beginning of Fitzgerald's career, his and Zelda's drunken antics were broadly reported by the press, while the legend of Fitzgerald's drinking was also fuelled by Fitzgerald himself.⁴⁹⁷ According to his biographer, Andrew Turnbull, when introduced "he would say in his nicest Princeton manner, 'I'm very glad to meet you sir – you know I'm an alcoholic.'"⁴⁹⁸ In the blurb of the third printing of *This Side of Paradise* distributed at the American Booksellers Association convention in May 1920, Fitzgerald wrote an "apology" ending "so gentlemen, consider all the cocktails mentioned in this book drink by me as a toast to the American."⁴⁹⁹ Later in the decade, he published in the *New Yorker* a yearly inventory of the drinks he had had since 1913.⁵⁰⁰

The literary intelligentsia also helped reinforce the association between Fitzgerald and liquor. In March 1922, the month in which *The Beautiful and Damned* was published, readers in St. Paul were told that Fitzgerald had been "sequestered in a New York apartment with \$10,000 sunk in liquor and that he was bent on drinking it before he did anything else," while subscribers to *The Bookman* were informed that his "Irishman imagination" was "such a torture that [he] can't bear it without

⁴⁹⁷ See Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, p. 128.

⁴⁹⁸ Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 171.

⁴⁹⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 459.

⁵⁰⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, "A Short Autobiography" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, pp. 225-26).

whisky.”⁵⁰¹ Virtually all the reviews of Fitzgerald’s second novel singled out its depiction of excessive alcohol consumption. A Raleigh paper observed that “liquor flows through the pages of *The Beautiful and Damned* in a steady stream. It wouldn’t be easy to find two harder drinkers than Anthony and Gloria [...] the world’s champion staggers of liquor parties.”⁵⁰² A Rochester, New York, newspaper noted that there were long sections in the novel “in which its author apparently considered that page lost on which innumerable cocktails were not consumed.” The *Montgomery Advertiser* accused Fitzgerald of having chosen “‘booze-party’ added to ‘booze party’ in all their nauseating details as subject-matter for two novels and numerous short stories.”⁵⁰³ While studies have explored at length Fitzgerald’s reputation as an alcoholic in print, the extent to which the film adaptation of a novel such as *The*



Figure 28 Film still of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Fitzgerald's *Scrapbook III*

Beautiful and Damned contributed to fashioning his drunk persona has never been considered.⁵⁰³ Such a consideration

⁵⁰¹ Thomas A. Boyd, “Literary Libels” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, p. 245); Edmund Wilson, “F. Scott Fitzgerald” (Repr. in Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light* (New York: Farrar Straus & Young, 1952), p. 31).

⁵⁰² N. B. L., “Fitzgerald’s Latest Not for all Palates”; “The Beautiful and Damned,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*; *Montgomery Advertiser* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 118; p. 89; p. 113).

⁵⁰³ On the interviews in which Fitzgerald called attention to his drinking see Ruth Prigozy, “Introduction: Scott, Zelda and the Culture of Celebrity,” p. 6; Scott Donaldson, *Fool for Love* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1983), p. 162. On the *Bookman* essay and its references to Fitzgerald and liquor see Deborah Davis Schlacks, “F. Scott Fitzgerald, Trickster: Images of Irishness in Edmund Wilson’s *Bookman* Essay,” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 14 (2016), 159-80, pp. 164-65.

might begin with the fact that Kenneth Harlan, the actor cast as the book's semi-autobiographical protagonist, bore a striking physical resemblance to Fitzgerald (see Fig. 28).

As early as in 1923, Russian formalist critic Boris Tomasevskij stated: "We must consider how the poet's biography operates in the reader's consciousness." According to Tomasevskij, after a time "during which the personality of the artist was of no interest at all to the audience" more recently "the name and personality of the author came to the forefront." By the Romantic Era, Tomasevskij held, the interrelationship of life and literature had become confused: "the author becomes a witness to and a living participant in his novels, a living hero. A double transformation takes place: heroes are taken for living personages, and poets becomes living heroes." By 1923, the Russian critic had noted the appearance of "a special type of writer with a demonstrative biography, one which shouted out: Look at how bad and how impudent I am!"⁵⁰⁴ Exemplifying Tomasevskij's argument, an anonymous article Zelda Fitzgerald pasted in her scrapbook around the time of *The Beautiful and Damned* film's release commented on her husband's "bad reputation," which

has been fostered by publicity sleuths who always try to give the public what it wants [...] we are accustomed enough to this kind of rumor in regard to stage stars, but it is fairly new in relation to authors. The great drinking bouts, the petting, may be what the public expects of Fitzgerald whose books told so much this kind of life.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁴ Boris Tomasevskij, "Literature and Biography" (Repr. in Ladislav Mateija, Krystyna Pomorska, eds., *Reading in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views* (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1971), pp. 47-55).

⁵⁰⁵ Zelda Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook*.

This chapter demonstrates how, by aggressively advertising and disseminating the movie version of *The Beautiful and Damned* and its many “alcoholic interludes” around the world, Warner Brothers played into Fitzgerald’s “damned reputation” in the public’s mind.

Although not a “best-seller,” *The Beautiful and Damned* sold 50,000 copies in 1922 and made the *Publishers Weekly* best-seller list three times reaching number six.⁵⁰⁶ As Vincent Barnett notes, “the commercial potential of adapting the novels of well-known writers into films was accepted by movie producers even in the early studio era, with the marketing advantage of pre-sold materials being obvious.”⁵⁰⁷ But the best-seller lists provided the industry with a considerable problem. According to Richard Maltby, the financial success of popular books such as *The Beautiful and Damned* “made them commercially desirable and culturally appropriate for adaptation, but their content made that adaptation extremely problematic.”⁵⁰⁸ This was particularly true in 1922. A few months before the release of Seiter’s movie, the main film studios established the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) headed by Will H. Hays with the intent to safeguard the economic interests of the industry’s production-distribution oligopoly. While the MPPDA’s central concern was, as Maltby notes, “with the threat of legislation or court action to impose a strict application of the antitrust laws to the industry,” Hays made sure to publicise its intent was to “maintain the highest possible moral and artistic standards of motion picture production.”⁵⁰⁹ One of the first things Hays did was to establish a blacklist of books

⁵⁰⁶ See Mary Jo Tate, *F. Scott Fitzgerald A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Facts On File, 1998), p. 63.

⁵⁰⁷ Vincent L. Barnett, “The Novelist as Hollywood Star: Author Royalties and Studio Income in the 1920s,” *Film History*, 20 (2008), 281-93, p. 281.

⁵⁰⁸ Richard Maltby, “‘To Prevent the Prevalent Type of Book’: Censorship and Adaptation in Hollywood, 1924-1934,” *American Quarterly*, 44.4 (1992), 554-83, p. 559.

⁵⁰⁹ Qtd. in Richard Maltby, “‘To Prevent the Prevalent Type of Book,’” p. 559.

and plays which were forbidden to the industry. Despite its depiction of moral deterioration and its anti-Volstead ardour, *The Beautiful and Damned* was not among them, for reasons I will explain.

According to Richard Astro, as a novel *The Beautiful and Damned* is “a work that even Fitzgerald’s most reputable critics have condemned as immature, unrealistic, trivial and generally unsuccessful when viewed in comparison with the vast thematic and technical success of *The Great Gatsby*.”⁵¹⁰ As Ami J. Elias also observes, “the mixed critical reception upon its publication has influenced studies of the novel [...] compared to Fitzgerald’s other novels, it has received little critical attention.”⁵¹¹ Given the extent to which the silent film adaptation of the more canonical *The Great Gatsby* has been neglected and that *The Beautiful and Damned* is, according to the online MLA database, Fitzgerald’s least analysed work, there is little wonder that its silent version has been widely overlooked.⁵¹² Gene D. Phillips dedicates a few pages to the plot of the 1922 film, underlining the thematic contrast between the book and its screen version, in which “much of the in-depth psychological analysis of the characters [...] was shorn away [...] offering Fitzgerald’s story without the thought-provoking psychological study of the deterioration of the Patches’ marriage.”⁵¹³ While Phillips is the only scholar who has discussed the screen adaptation of *The Beautiful and Damned* at any length, he bases his analysis solely on two reviews of the film. Rose Adrienne Gallo and Aaron Latham also briefly mention the film but they only use one article reprinted in *The*

⁵¹⁰ Richard Astro, “*Vandover and the Brute and The Beautiful and Damned: A Search for Thematic and Stylistic Reinterpretations*,” *Modern Fiction Studies*, 14.4 (1968), 397-413, p. 397.

⁵¹¹ Amy J. Elias, “The Composition and Revision of Fitzgerald’s *The Beautiful and Damned*,” *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 51.3 (1990), 245-66, p. 245.

⁵¹² See Jonathan Enfield, “As the Fashion in Book Shifted: *The Beautiful and Damned* as Arc-Light Fiction,” *Modernism/Modernity*, 14.4 (2007), 669-85, p. 682.

⁵¹³ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 97.

Romantic Egoists (Gallo) and a line from a review quoted by Arthur Mizener in 1951 (Gallo and Latham).⁵¹⁴ Even Jonathan Enfield, who discusses how Hollywood film influenced Fitzgerald's conception of *The Beautiful and Damned* and complains scholars do not appreciate the extent to which Hollywood shaped Fitzgerald's fiction because they regard "all filmic adaptation of Fitzgerald's novels with suspicion," dismisses Seiter's 1922 film in three lines.⁵¹⁵

As in the case of the other five silent adaptations of Fitzgerald's work, the main reason for the neglect of *The Beautiful and Damned* lies in the fact that its film print is missing. But 152 stills from the movie survived, allowing a provisional reconstruction of the film adaptation offered in Appendix Two. The film's pressbook makes clear that the movie's plot follows the novel's closely:

In relating the story of the love and marriage of Anthony Patch and the vivid beauty Gloria [...] a young, spoiled and sophisticated, but withal appealing little flapper, toys with men's hearts until she falls in love with [...] the grandson of old Millionaire Adam Patch, familiarly known as 'Cross Patch,' an aged philanthropist who for many years has crusaded against Vice, Literature, Sunday Theatres and Liquor. The grandfather is delighted with the marriage, for he is convinced it means the reform of Anthony, in whom ambition is little more than a whisper. But instead of improving, Anthony does nothing but waste time and energy in cabarets. He is completely under Gloria's spell and gives up business prospects that would take him away from her; he is satisfied only when near her. The climax is followed by other equally tense-

⁵¹⁴ Rose Adrienne Gallo, *F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 133; Aaron Latham, *Crazy Sundays*, p. 38; Arthur Mizener, *The Far Side of Paradise*, p. 331.

⁵¹⁵ Jonathan Enfield, "As the Fashion in Book Shifted," p. 678.

situations that show the struggles and changes that come into their lives before they turn their backs on the old life.

The synopsis opens by letting exhibitors know that “Fitzgerald’s novel of flappers and gilded youth scored such spontaneous and instant success as a book that it was quickly captured for the screen.”⁵¹⁶ The context in which audiences viewed *The Beautiful and Damned* was shaped by the new practice of rapid adaptation of recent novels.⁵¹⁷ Perhaps betraying Fitzgerald’s wish to sell the film rights to his book as early as possible, one of Anthony’s friends even remarks upon it: “All the new novels are sold to the moving pictures as soon as they come out.”⁵¹⁸ A contemporary article similarly explained: “Producers are anxious to get their films to the front while the book interest is keenest, with consequent publicity value [...] fiction now often appears on the screen within six or eight months of its first appearance in book form.”⁵¹⁹ Eight months was exactly the time that it took Fitzgerald’s book to make the transition from print to screen.

Hollywood producers might have been especially eager to adapt recent novels whose association with the movies had been repeatedly underscored by the literary elite. As soon as *The Beautiful and Damned* was published, reviewers hinted at its cinematic potential, some considering it the novel’s strength, others its weakness. Henry Seidel Canby found the novel’s fault in its similarity to “an endless film of

⁵¹⁶ “Warner Brothers Presents: *The Beautiful and Damned* by F. Scott Fitzgerald,” pressbook distributed by Warner Brothers, 1600 Broadway, New York, N. Y., p.1

⁵¹⁷ On the 1920s practice of adapting novels shortly after their publications, see Sara Ross, “Screening the Modern Girl: Intermediality in the Adaptation of *Flaming Youth*,” *Modernism/Modernity*, 17.2 (2010), 271-90.

⁵¹⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 48.

⁵¹⁹ “The Movie and the Book Again,” *Publisher’s Weekly*, 26 February 1924, p. 509. According to West, the late sale of *This Side of Paradise* to Hollywood might have been one of the reasons why no movie version of the book was ever made. James L. W. West III, “Did F. Scott Fitzgerald Have the Right Publisher?” *The Sewanee Review*, 100.4 (Fall 1992), 644-56, p. 649.

racy pictures.” According to the critic, Fitzgerald had followed the popular taste and gratified “curiosity as to what they do on Broadway after midnight with the fullest detail,” reporting his own reactions to life, “like a reporter with a moving-picture camera [who] squirmed into hallways and hid behind café tables.” Referring to the episode in which Anthony Patch mocks the film producer Bloeckman for speaking like “a subtitle from one of his movies,” another critic remarked, “Mr. Fitzgerald [also] makes his Gloria [the female protagonist] use language that often strongly resembles the literature of the movies.” And just as Anthony lampooned Bloeckman for expressing himself like a living title card, so John Peale Bishop mocked Fitzgerald for his “recently acquired fondness for the D. W. Griffith order of words.”⁵²⁰

In mid-April 1922, only a month after the publication of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Fitzgerald received a proposal from Warner Brothers for the rights to the novel.⁵²¹ On 2 May 1922, *Film Daily* announced that Warner Brothers had purchased the film rights to *The Beautiful and Damned*.⁵²² In late June, the casting for the film started; the first people to be signed for the production were flapper actress Marie Prevost, featured in the role of Gloria Gilbert, and prolific scenario writer Olga Printzlau.⁵²³ Kenneth Harlan, who married Prevost in 1923, was engaged to star as

⁵²⁰ Henry Seidel Canby, “The Flapper’s Tragedy”; N. P. Dawson, “*The Beautiful and Damned*,” John Peale Bishop, “Mr. Fitzgerald sees the Flapper Through” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 63; p. 65; p. 72).

⁵²¹ Ober described the studio’s proposal as “a low offer but best [they could] get.” Fitzgerald replied on the same day asking whether the studio would give a “small percentage in addition because of low price.” He added: “accept best offer anyway if you think advisable.” Which is what Ober did. On the next day, Fitzgerald wrote to Maxwell Perkins: “I sold the movie rights to Warner Bros for \$2500 which seems a small price. But it was the best I could do [...] please don’t tell anyone what I got for *The Beautiful and Damned* from the movies.” A week later, Fitzgerald mentioned the contract again to Perkins, specifying that it had a proviso of \$1250 more if the film did \$250,000 gross business. And he reiterated: “Poor price. Keep it dark.” Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, pp. 40-41. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. 102-03.

⁵²² “Buy *Beautiful and Damned*,” *Film Daily*, 2 May 1922, p. 1.

⁵²³ Discussing the selection of the cast, Allen noted, “it will be hard to tell which is beautiful, but all the players will be d-----d by the director before the final shot.” Don Allen, “Screenings,” *The Evening*

Anthony in August; a few weeks later, Louise Fazenda, was signed to play Gloria's friend Muriel. Both Prevost and Fazenda were former members of Mack Sennett's company of Bathing Beauties, a titillating fact that was frequently mentioned in the film press.⁵²⁴ The last player to be added to the cast was a great granddaughter of Francis Scott Key and distant cousin of Fitzgerald, Kathleen Key.⁵²⁵ In late September, Warner Brothers announced that William A. Seiter had been engaged to direct the film adaptation.⁵²⁶ In early October, *Moving Picture World* announced that the production of the film was "well under way"; a week later it was in "its sixth week of production; on October 21, Seiter completed shooting all scenes."⁵²⁷ *The Beautiful and Damned* was nationally released on 1 January 1923.

4.1 "The Title is the Film's Best Seller": Warner Brothers' Sweeping Campaign for *The Beautiful and Damned*

In his article "Did F. Scott Fitzgerald Have the Right Publisher?" James L. W. West III called into question whether the author's allegiance with Scribner's was indeed as "healthy and successful" as generally assumed. The answer West provides is that,

World, 28 June 1922, p. 28. The same year in which the film was released, the "Not for Old Fogies" *Flapper* magazine featured a picture of Prevost with the caption "typical flapper – Marie Prevost," "The Flapper – What is Home Without The Flapper? Impossible!" *The Flapper*, May 1922. "Sign Marie Prevost," *Film Daily*, 18 July 1922, p. 1. In late September, Olga Printzlau was flanked by Alexander Neal, a comedy scenarist who specialized in "injecting the requisite amount of humor into serious screen plays. He has been delegated to the task of placing light touches into [the film]." "Neal Alexander is Engaged by Warner Brothers," *Motion Picture News*, 23 September 1922, p. 1362.

⁵²⁴ According to *The New York Times*, the most interesting feature of the picture was that its cast included two bathing beauties. "Another Flapper Story," *The New York Times*, 11 December 1922, p. 22.

⁵²⁵ "Kathleen Key," *Washington Herald*, 6 August 1922; "Fazenda with Warner's," *Film Daily*, 7 September 1922, p. 1.

⁵²⁶ "Seiter Engaged to Direct *The Beautiful and Damned*," *Motion Picture News*, 23 September 1922, p. 1482.

⁵²⁷ "Ben Schulberg Explains Why Title of Second Al Lichtman Film Was Altered," *Moving Picture World*, 7 October 1922, p. 476; Roger Ferri, "In the Independent Field," *Moving Picture World*, 14 October 1922, p. 575.

characterized by an “essentially elitist business philosophy,” the publishing house kept the advertising of Fitzgerald’s books “limited and quiet in tone [...] a more aggressive printing campaign, backed by strong advertising aimed at a broad national middle-class audience, would almost surely have sold great many more copies of *This Side of Paradise*.”⁵²⁸ Tom Cerasulo similarly remarked: “Scribner’s was a noble, conservative house. It sold books, it was not in the business of selling authors.”⁵²⁹ But Hollywood was. Warner Brothers’ egalitarian and bold publicity campaign for the film adaptation of *The Beautiful and Damned*, aided by the more inclusive nature of the silent film medium that could reach foreign and illiterate audiences, helped its source text and author’s image reach larger and more diverse audiences than the restrictive and cautious Scribner’s did.

As John Raeburn notes, “the audience which gives a writer literary reputation is an elite; the audience which gives him public reputation is larger and more heterogeneous.”⁵³⁰ In 1929, R. L. Duffus reported that an average of 200 million books were bought every year in America. He noted “the figures dwindle when they are applied to population. They indicate that the American public buys approximately two books per capita each year.”⁵³¹ In the year in which *The Beautiful and Damned* premiered, by contrast, *weekly* cinema admissions in the U.S. touched 40 million.⁵³² By disseminating Fitzgerald’s name throughout America and across the world and by collaborating with bookstores and film magazines, Warner Brothers fed into both his public and literary reputation. With the intent of competing with more established

⁵²⁸ James L. W. West III, “Did F. Scott Fitzgerald Have the Right Publisher?,” pp. 646-49.

⁵²⁹ Tom Cerasulo, *Authors Out Here*, p. 14.

⁵³⁰ John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him: Hemingway as Public Writer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 8.

⁵³¹ R. L. Duffus, *Books: Their Place in a Democracy* (Boston: The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1930), p. 4.

⁵³² See John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny, “The Risk Environment of Film Making: Warner Bros in the Inter-War Years,” *Explorations in Economic History*, 35 (1998), 196–220, p. 199.

studios such as Fox and Metro, in 1922 the recently formed Warner Brothers started an aggressive marketing campaign for the “Classics of the Screen” using Fitzgerald’s name to promote one of the seven popular books they adapted. As Richard Koszarski notes, “with ‘expand or die’ as the industry watchword,” in the early 1920s Warner “decided to acquire theaters and raise the general level of their releases.”⁵³³ Fitzgerald benefited from the young studio’s efforts to become a significant player in the film industry by distributing widely and internationally and investing heavily in *The Beautiful and Damned* and a few other expensive productions in 1922 and 1923.⁵³⁴

In a letter to Perkins dated July 1921, Fitzgerald vented his frustration at his publishing house for its “ultra-conservatism in their marketing and editorial policies” that made the ads for *This Side of Paradise* “small and undistinguished and confined almost entirely to college magazines and to *Scribner’s* [magazine].”⁵³⁵ In contrast to Scribner’s marketing of Fitzgerald’s first book, Warner Brothers’ promotional campaign for the adaptation of his second novel was innovative and modern, in that it used original and eye-catching marketing gimmicks to sell the Screen Classic Series films to both exhibitors and moviegoers. The studio’s campaign was also wide and unrestricted; reproductions of *The Beautiful and Damned* book cover were displayed in highly circulated film magazines, libraries, billboards, and even a huge truck travelling throughout the United States.

If it is true, as Raeburn argues, that “a writer creates his public reputation by displaying his personality before a large audience,” in the early 1920s Warner Brothers extensively exposed Fitzgerald’s name.⁵³⁶ The studio’s slogan quoted in the title of this chapter – “Thousands Have Read the Book, Millions Will See the Film”

⁵³³ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, p. 90.

⁵³⁴ See John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny, “The Risk Environment of Film Making,” p. 203.

⁵³⁵ Andrew Turnbull, ed., *Dreams of Youth*, p. 165

⁵³⁶ John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him*, p. 8.

– was not referring solely to the millions of moviegoers watching the Screen Classics films. An advertisement Warner Brothers ran in virtually all the most popular film trade magazines assured moviegoers:

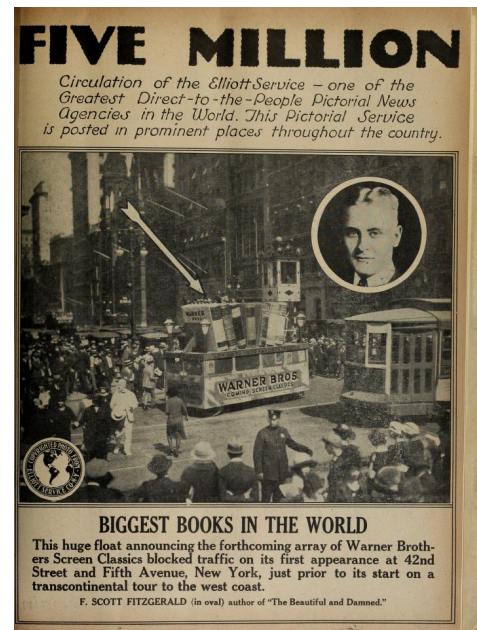
FIFTY MILLION People will read, see, hear and talk about the Warner Brothers Screen Classics [...] the figures do not include the millions of people who have read the books, those who read the ‘fan’, national and territorial trade magazines, or those who will read the newspaper stories of our float en route to the Warner west coast studios. There will be more advertising in the *Saturday Evening Post*, more advertising in the *Trade Papers*, more publicity stunts, newspaper stories and other avenues of advertising which patrons of your theatre will see, hear and talk about.⁵³⁷

The following pages gave the breakdown of the “fifty million people”: 2.5 million would read the *Saturday Evening Post* ad, 20 million would see the billboard adverts, 25 million would see “the float.” The latter was an advertising stunt described as “unprecedented in the history of motion pictures”: seven 17-foot high exact reproductions of the seven volumes of the “Screen Classics” series were mounted on a 13-foot high auto track with the appearances of a house on wheels. The float left New York on 3 October 1922, covered more than 5000 miles and reached the Warner Studios in Los Angeles on 1 April 1923. By March, 900 towns and cities and 1200 theatres had seen and heard the truck, which broadcasted the latest musical hits by a

⁵³⁷ The advertisement appeared on the five most prominent film trade magazines: “Fifty Million,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 14 October 1922, pp. 7-10; “Fifty Million,” *Moving Picture World*, 7 October 1922, pp. 443-44; “Fifty Million,” *Exhibitors Trade Review*, 7 October 1922, pp. 17-20; “Fifty Million,” *Film Daily*, 1 October 1922, pp. 19-22; “Fifty Million,” *Motion Picture News*, 7 October 1922, pp. 1715-18.

radio device and showed trailers of the seven films with a portable projector.⁵³⁸ On the tour, there also was a publicity man who visited “every mayor and governor along the route, carrying with him a letter of introduction from Will H. Hays and Mayor Hylan of New York.”⁵³⁹

While it is very likely that Warner Brothers exaggerated the magnitude of their advertising power, the studio worked to establish the credibility of their figures explaining that the *Post* had indeed a circulation of 2,500,000, while the float was going to be seen by “approximately twenty-five million” as that was the circulation of the Elliot Service (“one of the greatest direct-to-



the-people pictorial news agencies in the world”) known to post its ads in prominent places throughout the country.⁵⁴⁰ A photo showing the float blocking traffic at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue in New York was

Figure 29 *Film Daily*, 1 October 1922, p. 21



Figure 30 *Film Daily*, 1 October 1922, p. 22

accompanied by an oval with Fitzgerald’s face (Fig. 29).⁵⁴¹ In addition, Warner Brothers claimed, “approximately twenty million people” would see the “twenty-four-sheets”

⁵³⁸ “World’s Largest Book Shelf Here on Way to Coast,” *Corsicana Daily Sun*, 12 March 1922, p. 12.

⁵³⁹ “Huge Float to Tour from Coast to Coast,” *Motion Picture News*, 23 September 1922, p. 1511.

⁵⁴⁰ Harry M. Warner, “False Publicity Kills Patronage,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 30 September 1922, p. 59.

⁵⁴¹ “Fifty Million,” *Film Daily*, 1 October 1922, p. 21.

posted on “the best billboard locations all over the United States.” An illustration of one of these billboards (Fig. 30) shows a blown-up reproduction of the seven volumes of the Screen Classics series. The book standing in the middle of the advert displayed F. Scott Fitzgerald’s name in deliberately noticeable places throughout the United States.

In *The Beautiful and Damned* book, Richard Caramel explains to Anthony that the stories he sold to Hollywood “were to widen his audience. Wasn’t it true that men who had attained real permanence from Shakespeare to Mark Twain had appealed to the many as well as to the elect?”⁵⁴² Alan Margolies and others have noted that Dick Caramel shares with his author “a certain aspect”: he has learnt how to fashion his writing for movie sale. “Within a two-year period this novelist earns more than \$25,000 by selling to popular magazines short stories that can be easily converted into film scripts.”⁵⁴³ However, although Margolies argues that Fitzgerald’s interest in silent Hollywood was based exclusively on financial need, it seems likely that, having worked in the advertising business, he also considered how the adaptation of his work would “widen his audience.”⁵⁴⁴ According to Robert Sklar:

However much Norris and Mencken had taught him to think first of truth and art, Fitzgerald had not lost his old idea of serving, through his talents as an entertainer, as a spokesman or a popular leader. And however much he had learned from Mencken to despise the bourgeoisie, he was always concerned with who was in his audience-and how many.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 242.

⁵⁴³ Alan Margolies, “Kissing, Shooting, Sacrificing,” pp. 68-69.

⁵⁴⁴ Alan Margolies, “Kissing, Shooting, Sacrificing,” pp. 65-66. On Fitzgerald and the advertising business see Kirk Curnutt, “Fitzgerald’s Consumer World.”

⁵⁴⁵ Robert Sklar, *The Last Laocoön*, p. 91.

Budd Schulberg recalled Fitzgerald telling him in 1939 he “believed in film as an ideal art form for reaching out to millions who might never have read a serious novel.”⁵⁴⁶

A year after the sale of the novel’s film rights, Fitzgerald wrote to Harold Ober, “[I] hope Warner Brothers will pay fair on *The Beautiful and Damned*. Heaven knows they got it cheap and it was one of their own men who told me how it was packing them in on the coast.”⁵⁴⁷ Months later, Fitzgerald returned to the fray: “We haven’t tried *The Beautiful and Damned* movie bonus for over a year. Perhaps it would be worth it. If it is ever going to gross that it should do so now for it has been exhibited in England according to a clipping I received.”⁵⁴⁸ These letters stand as evidence that Fitzgerald was both monitoring the film’s box office and foreign distribution. Various reports in *Motion Picture News* confirm that Seiter’s film was a success at the American box office.⁵⁴⁹

But if Warner Brothers did not pay Fitzgerald well financially, they did repay him in terms of popular and international reputation. The trade press reported that the film had a wide (and widely publicized) distribution and that it was sold to independent film exchanges throughout the domestic and foreign markets. Titles in several film trade magazines announced that the “Warner product sold throughout

⁵⁴⁶ Budd Schulberg, *Writers in America: The Four Seasons of Success* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), p. 112.

⁵⁴⁷ A clause in the contract for *The Beautiful and Damned* stipulated that, if the gross income from the picture reached \$250,000, the company should have paid Fitzgerald an additional \$1250. The alleged success of the film was not the only reason why Fitzgerald felt entitled to the proviso. As he told Ober, he was “determined to make Warner Bros pay up more because they so mutilated the picture than for the money itself.” In November 1924, once again Fitzgerald wrote to his agent about the “b+ *damned* movie bonus.” Two months later, he asked Ober again whether the studio had “ever rendered a definite account on the b + d movie.” In June 1923, Fitzgerald told Ober, “I suppose we’ll have to take Warner’s word for the b + d gross and perhaps it’s accurate.” Fitzgerald never received the proviso. Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, pp. 53-55; p. 69; p. 73.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵⁴⁹ See the percentage value of the reports published by *Motion Picture News*: “The Check-Up,” *Motion Picture News*, 12 May 1923, p. 2279; “The Check-Up,” 11 August 1923, *Motion Picture News*, p. 654; “The Check-Up,” *Motion Picture News*, 8 September 1923, p. 1187.

country” and that “practically the entire country now disposed of [the Screen Classics].”⁵⁵⁰ Additionally, the film was shown in the five first run houses in New York State, a deal that Mr. Warner described as “unprecedented in the history of independent producing and distributing circles.”⁵⁵¹ The film was shown domestically for at least fifteen months, until late May 1924, and may have gone longer; in some states it ran simultaneously with the second adaptation of Fitzgerald produced by Warner Brothers, *Conductor 1492*.⁵⁵²

In addition to distributing *The Beautiful and Damned* widely across North America, Warner Brothers exported it around the world. In his study on the Warners’ studios market performance, H. Mark Glancy notes that *The Beautiful and Damned* and the other five films they produced in the 1922-23 season were “marked by very good returns on modest investments” and their foreign earnings accounted for approximately 10%.⁵⁵³ In July 1922, months before the shooting, the studio had sold

⁵⁵⁰ *Film Daily* reported, “Warner Brothers yesterday announced the list of sales to territorial buyers in connection with their 7 features for 1922-1923. The pictures involved are [...] *The Beautiful and Damned* [and six others]. Sales have been made to the following: Second National of Chicago, have contracted for Northern Illinois; Finkelstein and Ruben, Minnesota, North and South Dakota; R. H. Lieber, Indiana; A. H. Blank, Iowa and Nebraska; A. M. Fabian, Northern New Jersey; Tri-State Film Exchange, Wisconsin; independent film corp., Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, District of Columbia, Eastern Penn., and Southern New Jersey; Franklin Film Co. of Boston, New England; Skirboll Brothers of Cleveland, Ohio; Kwality Pictures of Denver, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico; S. & O. Pictures of Los Angeles, California, Nevada, Arizona, and Hawaii; first national of Pittsburgh, West Virginia and Western Pennsylvania; and Standard Prod of Atlanta, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, North and South Carolina.” “Warner Series Sold: Practically the Entire Country now Disposed of – 7 Features in the List,” *Film Daily*, 16 August 1922, p. 1. See also “Important Circuits Contract for Series of Seven Warner Bros Productions,” *Motion Picture News*, 26 August 1922, p. 1001; “Warner Product Sold Throughout Country,” *Motion Picture News*, 23 September 1922, p. 1510.

⁵⁵¹ “The contracts were made with the Strand theatre in New York City and Brooklyn, the State, Schenectady; Troy theatre, Troy, and the Strand, Albany,” “Five Warner Productions Are Booked at First Run Houses in New York State,” *Moving Picture World*, 2 December 1922, p. 65.

⁵⁵² The *Hamilton Evening Journal* advertised a screening of the film at the Palace theatre on May 29, 1924, p. 11. While a theatre owner from Perry, Illinois reported to *Exhibitors Herald* that *The Beautiful and Damned* “have been good, for about a dozen came back the second night [...] good house the second night,” an exhibitor from another Illinois little town commented on his theatre ringing “with laughter and applause” for the adaptation of “The Camel’s Back,” “What the Pictures Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 1 March 1924, p. 73.

⁵⁵³ See H. Mark Glancy, “Warner Bros Film Grosses, 1921-5: The William Schaefer Ledger,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 15.1 (1995), 55-73, pp. 56-58.

the film to Canadian distributors.⁵⁵⁴ Two months later, the general manager of the Warner Brothers Foreign Department, Gus B. Schlesinger, left for Europe to negotiate for the distribution of *The Beautiful and Damned*.⁵⁵⁵ In his six-month European trip, Schlesinger managed to sell the picture to distributors F. B. O. for the United Kingdom; L. Gaumont for Spain and Portugal; Neiderlandische Bioscop for Holland; John Olsen & Co. for Norway, Sweden and Denmark; Gaumont for France, Switzerland and Belgium. In August 1923, Warners completed foreign deals with the rest of the world, selling the film adaptation to distributor Australasian Films for Australia, New Zealand, Dutch East Indies and Straits Settlements; Les Etablissements Gaumont, for France Switzerland, Belgium, Balkans and Egypt; Oversea Film Trading Corp. for Scandinavia; International Variety Theatrical Agency for South Africa; Taisho Film Company for Japan; Sociedad General Cinematografica for Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador; Gonzolez, Lopez Ports & Cia. for Cuba; German Camus Y Cia for Mexico; World's Industrial Company for Holland; Peacock Film Corp. for China.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴ "The entire output of the Warner Brothers for the coming season has been purchased by Arthur Cohen and N. J. Nathanson, of the Regal Film, Ltd., Canada [including] *The Beautiful and Damned*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel." "Warner's Entire Output Bought in Canada," *Motion Picture News*, 15 July 1922, p. 282. The Canadian Royal Film organization had a chain of exchanges throughout Canada. See "Regal will Distribute all Warner Pictures in Canada," *Moving Picture World*, 15 July 1922, p. 229.

⁵⁵⁵ "Schlesinger Invades Europe for Warners," *Moving Picture World*, 30 September 1922, p. 371.

⁵⁵⁶ "Warners Complete Foreign Deals," *Motion Picture News*, 4 August 1923, p. 571.

Showing interest in the exposure of his second novel to the international public, in 1922 Fitzgerald first asked Perkins whether “*Paradise and Flappers* [had been] published by the same people as *The Beautiful and Damned* in Canada + Australia,” and then told him “[he’d] like very much if it came out in England simultaneously with America.”⁵⁵⁷ However, the first foreign country that saw an edition of the novel was Australia, in August 1922; in Great Britain, it arrived a month later. In



Figure 31 Svenska Filminstitutet, Swedish novelization of *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 1

other non-English speaking countries, *The Beautiful and Damned* was printed decades after the writer’s death: the book was translated into Finnish in 1954, into Portuguese in 1963 and 1968 (respectively Brazilian and Portuguese version), into French and Spanish in 1970 (Spanish and Chilean edition).⁵⁵⁸ But Seiter’s silent adaptation made *The Beautiful and Damned* and his author known to non-English countries before translators did. The 1924 Swedish novelization of *The Beautiful and Damned* movie bears the name of the story’s author (“Författare,” Fig. 31) on the cover, suggesting that Swedish audiences became acquainted with Fitzgerald’s name

⁵⁵⁷ Andrew Turnbull, ed., *Dreams of Youth*, p. 166; Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 110.

⁵⁵⁸ Linda C. Stanley, *The Foreign Critical Reputation of F. Scott Fitzgerald: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 15; pp. 221-22; Linda Berry, Patricia Powell, “Fitzgerald in Translation: A Checklist,” *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*, 4 (1972), 69-80, pp. 70-71.

four years before *The Great Gatsby* was rendered into Swedish.⁵⁵⁹ Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* has not been translated into Swedish to this day.

According to Sara Ross, Warner Brothers, "used the notoriety of the author to pre-sell *The Beautiful and Damned* to distributors and played up Fitzgerald's name in advertising and promotion."⁵⁶⁰ More than that, the studio exaggerated his role by informing newspapers that the author of the novel itself took active part in the production of the film and "assisted in casting the parts."⁵⁶¹ The film trade press also suggested theatre owners exploit Fitzgerald's popularity. While *Moving Picture World* noted that Fitzgerald's name itself provided many angles of publicity as he was "conceded to be one of the most popular of present day authors," *Exhibitors Herald* suggested that the picture offered "good talking points [such as] the author's



Figure 32 *Motion Picture News*, 21 April 1923, p. 1910

name" and it "got a ready-made audience [that] consist[ed] of the thousands of readers of F. Scott Fitzgerald's popular novel"; *Variety* predicted that the picture would "have some drawing power at the box office because of the novel" and its circulation.⁵⁶² Passers-by could read the name "F. Scott

⁵⁵⁹ *The Great Gatsby* was first translated into Swedish by Siri Thorngren-Olin in 1928. See Linda Berry and Patricia Powell, "Fitzgerald in Translation," p. 74.

⁵⁶⁰ Sara Ross, "Screening the Modern Girl," p. 272.

⁵⁶¹ "Arcadia," *Reading Times*, 23 April 1923, p. 11.

⁵⁶² "New Stunts Revealed in 'Beautiful and Damned,'" *Moving Picture World*, 25 November 1922, p. 338; "Special Cast in *The Beautiful and Damned*"; "*The Beautiful and Damned*," *Variety*.

Fitzgerald” as big as that of Marie Prevost on the marquee of the Princess Theatre in San Antonio, Texas (Fig. 32).⁵⁶³

The Fitzgerald persona was proliferating throughout American culture. Manifestations of this included an unusual number of new advertising accessories that displayed Fitzgerald’s name on knob hangers, stickers and even telephone dolls.⁵⁶⁴ Underscoring the interaction between the two mediums, a lithograph advertising of the film adaptation (Fig. 33) shows Gloria and Anthony literally stepping out of the pages of Fitzgerald’s book. The illustration showed an angelic (but thinly veiled) woman and her “gallant Romeo” in a kneeling posture, “with hand to heart looking soulfully up into the damsel’s eyes.” In addition to assuring the film’s innocence and romantic subject matter, Warner Brothers’ publicity manager



explained that the aim of this advert was to convey that the film was based on a novel by Fitzgerald:

Figure 33 *Exhibitors Herald*, 19 May 1923, p. 48

How can an illustration enhance the value of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s popular novel? The book was popular, and in order to take advantage of this fact the illustration was drawn to reveal at first glance a beautiful woman, [...] stepping out of the pages of the novel [...] And there you have a 24-sheet that commands

⁵⁶³ “Bookstore-Window,” *Motion Picture News*, 21 April 1923, p. 1910.

⁵⁶⁴ “Novel Aids prepared on *The Beautiful and Damned*,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 25 November 1922, p. 66; “Warners Offer Many Accessories: Unique Advertising Novelties Designed for *The Beautiful and Damned*,” *Motion Picture News*, 25 November 1922, p. 2693; “New Stunts Revealed in ‘Beautiful and Damned’”; “Selling the Picture to the Public,” *Film Daily*, 23 December 1923, pp. 10-11.

attention, drives home the fact that *The Beautiful and Damned* is a picture made from the novel of the same name.⁵⁶⁵

In July 1921, Fitzgerald complained to Perkins about Scribner's promotion of *This Side of Paradise*, claiming that the notoriety that his first novel "got in the beginning, it got almost unaided." Warner Brothers' marketing for the movie version of *The Beautiful and Damned*, on the contrary, not only aided but also played up his second novel's popularity.⁵⁶⁶

In 1922, Fitzgerald enthusiastically wrote to his editor that a Saint Paul library made "an advertising moving picture to be shown in all St. Paul theatres, which will have a picture of me, of the store with the windows full of *The Beautiful and Damned*, a close up of the book & the title in big letters."

Fitzgerald predicted, "it will be quite a thing."⁵⁶⁷

To maximize the advertisement for *The Beautiful and Damned* screen version, Warner Brothers also provided exhibitors and bookshop owners with a reproduction of Hill's book cover and suggested they prepare window tie-ups in their cinemas showing the film adaptation and bookstores selling the novel.⁵⁶⁸ As Fitzgerald unsurprisingly wrote in his satirical piece "How I would Sell My

Book If I Were a Bookseller": "I believe that a



Figure 34 *Motion Picture News*, 21 April 1923, p. 1904

⁵⁶⁵ L. Marangella, "Poster Sense, Common Sense," *Exhibitors Herald*, 19 May 1923, p. 48.

⁵⁶⁶ Andrew Turnbull, ed., *Dreams of Youth*, p. 165.

⁵⁶⁷ John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds. *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 55.

⁵⁶⁸ *The Beautiful and Damned Keybook*, Warner Brothers Keybook Collection, Moving Image Department, George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY, 1958: 0052: 0152.

book by a well-known author should be given a full window display.”⁵⁶⁹ Trade journal printed pictures of the windows of San Francisco and Los Angeles bookstores that followed the exploitation advice (Fig. 34).⁵⁷⁰ The fact that the slogan “by the author of *This Side of Paradise*” in the original book cover was cropped out in the Warner Brothers’ reproduction might suggest that they considered Fitzgerald’s authorship of his first novel irrelevant given that it had not been adapted to the screen.

Toward the end of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Fitzgerald included a passage in which Dick and Anthony discuss the former’s library display. Among his “exhaustive collection of good American stuff, [...] six long rows of books, beautifully bound,” Dick “carefully displayed” his own books. Although Fitzgerald describes Anthony’s scorn of Dick’s pompous choice, the episode shows that the author was reflecting on the American families’ libraries and their display of the contemporary compatriot novelists. In April 1922, driven by the success of similar experiments, Fitzgerald suggested Charles Scribner II the idea for “a Scribner library” to include *This Side of Paradise* and seventeen other books selected by him. In this letter to his publisher, he mentioned the “recent American strain for ‘culture’” and the “selective function of this library would appeal to many people in search of good reading matter.”⁵⁷¹ Just as Dick “wedged” his novels in between Twain and Dreiser, Fitzgerald put his first book in a list with canonized “good reading matter” such as Stevenson’s *The Treasure Island* and Wharton’s *The House of Mirth*.

Once again Scribner’s did not follow the young author’s suggested marketing tactics to maximize the sales of his book. However, exactly a year later, *Screenland*

⁵⁶⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, “How I would Sell My Book If I Were a Bookseller” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, p. 167).

⁵⁷⁰ “Warner Brothers’ Studio,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 7 April 1923, p. 42; “Bookstore-Window,” *Motion Picture News*, 21 April 1923, p. 1910.

⁵⁷¹ Andrew Turnbull, ed., *Dreams of Youth*, pp. 174-176.

did recommend Fitzgerald's second novel as "good reading matter" to be included in readers' personal libraries. To broaden its circulation, the film magazine offered readers a free copy of *The Beautiful and Damned* for a year's subscription.⁵⁷² *Screenland* encouraged movie fans who had enjoyed the screen version of the novel to "keep up with the worth-while literature of the day"; Fitzgerald was "the talk of the country" and "when the book is discussed over the dinner table or after the theatre, you will want to discuss it too." Another advert in the following issue of the magazine reused the same marketing technique by stating "you cannot discuss up-to-date literature intelligently if you have not read *The Beautiful and Damned*"; in addition to being a splendid Easter or birthday gift, a "handsome copy of the novel" will be a "real addition to your own library."⁵⁷³ Just as Zelda's review of the novel had humorously provided readers with "aesthetic reasons" to buy her husband's book (namely its "bright yellow jacket adapted to being carried on Fifth Avenue" and a size "adaptable to being read in hotel lobbies"), *Screenland* also pointed to his potential subscribers its "physical appeal."⁵⁷⁴ "Simply possessing books," observed Megan Benton in her study on the cultural significance of book ownership in the 1920s, "was not enough. They were to be as thoughtfully selected and coordinated as any other expression of personal style."⁵⁷⁵ While the emphasis on the book's "handomeness" underlines the 1920s' preoccupation with the value of books as domestic accessories, *Screenland's* urging its readers to buy *The Beautiful and Damned* gave the novel what its author was striving for in 1923: a prominent place among the "worth-while literature of the day."

⁵⁷² "Free! F. Scott Fitzgerald's Famous Novel *The Beautiful and Damned*," *Screenland*, March 1923, p. 7.

⁵⁷³ "The Beautiful and Damned," *Screenland*, April 1923, p. 2.

⁵⁷⁴ Zelda Sayre, "Friend Husband's Latest," p. 111.

⁵⁷⁵ Megan Benton, "'Too Many Books': Book Ownership and Cultural Identity in the 1920s," *American Quarterly*, 49.2 (June 1997), 268-97, p. 281.

An unpublished letter in the Princeton archive reveals Warner Brothers contacted Harold Ober to suggest the publication of a photoplay edition of *The Beautiful and Damned*.⁵⁷⁶ The proposed new edition would include images from Seiter's screen version. As Ober explained to Fitzgerald:

A Miss Peterson came in from the moving picture company that is producing *The Beautiful and Damned* with about two hundred and fifty or more pictures. The idea was a possible new edition of the book with some of these pictures. They looked to me like good moving picture pictures, but the idea of putting them in the book was not attractive. You could see them any time by going to the office of the company at 1600 Broadway, or I could have them brought over here again.⁵⁷⁷

Given that, a few months before this letter was written, Scribner's had refused Fitzgerald's suggestion of making a reference on the wrap of *Flappers and Philosophers* to the fact that it contained "the famous Head and Shoulders" as its movie adaptation "had advertised it," it is very likely that the publisher decided against Miss Peterson's proposition.⁵⁷⁸ The photoplay edition of *The Beautiful and Damned* was never printed and there is no record as to whether Fitzgerald visited the Warner Brothers' office, although he pasted two film stills from Seiter's film into his scrapbook that likely Warner Brothers had given his agent. Ober's letter nonetheless

⁵⁷⁶ In the early twentieth century, publishing houses were printing novels illustrated by photographs. Henry James was among the authors who allowed photographs to illustrate his 1904 work, *The Golden Bowl*. See Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, p. 14.

⁵⁷⁷ Harold Ober, Letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald, 24 October 1922, ALS, F. Scott Fitzgerald Papers, C0187, Box 51a; Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books & Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.

⁵⁷⁸ John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds., *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, pp. 51-52.

demonstrates that the studio was looking for innovative ways to sell more copies of *The Beautiful and Damned*. Discussing reprinted editions of books made into films, in 1930 a cultural commentator noted:

A motion-picture production may send the circulation of a book from a little more than nothing to a million or more a year [...] no book is too dead or too old to be restored to vigorous life once its characters have moved [...] upon the silver screen [...] Some authors have actually made their reputations in the reprint field, with subsequent successes in the regular trade editions. Astute publishers recognize this possibility [...] it is possible to think of the reprint [...] as a kind of ladder by which readers climb from motion pictures or fiction of the motion-picture type to something of a more serious nature.⁵⁷⁹

Although the photoplay edition of the novel was never published, Warner Brothers eventually printed stills from *The Beautiful and Damned* in the center of the book (Fig. 35), again driving home the fact that the film “was a picture made from the novel of the same name.”⁵⁸⁰ In addition to the book form of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Warner Brothers also indirectly promoted its serialization, which, as *Motion Picture News* explained, was running in the “*New York Daily News* and other leading newspapers in America.”⁵⁸¹ The Regent Theatre in Brooklyn followed the suggestion and “put up business for *The Beautiful and Damned* by getting permission

⁵⁷⁹ R. L. Duffus, *Books: Their Place in a Democracy*, pp. 117-18.

⁵⁸⁰ “A Best Seller Faithfully Reproduced,” *Film Daily*, 26 November 1922, p. 12; L. Marangella, “Poster Sense, Common Sense.”

⁵⁸¹ “Newspapers Tie-up on Serial of *Beautiful and Damned*,” *Motion Picture News*, 31 March 1923, p. 1560.

to use the posters put out by a daily paper which was running the story as a serial.” According to the trade magazine, this was indeed “a clever hook up at small cost.”⁵⁸²

In sum, in the early 1920s Warner Brothers played a crucial role in further popularizing Fitzgerald and his work. The studio’s aggressive domestic and international distribution and innovative marketing strategies played up and exported Fitzgerald’s literary and popular reputation in a way the American book or magazine publishing industry could (or would) not do.⁵⁸³

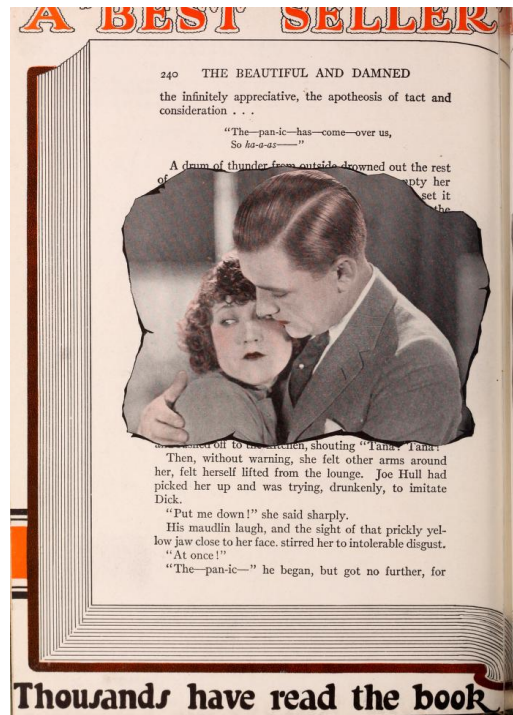


Figure 35 *Film Daily*, 26 November 1922, p. 12

4.2 “The Boozeful and Damned”: “Scotch” Fitzgerald, William H. Hays, and Prohibition

In May 1922, H. L. Mencken asked Fitzgerald: “Are you going to act in *The Beautiful and Damned*? If so, I bespeak the part of the taxi-driver.”⁵⁸⁴ The Sage of Baltimore was humorously referring to the episode in the book where a very drunk Anthony Patch is knocked unconscious by a taxi driver. The fact that Mencken asked Fitzgerald whether he was going to impersonate his drunken hero suggests the extent to which the author was associated with his characters as well as with Hollywood. Although there is no evidence that in 1922 Warner Brothers offered Fitzgerald Anthony’s role,

⁵⁸² “Hooks to Paper,” *Moving Picture World*, 3 March 1923, p. 56.

⁵⁸³ “World’s Largest Book Shelf here on Way to Coast.”

⁵⁸⁴ “Freud Explains Such Errors,” May 18, no year, F. Scott Fitzgerald Papers, Box 51a, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

in July of the same year Famous-Players asked him to act the part of Amory Blaine from *This Side of Paradise*. As Fitzgerald told Perkins, he was “bickering with two men who want to do *Paradise* as a movie with Zelda and I in the leading rolls” [sic].⁵⁸⁵ Although Fitzgerald tried to convince Perkins that “if we do play in this one movie it will be my first + last appearance,” the editor categorically replied: “I hope you and Zelda won’t go into the movies.”⁵⁸⁶ The film was never made. But these letters stand as evidence of how intertwined Fitzgerald’s characters already were with the Fitzgeralds’ personas as a couple in the public imagination.

Interviews given by the couple to film magazines in the 1920s fed into this intertwining of fact and fiction, including a mutual penchant for liquor. In 1921 *Shadowland* reported Fitzgerald saying he “had married the heroine of my stories”; in 1927, *Motion Picture Magazine* interviewed the couple in Los Angeles and noted “the two of them might have stepped, sophisticated and charming, from the pages of any of Fitzgerald’s books.” The journalist also dutifully reported about the “bottles of Canada dry, some oranges, a bowl of cracked ice and three very, very empty bourbon bottles” left outside their hotel room.⁵⁸⁷

The contemporary reception of Fitzgerald’s first two novels further reinforced the association between the author and alcohol by emphasizing their descriptions of excessive drinking, as well as their autobiographical nature. *The Nation* described *This Side of Paradise* as “autobiographical,” noting that Fitzgerald’s alter ego “gets

⁵⁸⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, Letter to Maxwell Perkins, Ca July 1922, ALS, 4 pp., Charles Scribner's Sons Records, C0101, Box 73 Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books & Special Collections, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, p. 3.

⁵⁸⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, Letter to Maxwell Perkins, Ca July 20, 1922, ALS, 1 p., Charles Scribner's Sons Records, C0101, Box 73 Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books & Special Collections, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ; Maxwell Perkins, Letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald, ALS., 2 pp., July 17, 1922, Charles Scribner's Sons Records, C0101, Box 73 Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books & Special Collections, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸⁷ Frederick James Smith, “Fitzgerald, Flappers and Fame”; Margaret Reid, “Has the Flapper Changed?” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, p. 245; p. 278).

drunk steadily.” As soon as *The Beautiful and Damned* came out in bookshops, Zelda Fitzgerald underscored its autobiographical quality and depictions of drinking by noting it included portions of her personal diary and an example of a very “handy cocktail mixer.”⁵⁸⁸ John Peale Bishop defined Anthony Patch as succeeding “Amory Blaine as a figure through whom Mr. Fitzgerald may write of himself,” adding “the alcoholic interludes [in the book] are, if frequent, agreeably heady.” The *Philadelphia Public Ledger* pointed out that Fitzgerald spared no intimate touch of “alcohol and other excitants” and the reader was “likely to get the idea from the tale of Anthony and Gloria that the author knows a good many things that he ought not to know [...] he tells much that might have been better guessed [...] of Gloria’s little ways when she was drunk.”⁵⁸⁹

Discussing New York night life a month after the publication of the book, Fitzgerald stated in an interview:

It’s going on as it never was before Prohibition. I’m confident that you can find anything here that you find in Paris. Everybody is drinking harder – that’s sure. Possessing liquor is a proof of respectability, of social position [...] Prohibition, it seems to me, is having simply a ruinous effect on young men.⁵⁹⁰

Both the novel and its film adaptation presented characters defying the Volstead Act, which was duly noted by the American press. Whereas an exhibitor criticized Seiter’s film for being “one series of booze parties after another” and *Motion Picture News*

⁵⁸⁸ Zelda Sayre, “Friend Husband’s Latest,” p. 111.

⁵⁸⁹ “Reforms and beginnings”; John Peale Bishop, “Mr. Fitzgerald Sees The Flapper Through”; “The Beautiful and Damned Reveals One Phase of Jazz Vampire Period in Gilded Panorama of Reckless Life” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 17; pp. 71-74; p. 84).

⁵⁹⁰ Marguerite Mooers Marshall, “F, Scott Fitzgerald, Novelist, Shocked By ‘Younger Marrieds’” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Bruccoli and Bryer, p. 255).

described it as making “capital [out] of the high life among the hard drinking boys and girls,” a review of Fitzgerald’s book was headed “A Cocktail Party in Every Chapter” and Fanny Butcher suggested as a new title ‘the boozeful and damned’ by Scotch Fitzgerald.”⁵⁹¹

But Seiter’s *The Beautiful and Damned* proved wrong Henry Seidel Canby’s prediction that “the scenes of debauchery in [Fitzgerald’s] book will be very much censured.”⁵⁹² Details of Prohibition’s life appeared in Seiter’s film: a bootlegger visits the Patches’ flat, Anthony frequents speakeasies and is punched senseless and thrown in the street, alcohol is consumed generously in the several parties shown in the film. In the United States under prohibition, showing illegal drinking on screen was a double-edged sword, as the marketing for *The Beautiful and Damned* suggests. While the pressbook reached out to supporters of temperance promising the film was a cautionary tale of the side effects of alcohol, unfolding “what happens after [Anthony] drinks the dregs of degradation,” it also suggested a catch line that capitalized on the anti-prohibition feeling of part of the country: “they toiled not, nor did they spin, but how they did defy the Volstead amendment.”⁵⁹³ According to an article from the *New York Tribune* that Fitzgerald pasted in his scrapbook, “one of the best scenes in the picture is where Tony, reduced to live in poverty, entertains his bootlegger; the man walks in, apparently with guile of a bottle of rum, and then he extracts from his wearing apparel twelve quart bottles of Scotch.” At the Strand, the

⁵⁹¹ “What the Pictures Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 28 April 1923, p. 83; Laurence Reid, “The Beautiful and Damned”; James W. Dean, “*The Beautiful and Damned* Doesn’t Indict Flappers.” Robert F. Rogan, “A Cocktail Party in Every Chapter”; Fanny Butcher, *Chicago Sunday Tribune* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 100; p. 74).

⁵⁹² Henry Seidel Canby, “The Flapper’s Tragedy” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 63).

⁵⁹³ “Former Bathing Beauty Queen in Flapper Film,” in “Warner Brothers Presents,” p. 2.

same New York theatre in which Fitzgerald saw the film, “hearty applause greeted this feat.”⁵⁹⁴

Anthony’s cinematic counterpart follows the same path of the novel’s protagonist, as the *Yale Literary Magazine*’s review put it, progressing “from drunk to drunk.”⁵⁹⁵ A film magazine notes that Kenneth Harlan’s Anthony is “happy for a time” but then starts drowning “his troubles in drink” until, according to the *New York Times*, he drinks “harder than ever, and no longer for the fun of it.”⁵⁹⁶ Despite Mencken’s hope, Fitzgerald did not play in *The Beautiful and Damned*. But Kenneth Harlan shared a certain physical likeness to him. If it is true, as Prigozy noted, that “magazine illustrations of Fitzgerald’s fictional heroes all look like taller versions of [his author],” the drunk Harlan lying on the floor in the still Fitzgerald pasted into his scrapbook (fig. 28) also bears a striking resemblance to him.⁵⁹⁷ Starring an actor looking alike Fitzgerald, the film adaptation of his book that described booze parties and drunken characters considered mostly autobiographical could not but solidify his reputation as a drunk in the mind of American and foreign moviegoers.

Not only did Warner Brothers render Fitzgerald’s story available to millions of moviegoers around the world but also his self-fashioned identity. The 1922 silent film contributed to what Ruth Prigozy has called “Fitzgerald’s mythmaking enterprise,” exporting Fitzgerald’s persona across the United States and the world. The pressbook for *The Beautiful and Damned* included a reprinted section of Fitzgerald’s 1922 article “What I Think and Feel at 25,” which Sarah Churchwell describes as an “exercise in

⁵⁹⁴ Harriette Underhill, “On the Screen.”

⁵⁹⁵ Thomas Caldecot Chubb, *Yale Literary Magazine* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 62).

⁵⁹⁶ Laurence Reid, “The Beautiful and Damned”; “Another Flapper Story.”

⁵⁹⁷ Ruth Prigozy, “Introduction: Scott, Zelda and the Culture of Celebrity,” p. 9.

self-promotion,” and disseminated it globally.⁵⁹⁸ A snippet of Fitzgerald’s self-promoting essay had first appeared in the first national trade magazine for advertising *Printers’ Ink* to publicize the full article coming in *The American Magazine* on the next month.⁵⁹⁹ The circulation of the monthly magazine boasted in the advert – 1,800,000 – pales in comparison to the number of people who read “Fitzgeraldisms at Twenty-Five” in the countless of local and international newspapers (Fig. 36) that reprinted the article from the pressbook.⁶⁰⁰ Given that I have found traces of *The Beautiful and Damned* film in eight countries at least, and that the general manager of the Warner Brothers Foreign Department, as mentioned above, managed to sell the picture to almost thirty countries, we can safely assume that Fitzgerald’s essay appeared in hundreds of foreign newspapers. The film’s pressbook played up the fact that its articles were going to be seen in “unlimited avenues for publicity and exploitation.” Warner

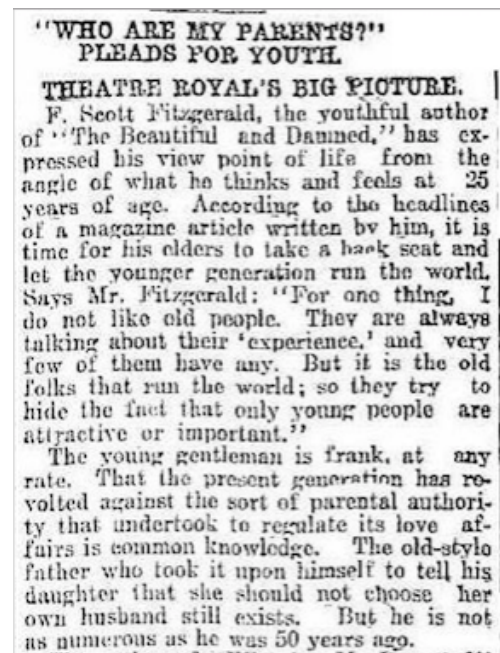


Figure 36 *Daily News*, 8 June 1923, p. 9

Brothers went as far as to say that “no novel published within the past few years has created as much discussion as ‘The Beautiful and Damned.’ It is known throughout the breadth and scope of America. In fact, it is internationally famous.”⁶⁰¹

Referring to an interview Fitzgerald gave three weeks after the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, Galow points out Fitzgerald hoped that “it might be reprinted

⁵⁹⁸ Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, p. 41.

⁵⁹⁹ “The Adventure of Living Together,” *Printers’ Ink*, 24 August 1922, p. 5

⁶⁰⁰ “Liberty Today,” *Index-Journal*, 16 August 1923, p. 5; “Who Are My Parents? Pleads For Youth,” *Daily News*, 8 June 1923, p. 9.

⁶⁰¹ “Dollars and Cents,” in “Warner Brothers Presents,” p. 1.

simultaneously in newspapers, literary inserts, and book reviews around the country. He could, for the first time in history, anticipate submitting his opinions almost immediately to millions of contemporary readers across the continental United States.”⁶⁰² The re-publication of Fitzgerald’s self-fashioning piece suggests the extent to which the two predominant media in the early 1920s, magazines and films, helped popularize the persona that Fitzgerald was trying to build. John Raeburn argues that,

public reputation is a quantitative measurement rather than a qualitative: it is gauged by how nearly media coverage of a writer’s activities approaches the saturation point, and the important factor in it is not variety, but repetition. Its fundamental form is the anecdote; the more frequently the same anecdotes about the writer’s personality are repeated in the mass media, the more likely his public reputation will be large.⁶⁰³

If public reputation is a “quantitative measurement,” the dissemination of this self-fashioning piece via the pressbook in America and abroad suggests the extent to which silent Hollywood contributed to Fitzgerald’s popular persona, even beyond his control. If “Fitzgeraldisms at Twenty-Five” promoted Fitzgerald’s youthful, attractive persona, the film adaptation of a book once referred “‘the boozeful and damned’ by Scotch Fitzgerald” represented a darker side, one he wanted to separate from his literary persona.⁶⁰⁴ While the young Fitzgerald often boasted about his drinking, he also tried to convince his readers that alcohol did not interfere with his

⁶⁰² Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, p. 2.

⁶⁰³ John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him*, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁴ Funny Butcher, *Chicago Sunday Tribune* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 74).

serious writing. Although he used to introduce himself, facetiously, as “one of the most notorious drinkers of the younger generation” or “Fitzgerald, the well-known alcoholic,” he did not like journalists and critics “commenting on his drinking in print.”⁶⁰⁵ When Edmund Wilson sent him a draft of his review of *The Beautiful and Damned* for the *Bookman*, Fitzgerald asked him to omit the allusion to his intake.⁶⁰⁶ The “legend of my liquoring,” he told Wilson, “was terribly widespread” and he did not want this to ruin his literary reputation. In addition, when Fitzgerald saw W. E. Hill’s illustration for the book jacket of *The Beautiful and Damned*, he wrote to Perkins: “I suspect [Anthony] is a sort of debauched edition of me [...] I suppose Hill thought it would please me if the picture looked like [...] me.”⁶⁰⁷ Fitzgerald objected to what he called “this bartender on the cover,” especially because he had given Anthony many autobiographical traits, including “too great a fondness for alcohol.”⁶⁰⁸

Given his reaction to the textual allusion in *The Bookman* essay and to the jacket’s visual hint to his “debauchery,” Fitzgerald likely disapproved of semi-autobiographical characters Anthony Patch and Richard Caramel in the film adaptation. While the former, played (as mentioned) by an actor with a striking similarity to Fitzgerald, was seen drunk in speakeasies and at home, and lying unconscious on pavements, reviews of the film described the latter as a “drunkard would-be author,” and “a serious novelist with decided leaning towards his liquor.”⁶⁰⁹ Whereas *The Bookman* had a circulation of nearly twenty thousand, the Warner Brothers’ film was destined to reach more than ten times that figure, and thus

⁶⁰⁵ See Scott Donaldson, *Fool for Love*, p. 162.

⁶⁰⁶ On Wilson’s allusions to Fitzgerald’s drinking in the 1922 piece, see Deborah Davis Schlacks, “F. Scott Fitzgerald, Trickster.”

⁶⁰⁷ John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds. *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 52.

⁶⁰⁸ James L. W. III West, “The Question of Vocation,” p. 50.

⁶⁰⁹ Roger Ferri, “The Beautiful and Damned”; “The Beautiful and Damned,” *Variety*.

disseminate the “legend of his liquoring” around the world. Millions of moviegoers – if one believes Warner Brothers figures – saw an adaptation of a novel widely described as autobiographical starring an actor who markedly resembled the author impersonating a debauched drunkard, along with a novelist who had a drink in his hand in almost every scene of the film.

To avoid that censor boards “rise in fury and smite us with another blow” (as Warner Brothers’ publicity manager put it) after seeing the many scenes of drunken revelry in *The Beautiful and Damned*, the young studio made a bid for respectability by underscoring in the press both their allegiance with Will H. Hays and the cultural and social authority of the authors they adapted.⁶¹⁰ When Hays started his duties as president of the MPPDA in 1922, one of his first responsibilities was to restore the confidence in the film industry, after a series of notorious scandals. As Lee Grieveson notes:

Later debates about the regulation of cinema were framed by the decisions made in the pre-classical period. By 1915 the constitutional framework for censorship was set in place, and from then on the mainstream industry pursued the strategy of accepting cinema’s role as provider of entertainment [...] the formation of the well-known Production Code in 1930 stands in this sense as a coda to the working out of institutional arrangements.⁶¹¹

⁶¹⁰ This is similar to what Fitzgerald did when he let Perkins – notoriously a non-sympathizer of the movies – know he had sold the rights to *The Beautiful and Damned* to the same “people who bought *Brass + Main Street*.” Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 103. According to Richard Allan Davison, it seems more than coincidental that Charles G. Norris’ 1921 novel and *The Beautiful and Damned* had been produced by the same film company, given that two years before the Chicagoan author had tried to help Fitzgerald sell the rights to *This Side of Paradise*. See Richard Allan Davison, “F. Scott Fitzgerald and Charles G. Norris,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 10.1 (1983), 40-54, pp. 44-45. L. Marangella, “Poster Sense, Common Sense.”

⁶¹¹ Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America* (London: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 213-14.

In 1921 the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry (NAMPI) issued the so-called “thirteen points” to guide what should not be shown on screen. Point five prohibited making “drunkenness attractive.”⁶¹² Nevertheless, Cecil B. DeMille famously filmed debauched orgies in movies such as *Manslaughter* (released the same year as *The Beautiful and Damned*), which were able to justify themselves, in Kozarski’s words, “through the inevitable scenes of retribution that followed.”⁶¹³ Seiter (as described in more details in Appendix Two) also followed DeMille’s lesson making Gloria and Anthony redeem at story’s end.

The film press noticed the extent to which the message of Fitzgerald’s novel was changed under Warner Brothers’ avowed intent to transmit “clean, wholesome and instructive ideas” through its films. *Motion Picture Magazine* noted “presumably the censors had something to do in suggesting the soft pedal upon the psychology of plot and characterization of Scott Fitzgerald’s original [...] the picture [...] merely presents the hard-drinking boys and girls of our present generation – with considerable moralizing to teach us a lesson.”⁶¹⁴ “A *Photoplay* article that Fitzgerald pasted into his scrapbook humorously suggested that Warner Brothers’ art was “legerdemain”:

In response to their call for subjects, F. Scott Fitzgerald stepped forward with *The Beautiful and Damned*. They made a few passes at him and when he

⁶¹²As Kozarski notes, “in February 1924 the MPPDA adopted a ‘formula’ that gave the thirteen points some organizational credibility. In 1927, the ‘formula’ was considerably strengthened by the adoption of a series of ‘don’ts and be carefals’ based on the original thirteen points [...] the codified set of standards [...] would be the basis for the production code which followed in 1930.” Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, pp. 207-08.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁶¹⁴ “The Beautiful and Damned: Warner Bros.,” *Motion Picture Magazine*, 23 March 1923, p. 58.

opened his eyes and looked at his story he thought he was Louis M. Alcott. No one can say the movies ain't an art.⁶¹⁵

Motion Picture News also pointed out that, while “Scott Fitzgerald has been showing us the soul of the flapper as well as the spirit of the times,” Warner Brothers, “following conventions, has not caught his psychology.”⁶¹⁶

The marketing of *The Beautiful and Damned* film provides a fitting example of the way in which Hays allied with Warner Brothers to “culturally legitimate” the novel of an author that manifestly attacked canons of nineteenth-century taste and made “drunkenness attractive.” In August 1922, shortly before Seiter started filming Fitzgerald’s second novel, Hays visited the Warner Brothers studio; *Moving Picture World* included a picture of Hays posing among the Warner Brothers, Marie Prevost and other film crew members.⁶¹⁷ On this occasion, the Warner Brothers declared their intention to cooperate with the MPPDA and assured the czar of Motion Pictures and his supporters that the films they were producing had “a strong educational value.” “We have joined the Will H. Hays organization,” reported Harry M. Warner to *Moving Picture World* shortly after Hays’s visit,

and we are glad to be with him in helping to restore the public confidence in motion pictures and in the industry in general. We believe he will counteract and wipe out all the unscrupulous promoters of motion pictures who are actually stealing the hard earned savings of widows, orphans and the countless others who are regular patrons of the picture theatre. We believe that Mr. Hays

⁶¹⁵ Herbert Howe, “Close-ups and Long Shots: Decorations by John Held, Jr.,” *Photoplay*, June 1923.

⁶¹⁶ Laurence Reid, “The Beautiful and Damned.”

⁶¹⁷ “Warners Prepared for Busiest Season: Announce Big Releases,” *Moving Picture World*, 19 August 1922, p. 594.

is performing a wonderful service to the industry. We believe that he is wielding a powerful weapon in developing the educational as well as the entertainment value and general usefulness of the motion picture in the eyes of the public [...] And that is why we joined Mr. Hays.⁶¹⁸

In its position as a purveyor of fictions for mass consumption, MPPDA's declared goal "was to prevent the prevalent type of book and play from becoming the prevalent type of picture." But, as Richard Maltby demonstrates, MPPDA devised regulations to render objectionable books unobjectionable, which sought both to maximize commercial advantage and to distribute an affirmative cultural vision that, as Hays proclaimed in 1925, "America is sound and wholesome [...] and it wants wholesomeness in its entertainment."⁶¹⁹ On the motor float that travelled from "from Maine to California" advertising the Seven Classics of the Screen, a publicity man was to visit various Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Clubs, speaking about the trip as a means of stimulating interest in "clean pictures." To make *The Beautiful and Damned* "unobjectionable," Warner Brothers thus used MPPDA's established contact with nationally federated fraternal, educational, and religious organizations and made them "a friendly rather than a hostile critic" of the picture.

As Maltby notes, in order for film adaptations "to offer the maximum pleasure to the maximum number at the maximum profit, the studio had not only to provide a satisfactory level of entertainment for their diverse audiences, but also to offend as small a proportion of the society as possible."⁶²⁰ In trying to reach larger and more varied audiences, Warner Brothers made *The Beautiful and Damned* homiletic by

⁶¹⁸ Harry M. Warner, "Warner Production Plans for Season of 1923: Why We Joined Will H. Hays," *Moving Picture World*, 23 September 1922, p. 274.

⁶¹⁹ See Richard Maltby, "'To Prevent the Prevalent Type of Book,'" pp. 557-58.

⁶²⁰ Richard Maltby, "'To Prevent the Prevalent Type of Book,'" p. 559; p 571.

marketing it with “catch lines” such as “wherein Fate makes a frivolous couple squirm with remorse”; it also followed what a contemporary of Fitzgerald defined as “the Hays’s perfect formula,” namely, “five reels of transgression followed by one reel of retribution.”⁶²¹ As the South-Carolinian *Index-Journal* noted, the picture defended both the “upright puritanical ways of the older generation and the giddiness of the new.” The *New York Times* underlined the inconsistency of the film, which alternated a light and amusing beginning with a heavy and moralizing ending:

The story starts as a not-too-serious treatment of the wild, wild life of the younger generation. Youths and girls who spend most of their time drinking and dancing provide the diversion and although there are heavy and platitudinous subtitles to confide the joy of the proceedings, the pictures are bright enough, both as to acting and direction, to promise a good show of male and female flappers at their silliest. There is no sermon in them, and no sympathy for their subjects [...] No sooner has the story started, however, than it begins to take itself seriously.⁶²²

The ambiguous message sent by Warner Brothers was reflected by the way 1920s exhibitors advertised the film in their cinemas. While some theatre owners believed that the film delivered a sermon that “should contribute materially in bringing patrons to your box office,” others preferred to take distance from the film’s moral message, by playing up Fitzgerald’s already well-established reputation as “creator” of the flapper.⁶²³ An exhibitor from Minnesota organized a “flapper contest” raffling ten

⁶²¹ “Catch Lines,” in “Warner Brothers Presents,” p. 4; “Virtue in Cans,” *The Nation*, 15 April 1930, p. 446.

⁶²² “Another Flapper Story.”

⁶²³ Roger Ferri, “The Beautiful and Damned.”

tickets to the show, a theatre owner from Texas announced “all girls who have bobbed hair will be admitted free to the Wednesday matinee of *The Beautiful and Damned*.”⁶²⁴ The owner of the Opera House in Baldwin, Wisconsin, afraid that his “church people would pan [the film] on the first night and keep the crowd away the second night,” billed it as “a wild one, offering free admission to all ‘beautiful flappers’ if accompanied by a ‘damned’ cake eater.” The idea worked: “the church people stayed away, but got a good crowd of young folks.”⁶²⁵

Hays criticized the work of the “lost generation of writers,” as “there was no God. The world was rotten. A fist was shaken at every convention of society. The sole aim of life was to get as much pleasure as possible out of it [...] drinking became a mark of defiance.”⁶²⁶ Nonetheless, as Maltby demonstrates, controlling the adaptation process was MPPDA’s device to prevent that “urban, sophisticated culture” of authors like Fitzgerald become the dominant ideology on the screen. Thus Warner Brothers’ allegiance with Hays’s MPPDA weaved a homiletic message into the film adaptation of *The Beautiful and Damned* and changed the intent of Fitzgerald’s story, while also bestowing “respectability” upon its controversial source text and allowing it to reach varied and unpredictable types of readerships. Paradoxically, thanks to Hays’ “legerdemain,” Fitzgerald’s novel was “made suitable” to a part of the audience that Scribner’s did not target: children. In late 1922, the leading book publishers of the country held a Children’s Book Week in collaboration with several film studios, including Warner Brothers. Describing the initiative, *Motion Picture News* explained that “the libraries recognized the opportunity for increasing their circulation by

⁶²⁴ “Flapper Contest Prize Winner,” *The Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, 13 March 1923, p. 2; “Flappers’ Matinee is given on *The Beautiful and Damned*,” *Motion Picture News*, 4 August 1923, p. 539

⁶²⁵ “What The Pictures Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 3 November 1923, p. 84.

⁶²⁶ Richard Maltby, “To Prevent the Prevalent Type of Book,” p. 574.

drawing in as readers young folks who have seen the stories on the screen, and also of which may be counted on to support worthwhile films.”⁶²⁷ Among the “seven great pictures from seven great books” selected for being suitable for young people was, quite surprisingly, *The Beautiful and Damned*. The studio’s alliance with Will Hays had ultimately made the film “unobjectionable,” allowing Fitzgerald to widen his audience and “appeal to the many.”

Reconsidering the commercial value of the novel, in June 1929, on the verge of the Wall Street Crash, Warner Brothers planned to remake the film with sound. As in the case of *The Chorus Girl’s Romance* and *The Great Gatsby*, the project was abandoned.⁶²⁸ But Fitzgerald would be represented as an alcoholic in many films to come. As Gene D. Phillips notes, the phenomenon of his drinking would be “depicted in more than one of the films based on Fitzgerald’s life.”⁶²⁹ In King Vidor’s *Wedding Night* (1935), discussed in more details in the conclusion, a character based on Fitzgerald asks his publisher for five hundred dollars “to pay the liquor bills” and is told in response to “get some of the liquor out of [his] system.” The residue of Fitzgerald’s popular image as an alcoholic can also be found in more recent cultural depictions of the author and his wife. In Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris* (2011), Alison Pill as Zelda is heard saying “I miss the bathtub gin” and “my talent really

⁶²⁷ “Children’s Book Week Scheduled for November 12 to 18,” *Motion Picture News*, 4 November 1922, p. 2297.

⁶²⁸ On 19 June 1929, Ober sent Fitzgerald the contract covering the talking picture rights to the film and mentioned again the proviso question “In making the new contract they insisted on including the clause which you will find in the last paragraph of Clause 4, releasing them from making further payment. I have been fighting them over this for a month or two now. The lawyers say that it is impossible now under the present distribution of moving pictures to keep any kind of an accounting and tell the gross earnings of a picture. They say that they are sure that the picture has never earned anything like \$250,000. I finally got them up to \$1000 but they say they will not pay any more. If we do not want to go ahead on this basis they will drop the matter. It is possible that if you refuse to sign the contract they may come up a little more, but I am inclined to think that this is their limit. If you decide to sign the contract, sign it before an American consular office. I can get the \$1000 as soon as you send back the signed contracts.” Fitzgerald sent him the signed contract straight away. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, pp. 135-36; p. 139.

⁶²⁹ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction Film and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 164.

lies in drinking.” That same year, New Directions published *On Booze*, a collection of nonfiction essays on Fitzgerald and alcohol that, according to the book’s back cover, “portrays ‘The Jazz Age’ as Fitzgerald experienced it: roaring, rambunctious, and lush – with quite a hangover.”⁶³⁰

In a process started with the publication of his first novel and continued through the 1920s with the cinematic adaptations of his work, Fitzgerald’s self-confessed “liquoring legend” had become a “literary fact.”⁶³¹ As Robert C. Holub notes, “an adequate reading of a given writer is not solely dependent on analysing formal devices; from the reader’s perspective, the ideal biography is an essential mediating between text and audience.”⁶³² By showing the impact that the adaptation, promotion and reception of the 1922 film version of *The Beautiful and Damned* had on the reading and moviegoing public, this chapter has provided a more adequate reading of Fitzgerald’s “ideal biography” and added to our understanding of his public persona in the early years of his professional career.

⁶³⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *On Booze* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2011).

⁶³¹ See Boris Tomasevskij, “Literature and Biography” (Repr. in *Reading in Russian Poetics*, p. 53).

⁶³² Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 20-21.

Chapter 5 Adapting Fitzgerald's Irish Legacy: "The Camel's Back" from Paper to Celluloid

Conductor 1492 (d. Charles Hines and Frank Griffin, 1924) is one of the two silent films (loosely) based on a work by Fitzgerald that survives today. A year after producing *The Beautiful and Damned*, Warner Brothers bought the film rights to Fitzgerald's 1920 *Saturday Evening Post* story "The Camel's Back" as a vehicle for Johnny Hines. The comedian was famous in the 1920s for starring in melodramatic farces that displayed the experiences of a young man looking for his fortune, a formula which often appeared in Irish-American fiction.⁶³³ A third generation Irish-American, F. Scott Fitzgerald was also known to evoke in his commercial stories jazz age versions of the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches myth, a fact that Warner Brothers may have taken into consideration by purchasing "The Camel's Back" as a vehicle for the popular comedian.⁶³⁴ *Conductor 1492* was nationally released on 12 January 1924.

While the neglect of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* can be justified by the fact that the film was universally believed to be lost until 2016, the information that a private collector had donated a copy of *Conductor 1492* to the Museum of Modern Art was revealed by Alan Margolies back in 1974.⁶³⁵ Although Margolies reports in

⁶³³ An advert for *Conductor 1492* marked 1924 as "the most successful of all the successful Hines years [...] to-day Johnny Hines Typifies the American Go Getter." "Three Big Reasons in One For a Better 1924," *Film Daily*, 2 August 1924, p. 192. The plots of Hines's silent movies, notes Kerr, "were the go-getter stage patterns of the period: *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford* done over and over again." Walter Kerr, *The Silent Clowns* (New York: Knopf, 1975), p. 290. See also Donald W. McCaffrey, *Three Classic Silent Screen Comedies Starring Harold Lloyd* (London: Associated University Presses, 1976), p. 52. On the rag-to-riches formula in Irish-American literature see Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America: 250 Years of Irish-American Fiction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), p. 250

⁶³⁴ On the rags-to-riches myth in Fitzgerald's fiction see Kirk Curnutt, *The Cambridge Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 57.

⁶³⁵ Alan Margolies, "'The Camel's Back' and *Conductor 1492*," p. 87.

his brief note that many had “wondered about” the film’s existence, *Conductor 1492* went overlooked until 2014, when Ursula Candace Grissom analysed it in her study on *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film*.⁶³⁶ Given that *Conductor 1492* is one of the only two filmic representation of Fitzgerald’s fiction to survive, it seems hard to believe that eight scholarly pages in total have been dedicated to this 1924 movie. The first section of this chapter traces the complex history of the sale of the cinematic rights to “The Camel’s Back.” The second section shows the role that *Conductor 1492* played in cementing the association between Fitzgerald and his Irish heritage in the public’s mind.

Starring and written by Johnny Hines (the director’s brother), *Conductor 1492* is the Alger-style story of Terry O’Toole, an Irish immigrant who travels to America to try his fortune. He takes with him a little doll that, as the film’s pressbook reads, “had proved a lucky mascot for his father on a similar journey years before.” Terry soon finds a job as a streetcar conductor and saves the life of a young boy, Bobby Connelly (Byron Sage), the son of the Loteda Traction Company’s president, Denman Connelly (Fred Esmelton). As a reward for his heroism, Terry is invited to the Connellys’ home and falls in love with Bobby’s sister, Edna (Doris May). At this point enters “Dan Cupid, with the usual disastrous results.” In his own Gatsbyesque way, the penniless Terry tries to “make himself worthy of [Edna]” and “decides to become a ‘gentleman’ and break into society.”⁶³⁷ The girl has another suitor, crooked attorney Richard Langford (Robert Cain), who is plotting to take over her father’s company. There is a power struggle between Connelly and the vice president of Loteda (Michael Dark); a mere two shares determine who will own the trolley

⁶³⁶ Candace Ursula Grissom, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film*, pp. 11-17.

⁶³⁷ “Synopsis” in “Conductor 1492,” pressbook, distributed by Warner Brothers, 1600 Broadway, New York, NY, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research, Madison, WI, p. 1.

company. Mike O'Toole (Dan Mason) arrives from Ireland; after a few minor plot complications, it is revealed that, many years earlier, Terry's father had bought two shares of stock and hid them inside his son's mascot doll. Connelly keeps control of the company, Terry gets his Irish-American golden girl, and the reunited, enlarged, family travels back to the Emerald Isle.

Fitzgerald's "The Camel's Back" opens, by contrast, with the American lawyer Perry Parkhurst asking Betty Medill, the daughter of an aluminium magnate, to marry him. Turned down by the flapper, he goes on a bender, rents a camel costume for a circus ball, and persuades a taxi driver to wear the back half of the costume. At the party, Betty starts flirting with the camel thinking he is a visitor in town. She and the camel win prizes for the best costumes and they are married in a supposedly mock but actually binding ceremony. When the rear of the camel, namely the taxi driver, refuses to relinquish his claim as Betty's husband, she reluctantly agrees to marry Perry in a real ceremony.

One of the reasons for scholars' dismissal of *Conductor 1492* is the fact that its plot has evidently no similarity to Fitzgerald's story. However, given that the plot of "The Camel's Back" has never been cited as example of Fitzgerald's talent for fictional invention – but rather of his commercial pragmatism – the plot of its film adaptation would not be critically relevant anyway. Instead, *Conductor 1492* deserves more scholarly attention inasmuch as it is one of the two only existing film records of how Hollywood interpreted Fitzgerald's persona during the silent era.⁶³⁸

Some details in the movie adaptation seem like a wink at the audience who had read "The Camel's Back" in either the *Saturday Evening Post*, where the story

⁶³⁸ A second film version of "The Camel's Back" aired on television in the United Kingdom on December 13, 1963, as part of an eight-episode BBC anthology series entitled *Teletale*. All episodes have been lost. See Jeff Nilsson, ed., *Gatsby Girls*, p. 86.

appeared on 24 April 1920, or *Tales of the Jazz Age*, where the story was republished in September 1922. The name of the main character of *Conductor 1492* is Terry instead of Perry, both film and story are set in Ohio, and the city in which the film takes place is Loteda, an inexact anagram of Toledo, the setting of “The Camel’s Back.” There are also some recurring objects in both the film and the short story, including the box of cigars that in “The Camel’s Back” was the prize for the best costume, and, of course, the camel costume itself. But it is the interlude of the party in *Conductor 1492* that is the scene that bears the most resemblance with “The Camel’s Back.” Both in Fitzgerald’s story and Hines’s film the protagonists dress as a camel and get (illegally) drunk. A cartoon included in the film’s pressbook shows a camel smiling at Terry holding a bottle, accompanied by a caption hinting at the fact that the film included

scenes of the character with “a pleasant matter well in hand” (Fig. 37). Next to this illustration, a picture of Mike O’Toole assured audiences that *Conductor 1492* not only represented drunkenness but also “a bit of Erin.”⁶³⁹



Figure 37 “Conductor 1492,” pressbook, p. 2.

The audiences of Hines’s film who had read “The Camel’s Back” in *Tales of the Jazz Age* knew that a similar boozy costume party had happened in reality. In the

⁶³⁹ “Impressions of ‘Conductor 1492,’” in “Conductor 1492,” pressbook, p. 2.

Table of Contents of the short story collection, Fitzgerald bragged about the fact that the “camel part of the story is literally true.”⁶⁴⁰ In a review of the book, *St. Paul Daily News* also reported that “The Camel’s Back” was “famous in St. Paul” because it “really happened, as all good citizens and perusers of paragraphs should know, in this very town.”⁶⁴¹ By visualising the semi-autobiographical episode in Fitzgerald’s story in which the drunken Perry dresses as a camel in a film dealing with “a bit of Erin,” Warner Brothers inevitably fed into F. Scott Fitzgerald’s public persona as an Irish drinker. In *The American Irish*, William V. Shannon stated that Fitzgerald’s “work is intimately bound up with his Irish background but in a more complex and less obvious way than that of the earlier Irish writers.”⁶⁴² As Christopher Dowd notes in his more recent work on the *Construction of Irish Identity in American Literature*, even the author’s name – F. Scott Fitzgerald – “evokes Irish heritage.”⁶⁴³ But, while the way in which Fitzgerald treated issues of Irish identity in his fiction and the extent to which Irishness was key to his public persona in print have been widely explored, the impact that film had in representing Fitzgerald’s Irish legacy has never been studied. By substituting “The Camel’s Back” story with an Irish rags-to-riches plot and by representing the characters of *Conductor 1492* as heavy drinkers, Warner Brothers also played a role into the construction of Fitzgerald’s Irishness and his public reputation as a drinker – the two aspects being frequently linked in stereotypical representations of Irishmen.

⁶⁴⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, p. 5.

⁶⁴¹ Woodward Boyd, “The Fitzgerald Legend” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 160).

⁶⁴² William V. Shannon, *The American Irish* (1966. New York: Macmillan Publishing 1973), p. 234.

⁶⁴³ Christopher Dowd, *The Construction of Irish Identity in American Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 135.

5.1 “One Whom Gods Love”: Fitzgerald’s “Five Human Interest Points”

On 19 June 1920, two months after the publication of “The Camel’s Back” in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Fitzgerald wrote in a letter: “I have unearthed so many esoteric facts about myself lately for magazines etc. that I blush to continue to send out colorful sentences about a rather colorless life.” The newly acclaimed young author of *This Side of Paradise* managed to get over the embarrassment quickly, however, adding: “Here are [five] ‘human interest points.’” The first point Fitzgerald chose to share with his correspondent was the fact that he was “always interested in prodigies because I almost became one – that is in the technical sense of going to college young [...] I went in on my 17th birthday and, I think, was one of the ten youngest in my class at Princeton.” The second and third point were that, just as a movie star, he “got four dozen letters from readers when [Head and Shoulders] appeared in the Post” and that the short story was going to be republished in *Flappers and Philosophers*. The fourth point Fitzgerald thought represented him well was that he would “rather watch a good shimmee [sic] dance than Ruth St. Dennis + Pavlova combined. I see nothing at all disgusting in it.”⁶⁴⁴

Although Alice Hall Petry claims the addressee of this letter, David Arnold Balch, was the editor of *Movie Weekly*, the first issue of that magazine did not appear on newsstands for another eight months.⁶⁴⁵ Instead, in June 1920 Fitzgerald was exchanging letters with Balch as an employee of Metro Pictures Corporation, as revealed by the address on an unpublished letter Fitzgerald wrote to him a week

⁶⁴⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, p. 40.

⁶⁴⁵ Alice Hall Petry, *Fitzgerald's Craft of Short Fiction*, p. 20. The first issue of *Movie Weekly* appeared on February 12, 1921. Anthony Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine: A History of Star Makers and Gossip Mongers* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), p. 106.

later.⁶⁴⁶ Balch's letter regarded the film adaptation of "Head and Shoulders" rather than the story itself, as Petry suggests. When Fitzgerald mentioned he had no problem *watching* "a good shimmee dance," he was referring to seeing Viola Dana impersonating Marcia's shimmy dance in *The Chorus Girl's Romance*.

Balch apparently asked Fitzgerald for more biographical information. On June 24, the young author responded by providing other "facts" about himself: he had "started writing when [he] was 10 years old"; he wore "brown soft hats in winter, panamas in summer, loathe dress suits and never wear one"; he preferred "people with greenish grey eyes."⁶⁴⁷ All these biographical facts were included the next month in an article in one of the most prominent film trade papers of the time. Titled "One Whom Gods Love," the piece revealed that Balch had asked Fitzgerald to help in the promotion of Dowlan's film. The two letters Fitzgerald sent to Balch were reused in a "Metro report" that described the author of the film's story as enjoying

the unique and enviable distinction of being the youngest successful writing man in America, if not the world [...] In addition to reaching the printed page at an age when most young men are studying geography, Mr. Fitzgerald has found his work in immediate demand for screen production, one of which, as already has been mentioned, Metro is doing, while others are under consideration.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ The letter was addressed to "Mr. David A. Balch, Metro Pictures, 1476 Broadway, New York City." F. Scott Fitzgerald, Letter to David A. Balch.

⁶⁴⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, Letter to David A. Balch, p. 1.

⁶⁴⁸ "One 'Whom Gods Love': So Says Metro in Describing the Career of F. Scott Fitzgerald," *Motion Picture News*, 31 July 1920, p. 965.

Issued from Metro headquarters a week before the release of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, the statement reported by *Metro Picture News* comprised Fitzgerald's own carefully chosen "human interests points," including his specific age when he entered Princeton University. Hollywood was contributing not only to shaping Fitzgerald's public image but also his literary persona. In March 1921, *Writer's Digest* reprinted parts of Metro's report, informing its readers that the film studio had just released a story by the "brilliant young novelist" under the screen title of *The Chorus Girl's Romance*. "The young man whom obviously the gods love," stated the piece, "would rather watch a good shimmy dance than Ruth St. Denis and Pavlova combined." Philip Sexton, the editor of a recent collection of articles from the archives of *Writer's Digest*, points out that this piece "paints a picture of F. Scott Fitzgerald that most wouldn't recognize: youthful, vibrant, and funny, without any trace of the alcoholism that eventually destroyed him."⁶⁴⁹ More than that, this contemporary perspective shows how Fitzgerald's image as a writer for the movies was being cemented in the minds of the readers of a literary magazine that, in Sexton's words, "provided a new forum for writers to express their interests and concerns, practical lessons for improving one's work."⁶⁵⁰ It also suggests how later knowledge has clouded our image of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Disseminated across the United States by *Motion Picture News* and *Writer's Digest*, the five "human interest point" that Fitzgerald wrote to Balch not only stand as evidence of the twenty-three year old writer's efforts to self-fashion his image as a fashionable, gifted, young man, but also of his attempt to sell cinematic rights to

⁶⁴⁹ "Started Writing at the Age of Ten" (Repr. in Phillip Sexton, ed., *Legends of Literature: The Best Articles, Interviews, and Essays from the Archives of Writers Digest Magazine* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2007), pp. 22-23).

⁶⁵⁰ Phillip Sexton, ed., *Legends of Literature*, p. 1.

his work. The fifth “human interest point” that Fitzgerald carefully decided to let Balch know in the first letter was that his

story ‘The Camel’s Back’ in the S. E. P. (which you may be buying) was the fastest piece of writing I’ve ever heard of. It is twelve thousand words long and it was written in fourteen hours straight writing and sent to the S. E. P. in its original form. I can’t think of anything else just now that hasn’t been used before.⁶⁵¹

Fitzgerald was referring to the fact that, of all the short stories he had published so far, “The Camel’s Back” was the only one that had not been adapted for the screen. By June 1920, Fox had already bought the rights to “Myra” and Metro had taken “Head and Shoulders” and “The Offshore Pirate,” along with an option on his future works.⁶⁵² Fitzgerald’s pitch of “The Camel’s Back,” however, did not achieve the desired effect. Although Harold Ober had had “several feelers” and Fitzgerald felt “perfectly sure” that the story would make “an excellent movie,” in 1920 neither Metro, nor other film companies purchased “The Camel’s Back.”⁶⁵³

Discussing the stories to be collected in *Tales of the Jazz Age* two years later, Fitzgerald told Maxwell Perkins: “The only story about which I’m in doubt is ‘The Camel’s Back.’ But I’ve decided to use it – it has some excellent comedy + was in one O. Henry collection – though of course that’s against it.”⁶⁵⁴ A letter to Ober

⁶⁵¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, p. 40.

⁶⁵² The contract for the option on Fitzgerald’s future works stipulated Metro had sixty days to choose among the short stories Fitzgerald had published that far. The agreement was dated May 27, which means that the stories left to choose from were “The Camel’s Back” and “Bernice Bobs Her Hair.” “The Agreement Made on May 27, 1920.”

⁶⁵³ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 16.

⁶⁵⁴ John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds. *Dear Scott/Dear Max*, p. 60.

reveals that Fitzgerald's final decision to include the story was also due to the fact that "none of the 11 stories or playlets in it have been sold to the movies and I'm hoping that some of them may get bid for when it is in book form."⁶⁵⁵ This time Fitzgerald's marketing stratagem worked. Shortly after "The Camel's Back" appeared in *Tales of the Jazz Age*, Warner Brothers purchased the cinematic rights to the 1920 story. In July 1920, Fitzgerald told Ober he would "rather get \$1000 than nothing" for the movie rights to "The Camel's Back."⁶⁵⁶ Fitzgerald's ledger shows that this is the sum that the Hollywood studio paid him three years later.⁶⁵⁷

5.2 "Show Yer Nationality": Fitzgerald and "Ould Erin" On Screen

F. Scott Fitzgerald was the grandson of potato-famine immigrants on his mother's side and descended from an older, partly Irish Maryland family on his father's.⁶⁵⁸ Although Shannon claims that Fitzgerald's "conquest of national fame was so swift and complete that he never became identified in the public mind as Irish at all," in fact, 1920s film reception shows the contrary.⁶⁵⁹ Irishness was so key to Fitzgerald's public persona that he was frequently associated with his ethnic origins by newspapers and magazines. Interviews and reviews of the books published shortly before the filming of *Conductor 1492*, *The Beautiful and Damned* and *Tales of the Jazz Age*, show the extent to which Fitzgerald was culturally constructed as Irish by the media. A reviewer of Fitzgerald's second novel referred to the author's "Irish talent for the fantastic," while a journalist who interviewed him for the *Bookman* in

⁶⁵⁵ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 45.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶⁵⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Ledger*, p. 26.

⁶⁵⁸ Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America*, p. 248.

⁶⁵⁹ William V. Shannon, *The American Irish*, p. 233.

1922 described his “trick of looking up swiftly and mischievously at you, anticipating a laugh” adding that “perhaps he does it because he’s Irish.”⁶⁶⁰ In two reviews of *Tales of the Jazz Age*, critics also noted the stories of the collection had been bred “in the workshop of Mr. Fitzgerald’s Celtic imagination” and that “even in such a confection as ‘The Camel’s Back,’ his deft, Celtic hand is seen exhibiting a fine workmanship and a good organization.”⁶⁶¹ The most famous acknowledgment of Fitzgerald’s Irishness, however, came from his Princeton classmate Edmund Wilson the year before Warner Brothers shot *Conductor 1492*. In his review of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Wilson informed the readers of *The Bookman* that in regard to Fitzgerald there were “two things worth knowing, for the influence they have had on his work,” namely the fact that he came from the Middle West and that he was “partly Irish”:

Like the Irish, Fitzgerald is romantic, but also cynical about romance; he is bitter as well as ecstatic; astringent as well as lyrical. He casts himself in the role of playboy, yet at the playboy he incessantly mocks. He is vain, a little malicious, of quick intelligence and wit, and has an Irish gift for turning language into something iridescent and surprising.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶⁰ “The Future of Fitzgerald,” (Repr. in *The Critical Reception of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Bryer, p. 392); “The Gossip Shop,” *The Bookman*, 55 (May 1922), pp. 333-34.

⁶⁶¹ Burton Rascoe, “We Recommend,” *New York Tribune*, 1 October 1922, p. 8; H. B. D. “Clever Stories of the Jazz Age by Fitzgerald,” unidentified clipping in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook III* (Repr. in *The Critical Reception of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Bryer, p. 164). As Andrew M. Greeley notes, two typical stereotypes of the Irishman are his skills at poetic imagery and comic making. Andrew M. Greeley, *That Most Distressful Nation: The Taming of the American Irish* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972), pp. 52-53.

⁶⁶² Edmund Wilson, “F. Scott Fitzgerald” (Repr. in Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, p. 31).

Scholars such as Deborah Davis Schlacks have extensively explored the many ways in which Wilson and other literary critics established Fitzgerald's reputation as Irish in print.⁶⁶³ But by showing the story of an Irish immigrant on countless movie screens, *Conductor 1492* inevitably fed into Fitzgerald's Irishness. Even if the original story was heavily changed in the transfer to the screen, the trade press associated Hines's film with Fitzgerald. Although Margolies claims that "searches over the years of reviews [...] failed to show any connection between the film and the short story [...] and to link the novelist with the film," I have found evidence that the film press and Warner Brothers publicized the information that the film was based on a story by Fitzgerald.⁶⁶⁴ In September 1923, *Film Daily* reported that "Johnny Hines is now working on *Conductor 1492*, an adaptation of a Scott Fitzgerald story 'the Camel's Back.'" ⁶⁶⁵ *Motion Picture News* also announced that "Warner companies are busy with productions. [...] *Conductor 1492*, a screen version of the story 'The Camel's Back' by F. Scott Fitzgerald, is the forthcoming starring vehicle for Johnny Hines, which is fast rounding into its final stages."⁶⁶⁶ Even once the film was completed, a journalist wrote that "word comes from the Warner studio on the west coast that Johnny Hines has completed the final scenes for his latest feature *Conductor 1492* and is now busily engaged in editing and cutting the photoplay. About eight weeks were consumed by the star in the production of the picture, which is an adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's story 'The Camel's Back.'" ⁶⁶⁷ In addition, the keybook of the film includes a behind-the-scene still, whose caption reads:

⁶⁶³ See Deborah Davis Schlacks, "F. Scott Fitzgerald, Trickster."

⁶⁶⁴ Alan Margolies, "'The Camel's Back' and *Conductor 1492*," p. 87.

⁶⁶⁵ "Hines in 'Conductor 1492,'" *Film Daily*, 4 September 1923, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁶ "Warner Companies Are Busy with Productions," *Motion Picture News*, 15 September 1923, p. 1307.

⁶⁶⁷ "Johnny Hines Completes 'Conductor 1492,'" *Motion Picture News*, 20 October 1923, p. 1879.

“Johnny Hines gets ammunition for his second Warner Bros. classic – an Irish comedy drama, *Conductor 1492*, from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s O Henry prize story, ‘The Camel’s Back.’”⁶⁶⁸

Warner Brothers capitalised on Johnny Hines’s popular Horatio Alger-like screen persona by characterising him, as the pressbook for *Conductor 1492* reports, as “an ambitious young Irishman just arrived in this country and bent on making his way to fame and fortune [...] Hines seemed to be made to order for the part of Terry O’Toole, the young hopeful.”⁶⁶⁹ Fitzgerald’s grandfather also belonged to the “young hopeful” type of Irish immigrant who succeeded.⁶⁷⁰ Philip McQuillan immigrated from County Fermanagh at age nine and as a young man built a thriving wholesale grocery business in St. Paul, Minnesota. When McQuillan died, he was one of the city’s leading businessmen and left a fortune to his heirs.⁶⁷¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald was also born and raised in St. Paul, one of the cities where Irish immigrants who found success were often stereotyped as social-climbing “lace-curtain” Irish.⁶⁷² In the 1920s, however, filmmakers were taking into consideration that, as Lee Lourdeaux points out, “the Irish immigrant struggle to succeed perfectly suited the Anglo success ethic.”⁶⁷³ Representing the story of an Irish migrant to America “struggling

⁶⁶⁸ 1958: 0193: 0105 in *Conductor 1492* Keybook, Warner Brothers Keybook Collection, Moving Image Department, George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY.

⁶⁶⁹ “Fast Fun in Latest Warner Picture Comedy,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook.

⁶⁷⁰ His paternal grandfather, Michael Fitzgerald, was also Irish as the name suggests. However, as Dowd notes, F. Scott Fitzgerald did not consider the Fitzgeralds to have “the immediacy of the Irish connection” that his mother’s family had. Christopher Dowd, *The Construction of Irish Identity in American Literature*, p. 201.

⁶⁷¹ William V. Shannon, *The American Irish*, p. 236.

⁶⁷² See Deborah Davis Schlacks, “St Paul, Minnesota, St. Paul Academy and the St. Paul Academy Now and Then,” in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, p. 107

⁶⁷³ See Lee Lourdeaux, *Italian and Irish Filmmakers in America: Ford, Capra, Coppola, and Scorsese* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 46-55. In the early 1920s, the social-climbing “lace-curtain” Irish stereotype was a common character, as exemplified by the popular nationally syndicated comic strip *Bringing Up Father*, in which Irish-American Maggie wins the lottery and starts her social advancement. “Laura La Plant” in Denise Lowe, *An Encyclopedia of Women in Early American Films: 1895-1930* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), p. 1939.

to succeed,” *Conductor 1492* necessarily foregrounded Fitzgerald’s Irish identity as the descendent of young hopeful immigrants who had “made their way to fame and fortune.”

When Fitzgerald was growing up in St. Paul, the American Irish had almost achieved occupational and educational equality with the American population, and they considerably exceeded the “new immigrants” in social mobility and success.⁶⁷⁴ But Fitzgerald was self-conscious about his “half black Irish” background as the Irish were among the immigrant groups that had been excluded from definitions of whiteness only a few decades before he was born. In the nineteenth century, comparisons between blacks and Irish were often unfavourable to the latter.⁶⁷⁵ The social stature of his antecedents remained a source of embarrassment for Fitzgerald, which implies that Irishness still had a stigma in the 1920s. The fact that at the beginning of the decade Fitzgerald wrote to Edmund Wilson that “they should raise the bars of immigration and permit only Scandinavians, Teutons, Anglo-Saxons and Celts to enter” suggests his need to differentiate his status of “permissible immigrant” from that of the “new comer.”⁶⁷⁶ As Edward A. Abramson notes, Fitzgerald’s own “awareness of difference intrudes into his writing, becoming an important part of his method of character development in most of his major novels [...] to be exclusive, one must exclude someone.”⁶⁷⁷ “The Camel’s Back” is a fitting example of this. More than the much-discussed African American character Jumbo, another minor figure in “The Camel’s Back,” the owner of the costume shop where Perry buys the camel outfit, betrays F. Scott Fitzgerald’s anxiety about the black Irish part of “his two-

⁶⁷⁴ Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish*, p. 181.

⁶⁷⁵ Laura Browder, *Slippery Characters: Ethnic Impersonators and American Identities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 50.

⁶⁷⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 326.

⁶⁷⁷ Edward A. Abramson, “Aliens, Stereotypes, and Social Change,” pp. 116-17.

cylinder inferiority complex.”⁶⁷⁸ Fitzgerald characterised Mrs. Nolak as a “newcomer” by defining her as “one of the new nationalities.”⁶⁷⁹

Conductor 1492 and “The Camel’s Back” represented different perspectives of class struggle and targeted different audiences. While Fitzgerald’s 1920 *Saturday Evening Post* story finishes with the middle-class lawyer Perry tricking the golden girl Betty Medill into marrying him, *Conductor 1492* ends with Irish immigrant Terry’s wedding to the daughter of a magnate, Edna Connelly, and the accomplishment of his meteoric social advancement. If, as Peter L. Hays states, “Fitzgerald did not write about the poor,” Hines did impersonate them.⁶⁸⁰ In the article “The Role I Prefer” included in *Conductor 1492*’s pressbook, Johnny Hines confessed:

It gives me great delight to impersonate characters that are a living breathing part of humanity. For instance, I like to play such roles as a street car conductor [...] In preference to such roles as a [...] Society dandy, millionaire’s son and other types that are presumably above the common people. The reason for this preference of mine is that it instils in the hearts of the masses the fact that a young man from ordinary circumstances can rise and make a big place for himself in the whirl of life.⁶⁸¹

By representing the story of success of a poor immigrant who travelled in the steerage of a boat and managed to marry the daughter of a magnate, *Conductor 1492* instilled

⁶⁷⁸ See Suzanne del Gizzo, “Ethnic Stereotyping,” p. 224; Robert Forrey, “Negroes in the Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald,” pp. 293-98.

⁶⁷⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, p. 38.

⁶⁸⁰ Peter L. Hays, “Class Differences in Fitzgerald’s Words,” in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, p. 216.

⁶⁸¹ “The Role I Prefer,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook, p. 7.

“in the hearts of the masses” the idea that upward mobility was attainable and acceptable. That the choice of the number 1492 in the title was deliberate is revealed by a teaser-advert in the pressbook, stating that Terry O’Toole’s “number naturally was 1492.”⁶⁸² In “The Camel’s Back,” by contrast, Fitzgerald ironically suggested that social advancement was possible only with deceit; although Perry belongs to the affluent middle class, he manages to marry the daughter of the aluminium magnate only thanks to the costume stratagem.⁶⁸³

But the function of the Irish characters in *Conductor 1492* is a complicated matter. While Irish patrons could enjoy the many references to “the Ould Erin,” Anglo-American moviegoers could laugh at the stereotyped Irish characters and their “tortured English and un-American clothes.”⁶⁸⁴ Following the Vaudeville tradition, the Hines brothers included versions of Irish routines that, at the same time, would be parodic and appeal to the Irish audience.⁶⁸⁵ Just like the Irish at home, Irish-Americans were a divided group and thus a difficult audience to address and satisfy. The immediate years before *Conductor 1492*’s release coincided with a variety of historical events that divided Irish-American communities including: the end of the First World War; de Valera’s eighteen month tour of the USA (1919-1920); the escalation of violence between Ireland and England; the movement toward Home Rule in Ireland; the controversial signing of the treaty which precipitated the Irish Civil War.⁶⁸⁶ To address the problem, in a press article Warner Brothers suggested exhibitors let their patrons know that:

⁶⁸² “Exploitation suggestion,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook, p. 3.

⁶⁸³ See Candace Ursula Grissom, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film*, p. 12.

⁶⁸⁴ Shirley Staples, *Male-Female Comedy Teams in American Vaudeville, 1865-1932* (Ann Arbor: Umi Research Press 1984), p 31

⁶⁸⁵ See Mark Winokur, *American Laughter*, p. 70.

⁶⁸⁶ See Maryanne Felter and Daniel Schultz, “Selling Memories, Strengthening Nationalism: The Marketing of Film Company of Ireland’s Silent Films in America,” *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 32.2 (Fall 2006), 10-20, p. 11.

Both the friends of the Sinn Feiners and the Orangemen, no matter how much they disagree on the home rule for Ireland question, will have to agree that they never have seen a more realistic reproduction of street scenes of a typical Irish town than appears in *Conductor 1492*.⁶⁸⁷

From the beginning of American cinema, filmmakers took advantage of a strong Irish-American market by designing films made specifically for Irish-Americans, who were naturally interested in films about Ireland and Irish plots.⁶⁸⁸ In the 1920s, over 150 films with Irish characters were produced, though few prints are extant today.⁶⁸⁹ At the time of the release of *Conductor 1492*, Hollywood was producing numerous films that played on the sentimental and nationalist feelings of Irish-American audiences. As Matthew Pratt Guterl notes, “missing their homeland and collectively uncomfortable with the grind of a modern industrial America, the Irish in America took comfort in nationalism and constructed a shared belief in their unwilling exile from Ireland.”⁶⁹⁰ Targeting the Irish and Irish-American’s sense of nostalgia, the article, aptly titled “Ould Erin On Screen,” reported that:

Hines brought to the soil of America typical street scenes of Killarney, Ireland, in order to film a number of dramatic scenes. The street scene is laid out in the quaint old Irish manner, its little cottages, the small, well-kept

⁶⁸⁷ “Ould Erin On Screen: Johnny Hines in ‘Conductor 1492’ Makes Ireland Live,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook, p. 7.

⁶⁸⁸ See Maryanne Felner and Daniel Schultz, “Selling Memories, Strengthening Nationalism,” p. 10.

⁶⁸⁹ Lee Lourdeaux, *Italian and Irish Filmmakers in America*, pp. 10-14; p. 48.

⁶⁹⁰ Matthew Pratt Guterl, “The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture 1910-1925,” *Journal of World History*, 10.2 (Fall 1999), 307-52, p. 314.

garden and the cobble-stone pavement will make every son of the Emerald Isle at least twenty years younger as his memory lingers over his boyhood days.⁶⁹¹

The trade journal *Film Daily* also suggested exhibitors “decorate [their] lobby and get over the [Irish] atmosphere” in order to exploit Irish immigrants’ nostalgia for their homeland.⁶⁹² The “native Irish town” was “very picturesquely portrayed with adobe-shaped houses, covered with straws and greens; the pigs very comfortably wallowing in the mire, while the goats and mules complete the picture of a typical Erin village.”⁶⁹³ The marketing for the film insisted that the story gave insight into the “true” Irish character, making spectators more familiar with the more or less unknown mother country. Emphasizing the educational feature of the film, the pressbook underlined that, “goats, donkeys, peat, horse carts, shamrocks – and a hundred other properties associated with Ireland and the Irish make their appearance in this picture.”⁶⁹⁴

A typical representation of the Irish immigrant arguably meant to appeal to the Irish spectators of *Conductor 1492* was the fact that, as soon as Terry earns his first cheque, he sends it to his father “to bring him from the old country.” To an extent unmatched by other groups, Irish emigration was a family undertaking. “The general routing established here” reported a Londonderry official, “is that in the first place the most enterprising of a family goes out; he then sends for one of his relations.”⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹¹ “Ould Erin On Screen: Johnny Hines in ‘Conductor 1492’ Makes Ireland Live,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook, p. 7.

⁶⁹² “Johnny Hines in *Conductor 1492*,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook.

⁶⁹³ “Battle Royal Almost Breaks Up Picture,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook.

⁶⁹⁴ “Got his Goat: So Goat Began to Stampede,” in “*Conductor 1492*,” pressbook.

⁶⁹⁵ See Maldwyn A. Jones, *Destination America* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p. 72.

Apparently, the film particularly pleased the moviegoers of Baltimore, a main centre of Irish settlement and the city where Fitzgerald's parents married.⁶⁹⁶ On 24 January 1924, *Variety* titled an article: "Audiences on Strike for Hines: Force Return of *Conductor*," reporting that:

In the afternoon, the majority of the patrons pleaded with those in charge of the house to again give *Conductor 1492*. The cries increased rapidly with the night performances and became so loud and numerous the management listened. Business was so heavy for the Hines picture the latter part of the week \$9000 was reported for the week despite the early part was slim due to the fact the patrons virtually went on strike for Hines.⁶⁹⁷

Conductor 1492, nonetheless, depicted Terry as the stereotypical quarrelsome and lucky Irish. An advert in the film's pressbook reads, "Who is *Conductor 1492*? Oh, just the fighting Irishman – did you ever see an Irishman who didn't love a good stiff set-to – who comes over from the shores of old Erin, sticks a clover and a handful of shamrocks in his pocket, and decides to get prosperous, or know why."⁶⁹⁸ And again, "Johnny plays the part of [...] a native son or Ireland, just arrived in this country and desirous of becoming rich and famous. Not knowing American ways and customs, he falls into many difficulties and situations out of which there are one of two ways to escape. One is to run and the other is to fight. Being an Irishman, he prefers the latter method as more expressive."⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁶ Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish*, p. 106.

⁶⁹⁷ "Conductor 1492," *Variety*, 24 January 1924, p. 27.

⁶⁹⁸ "Program Reader," in "*Conductor 1492*," pressbook.

⁶⁹⁹ "Warner Classic Abound with Irresistible Humor," in "*Conductor 1492*," pressbook.

In parodying the Irish immigrants, Hines was working within comic traditions of the 1920s. The character of the hard-drinking, quarrelsome, and lucky Irishman was one of the most pervasive in American popular culture from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Fitzgerald himself had referred to classic Irish stereotypes in his popular first novel, a fact that eventually became a double-edge sword. Readers of *This Side of Paradise* could easily make the connection between the author of the book and his alter-ego Amory Blaine's Irishness. Fitzgerald characterized his autobiographical hero as the son of a "Celtic mother" who admits that "there had been a time when his own Celtic traits were pillars of his personal philosophy."⁷⁰⁰ Dowd convincingly demonstrates how Amory attributes the worst aspects of his alcoholic mother's behavior to her Irish origins:

After being released from the sanitarium, Beatrice proudly tells Amory that, 'if any man alive had done the consistent drinking that I have, he would have been physically shattered, my dear, and in his grave – long in his grave' [...] Amory winces at this remark, embarrassed by his mother's stereotypically Irish pride in her predilection for drinking.

One of the many Irish identities that Amory tries to perform in the book is that of the "degenerate Irish drunk," when he "embarks on a drinking binge in response to his failed relationship with Rosalind."⁷⁰¹ Although not Irish, Perry Parkhurst also consoled himself with alcohol in "The Camel's Back" after Betty Medill rejects his marriage proposal. After leaving her house "much too dispirited to care where he

⁷⁰⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, ed. by James L. West III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 15; p. 197. See Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America*, p. 248.

⁷⁰¹ Christopher Dowd, *The Construction of Irish Identity in American Literature*, p. 142; p. 150.

went,” Perry meets a “bad man named Baily” and accepts his invitation to drink with him by theatrically proclaiming: “I’ll drink your champagne. I’ll drink every drop of it. I don’t care if it kills me” (referring to the fact that it might contain wood alcohol).⁷⁰² Severely intoxicated, Perry goes to the Townsends’ circus ball dressed as a camel accompanied by a taxi-driver wearing the camel’s back. Ursula Candace Grissom claims that the camel,

an instrumental plot device in Fitzgerald’s original story, makes only a small appearance in Hines’s film, when Terry picks up in his trolley car a well-dressed, drunken young man carrying a camel costume. This young man, presumably an unnamed Perry Parkhurst character, asks Terry to be the rear half of his camel.

Grissom maintains that this scene is relevant as it marks the film’s “most significant thematic departure from Fitzgerald’s original story, in which the unnamed Irish cab driver agrees to be the rear end of the camel.”⁷⁰³ I argue instead that this scene is important as it shows that the only portion of the story that Warner Brothers retained from Fitzgerald’s story is the boozy costume party, an episode that Fitzgerald described as autobiographical. While Grissom locates her interest in *Conductor 1492* as evidence of how Hollywood was “exploring in greater depth the latent social and ethnic issues in Fitzgerald’s fiction that the author could not express explicitly in his original works,” I suggest that the 1924 movie is relevant inasmuch as it is a filmic trace of how Warner Brothers represented the author’s public persona as Irish and a drunk.⁷⁰⁴ Grissom claims that Terry is based upon the unnamed taxi driver in

⁷⁰² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, pp. 34-35.

⁷⁰³ Candace Ursula Grissom, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film*, p. 13.

⁷⁰⁴ Grissom mentions only in passing that Fitzgerald was of Irish-catholic descent. *Ibid.*, p. 15; p. 17.

Fitzgerald's story because they share an ethnic identity. As evidence of this, she cites this passage from "The Camel's Back":

'I gotta work,' answered the taxi-driver lugubriously. 'I gotta keep my job'
[...] 'What's 'at thing?' demanded the individual dubiously.
'A shroud?'
'Where 'bouts is it?'⁷⁰⁵

Although Grissom reads this as Irish, there is little here to suggest a brogue, and no stereotypical Irish phrases. Although Grissom argues that the character of Terry was an adaptation of the taxi driver, there is more reason to read the drunk Irish character as a version of the author of the short story. Fitzgerald's public reputation as a drinker, discussed in the previous chapter, also converged with his Irish identity. Wilson's 1922 *Bookman* essay not only fed into Fitzgerald's Irishness, but it also crystallized his reputation as a heavy drinker. Among all the Irish stereotypes that Schlacks identifies in the piece (childlikeness and immaturity, lack of abstract thought, strong imagination and romanticism, lyricism, bitterness, lightness), there is also that of "the Irish as fond of the drink."⁷⁰⁶ Years later, another portrayal of Fitzgerald associated his inclination for liquor with his Irish heritage by noting, "while drinking he is able to stand almost any company, but prefers that of Celts."⁷⁰⁷

Besides the boozy costume party, *Conductor 1492* fed into Fitzgerald's reputation as the quarrelsome Irishman "thirsty for alcohol" from the very first scene. The film starts by showing Terry's home in Ireland where all his relatives have

⁷⁰⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, pp. 42-43.

⁷⁰⁶ See Deborah Davis Schlacks, "F. Scott Fitzgerald, Trickster," pp. 164-68.

⁷⁰⁷ Charles G. Shaw, "F. Scott Fitzgerald" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time*, ed. by Brucoli and Bryer, p. 283).

gathered to get drunk. Two villagers cut short their game of horseshoe to argue about Terry's trip to America and the argument ends in a fistfight. In the final scene of the film, after returning to Ireland, Terry brings every Irish villager a pair of boxing gloves as gifts from "Americky," tells them to 'show yer nationality,' and starts a "grand free-for-all in which the fists and pugilistic abilities of more than 150 extras were involved."⁷⁰⁸ Unlike *The Beautiful and Damned* film, which showed the drunken, hopeless, Anthony Patch getting in a fight and being left unconscious on the sidewalk, *Conductor 1492* treated the theme of drunken quarrelling in a comic way. Nonetheless, by capitalizing on the cliché of the Irish being drunk and quarrelsome for slapstick gags, Hines indirectly reinforced Fitzgerald's stereotypical Irish persona.

Another classic representation of the Irish on the 1920s screen was the ostensible rivalry between the Jewish and the Irish.⁷⁰⁹ In *Clancy's Kosher Wedding* (1927), for instance, titles read, "There are three races here: Irish, Jewish and innocent bystanders" and "The sun can't shine at the same time in Ireland when it's raining in Jerusalem."⁷¹⁰ *Conductor 1492* also showed a quarrel between Terry's father and Edna's father, who had both changed their names to make them sound less Irish. In one of the last title cards, Mike O'Toole tells Denman Connelly "It's the divil of an Irishman ye are – changing yer name from Dinty to Denman" to which Connelly replies that Mike's pretence of being Jewish by changing his name to Rosenthal is not any better.

While in *Conductor 1492* the two fathers altered their last names in an attempt to hide their Irish identity, Fitzgerald played down his ancestry to avoid being stereotyped. Keenly aware of his literary persona, Fitzgerald, as Shannon points out,

⁷⁰⁸ "Battle Royal Almost Breaks up Picture: Over-abundance of Realism in Making of *Conductor 1492*," in "*Conductor 1492*," pressbook.

⁷⁰⁹ See Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (London: Cape, 1990), p. 376.

⁷¹⁰ Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, p. 148.

“wanted to win acceptance as an artist in his own right, unconnected with any distracting associations with Pat-and-Mike jokes, the Irish brogue, and other cultural clichés.”⁷¹¹ According to Kevin Kenny, “most Irish people [...] were painfully aware of their subordinate status in the eyes of their British and American detractors.”⁷¹² Fitzgerald began to pull away from his Irish background early in his life.⁷¹³ In a 1917 review of Anglo-Irish writer Shane Leslie’s *The Celt and the World*, the still unknown Fitzgerald laid claim to his Irish identity by writing that “to an Irishman the whole book is fascinating. It gives one an intense desire to see Ireland free at last to work out her own destiny under Home Rule.” But four years later he lied to the Anglo-American upper class Edmund Wilson: “I’m not Irish on father’s side – that’s where Francis Scott Key comes in.”⁷¹⁴ As Bruccoli notes, “Fitzgerald’s attempt to rewrite his pedigree supports Wilson’s theory that his erratic social behaviour resulted from his insecurity as an Irish Catholic.”⁷¹⁵ Regarding Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Fitzgerald famously confessed to Wilson: “I wish it was layed [sic] in America – there is something about middle-class Ireland that depresses me inordinately – I mean gives me a sort of hollow, cheerless pain. Half of my ancestors came from just such an Irish strata or perhaps a lower one. The book makes me feel appallingly naked.”⁷¹⁶ Writing to John O’Hara a decade later, Fitzgerald defined himself as,

Half black Irish and half old American stock with the usual exaggerated ancestral pretensions. The black Irish half of the family had the money and

⁷¹¹ William V. Shannon, *The American Irish*, p. 233

⁷¹² Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (New York: Longman, 2000), p. 70.

⁷¹³ See William V. Shannon, *The American Irish*, p. 238.

⁷¹⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Dreams of Youth*, p. 331; F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Untitled Review of *The Celts and the World* by Shane Leslie” (Repr. in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald on Authorship*, eds. Matthew J. Bruccoli, Judith S. Baughman (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 25).

⁷¹⁵ Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, p. 160.

⁷¹⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, p. 61.

looked down upon the Maryland side of the family who had, and really had, that certain set of reticences and obligations that go under the poor old shattered word ‘breeding’ (modern form ‘inhibitions’). So being born in that atmosphere of crack, wisecrack and counterack I developed a two-cylinder inferiority complex [...] I suppose this is just a confession of being a Gael though I have known many Irish who have not been afflicted by this intense social self-consciousness.⁷¹⁷

As the screen version of “The Camel’s Back” shows, in the 1920s Fitzgerald was unequivocally identified in the public mind as a third-generation Irish immigrant. By radically changing the original story into an Irish rags-to-riches plot and by representing Irish characters as drunk and quarrelsome, *Conductor 1492* helped reinforce the association between Fitzgerald and the Irish working-class strata, denuding the Irish-American writer of his painfully self-proclaimed “old American stock.” This chapter has revealed the importance of analysing the silent adaptations of Fitzgerald’s fiction for developing a more comprehensive understanding of the author’s early reputation. By showing how silent Hollywood fed into the author’s Irishness, I have uncovered contemporary perspectives on F. Scott Fitzgerald that aid in gaining a more well-rounded perspective of his celebrity persona in the 1920s.

⁷¹⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 503.

Chapter 6 “Dreams of the Old Days”: “Memories” of the Silent *Gatsby* and its Music Score

Herbert Brenon’s 1926 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* was the last silent film ever made from a work by Fitzgerald. All that presumably remains of the first adaptation of Fitzgerald’s iconic novel is the original trailer.⁷¹⁸ The fact that no copies of the film, produced by Famous-Players-Lasky and distributed by Paramount, exist has understandably discouraged study of it. But numerous traces of the film survived. An assortment of primary documents from local and international archives reveals detailed information on the film plot of one of the most regretted lost silent films. It also shows the extent to which 1920s Hollywood facilitated the global exposure of Fitzgerald. The international contemporary reception of the silent *Gatsby* is so extensive, in fact, that the film can be reconstructed virtually scene-by-scene, shedding new light on the impact Hollywood had in exporting Fitzgerald’s name and (now) most celebrated work across the United States and the world.

While the scholarly indifference to the four silent films based on Fitzgerald’s short stories may be justified by the fact that their source texts are minor, this certainly does not explain the neglect of the 1926 *Gatsby* film. Although it is true that all these films have been comparatively disregarded because they are presumed lost, given the reams of paper devoted to Fitzgerald’s masterpiece, the lack of criticism concerning its first cinematic adaptation may still come as a surprise. In fact, the

⁷¹⁸ DeWitt Bodeen watched the film in 1947 at the library of Paramount Studies. “The print kept breaking,” wrote the scholar, “so I’m not surprised that it’s now listed as ‘lost.’” DeWitt Bodeen, “Hollywood and the Fiction Writer,” p. xvii. The trailer can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_3bob4nPdM> [accessed 30 May 2018].

film's reception provides insight into the novel's reception and may even suggest new reasons for its commercial failure.

None of the scholars who have analysed the film adaptation devote more than a couple of pages to it. Gene D. Phillips dedicates only two pages of his 220-page work on *Film and F. Scott Fitzgerald* to the 1926 film, focusing exclusively on its cast and director.⁷¹⁹ Wheeler W. Dixon gives only a few paragraphs of his essay on "The Three Film Versions of *The Great Gatsby*" to the first film version, although he includes a useful account of all the archives he visited in his "diligent search" for the film print and of James Cozart's rediscovery of the one-minute trailer.⁷²⁰ Only Alan Margolies, Thomas Morgan and Nicholas Tredell analyse the film's plot, but they limit their sources to Elizabeth Meehan's treatment and a few film reviews.⁷²¹

While the majority of scholars simply explain that its print is lost, others, like Irene Kahn Atkins, reject the study of Brenon's film on the basis that "adaptation of a novel by Fitzgerald into the silent film medium, thus reducing dialogue and evocative word-patterns to title cards, is [...] a self-defeating kind of film-making."⁷²² From another perspective, however, the silent film medium unburdened the scenarist from having to adapt Fitzgerald's intentionally prominent authorial and aural presence into spoken dialogues and voiceover. Moreover, the silent *Gatsby* was not really silent as, in Irving Thalberg's words, "there never was a silent film."⁷²³ The great majority of 1920s movies were accompanied by music, including *The Great*

⁷¹⁹ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. 110-11.

⁷²⁰ Wheeler W. Dixon, "The Three Film Versions of *The Great Gatsby*," pp. 289-90.

⁷²¹ Thomas Morgan, "Sentimentalizing Daisy for the Screen," pp. 15-17; Alan Margolies, "Novel to Play to Film: Four Versions of *The Great Gatsby*," in *Critical Essays on The Great Gatsby*, ed. by Scott Donaldson (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984), pp. 187-200; Nicholas Tredell, *Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), pp. 96-98.

⁷²² Irene Kahn Atkins, "In Search of the Greatest *Gatsby*," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 2.3 (Summer 1974), 216-28, p. 217.

⁷²³ Qtd. in Rick Altman, "The Silence of the Silents," *The Musical Quarterly*, 80.4 (Winter 1996), 648-718, p. 648.

Gatsby. An article published in a popular film trade magazine preserved information on an exhibition stunt that may have been performed in some movie theatres to lure moviegoers into the screenings of the film. *Film Daily's* "Present-o-gram" advised exhibitors to stage a scene from the West Egg party and its most emblematic elements: bootleg alcohol and fast dances.

Use set representing living room or hall with luxurious furnishings. As curtain rises a hilarious party is in progress and several couples are dancing. If your patronage is anti-Volstead it won't hurt to include a few bottles among the props. The dance concludes. Two girls go into the Black Bottom, Charleston or whatever fast-action number popular in your community, the other players clapping hands to beat time.

In contrast to this scene of movement and excitement,

one man stands quietly by, watching the proceedings indifferently [...] the man, who represents Warner Baxter in the picture, goes to a wall window, enters back stage, and glances out. He sings 'Memories.' Dim the lights and create the illusion of moonlight beyond the window. After the chorus he pauses and a soprano voice, apparently far distant, sings the second stanza, both rendering the chorus.⁷²⁴

⁷²⁴ Arthur W. Eddy, "Developments in Presentations: Present-O-Grams," *Film Daily*, 28 November 1926, p. 8.

D. W. Griffith once said: “watch a film run in silence and then watch it again with eyes and ears. The music sets the mood for what your eye sees; it guides your emotions; it is the emotional framework for visual pictures.”⁷²⁵ As noted in Chapter Two, 1920s surveys reported that moviegoers often indicated musical accompaniment as the best part of their film experience. The fact that in 1926 trade magazines were encouraging theatre owners to reperform and accompany scenes from the film with live songs suggests the importance that underscoring action and mood with music had in silent film exhibition. Given that “Memories” is not among the several songs Fitzgerald mentioned in *The Great Gatsby*, one might think that *Film Daily*’s accompaniment choice was arbitrary. In fact, the 1915 song by Gustave Kahn and Egbert Van Alstyne was part of the film score, as revealed by the musical cue sheet for Brenon’s movie preserved at the George Eastman Museum. Providing the approximate time and a short description of each scene, cue sheets were music suggestions that film studios supplied to cinemas to help their accompanists in scoring movies.⁷²⁶ Distributed by Paramount to film orchestras around the country, the *Gatsby* cue sheet also includes the beginning of each scene’s melody alongside the subtitle and action that composed the silent movie adaptation.

Lyrics of most of the songs in the cue sheets show literalism at work in the music score for the film. I will argue that the voices of the singers accompanying the film may have worked as a substitute for Fitzgerald’s language in the novel, evoking those dialogues and word-patterns that, according to Atkins, were confined only to title cards and made the silent film a “self-defeating kind of film-making.”⁷²⁷ Cross

⁷²⁵ Qtd. in Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 193

⁷²⁶ See Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, p. 43.

⁷²⁷ In the same month of the film’s release, Hugo Riesenfeld, the renown conductor for the Rivoli movie palace where *Gatsby* was screened, discussed the presence of singers in theatres’ orchestras. Hugo Riesenfeld, “Music and Motion Pictures,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social*

referencing the score and other overlooked multilingual and “multisemiotic” materials, my reading also includes a provisional scene-by-scene reconstruction of the “silent” *Gatsby*, along with many of its title cards. The assortment of primary documents that I found in foreign archives reveals the extent to which Paramount facilitated Fitzgerald’s global exposure by exporting *The Great Gatsby* to at least Spain, UK, Portugal, Australia, Argentina, Mexico and Brazil. Long forgotten sources allow for a reception history of Brenon’s 1926 movie that has never been undertaken before, shedding new light on the production, exhibition, promotion, and impact of the silent film adaptation of Fitzgerald’s most renowned work.

6.1 The Making of a (non) Best Seller: *Gatsby* from Paper to the Silver Screen

Fitzgerald began thinking about cinematic rights to *The Great Gatsby* six months before the novel came out. In October 1924, he wrote to Ober, “looking pretty far ahead [...] I will refer any and all moving picture bids on the book to you and will tell Scribner to let you know about any moving picture bids that come through them.”⁷²⁸ In late April 1925, only two weeks after the book’s publication, Fitzgerald expressed to Perkins his worry that *Gatsby* could fail commercially and added: “please refer any movie offers to Reynolds.”⁷²⁹ A few weeks later, Fitzgerald’s fear that the novel would sell poorly was growing. “About *Gatsby*,” he confided to Ober,

no data yet on sales – from which I gather it didn’t get off to a flying start. By this time next week [...] it’ll be obvious [...] whether the movies are interested.

Science, The Motion Picture in Its Economic and Social Aspects, vol. 128 (November 1926), 58-62, p. 59.

⁷²⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, p. 83.

⁷²⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 199.

The minimum price would be \$5000. If it goes to say 50,000 copies I should want at least \$10,000 and for anything over that, in the best-sellers class, I think I should get \$25,000 which is what they seem to be getting.

During Fitzgerald's lifetime, the novel sold less than half of the lowest number of copies indicated in this letter. As Philip McGowan notes, sales of *Gatsby* "initially struggled to match those of his two previous novels [...] roughly half the number of copies of *Gatsby* were sold compared to the other two in their release years."⁷³⁰ In late May 1925, Fitzgerald wrote Ober again: "the book has fallen so flat that I'm afraid there'll be no movie rights. However, a book always has a chance value as a movie property. I imagine that if one movie makes a strike they buy the rights of all the other books you've written."⁷³¹

Having already sold the rights to five of his works to Hollywood, Fitzgerald was most likely aware of the cinematic potential of *Gatsby*. So was the press. An English review of the novel pasted in his scrapbook stated: "Mr. Scott Fitzgerald is the literary artist of the screen. This is not to say that he uses film plots; he does not. But he produces a film effect of flickering lights and ceaseless movement, and his people are just the New York types, with which the cinema has made us familiar." The review continued with a list of all the elements that added to the filmic qualities of the novel: "Cocktails, gasoline, telephones, sheer silk stockings, ice-chests and swimming pools recur in his books as on the screen."⁷³² The Louisianan daily *The Town Talk* added the book's protagonist to the catalogue, reporting that "when the

⁷³⁰ Philip McGowan, "Popular Literary Tastes," in *F. Scott Fitzgerald in Context*, ed. by Mangum, p. 273.

⁷³¹ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, pp. 77-78.

⁷³² "The Novel of the Film," unidentified clipping, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

casting was under way for *Gatsby* it was joked about that here was a part for almost any male star because most movie actors are *Gatsby*'s [sic].⁷³³

The Great Gatsby was eventually bought by Paramount a year later. The novel was first adapted into a play that premiered on Broadway in February 1926.⁷³⁴ Gene D. Phillips mistakenly argues that "there is no doubt that the success of [Owen] Davis's play sparked special interest in *Gatsby* as a promising film property."⁷³⁵ But two months before the premiere of the play, *Variety* announced:

The Great Gatsby is being dramatized by Owen Davis for production by William A. Brady. It is said that negotiations for the film rights to the book were halted when Brady asked for the dramatic rights. Under the circumstances, the story will hardly reach the screen until after its stage production.⁷³⁶

What had sparked interest in the novel as a promising film property was not the play but the novel itself. A clipping in Fitzgerald's scrapbook reads: "rights to the novel have long been the subject of covetous glances. When bids were made, however, it was discovered that Henry Ginsberg, who owns the stage play, was not

⁷³³ "Gossip of Movie Pictures," *The Town Talk*, 16 June 1926, p. 4.

⁷³⁴ The news that Fitzgerald's book was almost simultaneously being adapted into a theatrical and cinematic work received consistent attention in the American film press and even reached Europe. In February 1927, *Variety* noted that Davis's and Brenon's versions of the novel run at the exact same time in Minneapolis: "when Finkelstein & Ruben learned that 'Buzz' Bainbridge at the eleventh hour had decided to throw in the spoken play 'The Great Gatsby' [...] they immediately booked its photoplay adaptation at the Lyric [...] Thus, both play and picture will be on view the same week." "Gatsby Versions, Play and Film, Clash," *Variety*, 2 February 1927, p. 49. In April 1926, Hemingway wrote to Fitzgerald: "I'm glad as hell you got the money for the movie rights of *Gatsby*. With that and *Gatsby* in person at the Ambassador you should be able to write a pretty good novel." Ernest Hemingway, *Ernest Hemingway Selected Letters: 1917-1961*, ed. by Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner Classics, 2003), p. 200.

⁷³⁵ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 109.

⁷³⁶ "Fitzgerald's Best Seller," *Variety*, 2 December 1925, p. 55.

underestimating the screen value of the novel and would have to be paid highly. Famous-Players-Lasky is offering around \$75,000 for the right to film the book, it is said. The contract is expected to be closed soon.”⁷³⁷ A wire from Ober in Fitzgerald’s scrapbook dated 16 April 1926 reveals that the final offer for the rights to *Gatsby* was \$45,000.⁷³⁸ Given that the minimum price Fitzgerald was ready to accept from the cinematic rights was \$5,000, \$10,000 if the novel sold 50,000 copies, and \$25,000 for anything over that, the sum he received from the film studio was not only a financial relief but also a sort of validation that, although the sales of the book did not reflect it, his “Great American Novel” was “in the best-sellers class.”⁷³⁹

Film trade magazines followed closely the development of the film adaptation, giving details on each step of the production. In late April 1926, *Film Daily* announced: “Henry Ginsberg has acquired ‘The Great Gatsby,’ the Owen Davis play from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s story.”⁷⁴⁰ A month later, Famous-Players-Lasky had already engaged Herbert Brenon as director for the film, along with the assistant director and cast.⁷⁴¹ Elizabeth Meehan was signed as the film’s adapter; she finished the treatment on May the 26th.⁷⁴²

⁷³⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

⁷³⁸ Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz*, p. 88.

⁷³⁹ Fitzgerald, however, received only 16,666 of this amount. Twenty days after the contract with Famous Players, Fitzgerald wrote to Perkins: “Gatsby, so now appears, sold for \$50,000. An agent on the coast got 10% and Davis, Brady and I split the \$45000. Then I had to pay Reynolds 10% more, so instead of \$16,666.66 I received \$13,500 – or \$3,166.66 went in agent’s commissions. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 223. A letter Fitzgerald sent to Ober more than ten years later reveals that the Reynolds office made him pay double commission for the sale of the rights to the novel. Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz*, p. 331.

⁷⁴⁰ “Ginsberg Gets *Great Gatsby*,” *Film Daily*, 29 April 1926, p. 2. Ginsberg was a film distributor, head of the New York City-based Henry Ginsberg Distribution Corporation. Kenneth W. Munden, ed., *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States Feature Films 1921-1930* (New York: Bowker, 1971), p. 456. See also “Ginsberg Purchases ‘The Great Gatsby,’” *Motion Picture News*, 8 May 1926, p. 2185.

⁷⁴¹ “Baxter Heads Cast,” *Film Daily*, 30 May 1926, p. 40.

⁷⁴² As indicated on the cover page of the unpublished film treatment of the film. Elizabeth Meehan, “The Great Gatsby,” 26 May 1926, Collection 73, box 459, Performing Arts Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

The Great Gatsby was shot at the Famous Players Studios, in Astoria, Long Island.⁷⁴³ The *Ogden-Standard-Examiner* noted that “New York city and its environs have come in for close scrutiny and intensive observation by the movie people engaged in bringing to the screen [a] production for which the metropolis serves as a background, *The Great Gatsby*, [which] treats of varying phases of life in the big city.”⁷⁴⁴ Shooting started on June 1; three days later, Becky Gardiner completed the continuity for the film and Leo Tover began photographing the film.⁷⁴⁵ On 14 June, *Film Daily* reported that Lois Wilson “is going to bob her hair after all. She’s held on a long, long time but now must relinquish her locks for her art. Her role in *The Great Gatsby* requires it.”⁷⁴⁶ A week later production was “in full swing” and in late June a new actress was added to the cast, Ruby Blaine; the day after, the scene of the car accident was shot.⁷⁴⁷ On 2 July, Lois Wilson celebrated her birthday on the set – of course with a “Great Gatsby party.”⁷⁴⁸ *Film Daily* finished its month-long report on the film adaptation’s production announcing: “Work on ‘The Great Gatsby’ is scheduled to be completed by July 19.”⁷⁴⁹ Cutting and editing finished in late October.⁷⁵⁰

The film was nationally released on 8 November 1926 and distributed to the major theatres across the country.⁷⁵¹ The print was screened at the 2,900-seat Oriental

⁷⁴³ Gertrude Driscoll, “What the Stars Are Doing. And Where You May Write to Them,” *Motion Picture Magazine*, August 1926, p. 90; “Gunboat Smith,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 15 July 1926, p. 14. On the Famous Player Studios in Astoria see Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, pp. 103-4.

⁷⁴⁴ “New York,” *Ogden-Standard-Examiner*, 28 November 1926, p. 21.

⁷⁴⁵ “Starting ‘The Great Gatsby,’” *Film Daily*, 23 May 1926, p. 27; “Finishes Continuity,” *Film Daily*, 13 June 1926, p. 15; “Tover to Grind,” *Film Daily*, 13 June 1926, p. 15.

⁷⁴⁶ “And That’s That!” *Film Daily*, 14 June 1926, p. 3.

⁷⁴⁷ “In Eastern Studios,” *Film Daily*, 20 June 1926, p. 12. “Ruby Blaine Added to Cast,” *Film Daily*, June 29, 1926, p. 2; “And That’s That” *Film Daily*, 30 June 1926, p. 4.

⁷⁴⁸ “And That’s That!” *Film Daily*, 2 July 1926, p. 6.

⁷⁴⁹ “Finish July 19,” *Film Daily*, 12 July 1926, p. 7. On August 1, the same magazine confirmed that the production had been completed, “Eastern Studios,” *Film Daily*, 1 August 1926, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁰ “Finishing Cutting,” *Film Daily*, 31 October 1926, p. 6.

⁷⁵¹ “Releases of National Distributors in 1926,” *Film Year Book 1927* (New York: Wid’s Films and Film Folks, 1928), p. 391.

theatre in Chicago in the week commencing on 13 November; at the 4,000-seat Metropolitan theatre in Boston on 20 November; at the 2,000-seat Rivoli movie palace in Broadway on 21 November; at the 2,200-seat Strand in Providence on 27 November.⁷⁵² Virtually all the scholars who have written about the 1926 *Gatsby* claimed that it was a flop that lasted only a few weeks in U.S. theatres. Nicholas Tredell states: “[a critic’s] negative response seems to have been shared by the cinema public [...] the film lasted only two weeks at the Rivoli Theatre and had no success elsewhere.”⁷⁵³ Margolies also declares that “after only two weeks the film was pulled from the Rivoli Theatre and did little business elsewhere,” while Thomas Morgan notes that “by all accounts, the 1926 adaptation did not do well at the box office and soon disappeared after a few weeks.”⁷⁵⁴ Although it is true that the film was screened only for two weeks at the Broadway theatre (November 21- December 5, 1926), it was not because of the public’s reaction but rather because of the “policy of a weekly change” the Rivoli had at the time.⁷⁵⁵

Additionally, 1920s film trade magazines seem to disprove scholars’ assumptions that the film failed. Contemporary reports recording the total gross of *Gatsby* indicate that the film achieved average success at the box office in many theatres across the country. At the Rivoli, where the highest gross that year was \$35,000 and the lowest \$16,383, *Gatsby* earned \$25,000 (the price for a ticket ranged from 50 to 99 cents); at the Strand in Providence, where the highest gross that year

⁷⁵² *Film Year Book 1927*, p. 850; p. 852; p. 861; p. 864; “On Broadway,” *Film Daily*, 23 November 1926, p. 10.

⁷⁵³ Nicholas Tredell, *Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby*, p. 98.

⁷⁵⁴ Alan Margolies, “Novel to Play to Film,” p. 191; Thomas Morgan, “Sentimentalizing Daisy for the Screen,” p. 17.

⁷⁵⁵ *Motion Picture News* reported: “the current policy of a weekly change at the Rivoli Theatre, New York City, will be concluded with the present bill, headed by *The Great Gatsby*,” “Rivoli Playing Last Weekly Change Program,” *Motion Picture News*, 4 December 1926, p. 2174. On the constant changes of programs in silent picture palaces see Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, p. 34.

had been \$10,500 and the lowest \$3,500, it made \$6,500 (prices 15 to 40 cents); at the Oriental in Chicago, where the highest gross had been \$53,000 and the lowest \$40,000, it brought in \$47,000 (prices 35 to 75 cents); and at the Metropolitan in Boston where the highest gross had been \$60,880 and the lowest \$19,000, it earned \$30,500 (prices 50 to 65 cents).⁷⁵⁶

During the 1920s, *Motion Picture News* published a column called “The Check-up,” “a presentation in the briefest and most convenient form of reports received from exhibitors in every part of the country on current features, which makes it possible for the exhibitor to see what the picture has done for other theatre managers.”⁷⁵⁷ The magazine published nine reports on Brenon’s *The Great Gatsby*, which testify to the fact that the film had done “fair” if not “good” business. “The Check-up” columns also reveal for how long the film was screened in the United States. Published on 11 November 1927, exactly a year after the movie’s release, the last report shows that the film adaptation was still doing average “good” business around the country although it had been out for more than a year.⁷⁵⁸ The fact that *Gatsby* had not been a “big” success does not imply that it was a failure; as a Broadway reviewer summed up, the film did “fair business.”⁷⁵⁹

The same trade magazine suggested an “exploitation angle” to promote the film: “tie up with bookdealers. Play up author and mention that he won much success last season.”⁷⁶⁰ The truth, in Philip McGowan’s words, was that Fitzgerald was “absent from every one of the annual lists of top ten bestsellers” in the 1920s.⁷⁶¹ But

⁷⁵⁶ *Film Year Book 1927*, pp. 850-64.

⁷⁵⁷ “The Check-Up,” *Motion Picture News*, 11 March 1927, p. 872.

⁷⁵⁸ “The Check-Up,” *Motion Picture News*, 11 November 1927, p. 1495.

⁷⁵⁹ William A. Johnston, “An Editor on Broadway: The Week in Review,” *Motion Picture News*, 4 December 1926, p. 2129.

⁷⁶⁰ Laurence Reid, “The Great Gatsby: Good Acting and Direction Put it Over,” *Motion Picture News*, 11 December 1926, p. 2258.

⁷⁶¹ Philip McGowan, “Popular Literary Tastes,” p. 274.

readers of film magazines of the 1920s were told another story. On 2 December 1925, *Variety* titled an article “Fitzgerald’s Best Seller,” informing its readership that the novel was going to be adapted for the screen and the stage and that “in the interim [it was] proving a best seller.”⁷⁶² A year after this review, with *Gatsby* completely dead in the literary market, the *Modesto News Herald* announced that two cinemas offered “the screen version of a best seller story, *The Great Gatsby*.”⁷⁶³ *Motion Picture Magazine* also wrote: “the Great Gatsby has been a successful character. He was a best seller when he made his first public appearance between the covers of the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel [...] and now he is to try his fortune on the screen.”⁷⁶⁴ The impression abroad was also that the novel was a big success. Australian newspapers called *Gatsby* “a best seller based upon a most unusual theme,” “a book that proved one of the best sellers of its era,” and even a “world-read novel.”⁷⁶⁵ To advertise the 1926 *Gatsby*, newspapers around the world played up the novel’s success, persuading American and foreign moviegoers that the novel belonged, as Fitzgerald hoped, in “the best seller class.”

⁷⁶² “Fitzgerald’s Best Seller,” *Variety*, 2 December 1925, p. 55.

⁷⁶³ “Some Big Novels Being Filmed as Paramount Pictures,” *Modesto News Herald*, 29 December 1926, p. 9.

⁷⁶⁴ “The Great Gatsby,” *Motion Picture Magazine*, September 1926, p. 58.

⁷⁶⁵ “Some Big Novels Being Filmed as Paramount Pictures,” *The Advertiser*, 30 August 1926, p. 18; “Pictures for Football Club,” *South Eastern Times*, 20 September 1927, p. 2.

6.2 “From Gatsby’s Orange-squeezing Machine to the Molar Cuff Buttons of Wolfsheim”: Piecing Together the Lost Silent *Gatsby*⁷⁶⁶

At the beginning of his “history of the summer [of 1922],” Nick describes Daisy’s voice as “an arrangement of notes that will never be played again.”⁷⁶⁷ Although Brenon’s film (presumably) cannot be played again, its music score can. The most evanescent feature of the most fragile film medium was preserved thanks to a widespread practice in the 1920s: the thematic music cue sheet. Edison was the first company that provided musical suggestions to accompany its films in 1909, followed by Vitagraph the next year. Within three years, generic musical cue books became available, beginning with the Sam Fox Guide in 1913 and followed by publications from Schirmer and Photoplay Music. Volumes like Ernö Rapée’s *Motion Picture Moods*⁷⁶⁸ (1924), as Richard Koszarski notes,

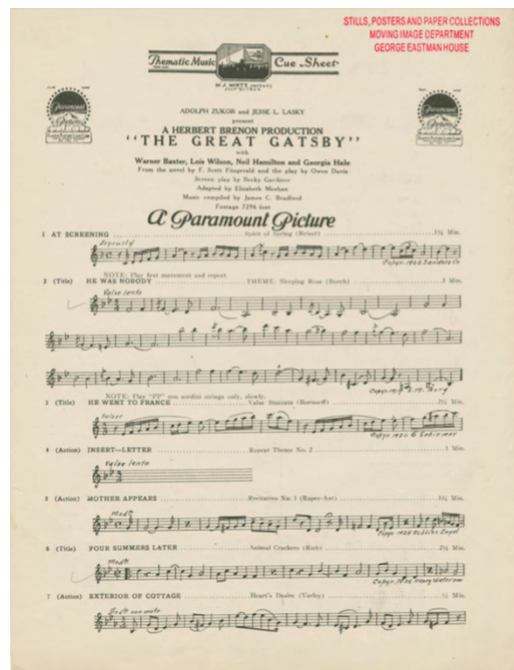


Figure 38 George Eastman House, “A Herbert Brenon Production,” p. 1

“helped if a musician had to face his or her subject cold, but generally accompanists

could count on at least some guidance from the distributor,” like cue sheets.⁷⁶⁸ Not universally available until the twenties, cue sheets were lists of recommended music

⁷⁶⁶ This expression is borrowed from a review of Owen Davies’s 1926 theatrical adaptation of *Gatsby*. The reviewer complained that Davies had been too conscientious in its effort to omit no detail and criticised “the attempt of the dramatization to gather in all the loose ends of the story from Gatsby’s orange-squeezing machine to the molar cuff buttons of Wolfsheim.” “From the Second Balcony,” *Barnard Bulletin*, 5 March 1926, p. 1. Although I was unable to find film stills showing orange-squeezing machines or molar cuff buttons, the title is meant to convey my intention to provisionally reconstruct the most powerful details of Brenon’s film adaptation.

⁷⁶⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 11.

⁷⁶⁸ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, p. 41. See also Anthony Slide, *Early American Cinema*, p. 119.

and titles cued to specific spots in a film. Part of the series of M. J. Mintz's Thematic Music Cue Sheets, the music suggestion for *The Great Gatsby* (Fig. 38) was produced by the highly successful company Cameo Music Service. Based in New York, Cameo offered settings for twenty-four different producers. Unlike other companies, they included the beginning of each piece's melody reproduced on a musical staff and reprinted music from several different publishers. *Gatsby's* cue sheet was prepared by the company's chief compiler, James C. Bradford, assisted by a distinguished stable of musicians. As Rick Altman notes in *Silent Film Sound*,

during the twenties, music directors and orchestra leaders depended heavily on cue sheets, as revealed by the number of handwritten notes on remaining copies. Cue sheets thus had an enormous influence on the motion picture music repertory. Selections chosen by cue sheet compilers were guaranteeing continued sales and playing time. With most cue sheet compilers doubling as publishers (Berg, Winkler), conductors (Bradford, Elinor, Kilenyi) composers (Beynon, Bradford, Kilenyi, Luz) and/or film music columnists (Berg, Beynon, Luz), cue sheets remained at the heart of 1920s film music practices.⁷⁶⁹

Music scholar Charles Merrell Berg considered the appearance of cue sheet specialists like Bradford, who had been the director of the Broadway theatre orchestra for seven years and was then music editor for Famous Pictures and First National, "a further indication that producers had come to regard the cue sheet as an essential investment in the successful presentation of their films." Berg describes the method to prepare cue sheets in these terms:

⁷⁶⁹ Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, pp. 346-53.

In the first stage as the picture was screened, [the music director] dictated the plot and action in proper sequence and speed to a phonograph. The second stage consisted of playing back the record and jotting down appropriate musical selections [...] the cue sheet was constantly refined until it included for each cue a description of either the title or action, a specific musical composition, the composer, the publisher, the character and tempo of the required music to give opportunity for substitutions, and the time.⁷⁷⁰

The cue sheet was especially helpful for conductors who, as Koszarski notes, “did not need to screen a film in advance to prepare [their] own orchestration of melodies, a great advantage given the frequency of program changes.”⁷⁷¹ Many major theatres such as New York City’s Rivoli, which showed *The Great Gatsby* in late November 1926, had large orchestras consisting of more than forty players under the baton of house conductor-arrangers who often became important names in film music composition, as Bradford did.⁷⁷² Given that the orchestra of the Rivoli needed to be ready to accompany a new film every two weeks, the usefulness of *Gatsby’s* Music Thematic Cue Sheet seems even more remarkable. However, it must be noted that it

⁷⁷⁰ Charles Merrell Berg, *An Investigation of the Motives for and Realization of Music to Accompany the American Silent Film, 1896-1927* (New York: Arno, 1976), p. 107; p. 112; p. 154.

⁷⁷¹ Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, p. 43.

⁷⁷² See Anthony Slide, *Early American Cinema*, p. 118. A study performed by cue sheet compiler Max Winkler reveals that by 1920 the country counted some 300 theatre orchestras of 30 or more musicians (2 years later Hugo Riesenfeld set the number at 500) out of a total of approximately 15,000 motion picture theatres. Some 3,500 theatres had orchestras of seven to twelve pieces, and another 3,500 had small ensembles of 3 or 4 musicians. According to these figures, approximately half the nation’s film theatres employed an orchestra. A 1922 *Motion Picture News* survey offers somewhat more conservative figures reporting 30 percent of theatres featuring some form of orchestra. Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, p. 303.

cannot be ascertained how many theatres actually used Bradford's recommended music for accompanying *The Great Gatsby*.

Compared to the directors who adapted *Gatsby* into sound film, Brenon arguably had an easier job, as the silent medium relieved him of, for example, deciding how to make Daisy's voice sound "full of money."⁷⁷³ But, the music compiler had to deal with a complicated synesthetic task, reinterpreting the elusive "yellow cocktail music" of *Gatsby*'s parties.⁷⁷⁴ As music scholar T. Austin Graham states, Fitzgerald "was an exemplary practitioner of the literary soundtrack [...] invoking the songs of his day not just for ambiance or as subject matter, but also as a means of creating a fresh, musical mode of reading and writing."⁷⁷⁵ Although Scott F. Stoddart notes that the "novel exhibits many filmic qualities, teasing any director to capture its essence: sumptuous sets, detailed costumes, even a musical soundtrack in Chapter Three," Bradford decided not to follow Fitzgerald's "soundtrack possibilities" (i.e. Whiting's "Ain't We Got Fun," Handy's "Beale Street Blues," Robledo's "Three O'Clock in the Morning," Hirsch's "The Love Nest," Smith's "The Sheik of Araby").⁷⁷⁶ Instead, his music cue sheet for *Gatsby* included other popular songs. As Rick Altman notes,

the early teens' prejudice against popular songs disappeared almost entirely in the late teens. Their prestige no longer in doubt, moving picture theaters could now return to their popular roots [...] While some commentators suggest

⁷⁷³ On Daisy's voice in the novel, see Scott F. Stoddart, "Redirecting Fitzgerald's 'Gaze,'" p. 105; Glenn Settle, "Fitzgerald's Daisy: The Siren Voice," *American Literature*, 57.1 (1985), 115-124.

⁷⁷⁴ On the other hand, Bradford evidently did not have to deal with the authenticity issues that arose with later sound adaptations of the film. At a screening of Clayton's 1974 *Gatsby*, Irene Kahn Atkins noted that: "the songs were setting up a wave of nostalgia for an era that the audience has never experienced [...] If the source music is to be recreated, the first question that arises is that of authenticity of orchestral arrangements." Irene Kahn Atkins, "The Melody Lingers On," *Focus on Film*, 26.3 (1977), 29-37, p. 29.

⁷⁷⁵ Austin T. Graham, *The Great American Songbooks*, p. 78.

⁷⁷⁶ Scott F. Stoddart, "Redirecting Fitzgerald's 'Gaze,'" p. 105.

reserving popular songs for comic situations, virtually everyone follows Roxy in claiming the usefulness of familiar melodies for film accompaniment [...] popular music remained an essential component of film accompaniments until the demise of silent films.⁷⁷⁷

The cue sheet also did not fail to include some pieces by Tchaikovsky and Verdi, as it was practice at the time even with films like *Gatsby* whose modern subjects one would now not associate with classical music.⁷⁷⁸

Besides being a source of musical interest, *Gatsby*'s music score helps provisionally reconstruct the film thanks to its description of "Title" (subtitles) and "Action," which were originally cues for the players. Details from the cue sheet can be cross-referenced with information from foreign novelizations, Meehan's treatment outline and other reception material to reconstruct the film. As Thomas Morgan notes, "since the screenplay [by Becky Gardiner] is no longer in existence, it is difficult to gauge what changes were made from treatment outline to script."⁷⁷⁹ Compiled after the shooting of the film, the cue sheet remains the most reliable trace of *Gatsby*'s script, as revealed by a change of the chronological order of events in the film that Gardiner made to Meehan's treatment that is preserved in Bradford's musical suggestion. While the treatment outline suggests that Daisy's wedding was shown in a flashback after the iconic scene of the white curtains blown by the breeze in the Buchanans' home, the cue sheet reveals that in the finished film the scene

⁷⁷⁷ Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, p. 313.

⁷⁷⁸ Describing his career as cue sheet compiler, Max Winkler confessed: "in desperation we turned to crime. We began to dismember the great masters. We began to murder the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Grieg, J. S. Bach, Verdi, Bizet, Tchaikovsky and Wagner – everything that wasn't protected by copyright from our pilfering." Qtd. in Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, p. 361; p. 365. On the battle raging between populists and classicists in silent-film scoring, see Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, p. 44.

⁷⁷⁹ Thomas Morgan, "Sentimentalizing Daisy for the Screen," p. 15.

appears chronologically after Gatsby goes to France. In general, the 1926 *Gatsby* has a much simpler structure than its source text. Only one party at Gatsby's mansion is retained from the novel, while the characters of Nick and Jordan are marginalised, losing their original narrative function.

The film opens in the veranda of an old Southern home in Louiseville, on “a glorious evening in 1917.”⁷⁸⁰ The music playing at the beginning of the screening was the up-tempo song “Spirit of Spring” by Czech-American composer Alois Reiser. *The Great Gatsby* begins with a flashback showing a not-yet-great Gatsby (Warner Baxter) and Daisy (Lois Wilson) followed by a title card labelling the protagonist: “He was nobody.”⁷⁸¹ Two film stills preserved at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research show the young lovers sitting on a long wicker chair in Daisy's garden, kissing passionately. As Paramount's press sheet explains, the following scene reveals that “though their different stations seem to offer an insurmountable obstacle, Gatsby swears that he will raise himself to her level. If she waits for him, he will place the world at her feet. Daisy promises [letters missing] as Jay marches off to the war.”⁷⁸² For this scene, Bradford suggested that the orchestra play a *valse lento* by Gaston Borch called “Sleeping Rose,” which is the musical theme of the film and recurs in all the love scenes between Jay and Daisy. The Spanish and Brazilian novelizations of the film offer a version of what Gatsby might have said to Daisy in a dialogue intertitle:

⁷⁸⁰ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 1.

⁷⁸¹ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” Thematic Music Cue Sheet, Paramount Pictures, Moving Image Department, George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY, 1-4, p. 1.

⁷⁸² “The Great Gatsby,” Press Sheet, Paramount Pictures, Moving Image Section, Motion Picture and Television Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 1-7, p. 1.

I am going to become rich so that I can provide you with anything you might need! I will buy you the most fashionable Parisian clothes. I will do all my best to study and elevate myself to your level. I will keep you far from my enemy Buchanan. We will marry as soon as I return from war.⁷⁸³

Footage from the film trailer preserves this scene, as indicated in the second subtitle of the cue sheet, in which Daisy and Jay say good-bye before “he went to France,” accompanied by a “Valse Staccato” by Josef Borisoff.

The Brazilian novelization suggests that the next subtitle read something like “next spring Daisy, influenced by her family, married Tom Buchanan.”⁷⁸⁴ Shortly before the wedding, Daisy receives a letter from Gatsby; the cue sheet indicates a close-up on the missive accompanied by the love theme by Borch.⁷⁸⁵ A film still preserved at the George Eastman Museum shows Daisy while lying in bed in her wedding gown, looking sad and pensive. According to the treatment outline, Jordan helps Daisy from the bed toward the bathroom and “tries to take the letter from [her] hand but Daisy stubbornly refuses to let it go.”⁷⁸⁶ Her mother, “a distinguished and stately Southern lady,” hurries into the room while, as *Photoplay* reports, Daisy is in a bathtub “a trifle tight and murmurs inanely ‘Daisy isn’t going to marry anybody,’” followed by another intertitle saying: “I’ve never had a drink before in my life, and I love it.”⁷⁸⁷ The *New York Times* reports that her first drink was nothing less than

⁷⁸³ “Tudo por Dinheiro,” *A Scena Muda*, 7.351 (1927), 10-30; p. 10. “La Ajena Felicidad,” *Mensajero Paramount: Al Servicio del Exhibidor*, New York: Paramount International Corporation, 5.3 (March 1927), 9-10, p. 9. The Spanish and Brazilian novelizations of the film have been translated into English by the author of this thesis.

⁷⁸⁴ “Tudo por Dinheiro,” p. 10.

⁷⁸⁵ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 1.

⁷⁸⁶ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 14.

⁷⁸⁷ Gaynor Wagstaff, “An Idol is Smashed,” *Photoplay*, October 1927, p. 143; Hariette Underhill, “On the Screen,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*; “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 1.

absinthe: “she takes enough of this beverage to render the average person unconscious. Yet she appears only mildly intoxicated, and soon recovers.”⁷⁸⁸

The next scene represents the wedding guests in the living room “prepared to see her married to her mother’s choice.” If the costume designer followed the treatment outline, Tom was attired in his morning clothes, a white carnation in his buttonhole, silk hat and cane.⁷⁸⁹ While in the novel Jordan retrospectively describes the Buchanans’ wedding to Nick in Chapter Four, in the film it comes after Jay’s departure. If Fitzgerald never suggested that the “gay again, gay as ever” Daisy was forced into marrying Tom, Meehan gives Mrs Fay a stronger role in her daughter’s marital destiny.⁷⁹⁰ According to the treatment, the woman calls Daisy inside while she is saying goodbye to Gatsby.⁷⁹¹ Although it is not clear whether this scene was kept in the script, the press sheet of the film also confirms that Daisy was “swayed by parental authority [to marry] Tom Buchanan.”⁷⁹² One of the many notes that Meehan added to the treatment outline reads “we must bring out in this wedding sequence that the mother [...] is almost forcing her child to a loveless marriage – a question of social equality.”⁷⁹³ By representing Daisy as an obedient child rather than a “careless” woman, Famous-Players-Lasky presumably tried to make her character more sympathetic and consistent with traditional gender roles.

According to the cue sheet, the next intertitle moves the action to “Four summers later.”⁷⁹⁴ The press sheet indicates that the film’s opening scene in Louisville is set in 1917 and the Long Island scenes in 1926, which means that the

⁷⁸⁸ Mordaunt Hall, “Gold and Cocktails,” *New York Times*, 22 November 1926, p. 28.

⁷⁸⁹ Mollie Gray, “Gray Matter,” *Variety*, 1 December 1926, p. 21; Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 14.

⁷⁹⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 60.

⁷⁹¹ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 1.

⁷⁹² “The Great Gatsby,” Press Sheet, p. 1.

⁷⁹³ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 13.

⁷⁹⁴ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 1.

Buchanans' wedding was set in 1921. This scenarist allowed four years between Gatsby's leaving for the battle front and Daisy marrying Tom, while Fitzgerald conveyed his heroine's carelessness by describing her debut just after the Armistice and her wedding a few months later. The music suggested for the first Long Island scene is a popular song of the year in which the film was released, "I'm Just Wild About Animal Crackers." While the most significant party songs in the novel, in Austin T. Graham's words, "very deliberately situate the plot in 1922," the film situates it in 1926, and presumably Bradford wanted to use currently popular songs.⁷⁹⁵ If, as Graham notes, Fitzgerald's allusions to famous contemporary music locate the "mythic, imagined world" of his novel in a "specifically dated, eminently recognizable setting," Bradford's selection of tunes by the most renowned musicians of the time similarly anchored *Gatsby's* silent film adaptation, and also seems to have been chosen primarily for their lyrical content. The lyrics of "I'm Just Wild About Animal Crackers," a novelty song co-written by Duke Ellington's bandleader Freddie Rich with Sam Coslow, suggest that the song might have been used for comic relief.⁷⁹⁶ Given that the 1926 song was meant to accompany the iconic scene of the novel in which Gatsby looks across the bay, the singer's craving for animal crackers ironically parallel the hero's longing for Daisy:

Everybody has some weakness

And so have I

Something I long for

I'm mighty strong for

It's my only dissipation

⁷⁹⁵ Austin T. Graham, *The Great American Songbooks*, p. 78.

⁷⁹⁶ See A. H. Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 66-67.

I won't deny

You would never guess

What brings me happiness

Oh! I'm just wild about Animal Crackers.⁷⁹⁷

“A party is being held at Gatsby’s,” explains the press sheet, while “across the bay, a green light twinkles on the Buchanan dock. To Gatsby it symbolizes a love that still burns.”⁷⁹⁸ Meehan indicated that Gatsby’s eyes should “become longingly fixed on a tiny single green light across the bay.” While I could not find evidence of how Brenon handed the “colossal significance of that light,” I can only assume a reference to it appeared in an intertitle.⁷⁹⁹ But a note in the treatment reveals that the studio did struggle with the transfer of the emblematic colour to the silver screen:

at the conference with the heads of the departments the difficulty of handing the green light and the night effects were brought up. We have therefore decided not to make it late evening until during the scene [...] between Buchanan, his wife and Jordan Baker. We must however get the effect from Buchanan’s porch of Gatsby’s house lighted up, LIKE AN AMUSEMENT PARK.⁸⁰⁰

The expression in block letters “like an amusement park” was taken from Chapter Three of the book where the uninvited guests to Gatsby’s party are described as

⁷⁹⁷ Fred Rich, Sam Coslow, Harry Link, “I’m Just Wild About Animal Crackers,” digitalised by Indiana Historical Society <<http://images.indianahistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16797coll1/id/1239>> [accessed 31 May 2018].

⁷⁹⁸ “The Story” in “The Great Gatsby,” Press Sheet, p. 1.

⁷⁹⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 73.

⁸⁰⁰ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” pp. 8-9.

conducting “themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks.” By recommending to light up Gatsby’s house like an amusement park, the treatment writer emphasised the importance of transferring to the screen the cinematic potential of Gatsby’s mansion as “a site of technological innovation and carnival excess.”⁸⁰¹ If Brenon could not render either the party “gaudy [...] primary colors” or the “yellow cocktail music” in the black and white silent film, he could “get the effect” of the lights “enough [...] to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby’s enormous garden.”⁸⁰²

The camera then moves from Gatsby’s garishly lit amusement park to Nick’s respectable cottage (“Action: exterior of cottage”) with a title card most likely explaining that in there lived Daisy’s cousin, Nick Carraway (Neil Hamilton). The treatment reveals that Gatsby’s butler knocks at the door of Nick’s house “squeezed between the mansion and another pretentious estate” that has “a view of the water and a partial view of his neighbor’s mansion and lawn.” If the script followed the treatment outline, an intertitle here read, “Mr. Gatsby’s compliments, sir, and he hopes you are coming over to the party.” Carraway indicates that he will be right over.⁸⁰³ No longer the story’s narrator, Nick lost his function; *Variety* described him as “a sort of disinterested onlooker.”⁸⁰⁴

In the first of the four flash-backs, the camera takes the viewers back to Gatsby’s house. As Rick Altman notes, in silent films the flash-backs “were not the more recent psychological flashbacks, but rapid returns to a part of the story previously presented, involving anything from a single insert to substantial

⁸⁰¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 8; p. 34; Philip McGowan, “The American Carnival of *The Great Gatsby*,” *Connotations*, 15.1-3 (2005-2006), 143-158, p. 151.

⁸⁰² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, pp. 33-34.

⁸⁰³ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 4.

⁸⁰⁴ Abel Green, “The Great Gatsby,” *Variety*, 24 November 1926, p. 15.

crosscutting.”⁸⁰⁵ Another 1926 song accompanies the party, “Got no Time” by Gus Kahn and Richard A. Whiting, the same authors of “Ain’t We Got Fun,” which Mr. Klipspringer plays at Gatsby’s command in the novel.⁸⁰⁶ The lyrics of “Got No Time” read,

Got no time to worry ’bout the rain or snow – No No
Got no time to worry if the wind don’t blow – Just so
Winter summer spring and fall – they all come and go
Maybe I don’t like ’em all
But who wants to know
Got no time to worry how the time does fly – away
Good times gone but more are comin’ bye and bye – some day
So if any trouble should set up set me
First it’s got to come and get me
Got no time I’ve absolutely got no time.⁸⁰⁷

Given that one of the dominant themes of the novel is Gatsby’s struggle against time (as Brucoli notes, the novel is “time-haunted” from the beginning to end and contains 450 time words), Bradford’s suggestion of playing a song whose lyrics read “good times gone but more are comin’ bye and bye” just before the meeting between Daisy and Jay was likely meant as an echo to the book’s concern with fleeting time.⁸⁰⁸

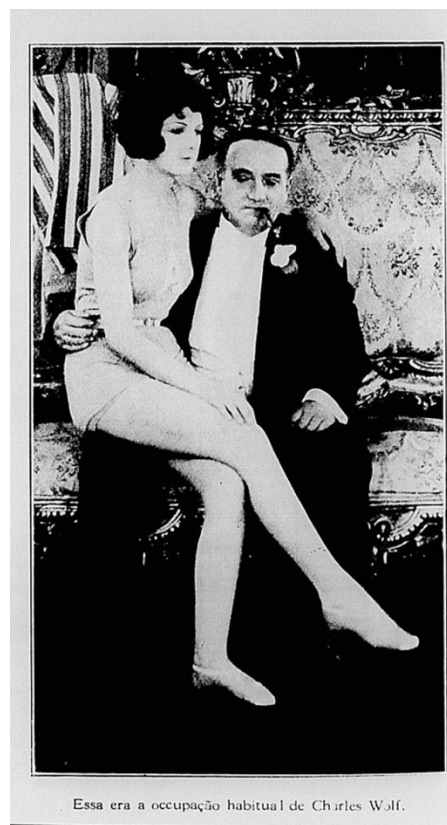
⁸⁰⁵ Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, p. 371.

⁸⁰⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 75.

⁸⁰⁷ Gus Kahn, Richard A. Whiting, “Got No Time” (New York and Detroit: Jerome H. Remick and Co., 1925), 1-5, pp. 3-5.

⁸⁰⁸ Matthew J. Brucoli, “Introduction,” in *New Essays on The Great Gatsby*, ed. by Matthew J. Brucoli, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 11.

Virtually all the reviews of the film mention the lavish party given by Gatsby at his mansion. *Mensajero Paramount*, a magazine that the studio circulated in Hispanophone countries, suggests the reason for the title of the Spanish film version, *La Ajena Felicidad* (“The Happiness Of Others”). “It seems like the parties he gave in his beautiful mansion had the only purpose of making other people happy.”⁸⁰⁹ The Brazilian novelization of the film notes that “these parties were always attended by Charles Wolf [George Nash as



Meyer Wolfshiem], an expert gambler who used to waste all his wins in illicit traffic.”⁸¹⁰

Figure 39 “Tudo por Dinheiro,” *A Cena Muda*, p. 10

A caption of a picture showing Mr. Wolf with a young lady sitting on his lap (Fig. 39) specified Gatsby’s associate had other hobbies besides gambling, namely women. While in *The Beautiful and Damned* movie Warner Brothers kept the name of Fitzgerald’s other famous Jewish character, Joseph Bloeckman, in the *Gatsby* film version, Paramount anglicized Meyer Wolfshiem’s name into Charles Wolf.

Another scene from the party shows Gatsby tossing “twenty-dollar gold pieces into the water, and [...] a number of the girls diving for the coins. A clever bit of comedy is introduced by a girl asking what Gatsby is throwing into the water, and as soon as this creature hears that they are real gold pieces she unhesitatingly plunges

⁸⁰⁹ “La Ajena Felicidad,” p. 9.

⁸¹⁰ “Tudo por Dinheiro,” p. 10.

into the pool to get a share.”⁸¹¹ An American review of the film reported that “in many situations it is plainly evident that the efforts of the producer were directed toward making the picture attractive by means of bare legs; in the scene of the revelry in the hero’s garden too many legs are shown to make the picture suitable for the family circle and too much drinking and love-making.”⁸¹² According to an



Figure 40 *Truth*, 12 September 1926, p. 8

unidentified article that Fitzgerald pasted in his scrapbook: “the particular flare of Gatsby for giving large and sumptuous parties on the lawn, in his pool and all about the porches of his suburban home is screened in detail.”⁸¹³ One of these “fleeting” outdoor party scenes has been preserved in an article published by the Australian newspaper *Truth* (Fig. 40), while the one-minute trailer also briefly shows guests diving in the swimming pool and running around Gatsby’s mansion.⁸¹⁴

The music cue sheet then suggests a change of mood in the film, likely conveyed through a scene showing Gatsby accompanied by Edwin H. Lemare’s

⁸¹¹ Mordaunt Hall, “Gold and Cocktails.”

⁸¹² “The Great Gatsby: With Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter” *Harrison’s Reports*, 4 December 1926, p. 195. *Moving Picture World* also mildly complained about the “display of legs” as it took time away from the dramatic development: “one trouble with the play is to be found in an excessive and unnecessary display of legs and underwear. The legs are shapely and the lingerie lacy, but they cannot replace drama and they usurp the footage that is needed for dramatic development.” Epes W. Sargent, “The Great Gatsby: Exceptionally Good Cast Pictorially Interprets Scott Fitzgerald’s Story of Post-War Development,” *Moving Picture World*, 4 December 1926, p. 365.

⁸¹³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

⁸¹⁴ “Filmland’s Fleeting Forms,” *Truth*, 12 September 1926, p. 8.

romantic song “A Reminiscence from ‘Melodie Sketches.’” The Brazilian novelization helps complete the title explaining the scene, signalled in the music cue sheet with “In the hope”: “Gatsby hoped to be liked by the high society, *in the hope* that one day Daisy, who lived nearby, would be attracted by the splendour of his dances and the happiness of his outdoor parties.”⁸¹⁵ *Motion Picture Magazine* reveals

that the action then moves from Gatsby’s mansion to the Buchanans’ one. At this point, the cue sheet reports: “Girls’ legs appear” and suggests the musicians accompany the scene with another popular 1926 song by Gus Kahn, “Chatter.” The camera focuses on two pair of legs that, as a caption of a scene from the film in *Motion*



Figure 41 *Motion Picture Magazine*, November 1926, p. 66

Picture Magazine states (Fig. 41), belong to

Jordan (Carmelita Geraghty) and Daisy.⁸¹⁶ A review of the film reveals that the next scene shows Daisy “sitting by the window in her home; the breeze blows her dress, which is made out of light material, disclosing her legs to a point where in a polite society no woman would have shown them.”⁸¹⁷

As the press sheet reports, “Daisy and her chum [...] are impatiently awaiting Tom’s arrival.”⁸¹⁸ Buchanan gets home with much delay and, according to the treatment, Jordan suggests they go to Gatsby’s party. The cue sheet indicates that the

⁸¹⁵ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 2; “Tudo por Dinheiro,” p. 10.

⁸¹⁶ Milton Howe, Elizabeth Greer, “News of the Camera Coasts,” *Motion Picture Magazine*, November 1926, 66-68, p. 66.

⁸¹⁷ “The Great Gatsby: With Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter.”

⁸¹⁸ “The Story” in “The Great Gatsby,” Press Sheet, p. 1.

next scene shows “Tom and Girl leave [the house],” accompanied by Giovanni E. Conterno’s song “Reverie.” The treatment uncovers that the girl accompanying Tom is Jordan; Daisy has stayed home pretending to have a headache. Meehan indicates the “name of Gatsby is a terrific shock to Daisy” and she prefers not to go to the party as it “awakened memories too poignant to dismiss from her mind.”⁸¹⁹ After having suggested that Daisy was coerced by her family to marry Tom, this is the second (but not last) time that the adaptation pushes the interpretation that the “golden girl” genuinely loves Gatsby.

The second flashback of the film explains the reason for Tom’s delay. “On the Road to New York,” an intertitle reads, he has a meeting with Myrtle, “a garage-keeper’s wife,” accompanied by 1926 song “Jolly Trotters” by Gillet. As the cue sheet reveals, the scene in which “Myrtle appears” is underscored by a song entitled “Just a Girl You Wouldn’t Marry.” Although I was unable to find any detailed information on this song, its title suggests that the music compiler chose it for its literalism. Accompanied by another song by Gillet, “Village Holiday,” the action goes back to Long Island with a “flashback to Jay.” The cue sheet indicates that Gatsby is now about to enter Nick’s cottage with Domenico Savino’s “Second Misterioso à la Valse” playing in the background. There is a “knock on door” accompanied by the *adagio* “Elegie” by Lubomirsky.⁸²⁰ The *New York Times* reports that, “when Gatsby appears as the mysteriously wealthy individual [Daisy] goes to

⁸¹⁹ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 12.

⁸²⁰ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 2.



Figure 42 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Great Gatsby*

Nick Carraway’s house to meet him. Here one perceives a regular movie deluge of rain.”⁸²¹ For the scene where “Daisy recognizes Gatsby,” instead of her “voice on a clear artificial note,”

and the sound of the “deluge of rain,” the cue sheet suggests that orchestras repeat the romantic theme song by Borch.⁸²² Two stills held at MoMA Film Study Center preserved a glimpse of Nick’s living room, first of the moment where Gatsby enters in the room (Fig. 42), and then of the two talking, while Nick quite uncomfortably looks outside (Fig. 43). *Motion Picture Magazine* also published a film still of this scene showing Nick

servicing tea to his two guests and the iconic “defunct mantelpiece clock,” although it is not tilting “dangerously at the pressure of [Gatsby]’s head” (Fig.



Figure 43 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Great Gatsby*

44).⁸²³

⁸²¹ Mordaunt Hall, “Gold and Cocktails.”

⁸²² “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 2.

⁸²³ “A Forecast of the New Screen Plays,” *Motion Picture Magazine*, October 1926, p. 56; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 68.

A change of scene follows: the camera now focuses on a “puppy drinking milk,” while orchestras were told to play the 1924 popular song “Follow the Swallow” by Ray Henderson.⁸²⁴ As the press sheet reports, “while Daisy is having tea with



Figure 44 *Motion Picture Magazine*, October 1926, p. 56

Gatsby, her husband is meeting Myrtle Wilson.”⁸²⁵ Instead of the apartment at 158th street in Manhattan, Brenon had Tom and Myrtle secretly meet in a Harlem apartment. Setting their adulterous meeting in an area famous nationally as the black neighbourhood in New York was likely made to underscore the illicit aspect of the extra-marital affair and reinforce the working class status of “the girl you wouldn’t marry.” Although Nicholas Tredell states that there are two extra characters in the film whose functions remain obscure, Lord Digby and Bert (played respectively by Eric Blore and Gunboat Smith), the Brazilian novelization reveals that Bert was Catherine’s husband, a car conductor owner of the Harlem apartment in question.⁸²⁶ *The Chicago Tribune* disclosed the function of Lord Digby: he “substituted for the original Klipspringer, the Oxford toady.”⁸²⁷

⁸²⁴ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 3.

⁸²⁵ “Highlights” in “The Great Gatsby,” Press Sheet, p. 1.

⁸²⁶ Nicholas Tredell, *Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby*, p. 97. As *A Scena Muda* explains, by letting Myrtle use her apartment, Catherine is protecting her sister’s affair with Tom. “Tudo por Dinheiro,” pp. 10-30.

⁸²⁷ “Closeups,” *Chicago Tribune*, 7 July 1926, p. 37. Regarding Klipspringer – apparently later renamed Lord Digby by Gardiner – Meehan writes: “Klipspringer has been changed to an English peer [...] We must bring home the fact that Gatsby gives this “nobleman” free board because of the former association at Oxford and because of his blue blood.” Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 8. In the novel, on the contrary, Gatsby gives Klipspringer “free board” out of generosity.

The Brazilian novelization reports Myrtle's sister Catherine sarcastically telling her husband: "Everyday Tom gives a present to Myrtle. To her, love is a good thing: helps pay the bill."⁸²⁸ In fact, an altercation soon arises between Tom and Myrtle, "indicating that their liaison is due for a break."⁸²⁹ For this scene, the orchestra was ironically recommended to play "I Love My Baby" by Harry Warren and Bud Green, whose lyrics seem to substitute for dialogue when they say:

Sometimes we quarrel, and maybe we fight,
But then we make up the following night!
When we're together, we're great company,
I love my baby, my baby loves me!

Given that in the original text Tom breaks Myrtle's nose "with his open hand," the song's line "he gives me kisses, each one is a smack" becomes rather more telling.⁸³⁰ The action returns to Long Island, where Gatsby proudly shows Daisy his "colossal affair" of a house and the medals he received during the war.⁸³¹ The Brazilian novelization reports a dialogue between Daisy and Gatsby that suggests the film might have included an anti-militarist intertitle reading:

'Are these medals yours?'

'Yes, they are. I was happy during the war.'

'Killing people with a machine gun cannot bring [...] happiness.'⁸³²

⁸²⁸ "Tudo por Dinheiro," p. 30.

⁸²⁹ "The Great Gatsby," Press Sheet, p. 1.

⁸³⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 31.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8; p. 68.

⁸³² "Tudo por Dinheiro," p. 30.

The last flashback takes the action back to Harlem, while a second song by Ray Henderson, “I’m Sitting on Top of the World,” plays in the background. Here Brenon shot a close-up on the lawyer’s card that, according to the treatment, Myrtle gives Tom telling him to get a divorce from his wife.⁸³³ Accompanied by Irene Berge’s “Appassionato Dramatico,” Tom tells her not to say Daisy’s name again; when she does, instead of breaking her nose (as in the novel), he covers her mouth with his hand. The removal of violence, as Thomas Morgan notes, was meant to soften Tom’s character and “make him seem a gentler, family man, [enabling] a more easily accepted domestic resolution to the Buchanan family at the end of [the film].”⁸³⁴ Many viewers remained unconvinced, however, a point to which I will return.

For the last time, the film takes the viewers back to Gatsby’s home. The song Bradford chose for this scene is the same one that *Film Daily* suggested exhibitors play in the exhibition stunt, “Memories” by Gustave Kahn and Egbert Van Alstyne. Once again, the song’s lyrics are telling. As Graham notes, in the novel Gatsby’s songs of courtship and nostalgia “seemed in many ways to be perfectly suited to the scenes, people and actions they accompany.”⁸³⁵ Kahn’s lyrics likely performed the same function:

Round me at twilight come stealing
Shadows of days that are gone
Dreams of the old days revealing
Memories of love’s golden dawn

⁸³³ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 3; Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 25.

⁸³⁴ See Thomas Morgan, “Sentimentalizing Daisy for the Screen,” pp. 15-16.

⁸³⁵ Austin T. Graham, *The Great American Songbooks*, p. 106.

Memories, Memories
Dreams of love, so true
O'er the Sea of Memory
I'm drifting back to you
Childhood days.
Wild wood days.
Among the birds and bees
You left me alone.
But still you're my own!
In my beautiful memories.⁸³⁶

A review in Fitzgerald's scrapbook suggests how appropriate the lyrics of "Memories" are for this scene: "Gatsby shows the girl his palatial home, the home he would have provided for her. With everything of the world and nothing of the soul, fanning the dead embers of their passion, he shows her what might have been."⁸³⁷ Gatsby also shows Daisy "his wardrobe [that] resembles the stock of a haberdashery [with its dozens and dozens of shirts]."⁸³⁸ Another article describes Gatsby's "childish pride in that overwhelming house" and his "dozens and dozens of monogrammed shirts."⁸³⁹ A film still preserved at the WCFTR shows Gatsby holding

⁸³⁶ Egbert Van Alstyne, Gustave Kahn, "Memories," *Historic Sheet Music Collection* <<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/sheetmusic/909>> [accessed 31 May 2018].

⁸³⁷ "Great Gatsby is Good," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

⁸³⁸ A reviewer complained that, "in spite of the fact that he owns dozens and dozens of shirts, Gatsby attends a party in the Plaza in the same shirt he wore while standing in the rain waiting to meet 'the girl he left behind him.'" "The Great Gatsby," *Film Daily*, 28 November 1926, p. 13. A clipping in Fitzgerald's scrapbook reports that Gatsby's "expensive tasteless silk shirts, hundreds of them, with which he tried to fill her place in his heart" would "make a turkey bawl." F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

⁸³⁹ Eileen Creelman, "Three in Cast Dominate 'Great Gatsby' on Screen," F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

a pile of shirts, whose colours are ironed out by the black and white photograph. Daisy looks sad; Nick stands supportively next to his cousin.

The treatment indicates that the next scene shows Carraway looking out the window and seeing “below on the driveway” Tom and Jordan Baker getting out of a coupe. In an intertitle, Nick explains “Jordan and Tom are at my cottage,” to the accompaniment of a second song by Savino, “Misterioso à la Valse.”⁸⁴⁰ The three go out of the house and meet Jordan and Tom, who are looking at Gatsby’s car. Again faced with the question of how to transfer Fitzgerald’s use of colour to the silver screen, Brenon changed Gatsby’s roadster from yellow to white.⁸⁴¹ However, the function of the car’s colour remained the same as in the novel; the press sheet noted that Brenon chose a white roadster as “white was considered rather impractical except for the wealthiest and most fastidious of owners.”⁸⁴² The Brazilian novelization suggests that a dialogue intertitle may have been inserted here, anticipating what Tom asks Gatsby at the Plaza in the novel:

‘Tell me, is it true that you studied at the University of Oxford for only five months? Did they expel you?’

‘No, they didn’t! The officers who distinguished themselves during the war were offered to study for five months at Oxford.’⁸⁴³

⁸⁴⁰ “Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 29. “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 3.

⁸⁴¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 221.

⁸⁴² “‘My Kingdom for a Car’ Said Brenon,” in “The Great Gatsby,” Press Sheet, p. 5.

⁸⁴³ “Tudo por Dinheiro,” p. 30.

As in Fitzgerald's book, the group decides to ride to New York. Accompanied by Irene Berge's "Drammatico Andante N. 39," "Tom stops at the Wilson garage and learns that Wilson suspects his



Figure 45 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Great Gatsby* wife's duplicity," as shown in a film still held at MoMA (Fig. 45).⁸⁴⁴ The cue sheet indicates that in the next scene "Tom and friends enter [the Plaza] apartment," to the accompaniment of the popular 1925 song "Here In My Arms" by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. A verse of the song, in particular, suggests Daisy's duplicity and carelessness:

Your pretty words were adorable
It's deplorable
that they were only lies.
Still you will find I am affable
it was laughable
that I believed your eyes.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴⁴ "A Herbert Brenon Production: 'The Great Gatsby,'" p. 3.

⁸⁴⁵ Dorothy Hart and Robert Kimball, eds., *The Complete Lyrics of Lorenz Hart* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), p. 58.

To the moviegoers who had read Fitzgerald's novel, the song must have sounded a cruel premonition of Gatsby's destiny. As the press sheet states: "in a room at the Plaza, the brewing storm breaks. Tom charges Gatsby with making love to his wife, calling him an intruder and a bootlegger. Jay cannot deny the accusations."⁸⁴⁶ An American film review notes that "the husband of the heroine tells her, in order to



Figure 46 *The South Western Times*, 11 February 1928, p. 5.

prevent her from following the hero, that he (the hero) was a bootlegger [who] had earned his wealth by selling alcohol. How he knew it no one knows; it is not explained, or even intimated at any time."⁸⁴⁷ The music cue sheet reveals that an intertitle began: "I suppose I should stand by." An Australian newspaper reports what probably was the rest of the title card which reused Fitzgerald's text almost verbatim: "I suppose I should stand by and see Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to my wife."⁸⁴⁸ In the next intertitle, Gatsby said: "But she does not love you, she loves me" (Fig. 46).⁸⁴⁹ The Brazilian novelization offers a version of how the exchange ended:

⁸⁴⁶ "The Story" in "The Great Gatsby," Press Sheet, p. 1.

⁸⁴⁷ "The Great Gatsby: With Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter."

⁸⁴⁸ "A Herbert Brenon Production: 'The Great Gatsby,'" p. 3. The passage in the novel reads: "I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife." F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 220.

⁸⁴⁹ "Lyric," *The South Western Times*, 11 February 1928, p. 5.

‘Mr Gatsby, you are a supporter of modern life, but everything has a limit in this world!’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Daisy wants to file for a divorce and marry me.’

‘This is impossible! My wife cannot listen to a man with no honor who works with Charles Wolf. You do not respect the laws of your country. Everyone, listen to me! Gatsby is a bootlegger. If I report him, they will imprison him for the rest of his life.’⁸⁵⁰

British trade magazine *Kinematograph Weekly* reveals that “after the altercation between the two men, Daisy agrees to leave Tom and to go away with Jay.”⁸⁵¹

Accompanied by Giuseppe Becce’s “Tragic Moments,” Daisy and Gatsby “rush out to the latter’s white roadster.”⁸⁵²

The action moves to the Wilsons’ house where George “finds evidence” of Myrtle’s infidelity, with “Agitated Hurry N.2” by Berge playing. An illustration in an Australian newspaper film still preserved the scene where George Wilson holds the incriminating puppy’s leash (Fig. 47).



Figure 47 *The Mackay Daily Mercury*, 13 August 1927, p. 15

⁸⁵⁰ “Tudo por Dinheiro,” p. 30.

⁸⁵¹ “The Great Gatsby,” *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 March 1927, p. 50.

⁸⁵² “The Great Gatsby,” Press Sheet, p. 1.

Myrtle runs out when she hears a car coming; the caption of the illustration suggests that a intertitle might have read “Help me, Tom- Save me!” She is then thrown into the ditch by the force of the car. Tom arrives at the garage and “the crowd [...] supply all details of the accident. He knew that it was Gatsby’s car, knew his wife had been with Gatsby and told Wilson.” Most likely in another intertitle, Wilson raved: “So, he was her lover – she ran out to speak to him and he wouldn’t stop.”⁸⁵³ The music cue sheet indicates that the exchange between Wilson and Tom was shot as “an interior night scene at the garage,” with Tchaikovsky’s “Pique Dame” playing in the background.⁸⁵⁴

Accompanied by Lorenzo Filiasi’s *adagio* “Manuel Menendez,” the next scene shows Tom and Daisy in their living room, as shown in a film still preserved at the MOMA (Fig. 48). According to Meehan’s treatment, Tom pleads “Let’s get away from it all Daisy, let’s start all over again, somewhere – away from everybody.”⁸⁵⁵ An American reviewer of the film reports that Daisy tells “her



Figure 48 MoMA, Film Study Center, film still of *The Great Gatsby*

husband that it was she who had caused the woman’s death by preventing the hero from stopping the machine in time to prevent the tragedy.” The critic complained that “no motive for her action is

⁸⁵³ “Theatre Royal Tonight,” *The Mackay Daily Mercury*, 13 August 1927, p. 15.

⁸⁵⁴ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 4.

⁸⁵⁵ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 42.

shown. Had she said that she did it because she had learned that the woman had been her husband's mistress, her act would have had a motive. If she assumes the blame to shield the absent-minded hero, the matter is not made clear.”⁸⁵⁶ Using one of Nick’s most powerful sentences in the novel, Tom says to Daisy in the film: “Let’s get away from this rotten bunch.”⁸⁵⁷ The biggest moral switch in the film thus assigns Nick’s last words to Gatsby (“They’re a rotten crowd [...] You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together”) to Tom, shifting sympathy to the Buchanans.⁸⁵⁸

In the meanwhile, an intertitle began with “Gatsby kept his vigil.” The scene supposedly showing Gatsby outside the Buchanan’s home was somehow ironically accompanied by the romantic theme song.⁸⁵⁹ As a British review states, “Next morning Wolf tells Jay that the police are on their trail. Jay rings up the police to tell

them he killed Myrtle.”⁸⁶⁰ Argentinian newspaper *Caras Y Caretas* wrote: “To save the woman he loves, Gatsby pleads guilty. Wolf, knowing that the police has discovered their illicit traffics, abandons Gatsby.”⁸⁶¹ As

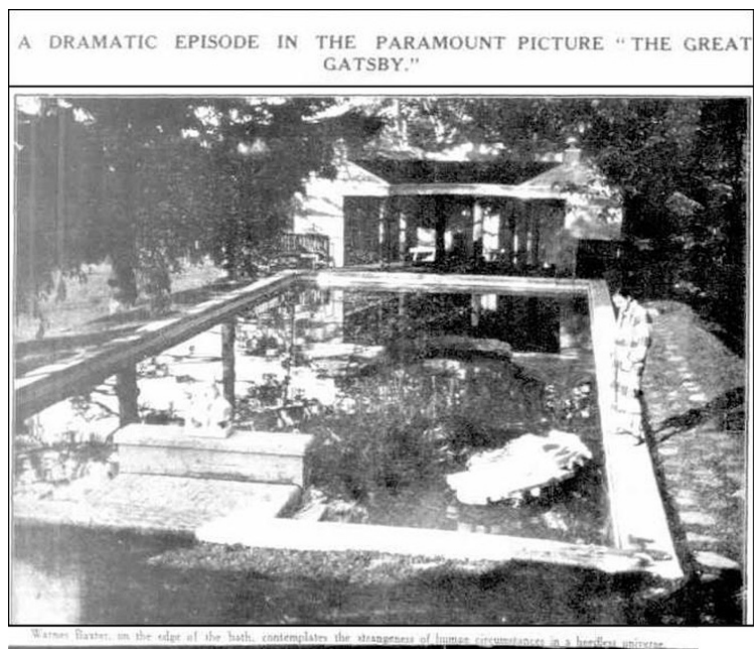


Figure 49 *The Capricornian*, 2 June 1927, p. 2

⁸⁵⁶ “The Great Gatsby: With Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter.”

⁸⁵⁷ Mollie Gray, “Gray Matter.”

⁸⁵⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 120.

⁸⁵⁹ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 4.

⁸⁶⁰ “The Great Gatsby,” *Kinematograph Weekly*.

⁸⁶¹ “Teatro del Silencio,” *Caras Y Caretas*, 28 May 1927, p. 173. The article has been translated into English by the author of this thesis.

the cue music sheet reports, an intertitle explained: Gatsby's "dream had broken." The action moves to Gatsby's home. In a close-up, Wilson's face "appears at Window" accompanied by Gabriel's "Mystere Oppressant."⁸⁶² An Australian newspaper preserved one of the last and likely most dramatic scenes of the film (Fig. 49). The caption of the film still reads, "Warner Baxter, on the edge of the bath, contemplates the strangeness of human circumstances in a heedless universe."⁸⁶³ The pneumatic mattress "that had amused his guests during the summer" is floating somberly in Gatsby's pool.⁸⁶⁴

According to *Mensajero Paramount*, "Gatsby dives in the swimming-pool, as the morning invited to take a swim. Protected by the fog of the dawn, Wilson approaches the pool and shoots Gatsby who is resting from the swim on a wooden bench by the pool."⁸⁶⁵ The music cue sheet here indicates that the "drummer [should] place two pistol shots about fifteen seconds apart as Jay is startled while reading on bench." As an American review states, Wilson then kills himself and Nick is "the only person that saw the tragedy, and the only one to do anything about the matter."⁸⁶⁶ A scene saved in the trailer shows Nick finding Wilson's body in the wood outside Gatsby's home. After the climatic scene, the orchestra was recommended to play Godard's "Adagio Pathetique."⁸⁶⁷

According to a review that Fitzgerald pasted in his scrapbook, toward the end of the film,

⁸⁶² "A Herbert Brenon Production: 'The Great Gatsby,'" p. 4.

⁸⁶³ "A Dramatic Episode," *The Capricornian*, 2 June 1927, p. 2.

⁸⁶⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 118.

⁸⁶⁵ "La Ajena Felicidad," p. 10.

⁸⁶⁶ "The Great Gatsby: With Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter."

⁸⁶⁷ "A Herbert Brenon Production: 'The Great Gatsby,'" p. 4.

comes a slightly moronic title explaining that some people (meaning that magnificent he-man Gatsby) live and die, but for the happiness of others. The picture illustrating this subtitle shows Daisy and her husband Tom and their lot draped beautifully on the porch of their happy home.⁸⁶⁸

Although a reviewer stated that “not a gesture is made in the direction of a happy ending as happy endings are generally construed in the movies,” an interview that Warner Baxter gave to *Motion Picture Magazine* suggests Brenon had intended the ending of the film as a happy one.⁸⁶⁹ “The minutes lengthened while we discussed his work in *The Great Gatsby*,” reported the journalist, and “it was interesting to hear that a different ending had been shot – NOT a happy one, and that Herbert Brenon, upon seeing the final cutting of it, had promptly resigned!”⁸⁷⁰ The international reception of the film also shows that its ending was perceived as a happy one by at least some viewers. One of the last lines of the Spanish novelization of the film adaptation reads like a fairy tale: “and it is like this that the great Gatsby died, a man who, being unable to find his own happiness, dedicated part of his life to provide happiness for others.”⁸⁷¹ The British trade magazine *Kinematograph Weekly* went so far as to indicate the “point of appeal” of *The Great Gatsby* its ending, as it showed “how one man’s failure brought happiness to two others.”⁸⁷²

Meehan suggested in the treatment that Brenon should bring “out that [Daisy did not] know that Gatsby [was] dead.”⁸⁷³ The first as well as the later sound

⁸⁶⁸ John S. Cohen Jr., “The Great Gatsby Enters the Cinema Mill,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

⁸⁶⁹ Wilella Waldord, “New Photoplays,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

⁸⁷⁰ Grace Corson, “Fashions and Studio Gossip,” *Motion Picture Magazine*, May 1927, p. 59; p. 108.

⁸⁷¹ “La Ajena Felicidad,” p. 10.

⁸⁷² “The Great Gatsby,” *Kinematograph Weekly*.

⁸⁷³ Elizabeth Meehan, “Treatment,” p. 49.

adaptations tend to represent Daisy, as hinted before, as a compassionate character; “the vast carelessness” of her fictional counterpart arguably was not a selling point for a screen heroine.⁸⁷⁴ An American review reveals that towards the end of the film, there is “a scene of marital serenity with the [Buchanan’s reconciliation and their] baby swinging under the old trees.”⁸⁷⁵ While according to a British film magazine “the car accident, followed by the shooting of Jay and Wilson’s suicide, are logical, and really the picture should end there, since it provides an excellent curtain,” the press sheet reports that the last scene of the film is Gatsby’s funeral. “[His] lonely death,” promised *Kinematograph Weekly*, “and his pathetic funeral – a hearse and one mourner – will bring tears to the eyes of the most hardened moviegoer.”⁸⁷⁶ The last intertitle, as indicated by the music cue sheet, started with “So we beat on,” which suggests that the film ended with the novel’s famous closing line: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”⁸⁷⁷ There is no indication that any of the rest of the celebrated ending made its way into the film – any more than it made it into any subsequent film adaptations.

6.3 The (Un)Happiness of Others and Audiences’ Tiredness with the “Realities of Life”

Shortly after the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald wrote Perkins, “if the book fails commercially it will be from one or two reasons or both. First, the title is

⁸⁷⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 139.

⁸⁷⁵ Hariette Underhill, “On the Screen,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*. This is the only reference in all the material I have found to date to the Buchanans’ daughter in the film, played by Nancy Kelley. Just like in the novel, Pammy was not a big presence in the film. *Harrison’s Reports* noted: “although the child, when she is ushered on the screen, is five years old, she had never even once been seen before.” “The Great Gatsby: With Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter.”

⁸⁷⁶ “The Great Gatsby,” *Kinematograph Weekly*.

⁸⁷⁷ “A Herbert Brenon Production: ‘The Great Gatsby,’” p. 4; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 182.

only fair [...] Second *and most important*, the book contains no important woman character [...] I don't think the unhappy end matters particularly."⁸⁷⁸ While little record survives of contemporary readers' reception of the novel, film magazines captured the opinions of some of the moviegoers who watched its film adaptation. Although it is impossible to demonstrate that the unhappy ending compromised the novel's sales, film fan magazines of the time reveal that, unsurprisingly, it did matter to the moviegoers that saw its film adaptation. An exhibitor from Sedalia, Missouri, published a mocking announcement in a local newspaper addressed to the many patrons who complained "because 'The Great Gatsby' gets killed in the last reel. For the benefit of those who demand a happy ending we hasten to explain that Mr. Gatsby went to Heaven."⁸⁷⁹ As film scholar Ruth Vasey notes:

In Hollywood's fictional kingdom, the desires that viewers project onto characters are fulfilled and regulated by a narrative resolution that reasserts and reestablishes a deterministic moral order, by which the guilty are punished, the sympathetic are discovered to be innocent, and audiences 'exhausted with the realities of life' are 'improved' by what one of the authors of the regulatory Production Code of 1930 called 'correct entertainment.'⁸⁸⁰

An analysis of the 1926 film's reception suggests that the ending of Brenon's *The Great Gatsby* did not fulfil at least some of the viewers' desires. "The hero does not realize his ambition," complained a film reviewer, who added: "he does not get the

⁸⁷⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 199.

⁸⁷⁹ "An Announcement by the Manager of the Maccabee Hall," *The Sedalia Democrat*, 21 November 1926, p. 16.

⁸⁸⁰ Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood: 1918-1939* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 3.

heroine, and dies a tragic death [...] Not very many picture-goers will want to see such an ending.”⁸⁸¹ While *The Educational Screen* argued that “the story is far too illogical in its conclusions for general satisfaction,” *Variety* extensively discussed *Gatsby*’s unfair ending in these terms:

along toward the last twenty minutes, the wife calmly states she does not love her husband and that her affections are with Gatsby, from whom she was parted by the Great War. With that established, the audience’s collective viewpoint are directed anew to the ultimate reunion of the wife of the Buchanan and Gatsby, her first lover, particularly in view of Buchanan’s apparent perfidy with a light lady. The vacillating shades and touches make one wonder whether Brenon (or his scenarist) had not started out to alter the original Scott Fitzgerald story for screen purposes and was confronted with contractual obligations to the author or other circumstances that prohibited such liberties. This is but a theory, since Fitzgerald is sufficiently established to command such special terms if he so elected [...] Fitzgerald will certainly have no quarrel with the filmization of his novel.⁸⁸²

There is no evidence that Fitzgerald was consulted by Brenon (or his scenarist) on any part of the film, including the ending. But there is evidence that he did have quarrel with the 1926 “filmization” of his book. A letter Zelda sent to Scottie in 1927 reveals that the Fitzgeralds considered Brenon’s movie so “ROTTEN and awful and

⁸⁸¹ “The Great Gatsby: With Lois Wilson and Warner Baxter.”

⁸⁸² Marguerite Orndorff, “The Theatrical Field,” *Educational Screen*, January 1927, pp. 39-40; Abel Green, “The Great Gatsby,” pp. 14-15.

terrible” that they both walked out from the theatre.⁸⁸³ An intertitle from the film reported by a review that Fitzgerald saved in his scrapbook suggests the extent to which the ending of the silent adaptation “rotted” Fitzgerald’s text. When Daisy chooses to remain with her husband, she says: “I have come to know that the important thing is not my own happiness but the happiness of others.” The reviewer, who arguably had read Fitzgerald’s book, pointed out: “We could have dispensed nicely with this. For everyone knows that Daisy was a thoughtless, selfish young woman who, when the great Gatsby was killed, rushed away crying ‘Let’s get out of this.’ It was so arranged in the picture that Daisy did not even know that Gatsby was dead. Thus, did the cinema take liberties with Fitzgerald’s heroine.”⁸⁸⁴

In addition to the unhappy ending, there was another characteristic of *Gatsby*’s silent film adaptation that audiences “exhausted with the realities of life” did not appreciate: its realism. While the novel and its sound film versions are now widely considered, in the words of a recent reviewer of Luhrmann’s *Gatsby*, “a dreamy, gossamer fable,” 1920s American and international newspapers and fan letters attest to the extent to which Fitzgerald’s story was understood as a realistic, cynical satire of the contemporary times.⁸⁸⁵ A movie fan from Flint, Michigan, complained to *Photoplay* about *The Great Gatsby*: “Oh dear, we can get morbid enough reading everyday life, but we want a rest at the movies. Life is so. But why choose the ugliest specimen to portray your heroes and heroines? Why be so realistic? Let us go back to the golden path. We don’t want life, but something to make us

⁸⁸³ Qtd. in Anne Margaret Daniel, “What did F. Scott Fitzgerald Think of The Great Gatsby, the Movie, in 1926? He Walked Out.”

⁸⁸⁴ Hariette Underhill, “On the Screen,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook IV*.

⁸⁸⁵ Tony Dayoub, “Movie Review: The Great Gatsby (2013)” <<http://www.cinemaviewfinder.com/2013/05/movie-review-great-gatsby-2013.html>> [accessed 8 March 2017].

happy. Let us live.”⁸⁸⁶ Another fan from Salt Lake City, Utah, criticised the realistic portrayal of Daisy as played by Lois Wilson: “It was like watching a rare porcelain being suddenly mud-splattered. We are a queer lot, we film fans. We don’t like watching our ideals smashed in reel life. We get so much of it in real life.”⁸⁸⁷

Other American and foreign critics of the film, on the other hand, praised the fact that the film’s characters, and in particular Gatsby, rang true. An Australian newspaper wrote: “the Great Gatsby is a very real character, such as one sees exemplified in modern society on every hand – ‘the successful man’ who uses his worldly goods to convince other people of his cleverness and power.”⁸⁸⁸ Another British newspaper observed: “The story is a blend of romance, intrigue and satire. It is a theme with a realistic hero such as no other film has ever possessed, because he is like many of the public figures whose names are household words to us.”⁸⁸⁹ Reviewing Brenon’s film, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* listed Fitzgerald’s work alongside Hardy, Voltaire and Schopenhauer:

Only rarely do we get a photoplay which, like *The Great Gatsby* faces life fearlessly and truthfully. All followers of Pollyanna doctrines duly are warned to stay away from this picture just the same as they would stay away from Thomas Hardy, Voltaire and Schopenhauer. Written by one of ‘the sad young men’ no other than F. Scott Fitzgerald, the story is almost entirely free from the artificial gilding so liberally employed on most movie stories. *The Great Gatsby* deserves to be put in the same class with *Greed* and one or two other

⁸⁸⁶ “The Real Critics, the Fans, Give their Views: Brickbats and Bouquets,” *Photoplay*, May 1927, p. 10.

⁸⁸⁷ Gaynor Wagstaff, “An Idol is Smashed.”

⁸⁸⁸ “New Films,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May 1927, p. 6.

⁸⁸⁹ “The Great Gatsby,” *Stoll Herald*, 18 July 1927, pp. 2-3.

great motion pictures which dared to show that life is not altogether a bed of roses, that virtue is not always rewarded with happiness, that true love does not always triumph over materialistic obstacles. It is an impressive character study, leaving on the mind an impression of life's irony and the futility of human activity. It does not attempt to say, as Hardy does, that all life is a futile mockery, but contents itself with one specific instance of a man who, innately good and generous, is rewarded with an empty life and a sordid death.⁸⁹⁰

As Sarah Churchwell notes, when the novel was published “most of its initial reviewers dismissed it as mere melodrama, the type of story found in the movies or in the papers every day [...] As far as its first readers were concerned, *The Great Gatsby* was covered in newsprint – and for many, this made it disposable and ephemeral, a mere tabloid tale. Even positive reviews returned repeatedly to the sense that it was a story ripped from the newspapers.”⁸⁹¹ An article reveals that the publicity for the film adaptation of *Gatsby* also played up the journalistic angle of the book. Perhaps considering that the novel had been praised by reviewers for “its almost journalistic report on the post-war manners of Great Neck,” Famous-Players-Lasky’ department of exploitation issued a newspaper page feature titled “Men of Mystery Dazzle New York” which, according to *Motion Picture News*, developed “the local news angle in *The Great Gatsby*.”⁸⁹²

⁸⁹⁰ “Strand,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 13 December 1926, p. 9. On May 2 1925, Fitzgerald told Ober: “I’d like von Stroheim to do [*Gatsby*] in the movies.” In an unpublished piece he wrote the year before, Fitzgerald described *Greed*’s director as having “a touch of real civilization in his make-up.” Scottie Fitzgerald Smith, Matthew J. Bruccoli and Joan P. Kerr, eds., *The Romantic Egoists*, pp. 152-53.

⁸⁹¹ Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, p. 4.

⁸⁹² “*The Great Gatsby* on the Stage,” *St Louis Post Dispatch*, 14 February 1926, p. 49; “Supply Mats of News Story on ‘The Great Gatsby,’” *Motion Picture News*, 11 December 1926, p. 2248.

The page was republished by the *Billings Gazette* on December 13, 1926, sub-headed “Rich and ‘Protected,’ their Past Shrouded in Secrecy, their Lavish Hospitality often Hides Love Tragedies under the Glitter of Gay Revelry” (Fig. 50). The piece is constructed as a real newspaper article and describes “the army of new millionaire spenders – men social climbers who, on no account, can permit the light of too persistent inquiry to be turned on their past.”



Figure 50 *The Billings Gazette*, 13 December 1926, p. 9

“More amazing still,” explains the *Billings Gazette*, “is the development of an allied asset which is so recent that, in all probability, it gets into print here for the first time. This is the actual organization of schools of ‘fine manners,’ where these men of mystery may be trained in gentlemanly deportment, dress, recreations, current fads of smart society, and in the elements of what constitutes good taste in the appointments of their city or country establishments.” The article continues with listing trials of reputed leaders in prohibition law violation and their bribes to Government employees, to then focus on a certain New York mystery millionaire and a comparison of real life with realistic fiction:

The mystery surrounding him is thick enough to cut with a knife. In the meantime those heavy-laden ships loitering far off shore grow steadily lighter,

and presently they blithely proceed on their interrupted way to whatever port is set down in their clearance papers. That an element so picturesque should enter even become part of the jovial life of great cities and fail to be reflected in current fiction was unimaginable. Here was a fresh angle from which to view the social drama of real life, a new application of the never-failing quality called mystery [...] Presently one of the most brilliant of American novelists with a genius for bringing fiction up to the minute, converted it into a best seller. Most significant of all, the picture screen, with its patronage of 20,000,000 people every day, was ready and waiting its opportunity to illuminate, as only the screen can, a type of human social climber whose chief asset had to be an atmosphere of mystery. That opportunity came with the publication of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, and the Famous Players Lasky organization seized it [...] The man of mystery who figures as the hero of *The Great Gatsby* bears a resemblance to actual life instances that is almost startling [...] The realism of these descriptions is said to have won great admiration for the book all over Long Island, although certain prominent mystery men are reported to have spoken disparagingly about it [...] In the jazzy night club life of New York, in Long Island country clubs and road houses, and in anterooms of courts where 'alleged bootlegging cases' enter with a blaze of publicity – and fade out for 'lack of sufficient evidence to convict' – you may overhear volumes about the operations of New York's mystery men. Much of this gossip includes names, dates and places. Some of it is as vivid as the fiction example of *The Great Gatsby*. It carries the ring of truth.⁸⁹³

⁸⁹³ "Men of Mystery Dazzle New York," *Billings Gazette*, 13 December 1926, p. 9.

This journalist-like piece disproves the now widespread belief that Fitzgerald was praising his hero. While the later sound adaptations of the novel played up the character's romanticism, Brenon's contemporary representation of Gatsby was more faithful to Fitzgerald's intention, portraying its vulgarity and startling resemblance to the actual social climber bootleggers. Ronald Berman notes that, when the novel appeared, its author "was thought to be insufficiently informed about his times [...]" Van Wyck Brooks thought that Fitzgerald could not be an important novelist because he failed even to describe the twenties in America.⁸⁹⁴ Even though he acknowledged Fitzgerald's social historian's skills, H. L. Mencken labelled the novel as "no more than a glorified anecdote."⁸⁹⁵ While part of the 1920s literary intelligentsia contributed to diminishing the value of the book as a social document, the film press praised *The Great Gatsby* for the realism of its descriptions, emphasizing Fitzgerald's genius "for bringing fiction up to the minute," and, paradoxically, even his ability to convert it into a best seller.

In 1934, Fitzgerald was asked to write the introduction for a reprint of *The Great Gatsby* for the Modern Library. "Reading it over," he wrote, "one can see how it could have been improved – yet without feeling guilty of any discrepancy from the truth, as far as I saw it; truth or rather the *equivalent* of truth, the attempt at honesty and imagination."⁸⁹⁶ In the publicity for the film adaptation, Famous-Players-Lasky publicized the aspect of *The Great Gatsby* that most of the literary critics did not appreciate and that Fitzgerald believed was its greatest strength: that it carried the

⁸⁹⁴ Ronald Berman, *Translating Modernism: Fitzgerald and Hemingway* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), p. 29.

⁸⁹⁵ H. L. Mencken, "As H. L. M. Sees It," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, 2 May 1925, p. 9.

⁸⁹⁶ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby with a New Introduction by F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: The Modern Library, 1934).

ring of truth. That same year, Fitzgerald had a lunch with Clark Gable who was toying with the idea of starring as Gatsby in a sound adaptation of the novel.⁸⁹⁷ Four years later, as Fitzgerald referred to Louis Trinkhaus, Paramount was still playing “dog-in-the-manger” about the rights. In December 1939, one year before his death, Fitzgerald told Leland Hayward that Griffith had “always wanted to do *The Great Gatsby* over again as a talkie.”⁸⁹⁸ Fitzgerald died before seeing his Great American Novel on the screen again.

⁸⁹⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, p. 248. In a typed memo, Ober reported that Fitzgerald had met Clark Gable, who was “very keen to do *Gatsby*. He is going to talk to Rubin [the secretary of MGM] of Metro Goldwyn about it, and Scott suggested I speak to Rubin about it.” A year before, Ober had sent Fitzgerald copies of the agreement for the talking picture rights to *The Great Gatsby*, signed by Owen Davis and Brady. Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., *As Ever, Scott Fitz-*, p. 196; p. 203.

⁸⁹⁸ Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 333; p. 490; p. 566.

Coda

A 1925 *Photoplay* article entitled “Hollywood in a High Hat” described a recent party in Tinseltown as “one of those bootlicking banquets in honor of star or producer, at which upon arrival you are presented with a stick of incense and a glass for toasting. After about six toasts to the glory of the feted nabob a fellow is liable to go wild and start drinking to himself until he feels as good as the god, if not better.” Among the guests drinking themselves “brilliant” (in the author’s words) were

F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda [who] were astonished to receive a party invitation from a star whom they had never met. Not so astonishing, as I tried to explain to them. The star had conceived a yen for being surrounded by literary lights. And Scott burns no mean incandescence. But their real astonishment came at the party where the principal stunt of the evening was to push the star around in a wheeled chair, the guest shouting, ‘Hurrah for Mazie, the beautiful Mazie!’ Mrs. Fitzgerald galloped gallantly for the first half hour until she sank to the floor exhausted. ‘I felt a terrible flop,’ she confided. ‘It was a dreadfully proper party.’⁸⁹⁹

This passage is not significant as yet another anecdote recounting the many drunken exploits during the Fitzgeralds’ first visit to Hollywood in 1927.⁹⁰⁰ It is significant as

⁸⁹⁹ Herbert Howe, “Hollywood in a High Hat,” *Photoplay*, August 1925, p. 114.

⁹⁰⁰ One of their drunken exploits happened at a party given for Carmel Myers by Lois Moran, the inspiration for Fitzgerald’s character Rosemary Hoyt. The Fitzgeralds, visibly intoxicated, asked guests for watches and jewellery. On the pretext of performing a magic trick, they went to the kitchen and they set about cooking their new acquisitions in a pot of tomato sauce. See Richard Buller, “F. Scott Fitzgerald, Lois Moran and the Mystery of Mariposa Street,” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 4 (2005), 3-19, p. 8.

it was published in August 1925, two years before they ever went to Hollywood, at a time when the Fitzgeralds were drinking themselves “brilliant” not in California, but on the other side of the Atlantic, on the golden shores of the Riviera.⁹⁰¹ Dubbed “the king of all the fan magazines” by film scholar Pamela Hutchinson, *Photoplay* was known in the twenties for celebrity gossip and its focus on the stars and their private lives.⁹⁰² Its inaccurate 1925 account of the party given by the unidentified Mazie suggests the extent to which Hollywood contributed to building Fitzgerald’s persona. Few of his contemporary writers, and certainly none of the expatriates, could boast of receiving the same degree of attention from film magazines in 1925. In December of the same year, *Photoplay* mentioned Fitzgerald again, or rather one of his most villainous characters, by stating:

the young star who achieves the pinnacle of fame and wealth at twenty-five or thirty excites a profound pity. He is like Buchanan in Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* – ‘one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence that everything afterward savors of anti-climax.’⁹⁰³

To anyone who has even the most superficial knowledge of Fitzgerald’s biography, Howe’s sentence will recall the writer’s own star trajectory. At twenty-five years old, he had already three books and several short stories published to his credit; four films had been adapted from his work. By the time he was thirty, the books to his credit

⁹⁰¹ In September 1925, Fitzgerald wrote to John Peale Bishop about the month he had just spent in the Antibes. Ironically, he said “there was no one at Antibes this summer except me, Zelda, the Valentinos, the Murphys, Mistinguett, Rex Ingram, Dos Passos, Alice Terry.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 378.

⁹⁰² Pamela Hutchinson, “*Photoplay Magazine: the Birth of Celebrity Culture*” <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2016/jan/26/photoplay-magazine-hollywood-film-studios-stars-celebrity-culture>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

⁹⁰³ Herbert Howe, “Close-ups and Long-shots,” *Photoplay*, December 1925, p. 33.

were five, the short stories forty-seven, the film adaptations six. Focusing on Fitzgerald's relationship with Hollywood in the 1920s, this thesis has dealt with the pinnacle rather than with the anti-climax of the author's career. But the end of the silent era coincided with the end of Fitzgerald's luck with Hollywood; after the arrival of sound in 1927, none of his works was ever made into a feature film during his lifetime. One feels that Fitzgerald's pinnacle of fame and wealth reached such an "acute excellence" in the twenties, that the thirties could not but "savor of anti-climax."

Conclusion

In his 1937 autobiographical essay “Early Success,” Fitzgerald retrospectively wrote about “that first wild wind of success and the delicious mist it brings with it. It is a short and precious time – for when the mist rises in a few weeks, or a few months, one finds that the very best is over.”⁹⁰⁴ Much has been written about Fitzgerald’s meteoric rise to success in 1920, when the twenty-three year old author achieved “what his own romantic self longed for – fame, money, and the girl.”⁹⁰⁵ The generally held view on the early construction of Fitzgerald’s celebrity can be summed up in the words of Mary Jo Tate: “*This Side of Paradise* achieved Fitzgerald’s goals of fame and winning Zelda, and his early success became a formative influence on the rest of his career, shaping his romantic emphasis on aspiration.”⁹⁰⁶ Yet, ignoring the importance that Hollywood also had in constructing Fitzgerald’s celebrity persona at the beginning of his career leaves out an important part of the picture. One of the aims of this thesis has been to address this gap in the literature on Fitzgerald by restoring the critical but overlooked role that silent films played in the genesis and development of his early reputation.

In the “short and precious time” between February and May 1920, Fitzgerald sold three short stories and an option on his future output to Hollywood for a total of \$7,425, the equivalent of almost \$100,000 today.⁹⁰⁷ Looking back at that “precise point in time” when his career started, in 1924 Fitzgerald recalled: “I had just received a large cheque from the movies and I felt a little patronizing toward the millionaires

⁹⁰⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*, p. 186.

⁹⁰⁵ Satyam S. Moorthy, “Frank Norris and F. Scott Fitzgerald as Romantic Rebels,” *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos*, 2 (1993), 75-85, p. 83.

⁹⁰⁶ Mary Jo Tate, *F. Scott Fitzgerald A to Z*, p. 232.

⁹⁰⁷ According to the online Saving Inflation Calculator, \$7,425 in 1920 equals \$96,848.71 in 2018 <<https://www.saving.org/inflation/inflation.php?amount=100&year=1920>> [accessed 20 April 2018].

riding down Fifth Avenue in their limousines – because my income had a way of doubling every month.”⁹⁰⁸ Years later, while a resident at the Garden of Allah on Sunset Boulevard, Fitzgerald went back to write about that moment when “counting the bag, I found that in 1919 I had made \$800 by writing, that in 1920 I had made \$18,000 – stories, picture rights, and book.”⁹⁰⁹ The largest share of his 1920 income came from selling “Head and Shoulders,” “Myra Meets His Family” and “The Offshore Pirate” to Hollywood.

In his 1920 correspondence, Fitzgerald bragged that he was living “royally off the moving picture rights” to his stories.⁹¹⁰ But he also deemed the sale of his first work to Hollywood an achievement worthy to be mentioned along with the publication of *This Side of Paradise*. On 26 March 1920, Fitzgerald wrote to Ruth Sturtevant, his confidante throughout his studies at Princeton: “My book came out today and of course I am frightfully excited.” But he was also “quite jubilant because I sold the movie rights of my first *Post* story, ‘Head and Shoulders’ for \$2500 to the Metro people.” To which he added, “doesn’t that sound good?”⁹¹¹ As Fitzgerald acknowledged many years later, “the dream had been early realized.” Shortly after he got married and “the presses were pounding out *This Side of Paradise* like they pound out extras in the movies.”⁹¹² But days before the publication of Fitzgerald’s debut novel, as this thesis has demonstrated, film magazines also pounded out the fact that Metro had purchased the cinematic rights to “Head and Shoulders,” establishing the author’s fame in association with Hollywood even before the success of his first book.

⁹⁰⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*, p. 27.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁹¹⁰ As he wrote in August 1920 to Shane Leslie. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 376.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

⁹¹² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*, p. 188.

In “Head and Shoulders,” Marcia and Horace try, with variable success, to earn their living through their writing. The first short story that Fitzgerald sold to a popular magazine and a film studio thus explored that central dilemma of professional authorship that would haunt him for the rest of his career: how to reconcile the need to appeal both to a wide audience and to the literary elite in the age of mass culture. As Tom Cerasulo notes, “authors who want to be read and want to live by their writing have always – and will always – concern themselves with questions of marketing and audience.”⁹¹³ In a time when global distribution of books and magazines did not exist, *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, as well as the five other silent films based on Fitzgerald’s works, brought his name and persona before the eyes of countless American as well as foreign moviegoers.

Shortly after the release of the last silent film adapted from a work by Fitzgerald, Brenon’s *The Great Gatsby*, in January 1927 Fitzgerald went to Hollywood for his first time to work on *Lipstick*, a script for Constance Talmadge. In covering the news, the press highlighted the fact that Fitzgerald was not new to the movie business. An article in Fitzgerald’s scrapbook offered a clarification that was relevant to contemporary audiences: United Artists had not hired him to “adapt any of his published pieces but to work out originals.” The article continued by noting that “out of his books only those three composed of jazz short stories have failed to get consideration from scenario departments.”⁹¹⁴ The *Lipstick* script went unproduced, foreshadowing Fitzgerald’s troubled relationship with Hollywood in the 1930s. The script that he wrote for Jean Harlow in 1931-1932 was also rejected; in his three-and-a-half year tenure in Hollywood from 1936 to 1940, Fitzgerald worked on more than

⁹¹³ Tom Cerasulo, *Authors Out Here*, p. 4.

⁹¹⁴ Allene Talmey, “Behind the Screen: East and West in the Studios,” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook III*.

a dozen screenplays for various film companies but received only one shared screen credit. None of his works were adapted during the decade of the Depression.

The last work by Fitzgerald that was filmed during his lifetime was “The Pusher-in-the-Face,” a 1925 short story that relies heavily on slapstick.⁹¹⁵ My decision not to dedicate a chapter to this film adaptation in a thesis about F. Scott Fitzgerald and silent movies was prompted by the fact that “The Pusher-in-the-Face” was made into a sound film. Paramount purchased the rights to the story and released its now presumed lost cinematic adaptation in early 1929. “In this year,” wrote a contemporary observer, “the talkie is here, and here for the rest of the century.”⁹¹⁶

Under the direction of Robert Florey, the three-reel sound film with “100 per cent dialogue” was shot at Paramount’s Long Island studio, the same place where *The Great Gatsby* was filmed two years before.⁹¹⁷ In his recent study on *Fitzgerald and the Influence of Film*, Gautam Kundu includes *The Pusher-in-the-Face* among Fitzgerald’s film scripts.⁹¹⁸ Gene D. Phillips notes that “because the author of the screenplay for this short movie is not listed in any of the documentation available on the film, some film historians have hazarded the guess that Fitzgerald adapted his short story to the screen himself.”⁹¹⁹ In fact, I have found evidence that the author of *The Pusher-in-the-Face* script was the future 1936 Academy Award winner Pierre Collings.⁹²⁰ While Florey’s presumed lost sound featurette has been forgotten (or inaccurately remembered) by the literature on Fitzgerald, it has been mentioned in

⁹¹⁵ See Matthew J. Bruccoli’s introduction to the story in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Price Was High*, p. 98.

⁹¹⁶ Fitzhugh Green, *The Film Finds His Tongue* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1929), p. 313.

⁹¹⁷ “Sound Pictures: Paramount Begins Production in East, Lasky Announces Product,” *Exhibitors Herald and Moving Picture World*, 20 October 1928, p. 37; see also “Paramount Talking Shorts in Work at L. I. Studios,” *Motion Picture News*, 3 November 1928, p. 1390.

⁹¹⁸ Gautam Kundu, *Fitzgerald and the Influence of Film*, p. 7.

⁹¹⁹ Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 43.

⁹²⁰ *The Film Daily 1929 Year Book* (New York: Film Daily, 1929), p. 154.

several cinema studies as one of the first short sound comedies that Paramount ever produced.⁹²¹ In July 1938, *Film Daily* reported that the “tenth anniversary of Paramount’s entry into production of sound pictures was observed at the studio.” Director Robert Florey served “as principal celebrant,” as “exactly a decade ago [he] directed the first talkie released by the company, ‘The Pusher-In-The-Face.’”⁹²²

Distributed for the benefit of the Actors’ Fund and the Authors’ League, the 1929 short movie was released as part of the “Great Star and Author Series,” indicating the relevance Paramount was still attaching to the fact that the story was authored by Fitzgerald. But the first talkie based on a work by Fitzgerald was not received well. Contemporary reports seem to suggest that *The Pusher-in-the-Face* was among those substandard movies of early 1929 that, as Donald Crafton notes, “were hastily cobbled together to meet the unexpectedly strong demand for talkies.”⁹²³ While *Film Daily* described it as “a jumbled mess and about the rudest thing in sound available on the market,” an Iowa exhibitor complained that “my patrons do NOT like stuff like [...] ‘Pusher in the Face.’ [It is] the poorest entertainment I have ever shown.” He continued, “the facts are: after screening, ‘The Pusher-in-the-Face’ was put in the can and left there.”⁹²⁴

“The Pusher-in-the-Face” was the last of his works of fiction that Fitzgerald sold to Hollywood. The “Record of Published Fiction” in his ledger shows that the column labelled “Movie Made by” is consistently blank in the ten pages listing his 1930s

⁹²¹ See Edwin M. Bradley, *The First Hollywood Sound Shorts, 1926-1931* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2005), p. 52; p. 232. As Koszarski notes, “despite its Fitzgerald association and presence in the 16mm market as late as 1940,” the film is unavailable. Richard Koszarski, *Hollywood on the Hudson: Film and Television in New York from Griffith to Sarnoff* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), pp. 183-84; 518.

⁹²² Ralph Wilk, “Little from Lots: Florey and Para. Remember,” *The Film Daily*, 8 July 1938, p. 8.

⁹²³ Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema’s Transition to Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 14.

⁹²⁴ Qtd. in Richard Koszarski, *Hollywood on the Hudson*, p. 518; “Reports,” *Exhibitors Herald World*, 27 July 1929, p. 34.

works.⁹²⁵ Fitzgerald's many attempts to (re)adapt his works after the arrival of sound all failed. As discussed in Chapters One and Six, in the mid- to late 1930s Fitzgerald tried unsuccessfully to convince producers to remake "Head and Shoulders" and *The Great Gatsby* into sound films. The only book of long fiction that Fitzgerald published in the 1930s, *Tender is the Night*, was the only novel of his that, to borrow the words from the article mentioned above, "failed to get consideration from scenario departments."⁹²⁶

As early as in 1931, Fitzgerald was looking back "with nostalgia" at the previous decade, noting that the "[Jazz Age], as if reluctant to die outmoded in its bed, had leaped to a spectacular death in October 1929."⁹²⁷ The year of the Wall Street Crash coincided with the end of the silent era and of the marketability of Fitzgerald's work to Hollywood. But at the onset of the Depression audiences flocked to the movies. As Crafton notes, 1929 was "one of the best years in Hollywood history. Union leaders pointed out that this prosperity was in contrast to the thousands of musicians, crew members, extras, and specialty workers laid off during the transition to sound."⁹²⁸ Sharing the fate of the majority of silent film stars and other workers linked with the silent film medium, Fitzgerald ended up being a victim of the transition to sound. "As long past as 1930," wrote Fitzgerald in his 1936 essay "Pasting it Together," "I had a hunch that the talkies would make even the best selling novelist as archaic as silent pictures."⁹²⁹ As if "reluctant to die outmoded in its bed," in 1929 the cinematic adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald also "leaped to a spectacular death." The cinematic

⁹²⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald's Ledger*, pp. 8-17.

⁹²⁶ On Fitzgerald's attempt to sell the movie rights to *Tender Is The Night* to Hollywood, see Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. 137-38.

⁹²⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*, p. 130.

⁹²⁸ Donald Crafton, *The Talkies*, p. 15.

⁹²⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *My Lost City*, p. 148.

adaptation of Fitzgerald remained firmly associated with the glamorous silent era in the contemporary public's mind.

The Depression and its socioeconomic effects necessarily influenced the stars and stories that were made in the 1930s. The 1920s flapper image epitomized by Fitzgerald's heroines, as well as "high society stories" such as *The Off-shore Pirate*, *The Beautiful and Damned* and even *The Great Gatsby*, fell out of favour with audiences now facing economic hardship. The demise of the silent era also inevitably meant the demise of Fitzgerald's persona as interpreted by silent filmmakers. After the Wall Street Crash, the early public image of Fitzgerald as a carefree, spendthrift, celebrity author had lost its "drawing power" as a bankable commodity. Just like John Gilbert, Clara Bow, and many other 1920s Hollywood "fallen" stars, Fitzgerald's "silent film persona" did not meet with the Depression audiences' changing expectations and went out of fashion as quickly as the flapper fad did. As one of the most emblematic victims of the Golden Age said, the talkies "took the idols and smashed them."⁹³⁰

Timothy W. Galow convincingly argues that Fitzgerald attempted to refashion his persona in the 1930s. After Zelda's hospitalization in 1930 and his own problems with alcoholism, work had become increasingly difficult for Fitzgerald, who decided to spend "considerably less time in, or seeking to be in, the public eye."⁹³¹ But no matter how Fitzgerald tried to counter the perception that he was a washed-up alcoholic by adopting the persona of a sober, reflective man, his later literary reflections "received relatively little attention and did not go very far in rehabilitating

⁹³⁰ Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, dir. by Billy Wilder (Paramount Pictures, 1950).

⁹³¹ Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity*, p. 30.

[his] image. For many people, then as now, he remained simply the ‘voice of the Jazz Age.’”⁹³²

But Hollywood continued to feed into Fitzgerald’s public image, although not through the adaptation of his works. In 1935, Goldwyn released *The Wedding Night*, a film by King Vidor that presented a thinly disguised portrait of Fitzgerald. As Phillips notes, in the film the couple served as “emblems of the foolish, flashy twenties, who seemed very much out of place in the bleak, bankrupt thirties, where they appeared to be anachronisms left over from the previous decade.”⁹³³ As if they were ghosts of the glamorous Gloria and Anthony in the 1922 *The Beautiful and Damned* film, Tony and Dora Barrett also retreat to a country home in Connecticut because the former cannot focus on writing in the city. They also hire a Japanese servant called Taka, whose name echoed that of the Fitzgeralds’ domestic Tana, as discussed in Appendix Two. However, unlike Anthony and like Fitzgerald in the mid-1930s, Tony is a “burnt-out alcoholic writer with a southern wife,” who is trying to recover his health and talent.⁹³⁴ He had been a successful novelist over the past ten years; his first novel, published the year after he left college, has the unmistakably resonant title “This Side of Heaven.”⁹³⁵

Two years after *The Wedding Night*’s release, Fitzgerald, now mostly neglected by both literary critics and readers, went back to Hollywood for the third time to work as a screenwriter. Wheeler W. Dixon and Tom Cerasulo have criticised the popular portrayal of Fitzgerald in his final period as a “hack, working solely for money, completely lacking any artistic impulse,” while demonstrating that, rather than

⁹³² *Ibidem*.

⁹³³ The Princeton University Library holds a copy of the film’s script first titled “Broken Soil,” suggesting that Fitzgerald was aware of the link between the protagonist and himself. Gene D. Phillips, *Fiction, Film, and F. Scott Fitzgerald*, pp. 167-69.

⁹³⁴ Jeffrey Meyers, *Gary Cooper: American Hero* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), p. 111.

⁹³⁵ Alan Margolies, “F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Wedding Night*,” *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*, 2 (1970), 224-25.

destroying Fitzgerald's talent, Hollywood benefited it.⁹³⁶ Cerasulo acknowledges the association Fitzgerald had with the 1920s film industry, arguing, as this thesis also has, that:

To see the author as a 1930s Hollywood sellout is to ignore the fact that he had been selling to the movies since the early years of his career [...] despite the legend, Fitzgerald did not turn to the movies as a humiliating last resort; he had been courting them the whole way along.⁹³⁷

In September 1939, Fitzgerald started a series of stories for *Esquire* about a Hollywood alcoholic hack writer. Scholars have extensively debated the extent to which Pat Hobby was based on his creator, who once signed off on a telegram to his editor Arnold Gingrich as "Pat Hobby Fitzgerald."⁹³⁸ But the similarities and differences between Fitzgerald and his character have been exclusively considered in the context of Pat Hobby as a drunk writer unable to get screen credit, overlooking Fitzgerald's characterization of his anti-hero as a once-successful scenarist in the silent era. While Pat Hobby remains a fictional character, many of the seventeen stories refer to the fact that he is an "old-timer," who firmly belongs to 1920s Hollywood. Pat Hobby had "got a list of credits second to none"; he "had collaborated in over two dozen moving picture scripts, most of them, it must be admitted, prior to 1929."⁹³⁹ That is, before the Talkies rendered him obsolete. Given the success Fitzgerald had in selling his work to

⁹³⁶ Wheeler W. Dixon, *The Cinematic Vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 4.

⁹³⁷ Tom Cerasulo, *Authors Out Here*, p. 2; p. 17.

⁹³⁸ Qtd. in Arnold Gingrich, "Introduction," *The Pat Hobby Stories* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. xv. According to Margolies, by reading the stories "one wonders [...] if at times [Fitzgerald] felt like a Pat Hobby." Alan Margolies, "Fitzgerald and Hollywood," in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Prigozy, p. 204.

⁹³⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Lost Decade: Short Stories From Esquire, 1936-1941*, ed. by James L.W. West III (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 97; p. 133.

Hollywood in the 1920s (and his failure to do so in the 1930s), one might claim that he “belong[ed] to silent days as much as” Pat Hobby and “knew the game from twenty years’ experience.”⁹⁴⁰

Regardless of how autobiographical the Pat Hobby stories are, they stand as evidence that, while struggling to earn credits as a screenwriter in the late years of his life, Fitzgerald’s creative consciousness indulged in memories of the silent era. The narrator of “A Patriotic Short” described a scene where Pat Hobby’s mind “dissolved once more into the glamorous past.” Many other echoes of the silent movie age reverberate in the cycle of short stories, characterising the time as “the good old silent days,” “the fat days of silent pictures,” “the great days,” and “the salad days.”⁹⁴¹

In “Pat Hobby’s Preview,” the (anti-)hero finally manages to earn a screen credit and has a boost of confidence thinking that “his name would stand alone on the screen when the picture was released.”⁹⁴² As a screenwriter, Fitzgerald never saw his name alone on the screen: the only official screen credit he earned was shared with a co-writer, Edward E. Paramore. But in the 1920s, as this thesis has demonstrated, Fitzgerald’s name did “stand alone on the screen” several times as author of stories made into silent films. The contract for the cinematic rights to “Head and Shoulders,” which was signed one month before the publication of *This Side of Paradise*, testifies to the fact that Metro had agreed that “the name of F. Scott Fitzgerald shall appear as the author of the said [story] upon all films, announcements, printing, programmes, and all other forms of publicity.”⁹⁴³ The contract for the rights to “The Offshore Pirate”

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172; p. 87.

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 176; p. 97; p. 174; p. 138; p. 142.

⁹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁹⁴³ “Agreement F. Scott Fitzgerald and Metro Pictures Corporation, Motion Picture Rights of ‘Head and Shoulders,’” 25 February 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook I*. In *The Beautiful and Damned*, Joseph Bloeckman explains to Anthony Patch that “most of the contracts state that the original writer’s name goes into all the paid publicity.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 227.

also reveals that Metro was bound by contract to “use the name of the author [...] and state upon the film itself, for exposure long enough to be read, that the motion picture is based upon a literary or dramatic composition written by [F. Scott Fitzgerald].”⁹⁴⁴ The opening title card of the trailer of Brenon’s *The Great Gatsby* also includes Fitzgerald’s name as the author of the film’s original story.

Ten months before his death, Fitzgerald suggested Gingrich publish one of *The Pat Hobby Stories* under the pseudonym John Darcy, explaining that he was “awfully tired of being Scott Fitzgerald anyhow, as there doesn’t seem to be so much money in it.” While in the 1920s the film trade press recommended exhibitors to play up the name F. Scott Fitzgerald to advertise films based on his works, in 1940 Fitzgerald himself believed it was better to write under a pseudonym as people might not read him “just because I am Scott Fitzgerald.”⁹⁴⁵ His name had finally turned from being financially profitable to self-defeating. Fitzgerald tried to convince Gingrich to publish another story under a different nom de plume, Paul Elgin. But this piece, “On an Ocean Wave,” appeared posthumously. On 21 December 1940, at the age of forty-four, Fitzgerald died of a heart attack at 1443 North Hayworth Avenue, Hollywood. Except for the *Pat Hobby* stories, none of his works were in the public eye – either in print or on screen.

The 1920s would remain the golden age of Fitzgerald’s popularity in both literature and film. By the 1930s, the “delicious mist” of his early success had burnt off. But, against Fitzgerald’s prediction, the “very best” was not over. Sparked by Budd Schulberg’s *The Disenchanted* and Arthur Mizener’s *The Far Side of Paradise*, the Fitzgerald revival renewed interest in his life and work, enhancing his myth and

⁹⁴⁴ “The Agreement Made on May 27, 1920,” p. 7.

⁹⁴⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, pp. 432-33.

raising his reputation to an unequalled posthumous stature.⁹⁴⁶ From the late 1940s to the present day, dozens of TV and cinema adaptations have reinterpreted Fitzgerald's work and persona both in black-and-white and colour. Released almost one century after *The Chorus Girl's Romance*, the recent TV series based on *The Last Tycoon* (d. Billy Ray, 2016-2017) testifies to the fact that F. Scott Fitzgerald provides a bankable commodity for the film industry to the present day.

The "Fitzgerald Resurrection," however, has also been responsible for having fuelled the still-popular myth of Fitzgerald as a Hollywood casualty. This thesis has sought to dispel this notion by demonstrating the crucial role that Silent Hollywood played in the construction of Fitzgerald's celebrity and the propagation of his name across the globe. Failing to take into account the six film adaptations made into the 1920s, the widespread image of Fitzgerald as a victim of the "Hollywood-as-vampire" legend has skewed our perception of the relationship between Fitzgerald and the movies. This thesis has contributed to a more well-rounded understanding of Fitzgerald and Hollywood by showing how silent filmmakers transferred his work to the screen and fed into his celebrity persona from the very beginning of his professional career.

By adopting an audience-oriented approach and by making reception materials my primary sources, I have used the reception history of the 1920s silent films of F. Scott Fitzgerald to shed new light on the construction of his celebrity persona, along with the production, promotion, and reception of his work and its cinematic adaptation during the silent movie age. While the methodological approach I have adopted to piece together *The Husband Hunter*, *The Off-shore Pirate*, *The Beautiful and Damned*,

⁹⁴⁶ See Jackson R. Bryer, "Four Decades of Fitzgerald Studies: The Best and the Brightest," *Twentieth Century Literature*, 26.2 (1980), 247-67, p. 247.

and *The Great Gatsby* can be reused to reconstruct other lost silent movies, my rediscovery of *The Chorus Girl's Romance* and investigation of *Conductor 1492* should encourage further study on the extant film adaptations of Fitzgerald produced in the 1920s and their impact on the moviegoing public in their first release.

The reception materials of these six films have revealed invaluable information on how Fitzgerald's contemporaries received and interpreted his work as well as on the global exhibition and distribution of its filmic transposition. By treating the readers' and moviegoers' responses to these films as public, and by reconstructing the context in which their reception acts occurred, this thesis has advanced our understanding of the construction of Fitzgerald's public image. As Jauss notes, "a literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers."⁹⁴⁷ By re-reading these works and their cinematic adaptations almost a century after their production and first reception, this thesis has struck echoes of the silent movie age, in an effort of re-capturing those fleeting images of Fitzgerald that silently flashed on the silver screens of countless motion picture theatres around the world.

⁹⁴⁷ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 21.

Appendix One “Great Neck is a Great Place for Celebrities”: “Entertaining Footage” of the Fitzgeralds in their Long Island Home

An unidentified video showing rare footage of Scott, Zelda and Frances Fitzgerald in a garden circulates widely on the Internet (Fig. 51). Many think the film of the Fitzgeralds “looking like adoring parents



Figure 51 A&E TV “F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great American Dreamer”

as they happily fuss over their baby” was shot in France in 1924.⁹⁴⁸ In fact, there is evidence it was shot in Long Island in the autumn of 1922. An undated article from the *Atlanta Journal* that Fitzgerald pasted in his scrapbook reported that

Messrs. Thomas Sherman and Floyd Traynham, two former Southerners who are now editor and cameraman respectively for a big New York news reel company [...] went out to Long Island the other day to snap some movies of Mr. Fitzgerald and Mrs. Fitzgerald and the rest of the Fitzgerald family – a girl aged one.

⁹⁴⁸ See John Clarke, “Both Beautiful and Damned” <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2231012/Rare-1920s-footage-Great-Gatsby-author-F-Scott-Fitzgerald-wife-Zelda-mysteriously-emerges.html>> [accessed on 9 June 2018]. The same footage was included in “F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great American Dreamer,” an A&E TV documentary, aired on 14 April 1997.

The fact that Scottie Fitzgerald was born in October 1921 and that the article was accompanied by a picture of Marie Prevost starring in *The Beautiful and Damned* – released in December 1922 (Fig. 52) – are evidence that the film was shot in late 1922. The *Atlanta Journal* continued:

according to my informants, the Boswell of the flapper is far from being the sophisticated, advanced, and cynical young man one might expect



Figure 52 Fitzgerald's *Scrapbook III*

him to be. In fact, in his own home, he was domesticity itself. The picture they draw of him is not of a long-haired aesthete, nor of a worldly-wise familiar of gin and petting parties, but of a clean-cut young husband and father who, instead of exploding 'wise cracks' on life, spent most of their visit dancing up and down in front of his daughter, clapping his hands and making fatherly faces just like any ordinary mortal, in an effort to get her to smile for the cameraman.⁹⁴⁹

Although this article is undated, contemporary film trade magazines suggest that the movies of the Fitzgeralds “snapped” by the New York film company were turned

⁹⁴⁹ Ward Greene, “Is the Jelly Bean from Georgia?” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook III*.

into a one-reel magazine in November 1922 and released by Educational the next month. Announcing the release of the short film titled “Graphic 2548” on 2 December 1922, *Motion Picture News* wrote “Did you ever hear of a godfather of twenty-six? F. Scott Fitzgerald is one. There is a bit of entertaining footage showing the young author at his Long Island home.”⁹⁵⁰ *Film Daily* also reported the day after: “this issue of Educational’s Graphic will no doubt prove interesting entertaining. It deals with [...] F. Scott Fitzgerald, popular creator of flapper in fiction [...] introduced at his Long Island home.”⁹⁵¹ Given that “Graphic 2548” was released in early December 1922, and the Georgia newspaper reported Scottie being one year old and included a scene from Seiter’s *The Beautiful and Damned* (completed in late October 1922), it seems probable that the scene was filmed in early to mid-November 1922 at the Fitzgeralds’ rented house in Long Island.⁹⁵² The fact that Scott and Zelda are wearing light clothes might be misleading: November 1922 was a very warm month, with temperatures reaching a max of 63 F on the 19th in New York City.⁹⁵³

Part of the footage has been preserved at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. The WCFTR holds all the episodes of *Yesterday’s Newsreels*, a television series that ran from 1948 to 1950 and showed original newsreel footage with contemporary narration.⁹⁵⁴ The section “Personalities” of Episode 56 offered TV viewers vintage clips of literary critic Heywood Broun, music composer Richard Strauss and the Fitzgeralds. The voice over by Tom Hale and Roger Owens accompanied images of Fitzgerald writing at a desk in a garden: “Know this man?”

⁹⁵⁰ “Graphic n. 2548,” *Motion Picture News*, 2 December 1922, p. 2810.

⁹⁵¹ “Short Stuff”: Graphic 2548-Educational/Type of Production 1-reel Magazine,” *Film Daily*, 3 December 1922, p. 20.

⁹⁵² *Motion Picture News* reported that, “William A Seiter has completed shooting all scenes for *The Beautiful and Damned*.” “Studio and Player Brevities,” *Motion Picture News*, 21 October 1922, p. 2019.

⁹⁵³ Record of Climatological Observation, U.S. Department of Commerce, Station: Farmingdale, New York <<https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cdo-web/search>> [accessed 11 June 2018].

⁹⁵⁴ “Episode n. 56, ‘F. Scott Fitzgerald and Family,’” CA 415, *Yesterday’s Newsreel Films*, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research, Madison, WI.

well you know his books. This is Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald. Better known as F. Scott Fitzgerald.” The camera lingers on the sentence he wrote – “Everybody has been predicting a bad end for the flapper, but I don’t think there is anything to worry about” – and then moves to Zelda Sayre walking with a stick in her hand. The following scene shows Scott, Zelda and Scottie sitting on the grass, in the *Atlanta Journal’s* words, “just like any ordinary mortal.” It is the narrator’s following comment that strongly suggests that the footage of the *Yesterday’s Newsreel* was taken from “Graphic 2548” and that the setting of the video was indeed the garden of what Zelda called their “nifty-little Babbitt house” in Long Island: “It’s just 1922, and author is just 26. Here is his wife, legendary model for his heroines. Joined here with family, the great writer has still to author *The Great Gatsby*.”⁹⁵⁵

In 1922, the film company that released “Graphic 2548” produced many other one-reel magazines of celebrities of the likes of the Follies girls, women golf champions and Babe Ruth, which further suggests the extent to which silent Hollywood was feeding into Fitzgerald’s celebrity persona in the early 1920s.⁹⁵⁶ John Raeburn notes that

mass media create the celebrity not so much by extolling his accomplishments but by revealing, defining, and advertising his personality, for they are aware that his personality attracts the public to him. The mass media and the celebrity have a symbiotic relationship: in return for the fame they bestow upon him, the celebrity allows his private life to become a commodity for a mass audience.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁵ Qtd. in David S. Brown, *Paradise Lost*, p. 151.

⁹⁵⁶ “Graphic N° 2547”; “Graphic N° 2548” (Educational – magazine – one reel),” *Moving Picture World*, 2 December 1922, p. 2810; “Graphic n. 2550,” *Motion Picture News*, 23 December 1922, p. 3229.

⁹⁵⁷ John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him*, p. 3.

By agreeing to be filmed with his family outside their house in Long Island, Fitzgerald also allowed his private life to become a commodity in return for the fame the news reel may bestow upon him. The location for the shooting could not be more perfect. As Fitzgerald wrote to his cousin shortly before starring in the one-reel: “Great Neck is a great place for celebrities.”⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁸ Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 117.

Appendix Two A Provisional Reconstruction of *The Beautiful and Damned*

Unlike the other three presumed lost movies analysed in this thesis, virtually the whole silent adaptation of *The Beautiful and Damned* can be reconstructed by using 152 untapped stills archived at the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, New York.⁹⁵⁹ The stills are bounded in a keybook, namely a production book that during the silent era Warner Brothers prepared for all its films, including *Conductor 1492*. As David S. Shields points out, “still photographs stopped action as well as envisioned places.”⁹⁶⁰ Of the 152 stills of *The Beautiful and Damned*, 139 can be catalogued as scene stills (i.e. shots of scenes, including character portraits done on set), 4 as set stills (i.e. shots of the set), and 9 as behind-the-scenes (i.e. shots that included director, crew and/or cameras).

Although this unexplored visual documentation is essential to reconstruct and analyse Seiter’s 1922 film, it is important to note that some of the stills from the keybook might have not portrayed the same exact scene the viewers saw when the film was originally released. Sometimes a scene could have been cut or shot from a different angle in the final version of the film. However, the fact that the stills that I have located in film magazines, local newspapers, and the two novelizations represented the same scenes as those included in the keybook suggests that the great majority of the film stills are a fairly accurate visual reminiscence of Seiter’s

⁹⁵⁹ The Beautiful and Damned Keybook, Warner Brothers Keybook Collection, Moving Image Department, George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY. Warner Brothers produced two copies of keybooks – a West Coast and an East Coast copy – for each of its films. The studio donated the East Coast copy of *The Beautiful and Damned* Keybook to the George Eastman Museum in 1958. The information on the Warner Brothers Keybook Stills Collection were kindly provided to me by Sophia Lorent, the curatorial assistant at the Moving Image Department at the George Eastman Museum, during my research visit in July 2017.

⁹⁶⁰ According to David S. Shields, it was DeMille who “conceived the keybook, a master collection of costume, character, set, and scene images for his features for archival purposes that would become standard in studio productions in the 1920s.” David S. Shields, *Still*, p. 141; p. 10.

presumed lost film. The importance of the Warner Brothers keybook is emphasized by the fact that most of the 152 stills did not appear in the 1920s press. As Shields explains,

the public never saw the entire sequence of stills – the keybook – only solitary pictures, or a selection of half a dozen images. (Because motion picture exchanges were always attempting to rent or sell their stock of stills to exhibitors, the numbers in the late 1920s and early 1930s were limited to the minimum needed to get featured in the local newspaper and build a creditable window display at a theater). In theater lobbies enough appeared to highlight the conflicts in play, not enough to give the plot away.

Another popular use of the film stills during the silent era was to serve as illustration to novelizations and fan magazines.⁹⁶¹ To reconstruct *The Beautiful and Damned* scene-by-scene, I cross reference the stills from the keybook – some of which Fitzgerald pasted into his scrapbook – with an array of primary sources, including two untapped illustrated novelizations of the film, reviews and advertisements and the pressbook.⁹⁶² A provisional reconstruction of some of the intertitles was made using American reviews and foreign novelizations of the film, with the awareness that the latter were hyper-mediated texts and that it is impossible to determine the exact wording in the title cards, but only their broad content.

⁹⁶¹ “There were never more than 15 images maximum for novel or story, rather than the two hundred or more for a keybook of stills. A percentage of these illustrations served as genre images, others as images communication the tensions of the tale. The ideas for these illustrated novels came from the earlier photographically illustrated play texts from the turn of the century.” *David S. Shields, Still*, p. 370. The Spanish novelization of *The Beautiful and Damned* includes six images, the Swedish novelization one.

⁹⁶² The Spanish novelization has been translated into English by the author with the help of Pierluigi Calligaro; the Swedish novelization has been translated into English by Daniel Ocic Sundberg.

Revealing the anachronism of the current scholarly debate on the difficulty of adapting Fitzgerald's work to the screen, as early as in December 1922 *Moving Picture World* pointed out:

Adapting [*The Beautiful and Damned*] to the screen was by no means a task of simplicity. On the contrary, there were any number of questions that had to be taken into consideration. And these thoughts as they weighed on the adapter's mind must have multiplied the problems, for there are tendencies in the original script that mislead and tempt the director.⁹⁶³

Thanks to an article Olga Printzlau wrote for *Screenland*, it is possible to know what weighed on the mind of *The Beautiful and Damned*'s adapter: "In adapting this novel for the screen I have made a most gratifying discovery – an author whose work may be translated almost literally to the screen."⁹⁶⁴ Discrediting Printzlau's claim of having transferred the story "literally to the screen," other contemporary film trade magazines noted that in the process of adaptation "the Fitzgerald story [had] been changed somewhat" and that the film was "a free translation from the print to the screen, much having been deleted and a few liberties taken with the script. Not advantageously."⁹⁶⁵

Some of these "liberties" include the fact that, while the chapter "Portrait of a Siren" describes the first meeting between Anthony and Gloria at length, in the film adaptation they already know each other from the start and there are no "flash-back

⁹⁶³ Roger Ferri, "*The Beautiful and Damned*: F. Scott Fitzgerald Novel Furnishes Theme for Warner Production starring Marie Prevost," *Moving Picture World*, 23 December 1922, p. 774.

⁹⁶⁴ Olga Printzlau, "Little Hints for Booklovers: Fiction Reviewed from the Playgoer's Viewpoint," *Screenland*, November 1922, p. 52.

⁹⁶⁵ "Special Cast in *The Beautiful and Damned*," *Exhibitors Herald*, 13 January 1923, p. 53; "The Beautiful and Damned," *Variety*.

in paradise” showing how they met. Unlike his fictional counterpart, the screen Anthony neither works as a salesman nor is ordered South as a “man-at-arms.” Consequently, Dorothy Raycroft, the woman he met while stationed in the south in the book, is turned into a New Yorker “musical comedy soubrette” in the film adaptation.⁹⁶⁶ Additionally, the many references Fitzgerald did to the movies in the novel were deleted in the 1922 silent film: the movie producer Bloeckman (spelled Blockman in the Swedish and Spanish versions of the film) is turned into a theatrical impresario who tries to lure Gloria into becoming a stage actress; there is no mention that her father works in the film industry nor that Richard Caramel writes stories for Hollywood. *Motion Picture News* reported that, in the adaptation, “one might say that only the skeleton of the novel is revealed.”⁹⁶⁷ For the sake of clarity, the reconstruction of the film adaptation is subdivided following the “skeleton” of its source text, i.e. its tripartite structure (three books each consisting of three sections).

Book one, section one “Anthony Patch”

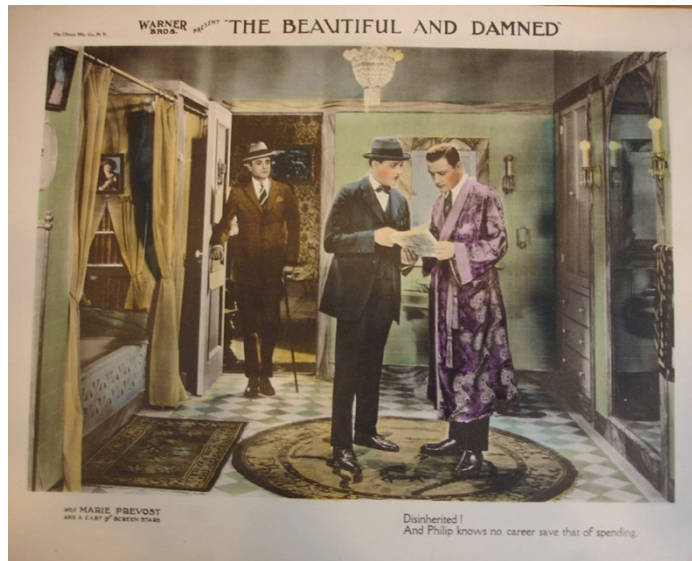
According to the 32-page Spanish novelization of *The Beautiful and Damned*, the film opens with Anthony Patch (Kenneth Harlan) having a late breakfast at home.⁹⁶⁸ Several set stills of Anthony’s “reproachless apartment” in which “all life began” show the accuracy with which the sets were built, praised by the industry press for

⁹⁶⁶ “‘The Beautiful and Damned’: A Very Interesting Picture,” *Clarion Ledger*, 3 May 1923, p. 10.

⁹⁶⁷ Laurence Reid, “The Beautiful and Damned,” *Motion Picture News*, 23 December 1923, p. 3227.

⁹⁶⁸ In the novel, the narrator explains that the dining room of Anthony’s house was merely “a magnificent potentiality” as he “took only breakfast at home.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 19. “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” *La Novela Semanal Cinematográfica*, 52.2 (17 October 1923), 1-31, p. 1. Distributed in Spain by Gaumont, the “Price of Beauty” premiered in Madrid on October 6, 1923. The Spanish novelization thus was sold simultaneously with the movie. The American novelization of *The Off-shore Pirate*, by contrast, was published two months before the release of the film.

being “lavishly mounted” and “the production highlights.”⁹⁶⁹ According to Richard Astro, Fitzgerald’s unique skill as a novelist is particularly apparent in [the] scene in which he vividly sketches Anthony’s lavish



bathroom.⁹⁷⁰ Shots of the set reveal the preciseness with

Figure 53 Lobby card, Beinecke Library, Yale Collection of American Literature

which Warner Brothers reproduced “the heart and core of the apartment – Anthony’s bedroom and bath” down to the finest detail.⁹⁷¹ On the four walls of the bathroom set, there are portraits of the “celebrated thespian beauties of the day” overlooking Anthony’s “generation of neckties,” “wall wardrobe,” and “rich rug.” But the most peculiar element of the bathroom set remains its bathtub, which, as in the book, was “equipped with an ingenious book holder.”⁹⁷² A scene showed Anthony while bathing in it. “Wait till those censor guys get a chance at THAT one,” commented *The Evening World*.⁹⁷³

⁹⁶⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 18; p. 254. “Special Cast in The Beautiful and Damned.”

⁹⁷⁰ Richard Astro, “*Vandover and the Brute* and *The Beautiful and Damned*,” p. 402.

⁹⁷¹ 1958: 0052: 0005.

⁹⁷² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, pp. 19-20. The pressbook reports that when Warner Brothers began filming “they were faced with the problem of constructing an unusual bath room that would permit Anthony to read and smoke luxuriously while bathing. The bath room setting was made of marble tile; within easy reach of the bath was a little recess, consisting of book shelves, with several dozen books reposing there. There was also a humidior containing choice cigarettes, and a pipe ready for Anthony when he wanted to change.” “Smoking and Reading in Bath Latest Novelty,” in “Warner Brothers Presents: *The Beautiful and Damned* by F. Scott Fitzgerald,” p. 4.

⁹⁷³ Don Allen, “Screenings,” *The Evening World*, 6 October 1922, p. 14. As the order of the stills in The Beautiful and Damned Keybook do not follow the progression of the plot, one can only guess whether the bathtub scene came before or after the breakfast scene, 1958: 0052: 0043.

When Anthony did wear clothes at the beginning of the film, his dandyish attire resembled that of his fictional counterpart, a “brocaded dressing-gown” that he liked to “parade before a mirror.”⁹⁷⁴ Dick (Harry Meyers) and Maury (Parker McConnell) enter Anthony’s apartment while he is going through his idle and narcissistic morning routine.⁹⁷⁵ As shown in a lobby card, Dick is carrying a newspaper that, according to both the Spanish and Swedish novelization, reports on Anthony’s grandfather, Adam Patch, who was in a critical condition (Fig. 53). The novelization of *El Precio de la Belleza* includes a dialogue between Anthony and his friends, that might provide a version of the original title cards:

‘Bad news, right? But you shouldn’t be too sad, should you?’

‘You are wrong, guys. The news saddens me. I do not wish my grandfather would die. Although he has many faults, still he is a loyal and kind-hearted man who always hoped for my best.’

‘Don’t waste any minute and go to your grandfather who needs you at his bedside. But, don’t forget about Gloria’s house party tonight.’⁹⁷⁶

While it is important to take into consideration that novelizations were hyper-mediated across multiple languages and media platforms, they functioned as “completion of the silent film,” capturing it in print and providing its incomplete dialogues.⁹⁷⁷ Although it is impossible to determine the exact content of the intertitle(s) accompanying this scene, given that the caption under the still in the

⁹⁷⁴ 1958: 0052: 0002.

⁹⁷⁵ In the novel, the three friends meet at the Ritz-Carlton.

⁹⁷⁶ “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 2.

⁹⁷⁷ See Thomas Van Parys, “The Commercial Novelization,” p. 315.

Spanish novelization also reads: “Your grandfather is going to hand the patrimony over,” it seems safe to assume that its (their) content regarded Anthony’s inheritance.

According to the Spanish novelization, as soon as Anthony leaves for Tarrytown, Dick and Maury finish the rest of his breakfast and comment on the good timing of Adam’s death in view of his grandson’s eventual wedding to the spendthrift Gloria. Dick takes down an idea for the book he is writing – three of his character portraits in the keybook show him writing on a notepad – perhaps a reference to the passage in the novel in which Anthony and Maury complain about their friend’s “habit of taking notes.”⁹⁷⁸ While the author of the Swedish novelization remained close to the title Fitzgerald gave to Dick’s book (*Kärleksdemonen*, “The Love Demon”), the writer of the Spanish novelization mockingly changed it into “World, Demon and Steaks.”⁹⁷⁹ The presence of the culinary item in the book’s title is explained shortly after in the text, when Dick is depicted eating avidly “dozens of [Anthony’s] steaks.” The Swedish novelization might clarify instead why “World” was added to the title, that is the “worldly nature” of the novel that “would mainly take place in restaurants, and follow the rhythm of Jazz.” Evidently, an excuse to frequent “restaurants and indulge in Jazz culture.”⁹⁸⁰ Maury may have been described by an introductory intertitle as “an artist who could win a Noble Prize in living like a tramp” with “no particular reason for his leisurely life.”⁹⁸¹

In the next scene, Anthony arrives at Adam Patch’s mansion. A still shows him in a corridor talking to a nurse and Adam’s secretary Shuttlesworth (Charles

⁹⁷⁸ 1958: 0052: 0018; 1958: 0052: 0019; 1958: 0052: 0020. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 11.

⁹⁷⁹ “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 2; *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*: Warner Bros. Classics of the Screen (Stockholm: Zetterlund & Thelanders Boktryckeri-A.B., 1924), 1-3, p. 1. “The Demon Lover” was the title that Fitzgerald gave to the first draft of the novel, in September 1919.

⁹⁸⁰ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 1.

⁹⁸¹ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 1; “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 2.

McHugh, spelled Shuttleworth in the novel), described in the pressbook as “a social reformer.”⁹⁸² Two stills and the Spanish novelization reveal that the following scene adhered to the source text, which describes Adam and the secretary interrogating Anthony about his plans for the future.⁹⁸³ The first still shows Anthony standing in front of Shuttlesworth, who is sitting on an armchair, and his grandfather, who is sitting up in a majestic four-poster bed.⁹⁸⁴ The Spanish novelization reports an exchange between Anthony and his grandfather:

‘Why are you looking at me like that? Did they tell you I was dead?’

‘No grandfather, on the contrary, I am awfully glad to see you are well. But the newspapers reported alarming news.’

‘Those were overstatements, my boy. I am sorry I disappointed you, next time it will be better! I need to have a word with you before you go. Are you by any chance planning to find a job?’

‘I already have a job! I am writing a compendium of the ‘History of the World’ [History of the Middle Ages in Fitzgerald’s text]. I start with the beginning of civilization, then I analyse monkeys, the evolution ...’⁹⁸⁵

The next still reveals that Anthony’s answer had put his two interlocutors to sleep.⁹⁸⁶

Without waking them up, he sneaks away. The viewer is introduced to the third set of the film, Gloria Gilbert (Marie Prevost)’s house.

⁹⁸² “Former Bathing Beauty Queen in Flapper Film,” in “Warner Brothers Presents,” p. 1.

⁹⁸³ The only difference between novel and film is that in Fitzgerald’s book the three men speak in a glass-walled sun parlour, in the adaptation in Adam Patch’s bedroom.

⁹⁸⁴ In the book, Shuttleworth also assists to the conversation. Anthony “wished that Shuttleworth would have tact enough to leave the room – he detested Shuttleworth – but the secretary had settled blandly in a rocker and was dividing between the two Patches the glances of his faded eyes.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 24; 1958: 0052: 0077.

⁹⁸⁵ *El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 6.

⁹⁸⁶ 1958: 0052: 0078.

Book one, section two “Portrait of a Siren” and three “The Connoisseur of Kisses”

In the novel’s subsection “Flashback in Paradise,” Gloria appears as beauty incarnate seven years before her first meeting with Anthony. According to John Peale Bishop, the episode “might, except for its wit, have been conceived in the mind of a scenario writer.”⁹⁸⁷ Agreeing with Bishop, Gautam Kundu notes in *Fitzgerald and the Influence of Film* that the passage reads like a “script from a screenplay with its emphasis on what is seen and what is heard [...] the very references to a film-like optical device with which the sub-section opens, is an indication that the novelist [...] introduces [...] a cinematic moment that [...] acts as a thread which connects Anthony [...] to the imminent future of Gloria’s intrusion.”⁹⁸⁸ Despite the cinematic quality of this description – Fitzgerald himself told Bishop he was worried it reminded of “elevated moments of D. W. Griffith” – Printzlau did not include it in the scenario.⁹⁸⁹ Gloria and Anthony know each other from the beginning of the film and there is no flashback depicting the “birth of her beauty.”

At Gloria’s house party – in the novel she organizes a dinner at the Biltmore Hotel – the scenarist groups all the main characters in the same room. A film still in the keybook shows the set shot from behind a 6-piece orchestra accompanying the dance of the guests.⁹⁹⁰ Muriel is attired as a glamorous vamp, with dark lipstick and

⁹⁸⁷ John Peale Bishop, “Mr. Fitzgerald Sees the Flapper Through” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 74).

⁹⁸⁸ Gautam Kundu, *Fitzgerald and the Influence of Film*, p. 118.

⁹⁸⁹ Given that this letter is dated February 1922 and Bishop’s review of *The Beautiful and Damned* appeared in the *New York Herald* the next month, it may have been Fitzgerald himself who gave Bishop the hint that the passage seemed written by a scenario writer. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *A Life in Letters*, p. 45.

⁹⁹⁰ 1958: 0052: 0033.

a revealing dress. Although in the early 1920s Fazenda was best known for her slapstick and Bathing Beauty roles, in *The Beautiful and Damned* she played the “part of the Jazz Baby.”⁹⁹¹ As a caption under a lobby card reads “people told her constantly she was a vampire and she believed it.”⁹⁹² Arguably included in an introductory title card, the sentence was taken verbatim from the novel, suggesting Printzlau deemed Fitzgerald’s quick turn of phrase good material for intertitles. Stills from the keybook reveal the hair and make-up artist stayed close to the original description of Muriel’s hair as “elaborately arranged,” her “over-red lips, combined to make her resemble Theda Bara, the prominent motion picture actress.”⁹⁹³

According to the writer of the Swedish novelization, the other guest of the party worth mentioning was “Jacinto” Blockman (Clarence Burton).⁹⁹⁴ Maury and Dick warn Anthony about his interest in Gloria perhaps via an intertitle reading: “a theatrical impresario can be a dangerous rival when your girl wants to become an actress.”⁹⁹⁵ In adapting *The Beautiful and Damned*, as anticipated above, Printzlau deleted its many references to the world of cinema.⁹⁹⁶ Fitzgerald’s first character associated with films, the movie executive Joseph Bloeckman, is turned into a theatrical impresario; Gloria, consequently, does not yearn to become a movie star but a stage actress. This choice might have not been casual, given that, as seen in Chapter Four, at the time of the production of the film Warner Brothers was supporting William H. Hays’s campaign to restore confidence in motion pictures and

⁹⁹¹ “Warner Picture Has Strong Cast,” *Motion Picture News*, 28 October 1922, p. 2193.

⁹⁹² 1958: 0052: 0032.

⁹⁹³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 95.

⁹⁹⁴ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 2.

⁹⁹⁵ *El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 7.

⁹⁹⁶ On the references to the world of cinema in *The Beautiful and Damned* see Jonathan Enfield, “As the Fashion in Book Shifted: *The Beautiful and Damned* as Arc-Light Fiction”; Robert Martin, “Hollywood in Fitzgerald: After Paradise,” in *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. by Bryer, pp. 130-32.

their educational values. Representing Bloeckman as a shady movie producer trying to lure young women would have implicated cinema in immorality, at a time when Hollywood studios were trying to clean their reputation.⁹⁹⁷ The Swedish novelization reports that Bloeckman's offer of a "brilliant future in the theatre" was "surely tempting for Gloria, but there are limits even to what a young girl ever so stricken with theatre was willing to sacrifice for her dreamy ideals."⁹⁹⁸ In "Flash-back in Paradise," by contrast, the "voice that was in the white wind" reveals to Gloria's fictional counterpart that "at first it was thought that she would go as an actress in the motion pictures but, after all, it is not advisable."

Additionally, in the film, to the best of my knowledge, no reference is made to the ethnic and religious background of neither the "exquisitely dressed Jewess" Rachel, nor the "stoutening, ruddy Jew" with "a heavy lay of jaw and nose" Bloeckman.⁹⁹⁹ Olga Printzlau did not transpose any of the racial slurs Fitzgerald used to describe Gloria's suitor, did not anglicize his name – Meyer Wolfsheim was turned into Charles Wolf in the silent adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* – and did not mention either his ethnic origins or religious belief. As Harold Brackman notes, in the 1920s the Jewish movie producer, identified as a moral lecher who debauched innocent Christian girls, [...] became a perfect symbol of Jazz Age decadence."¹⁰⁰⁰ Like Bloeckman, the Warner brothers were sons of poor European immigrants who anglicized their name and worked their way up in the silent film industry; their father

⁹⁹⁷ In a 1923 interview, Fitzgerald also claimed the theatre world was more "dangerous" than the film world for a girl. When asked whether he would allow his daughter to take up "screen work as a career," Fitzgerald replied, "if she has any talent for motion-picture work, I shall certainly encourage her to take it up. I would never – if I could possibly avoid it – encourage her to go on the stage. I think the theatrical world a terrible place for a girl." B. F. Wilson, "F. Scott Fitzgerald on Minnie McGlue," p. 102.

⁹⁹⁸ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 2.

⁹⁹⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 38; p. 41; p. 84; p. 175.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Harold Brackman, "The Attack on 'Jewish Hollywood': A Chapter in the History of Modern American Anti-Semitism," *Modern Judaism*, 20.1 (2000), 1-19, p. 4.

Benjamin had grown up in a Jewish ghetto in Krasnashiltz, Poland, and changed his family name from Varnereski or Varna in Castle Garden in 1883.¹⁰⁰¹ In the year in which the film was released, the New York Civic League's William Sheafe Chase worryingly argued that "the few producers who control the motion pictures are all Hebrews [...] the motion picture industry is in the despotic control of four or five Hebrews."¹⁰⁰² Unconvincingly claiming he had "absolutely no anti-Jewish spirit," Chase observed that there was now a:

Widespread conviction that the power [of this small group of men] is being used for selfish commercial and unpatriotic purposes [...] there is now a widespread hope that in the engagement of Mr. Hay's forces, these exceedingly powerful Jews have really been incited by an honest purpose to serve the public in a generous and effective way [...] Hays believes that these Hebrews who control the Motion Picture business are sincere in their desire to clean up the industry.

In February 1922, only one year after the Arbuckle case, director Taylor was found shot to death in his mansion, which added to a growing concern among the reformers that Hollywood was innately immoral. In a contemporary report of the movies made in the same year as *The Beautiful and Damned*, the Algonquin Round Table member Robert E. Sherwood sarcastically noted that after "the poisonous wave of scandal which swept through the yellow journals of our fair nation after the Arbuckle and

¹⁰⁰¹ Cass Warner Sperling, Cork Millner, Jack Warner, eds., *Hollywood be Thy Name: The Warner Brothers Story* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1988), pp. 17-20.

¹⁰⁰² William Sheafe, *Catechism on Motion Pictures in Interstate Commerce* (Albany: New York Civic League, 1922), p. 57; p. 115; p. 118.

Taylor cases,” Hollywood had been “associated in the public mind with such historic boroughs as Nineveh, Tyre, Babylon, Sodom and Gomorrah.”¹⁰⁰³ In view of the charges against Jewish producers and Hollywood in general, Warner Brothers likely preferred to characterize Bloeckman as a WASP theatre impresario instead that as a “despotic” and “unpatriotic” Hebrew film producer.

At the party, Bloeckman withdraws to a balcony with Gloria and asks her to marry him but she likely replies in a title card, “I don’t plan to marry for many years!” Anthony steps into the conversation and asks Gloria to dance (Fig. 54). The camera passed on Mr. Gilbert (Emmett King), immersed in a pile of unpaid bills accumulated, as reported

by *Moving Picture World*, by Gloria’s extravagance.¹⁰⁰⁴ The Spanish novelization reports an exchange between Gloria and Anthony that might have



Figure 54 Lobby card, Beinecke Library, Yale Collection of American Literature

title card:

‘Anthony, I think your love blinds you. I am just a vulgar girl. I love to dance and own silly things.’

¹⁰⁰³ Robert E. Sherwood, ed., *The Best Moving Pictures of 1922-1923. Also Who’s Who in the Movies. And the Yearbook of the American Screen* (Cambridge: Small, Maynard & Company, 1923), p. 79.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Roger Ferri, “*The Beautiful and Damned*.” The Swedish novelization also notes that Gloria’s father was “worryingly reading her fashionista and tailor bills,” *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 2.

‘Gloria you are just a naïve little doll that believes in dreams rather than reality.

I am neither rich nor I can make you a star but I love you.’¹⁰⁰⁵

The interchange is followed by a kiss and engagement proposal, which is promptly communicated to the guests of the party and to Gloria’s father. A still in the keybook shows all the guests raising a glass to the newly engaged couple.¹⁰⁰⁶

Book two, section one “The Radiant Hour”

While in the novel Anthony goes to his grandfather by himself to announce his engagement, in the film he is accompanied by Gloria, a choice Printzlau arguably made to contrast her anti-conformism with the old man’s traditionalism. The “Cross Patch” likely asked them via a title card “how do you plan to survive with one small

pension?” The Spanish novelization reported that, “as proof of her insouciance for the matter, Gloria lighted a cigarette like a modern woman”; Anthony quickly puts it out.¹⁰⁰⁷ A caption to a lobby card



Figure 55 Lobby card, Beinecke Library, Yale Collection of American Literature

¹⁰⁰⁵ “*El Precio de la Belleza: por Marie Prévost*,” p. 9.

¹⁰⁰⁶ 1958: 0052: 0040. This exchange echoes a passage from the novel’s sub-section “Admiration,” in which Gloria tells Anthony in a Broadway cabaret, “I’m like these people,” to which he replies “You’re a young idiot!” The exchange continues with Gloria insisting: “No, I’m not. I *am* like them [...] I’ve got a streak of what you’d call cheapness. I don’t know where I get this but it’s – oh, things like this and bright colors and gaudy vulgarity.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁰⁷ “*El Precio de la Belleza: por Marie Prévost*,” pp. 17-18.

detest reformers, especially the sort who try to reform me” (Fig. 55), which suggests that the sentence, originally attributed to Anthony by Fitzgerald, might have also been included in an intertitle.¹⁰⁰⁸

Just like in the book, the young couple’s wedding takes place in the Tarrytown mansion. The *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* described the scene as “one of the ‘queerest’ marriage ceremonies ever filmed for a motion picture.”¹⁰⁰⁹ The keybook includes various shots of scenes and character portraits from the wedding set that were reprinted in several local newspapers, suggesting the scenarist gave much emphasis to the glamorous Hollywoodian wedding.¹⁰¹⁰ The newlywed Scott Fitzgerald, by contrast, described the Patches’ wedding in less than a paragraph, sharing insights into Anthony’s mixed feelings on getting married: “A languorous and pleasant content settled like a weight upon him, bringing responsibility and possession. He was married.” In the novel, shortly after the wedding, Anthony calls Gloria “my darling wife,” to which she replies: “Don’t say ‘wife.’ I’m your mistress. Wife’s such an ugly word. Your ‘permanent mistress’ is so much more tangible and desirable.”¹⁰¹¹ According to the Spanish novelization, the scenarist used this phrase in a less controversial way by making Gloria say “wife is not a romantic word, let’s say we are the eternal fiancés.”¹⁰¹²

Following Fitzgerald’s novel, the next scenes dealt with the “question of laundry-bags,” that is Gloria fighting with Anthony because she is not willing to take

¹⁰⁰⁸ In the novel, Gloria says she does not like those reformers who tell her: “Oh, Gloria, if you smoke so many cigarettes you’ll lose your pretty complexion!” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁰⁹ “‘Queer Marriage’ Scene in Film of Super-Flappers,” *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, 15 March 1923, p. 5.

¹⁰¹⁰ 1958: 0052: 0066; 1958: 0052: 0068; 1958: 0052: 0069; 1958: 0052: 0050; 1958: 0052: 0054
1958: 0052: 0050; 1958: 0052: 0052; 1958: 0052: 0053; 1958: 0052: 0055; 1958: 0052: 0059.

¹⁰¹¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 171; p. 174.

¹⁰¹² “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 14.

the role of housewife.¹⁰¹³ The Swedish novelization, however, reassured its readers that the “first marital fight was happily taken care of and harmony returned. But now something had to be done since old man Adam had proven himself unwilling to die. Anthony had to force his writing the world history.”¹⁰¹⁴ Adhering to the novel, Printzlau made Anthony and Gloria invite Maury and Dick to their house to tell them they are moving to a house in the countryside, far from the city’s excesses – i.e. “Jazz and restaurants” according to the Swedish novelization – that prevent Anthony from finishing his book.

One of the most reprinted stills from the keybook froze a scene showing Gloria dancing sensually in front of Anthony, Maury and Dick. This scene was considered too daring by at least one contemporary exhibitor, who suggested his colleagues eliminate “about 50 feet of the dance put on by Marie [Prevost] when two gentlemen callers are present” as this “would remove very much food for the reformers.”¹⁰¹⁵ As Lory Landay notes, the shimmy would be “one of the dances prohibited in the Production Code that was referred to by name.”¹⁰¹⁶ Another exhibitor criticized the film for “shimmying was the main thing and after it is all over, what is it about?”¹⁰¹⁷ The controversial scene was adapted from a passage in the book in which Gloria,

Going beyond her accustomed limit of four precisely timed cocktails, led Anthony, Maury and Dick on as gay and joyous a bacchanal as they had ever known, disclosing an astonishing knowledge of ballet steps [...] which she

¹⁰¹³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 179.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 2.

¹⁰¹⁵ “What the Pictures Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 16 February 1924, p. 74.

¹⁰¹⁶ Lori Landay, “The Flapper Film: Comedy Dance, and Jazz Age Kinaesthetics,” p. 232.

¹⁰¹⁷ “What the Pictures Did For Me,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 28 April 1923, p. 83.

confessed had been taught her by her cook when she was innocent and seventeen.¹⁰¹⁸

That same year, to protect the citizens of their State from indecency, the New York State Censor Board had cut a shimmy dance executed by Gilda Gray “so materially that it appeared on the screen only in a brief flash.”¹⁰¹⁹ To avoid Gloria’s shimmying scene also ending on censors’ floors, Warner Brothers accompanied the action with a sermonic intertitle. *Screenland* reprinted a still from the scene (Fig. 56) with a



Figure 56 *Screenland*, April 1923, p. 2

caption reading, “Gloria danced to the lugubrious chant: The – panic – has – come – over us. So ha-a-as – the – moral decline!” While in the novel the same lines (from the “popular air called ‘Daisy Dear’”) were drunkenly sang by Maury at

a party in Marietta, the fact that Printzlau attributed them to Gloria via an intertitle was likely meant to underline her doom. *Photoplay* was arguably referring to this scene when it noted that the film “had been given sub-titles to point the usual silversheet moral,” while another review criticized the “sub-title pointer [indicating] its moral intent.”¹⁰²⁰

¹⁰¹⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 109.

¹⁰¹⁹ Robert E. Sherwood, ed., *The Best Moving Pictures of 1922-1923*, p. 145.

¹⁰²⁰ Fredrick James Smith, “The Shadow Stage: A Review of the New Pictures,” *Photoplay*, February 1922, p. 63; “Saves Your Picture Time and Money,” *Photoplay*, February 1922, p. 65.

In this and other scenes, Seiter followed the lesson taught by Cecil B. DeMille's *Manslaughter*, which was released two months before *The Beautiful and Damned*: in Sara Ross's words "having [the] cake and eating it too when it came to using spectacles of licentious sexuality as part of a moral lesson."¹⁰²¹ *Picture*

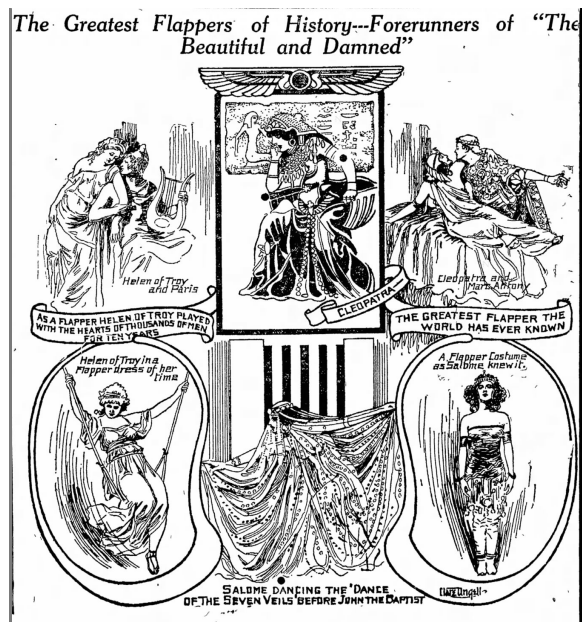


Figure 57 *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, 5 February 1923, p. 6

Play pointed out that "Miss Printzlau

holds to the moral far enough to present their wild life in a series of mad, mad parties which, however, are far too exciting to be useful as an awful warning."¹⁰²² While the director dwelled on Gloria's titillating shimmying and revealing clothes, the intertitle reminded that her hedonistic behaviour could only bring "moral decline," thus turning Maury's Goliardic song into a "lugubrious" and homiletic chant. The *New York Times* might have referred to this scene when it complained that "many people were encouraged by the early scenes of the photoplay to expect amusement but then "warned by the subtitles to fear a message."¹⁰²³ An advertisement for the film in the daily *Iowa City Press-Citizen* also reminds of DeMille's cinematic hit by displaying the "forerunners of 'The Beautiful and Damned'": Helen of Troy, Cleopatra and Salomé (Fig. 57).¹⁰²⁴ A Tennessean newspaper explained the reason why Warner Brothers brought "the three greatest flappers" into play: they "each met the same end

¹⁰²¹ Sara Ross, "1922-Movies and the Perilous Future," p. 82.

¹⁰²² "The Screen in Review," *Picture Play*, March 1923, p. 70.

¹⁰²³ "Another Flapper Story."

¹⁰²⁴ "The Greatest Flappers of History: Forerunners of 'The Beautiful and Damned,'" *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, 5 February 1923, p. 6.

as did Gloria. They were each ‘The Beautiful and Damned.’ History repeats itself in this vivid picturization of the life of a New York Flapper.”¹⁰²⁵ Just as DeMille made the comparison between ancient decadence and jazz-age America in the famous “Fall of Rome” sequence in *Manslaughter*, Warner Brothers marketed *The Beautiful and Damned* through the three historical and biblical women most associated with sin.

Given that, in Sumiko Higashi’s words, “bad women meant business,” the marketing for Seiter’s film conceptualized Gloria both as an archetypal ancient temptress and a ultra-contemporary flapper from the “Modern Babylon,” that is how New York was called at the time.¹⁰²⁶ Stressing her association with contemporary Gotham, *The Clarion Ledger* also described Gloria as “the loveliest flapper in New York – a 1922 model.”¹⁰²⁷ As James L. W. West notes, the novel “is set almost entirely in New York City and its environs; much of the action, in fact, occurs on the grid of central Manhattan.”¹⁰²⁸ In 1922, Henry Seidel Canby had already underscored that Fitzgerald, following what he believed to be popular taste, “gratified curiosity as to what they do on Broadway after midnight with the fullest detail.”¹⁰²⁹ Warner Brothers’ also contented his viewers by showing what they called the “heart of New York’s Great White Way” and played the setting up in the marketing of the film. The pressbook reported that the exact reproduction of “one of the biggest and most lavishly invested cabarets [...] was built at the Warner Brothers’ West Coast Studios [...] experts in interior decorating were consulted, and at great expense the lavish

¹⁰²⁵ “The Three Greatest Flappers,” *The Tennessean*, 30 April 1923, p. 3.

¹⁰²⁶ Sumiko Higashi, *Virgins, Vamps and Flappers: The American Silent Movie Heroine* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1978), p. 55. See Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, p. 101.

¹⁰²⁷ “*The Beautiful and Damned*: A Very Interesting Picture.”

¹⁰²⁸ James L. W. III West, “The Question of Vocation,” p. 50. For a consideration of the representation of New York City in *The Beautiful and Damned* see Nathalie Cochoy, “New York as a ‘Passing Stranger’ in *The Beautiful and Damned*,” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 4 (2005), 65-83.

¹⁰²⁹ Henry Seidel Canby, “The Flapper’s Tragedy” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 62).

splendor and beauty of the New York mecca of thrill hunters was faithfully reproduced.”¹⁰³⁰

In a passage from the book, Fitzgerald suggested that New York’s urban charm could be fully appreciated only when accompanied by the “indescribable gloss and glamour” of alcohol intoxication: “After a few high-balls,” observes Anthony, “there was magic in the tall glowing Arabian night of the Bush Terminal Building [...] and Wall Street was the triumph of gold.”¹⁰³¹ Similarly, the pressbook announced that the adaptation dealt with:

The wild restless life of pleasure seekers anxious for new thrills and the dazzle of New York’s night life where wine cups meet lips and lips hasten to join other lips, the rushing, exciting habits of that rich floating population which throngs the restaurants, cabarets, theaters and hotel of our great cities.¹⁰³²

Nonetheless, the fact that the novel and its silent film version “mostly concentrate on rich areas and wealthy people” was not received uniformly throughout the country.¹⁰³³ A month after the publication of *The Beautiful and Damned*, a reviewer from the North Carolinian daily *Raleigh News and Observer* complained:

In this part of the country, we are not familiar with the idle rich. Consequently, it is rather hard for a local reviewer to estimate the truth or falsity of F. Scott

¹⁰³⁰ “Broadway Cabaret Built for Flapper Play: The Beautiful and Damned,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 9 July 1923, p. 8. Reprinted from “Warner Brothers Presents.”

¹⁰³¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 201.

¹⁰³² “Starting Today: The Beautiful and Damned,” *The Times*, 1 March 1923, p. 4. Reprinted from “Warner Brothers Presents.”

¹⁰³³ Pascale Antolin, “New York in *The Beautiful and Damned*: ‘A City of Words,’” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*, 7 (2009), 113-25, p. 116.

Fitzgerald's characterizations and settings in his recent bestseller *The Beautiful and Damned*, which is a story of that class. Anthony and Gloria [...] are like no one that we would be apt to meet, even in Durham. In reading of their surprising lives, we glimpse a social stratum with which the average Tar Heel is wholly unacquainted.¹⁰³⁴

Similarly, an exhibitor from Marshfield (now Coos Bay), Oregon, described the film as "a big city picture that failed to satisfy the loggers and lumberjacks here," while a colleague from Melville, Louisiana, believed that it "should be a knockout in the cities, but in small burghs like this a fellow has to be careful in booking this class of picture. Lost money on it." A theatre owner from Chester, Vermont, echoed: "this is not a good feature for small towns. Too much booze is disgusting to my patrons."¹⁰³⁵ But it was an Iowan exhibitor from Decorah, a rural town of 4000, who arguably gave the most austere comment, depicting the film "not fit to be shown in any first class theatre. Showed one performance and pulled it off. A disgrace to the industry. Moral tone poor. Not suitable for Sunday."¹⁰³⁶ In bigger cities, comments were predictably more positive. In Ogden, Utah (32,000 inhabitants), the exhibitor acclaimed *The Beautiful and Damned* "best picture and best business in last six months [...] attendance was big."¹⁰³⁷ At the Beacon and Modern Theatres, in Boston,

¹⁰³⁴ "Raleigh News and Observer" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 117).

¹⁰³⁵ "What the Pictures Did For Me," *Exhibitors Herald*, 31 March 1923, p. 80; *Moving Picture World*, 1 September 1923, p. 54; A. Van Buren Powell, ed., "Straight from the Shoulders Reports," *Moving Picture World*, 15 December 1923, p. 626.

¹⁰³⁶ A. Van Buren Powell, "Straight from the Shoulders Reports," ed., *Moving Picture World*, 22 December 1923, p. 713.

¹⁰³⁷ "Exhibitors' Box-Office Reports," *Motion Picture News*, 24 March 1923, p. 442.

“records for a period of four years were shattered” by the adaptation; “house records” were also broken at the Wizard theatre in Baltimore.¹⁰³⁸

In addition to the view of Gloria’s enticing shimmy, other scenes of the film might have aroused moviegoers and, consequently, outraged censors. Overstressing her fictional counterpart’s flirtatious and promiscuous attitude, the caption of two lobby cards that likely appeared in an intertitle read: “She fed on her popularity and was disposed to like many men” and “Gloria constantly broke engagements – but isn’t that the prerogative of the super-flapper?” (Fig. 54). Other stills show her with bare shoulders asking Maury to hook her up.¹⁰³⁹ While the Spanish novelization and American reviews criticized Gloria for her wantonness, the book suggested the exact opposite: a girl might have had several men but this does not ruin her value, in fact it raised it. “It’s funny,” Gloria tells Anthony,

but I’m so sure that those kisses left no mark on me – no taint of promiscuity, I mean – even though a man once told me in all seriousness that he hated to think I’d been a public drinking glass [...] I just laughed and told him to think of me rather as a loving-cup that goes from hand to hand but should be valued none the less.¹⁰⁴⁰

Another set still of Anthony’s living room shows a mixer and martini glasses on a table, suggesting that the “last night of fun” before the Patches leaves the city was

¹⁰³⁸ “The Film Mart: Production Progress,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 2 February 1923, p. 59; “The Film Mart: Production Progress,” *Exhibitors Herald*, 24 February 1923, p. 68.

¹⁰³⁹ 1958: 0052: 0007. In the novel, Gloria asks Anthony to help her with her dress in the privacy of their bedroom. “She offered him her back and ask him to do it. ‘Hook me up,’ she suggested.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

celebrated with bootlegger alcohol.¹⁰⁴¹ The Spanish novelization suggests that, following the novel, once Maury and Dick leave late that night, Gloria says childishly to Anthony “our two little beds here – side by side – they’ll be always waiting for us.”¹⁰⁴²

The young couple moves to the countryside, where Anthony focuses on writing his history book. To underline Gloria’s childishness, the scenarist makes her friends send her toys “so that she could play with them,” while Anthony worked. A still used for the cover page of the Swedish novelization shows Gloria sitting in the garden of the country house surrounded by a set of dolls (see fig. 31). Another still also shows her sitting in an armchair with a doll in her arms, like in the sub-section “Winter,” in which Gloria presses “tightly to her bosom [...] a child’s doll, a profound and infinitely healing balm to her disturbed and childish heart.”¹⁰⁴³ Despite the comforting toys, Gloria becomes restless and complains to Anthony: “Don’t work today! You have been ignoring me for two months.” To his question “don’t you want me to finish this book?” she replies: “you only think about your book and I have nobody to talk to except these dolls.”¹⁰⁴⁴ Unlike the end of the section “The Radiant Hour,” in the film the Patches do not attend Mrs. Gilbert funeral: her character was not included in the film.

¹⁰⁴¹ 1958: 0052: 0009. If virtually all the American reviews of Seiter’s film comment on the characters’ excessive drinking, both the Spanish and Swedish novelizations did not mention it once. This suggests that either the public display of drunkenness was more constrained in Europe, or the press of countries free of Prohibition – in Sweden a Referendum for prohibition had failed only four months before the American premiere of the film – put less emphasis on alcohol’s consumption. Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, Ian R. Tyrrell, eds., *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopaedia*. Vol. 1, A-L (Santa Barbara: Abc Clío, 2003), p. xiii.

¹⁰⁴² “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 19; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁴³ 1958: 0052: 0026.

¹⁰⁴⁴ “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” p. 20.

Book two, section two “Symposium” and three “The Broken Lute”

The beginning of the section “Symposium” of the book presents a new character, “the exceedingly efficient [and stereotyped] Japanese” butler Tana. Unlike the African American players in *The Offshore Pirate* and *The Chorus Girl’s Romance*, the actor playing Tana (George Kuwa) received screen credits.¹⁰⁴⁵ *Motion Pictures News* mentioned the Japanese actor among the “popular screen players” of the movie. Warner Brothers likely included Kuwa in the cast because a few months before the release of *The Beautiful and Damned* he had played “Chopstick Charlie” in the adaptation of Frank Norris’s *Moran of the Lady Letty* starring the new-idol Rudolph Valentino.¹⁰⁴⁶ The stereotype of the Hollywood Asian, as that of many other ethnic characters, solidified during the silent era. Although his name was anglicized to “Tanner,” trade magazines still identified the character as “the Jap servant.”¹⁰⁴⁷ Stills show Tanner mowing the lawn or carrying laundry-bags while wearing stereotypical Chinese clothes; at the Patches’ costume party described afterwards, Rachel’s attire was likely meant to mock the servant’s one given its similarity. Nonetheless, Warner Brothers were not alone in typecasting Tanner; his fictional counterpart was not only highly stereotyped, but it also ridiculed the real-life Tana, the Fitzgeralds’ Japanese houseboy.¹⁰⁴⁸ In Fitzgerald’s novel, the character is described as “unusually small even for a Japanese” speaking in “splintered English”; Gloria and Anthony

¹⁰⁴⁵ According to George A. Katchmer, in the 1920s Kuwa “filled the part where an oriental was needed.” George A. Katchmer, *A Biographical Dictionary of Silent Film Western Actors and Actresses* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2002), p. 195.

¹⁰⁴⁶ “Warner Picture Has Strong Cast.” Kuwa is now most remembered for starring as the first non-white popular detective, the Chinese detective Charlie Chan, in *The House without a Key* (d. Spencer Gordon Bennet, 1925). See Philippa Gates, “The Assimilated Asian American as American Action Hero: Anna May Wong, Keye Luke, and James Shigeta in the Classical Hollywood Detective,” *Revue Canadienne d’études Cinématographiques*, 22.2 (Fall 2013), 19-40, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴⁷ “Special Cast in The Beautiful and Damned.” Another film magazine describes Kuwa as “a particularly clever Japanese actor.” Roger Ferri, “*The Beautiful and Damned*.”

¹⁰⁴⁸ George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken claimed Tana was a German spy. Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 122; Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, p. 142.

magnanimously “endured” him “as they endured ill weather and sickness of the body and the estimable Will of God.”

Shortly after Tana’s arrival, in the novel it occurred “to the estimable Gloria that she was probably with child.”¹⁰⁴⁹ Fitzgerald indirectly hints at abortion by having Gloria asks Anthony whether he wanted her to have the baby, a question which implies she might change her state. After coming back from her friend Constance’s house, Gloria tells Anthony smiling broadly “it’s all right,” leaving to interpretation whether she decided to abort her pregnancy or if it was a false alarm.¹⁰⁵⁰ Although Shelley Stamp has demonstrated that directors such as Lois Weber had tackled the issue of abortion during the silent era, it is unlikely that Printzlau considered hinting at Gloria’s potential end of pregnancy, given that in 1922 some boards of censorship disapproved of pictures “dealing with abortion and malpractice [...] and incidents having to do with eugenics and ‘birth control.’”¹⁰⁵¹ Nonetheless, the scenarist mentioned and ridiculed Gloria’s ideas on motherhood by quoting almost verbatim a passage from *The Beautiful and Damned* in a review of her own adaptation: “there is something whimsically pathetic and humorous about the little ‘flapper-wife’ – whose ironic soul whispers to her that ‘motherhood is also the privilege of the female baboon’ and so, her dreams are of ghostly children only.”¹⁰⁵²

Instead of having Gloria meet with Constance Merriam, Printzlau make her bump into her old acquaintance Bloeckman, who reiterates his intention to make

¹⁰⁴⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 94; p. 115; p. 222. For a discussion on abortion in *The Beautiful and Damned*, see Karen Weingarten, *Abortion in the American Imagination: Before Life and Choice, 1880-1940* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), pp. 44-52.

¹⁰⁵⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 228.

¹⁰⁵¹ See Shelley Stamp, “Taking Precautions, or Regulating Early Birth-Control Films” in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. by Bean and Negra, pp. 270-97. Robert E. Sherwood, ed., *The Best Moving Pictures of 1922-1923*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁵² Olga Printzlau, “Little Hints for Booklovers,” p. 52; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 424.

Gloria the primadonna of his theatre. She refuses the proposal but accepts a ride home. A still in the keybook shows Gloria coming out of a very elegant car with chauffeur; Bloeckman is helping her to step down by holding her hand.¹⁰⁵³ Anthony, who has just come back from a meeting with Adam Patch, is startled to see his wife with the theatre impresario.¹⁰⁵⁴ Adhering to the source text, in the next scene Anthony tells Gloria about his grandfather's offer – a job in Europe providing he goes by himself – and she reports Bloeckman's one. Stills in the keybook show Gloria gently touching Anthony's arm, but he responds by grabbing her shoulders and gazing threateningly at her.¹⁰⁵⁵ The writer of the Swedish novelization reports that “a marital storm blew over,” but a truce was achieved on the terms that both Anthony's trip and Gloria's theatre debut were inhibited. Printzlau ends the scene, in Fitzgerald's words, with a “triumph of lethargy”: the couple consents to give up their respective job offers for the other's sake.¹⁰⁵⁶

The climax of the film – the “production highlight” of the film according to the *New York Tribune* – coincides with the books' sub-sections “In Darkness” and “The Broken Lute.”¹⁰⁵⁷ American reviews of the film reported that, as in Fitzgerald's novel, the Patches' country home becomes theatre of revelry. Twenty-two stills in the keybook froze the various stages of the party scene, which *Photoplay* described as “a jazz anti-Volstead party, hardly to be recommended for the entire family, that will singularly touch many another member of the set Mr. Fitzgerald loves to depict.”¹⁰⁵⁸ When the party starts, as a film still in the keybook shows, everyone is

¹⁰⁵³ 1958: 0052: 0087.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵⁵ 1958: 0052: 0080; 1958: 0052: 0081; 1958: 0052: 0082.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 2; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 182.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Harriette Underhill, “On the Screen,” *New York Tribune*, 11 December 1922, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Fredrick James Smith, “The Shadow Stage.”

wearing elegant clothes; Gloria pours a cocktail to Muriel from a mixer (the *Evening News* notes that the young couple entertains their friends with bootleg hooch), while Anthony collects



his guests' watches for a
 Figure 58 Lobby card, Beinecke Library, Yale Collection of American Literature

reason explained below.¹⁰⁵⁹ Another still shows Dick introducing Anthony to a man in evening dress (Walter Long), who will play an important role in the “panic coming over the party.”¹⁰⁶⁰ A lobby card (Fig. 58) shows the party now in full swing, alcohol bottles scattered everywhere. None of the guests is “wearing [one’s] own clothes”: Anthony has a turban on (Valentino’s *The Sheik* had been released the previous year), Maury is in woman’s attire and Rachel, as mentioned above, wears Tana’s livery. Just like in the book, Anthony is “being attentive to Rachel,” while Gloria peaks from behind the curtain of a home-made theatre.¹⁰⁶¹ The *New York Tribune* reports that the guests tried to “outdo each other in putting over their individual acts”; a still in the keybook shows Gloria and Dick performing in front of the rest of the guests who are sitting on cushions.

While the book describes Tana playing “in a chair atop one of the tables,” making “a ludicrous and grotesque spectacle,” a still shows him blowing a flute on

¹⁰⁵⁹ 1958: 0052: 0096. James W. Dean, “The Beautiful and Damned Doesn’t Indict Flappers,” *The Evening News*, 15 December 1922, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶⁰ 1958: 0052: 0098.

¹⁰⁶¹ Harriette Underhill, “On the Screen.”

top of a piano.¹⁰⁶² Thus far, I was unable to uncover whether the scene was accompanied with “Poor Butterfly,” the song Fitzgerald suggested for this racial insensitive “musical-literary slapstick.”¹⁰⁶³ However, there is evidence suggesting that at the party the Patches’ gramophone, as voiced by motion pictures orchestras, played the song “Three O’ Clock in the Morning,” the same “neat sad little waltz of that year” that reverberated at Gatsby’s second party.¹⁰⁶⁴ According to *Motion Picture News*, a “happy touch” of the party scene happens when “the gay Anthony takes up the watches and carries off the pendulum of the hall clock so that no one will be watching the time.”¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ogden Standard-Examiner* explains Anthony did it to “keep the killjoys from breaking up [the] party,” so that “nobody knows when it’s ‘Three O’ Clock in the Morning.’”¹⁰⁶⁶ *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* also notes that “3 o’clock in the morning [was] a favourite hour for [the younger set’s] antics.”¹⁰⁶⁷ The caption under a lobby card showing the party in full swing reads, “A Saturday to Monday party with the burden of their song.” At Gatsby’s party, “Three O’ Clock in the Morning” performs the same “burdening” function: to make the hours “incalculable” and to call the guests (namely Daisy) “back inside.”¹⁰⁶⁸

As Sarah Churchwell notes, the Fitzgeralds heard Paul Whiteman performing “Three O’ Clock in the Morning” at the Palais Royal. The popular song was re-recorded in November of 1922, as advertised in an issue of the *New York Times* that the Fitzgeralds might have read on a train.¹⁰⁶⁹ A month later, at the premiere of the

¹⁰⁶² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁶³ See T. Austin Graham, *The Great American Songbooks*, pp. 103-04.

¹⁰⁶⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Laurence Reid, “The Beautiful and Damned.”

¹⁰⁶⁶ James W. Dean, “James W. Dean’s Film Reviews,” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 24 December 1922, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶⁷ “‘Beautiful and Damned’ at the Brooklyn Strand,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 19 December 1922, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Sarah Churchwell *Careless People*, pp. 131-32.

film adaptation of *The Beautiful and Damned* in Broadway, the couple might have re-heard the song as played by the Strand Symphony Orchestra under the baton of the prominent motion-picture conductor Carl Edouarde.¹⁰⁷⁰ As T. Austin Graham argues in his study of Fitzgerald's literary soundtracks, the writer's allusions to cultural icons of the 1920s mass entertainment "anchor [his] mythic, imagined world in a specifically dated, emanated recognizable setting."¹⁰⁷¹ When in December 1922 he (disapprovingly) attended a screening of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Fitzgerald was gathering ideas for his third novel, which was to be set in the same in year in which Seiter's film was released. By mentioning "Three O' Clock in the Morning" during one of Gatsby's parties, Fitzgerald might have intentionally alluded to the fact that that song was played/mentioned in the title card accompanying the Patches' party in the adaptation of his previous novel. Although I was unable to locate the music cue sheet for the film, a Georgian newspaper reveals other details of the music score for the film. *The Atlanta Constitution* reported that the music score for *The Beautiful and Damned* featured "the pretty little love melody" from the 1920 Broadway revue "As You Were," entitled "If You Could Care for Me." The song by Arthur Wimperis and Herman Darewski "was the love theme around which the musical setting [of the film] was built."¹⁰⁷²

¹⁰⁷⁰ On December 10, 1922, an ad in *The New York Times* announced the beginning of the screening of *The Beautiful and Damned* at the Strand with the accompaniment of the Strand Symphony Orchestra. "Warner Bros. Presents: The Beautiful and Damned," *The New York Times*, 10 December 1922, p. 122. According to a 1921 critical study on *Musical Presentation of Motion Pictures*, at the time the Strand was "the Mecca for all lovers of the truly artistic in music" that "gathered together an orchestra of thirty-five expert instrumentalists and installed a large organ." Carl Edouarde was "engaged to conduct this constellation of artists, and a standard program of merit was conceived, in which singers of reputation had a prominent place." George W. Beynon, *Musical Presentation of Motion Pictures* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1921), p. 114..

¹⁰⁷¹ T. Austin Graham, *The Great American Songbooks*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁷² "The Beautiful and Damned: at the Metropolitan," *Atlanta Constitution*, 30 January 1923, p. 9. According to the local newspaper, the score of *The Beautiful and Damned* also comprised "popular music of the lightest vein." "Metropolitan Offers Story of Jazz Set: *The Beautiful and Damned* Taken from Story by Scott Fitzgerald," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 28 January 1923, p. 3.

Just as in Fitzgerald's book, the party is "framed up and in full sway when the grandfather happens in," surprising everyone (Fig. 59).¹⁰⁷³



According to *Moving*

Figure 59 Fitzgerald's *Scrapbook III*

Picture World, Gloria goes to her room distraught by the unexpected visit; Joe Hull pursues her without being seen. In the book, Hull was a drunkard Maury and Dick had picked up from the street. To add complications to the plot, Printzlau emphasizes his role by making him a homeless who, according to the *Detroit Free Press*, "nearly walks away with the honors [for the best costume]" – Dick had dressed him in gentleman's clothes.¹⁰⁷⁴ In the novel, Gloria leaves the party because she feels too tipsy and goes to her room. After two hours of sleep, she sees a blurred shadow outside her door that might have been Hull, so she leaves that "evil house and the sombre darkness that was growing up about it" and goes to a little station where Anthony, Maury and Dick reached her and passed the night peacefully talking about philosophy.¹⁰⁷⁵ Printzlau overdramatized the scene and turned Hull into a famished predator. A still shows him holding an empty glass and looking menacingly at Gloria. Both are dressed as at the beginning of the party, suggesting he had malicious

¹⁰⁷³ "The Beautiful and Damned," *Variety*.

¹⁰⁷⁴ "La Salle Garden," *Detroit Free Press*, 25 March 1923, p. 66.

¹⁰⁷⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 119.

intentions from the start.¹⁰⁷⁶ Toward the end of the evening, Hull grabs Gloria to force her to drink from his glass, as shown in a film still in the keybook.¹⁰⁷⁷ Another still shows the villain leaning on Gloria's bed while she is sleeping.¹⁰⁷⁸

Motion Picture News reports that the party ends in near tragedy when Hull tries to "force his attentions upon the bride – which causes her to become half delirious through fright."¹⁰⁷⁹ Walter Long represented the ideal casting choice for this villain's role. Contemporary audiences would have immediately associated the actor with his most famous part, the "renegade Negro" he played in blackface in *The Birth of a Nation*. Notoriously, the climactic moment in Griffith's 1915 film comes when the former slave Gus pursues Flora Cameron with rapacious intent. While Mae Marsh's character runs from her chaser through the woods and jumps to her death from a bluff, Gloria

dashes out of the house, into the stormy night in her negligee, down the water-soaked streets and up the railroad tracks. The Limited is coming in the opposite direction. Tony and his friends follow, but she ignores their cries and dashes in the direct path of the on-coming train. The train sweeps seemingly onto the woman, and her friends, terror-stricken, run back. And after the train has dashed by an arm is shot up from a hole in which she had fallen, miraculously escaping being ground to death by the locomotive.¹⁰⁸⁰

¹⁰⁷⁶ 1958: 0052: 0094

¹⁰⁷⁷ 1958: 0052: 0125

¹⁰⁷⁸ 1958: 0052: 0135.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Laurence Reid, "The Beautiful and Damned."

¹⁰⁸⁰ Roger Ferri, "The Beautiful and Damned"; see also "Marie Prevost Has Narrow Escape From Fast Train," *Corsicana Daily Sun*, 24 February 1923, p. 5.

This passage suggests that, in this scene, Seiter not only made a likely intentional intertextual reference to the *Birth of a Nation*, but he also indirectly alluded to a famous episode in the Fitzgeralds' biography. Fitzgerald's Princeton friend Alexander McKaig wrote in the September 1921 entry of his diary, "In the evening Zelda – drunk – having decided to leave Fitz & having nearly been killed walking down RR track, blew in. Fitz came shortly after." Although it is impossible to ascertain whether Warner Brothers knew about this episode, the adapter curiously included a scene that is not present in the source text. While the screen Gloria almost dies by running "up the railroad tracks" in a stormy night, Zelda wrote Scott, "I look down the tracks and see you coming – and out of every haze & mist your darling rumples trousers are hurrying to me."¹⁰⁸¹

By revealing that "Mr. Fitzgerald" had used "a portion of [her] old diary and scraps of letters," Sayre's review of her husband's book made public what Edmund Wilson wrote to Princeton professor Christian Gauss: *The Beautiful and Damned* was "all about [the Fitzgeralds'] married life."¹⁰⁸² Ergo its adaptation. The film's pressbook included an article headed "Three Tyes of Husbands Named by Marie Prevost," an excerpt quoting almost verbatim a passage describing an entry from Gloria's diary that also classified husbands into classes. Since Nancy Milford first identified it as the portion of Zelda's diary that Fitzgerald used for his novel, this passage has been reprinted by many other biographers of Sayre as an example of her husband's "practice of unacknowledged 'borrowing.'"¹⁰⁸³ For a twist of fate, however, in the marketing of *The Beautiful and Damned* Warner Brothers

¹⁰⁸¹ Reprinted in Nancy Milford, *Zelda A Biography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 75-76.

¹⁰⁸² Zelda Sayre, "Friend Husband's Latest" (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer), p. 110; Edmund Wilson, *Letters on Literature and Politics, 1912-1972*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁸³ Sally Cline, *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002), pp. 122-23

(re)appropriated the diary without acknowledging neither Zelda nor Scott as primary source, but rather Marie Prevost who “apparently had [her real life husband] Kenneth Harlan in mind.”¹⁰⁸⁴

In his unsympathetic view of Hollywood entitled “Appendix from Moronia,” H. L. Mencken wrote that the hero in movies “always marries the girl in the end, and so it seems to him to be the decent thing to do it in his private life. Actors always copy the doings of the characters they impersonate.”¹⁰⁸⁵ Further reinforcing the association between the Fitzgeralds, the Patches and the two actors portraying them, Harlan and Prevost also married in real life. To market *The Beautiful and Damned*, Warner Brothers cashed in on the news, by making sure the press reprinted the news of their engagement concurrently with the information that they were starring as a couple in their film production. Conveniently a week before the release of the film, the *Washington Herald* reported the announcement of their engagement, along with the fact that they were “at present playing together in the Warner Brothers production of Fitzgerald’s novel *The Beautiful and Damned*.”¹⁰⁸⁶ *Moving Picture World* noted that “in view of the considerable pleasant publicity this couple is receiving in the newspaper” their appearance in *The Beautiful and Damned* was a “tip for exploitation tie-ups.”¹⁰⁸⁷

In addition to her diary, Prevost allegedly re-claimed part of Zelda Fitzgerald’s humorous review of *The Beautiful and Damned* in which she suggested to buy her husband’s book noting: “Where could you get a better example how not

¹⁰⁸⁴ “Three Types of Husbands Named by Marie Prevost,” in “Warner Brothers Presents,” p. 2.

¹⁰⁸⁵ H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth Series* (New York: Library of America, 2010), p. 540.

¹⁰⁸⁶ “Marie to Wed,” *Washington Herald*, 20 November 1922, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Roger Ferri, “*The Beautiful and Damned*.”

to behave than from the adventures of Gloria?”¹⁰⁸⁸ The *Seattle Star* reported that Prevost, on her turn, copied Zelda’s cautionary advice by stating that viewers should see the film adaptation as “an example of all they shouldn’t do after marriage.”¹⁰⁸⁹ In the current debate over Scott Fitzgerald’s use of his wife’s letters and diaries, this evidence shows that, as early as in 1922, Warner Brothers was appropriating Zelda’s writings for publicizing the adaptation of *The Beautiful and Damned*. If, as Sayre wrote, “plagiarism begins at home,” it continues in Hollywood.¹⁰⁹⁰

The Saturday-to-Monday party and what the pressbook called “the exciting pursuit of [Gloria] by a drunken bum” were likely considered too daring and cut by the Spanish censors, as suggested by the fact that the novelization of *El Precio de la Belleza* does not recount them. The Spanish novelization omits the two scenes that virtually all the American reviews described as the most thrilling part of the film and skips to the episode in which Adam Patch disinherits his nephew and, shortly after, dies. While to the American moviegoers it was clear that Anthony was disinherited because his grandfather witnessed his debauchery, the Spanish audiences of *El Precio de la Belleza* might have been startled by Adam Patch’s decision.¹⁰⁹¹ Adhering to the end of book’s sub-section “Broken Lute,” Seiter shows the couple moving back to New York, legally fighting to get the inheritance back and quarrelling about the money they waste. But while in the novel Anthony is drafted and left for a Southern camp, in the adaptation he remains in New York, as the film was set after the war.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Zelda Sayre, “Friend Husband’s Latest,” pp. 110-11.

¹⁰⁸⁹ “Movie Quizzes,” *The Seattle Star*, 2 December 1922, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Zelda Sayre, “Friend Husband’s Latest,” p. 111.

¹⁰⁹¹ Another episode in the film that was not included in the Spanish novelization is the scene in which Anthony reads a book while bathing at the beginning of the film. *The Evening World* was perhaps farsighted enough to state: “wait till those censor guys get a chance at THAT one!”

Book three, section one “A Matter of Civilization”

At the beginning of book three, anticipating Tom Buchanan, the scion of a wealthy Wall Street family Anthony Patch starts an affair with a woman from an inferior social standing, while training for the army in the South.¹⁰⁹² In the film adaptation, as reported by *Portsmouth Daily Times*, his screen counterpart remains in New York City and “becomes interested in a musical comedy soubrette.”¹⁰⁹³ Printzlau commented her own scenarization of the novel by stating:

Anthony sinks lower and lower – retaining one thing to the last, however, his purity of morals, but even this is shaken and put to a tremendous test, by the entry of a little creature of the half-world into his life. This soubrette [Cleo Ridgely] has found out that he is related to the deceased millionaire and plays for him accordingly.¹⁰⁹⁴

Film stills show the scene in which Anthony is approached by Dot and other two girls by the stairways of a shabby house – likely the dwelling place meant to “illustrate [the Patches’] social downfall” after having been disinherited.¹⁰⁹⁵ To indicate Dot’s inferior class position, Seiter filmed the soubrette in night-gown mending a sock next to two girls who are likely her flatmates. Suggesting her “man-eater” intention, the director used a not too subtle visual metaphor by placing the girl behind a huge spider web grinning at the camera, while plotting to catch her (supposedly) millionaire pray.¹⁰⁹⁶ The wide selection of bottles on the shelves displayed behind Dot suggests

¹⁰⁹² As Anthony notes, “Gloria and he had been equals [...] to this girl his very caresses were an inestimable boon.” F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 359.

¹⁰⁹³ “Former Bathing Beauty Queen in Flapper Film,” *Portsmouth Daily Times*, 25 August 1923, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Olga Printzlau, “Little Hints for Booklovers.”

¹⁰⁹⁵ Pascale Antolin, “New York in ‘The Beautiful and Damned,’” p. 116.

¹⁰⁹⁶ 1958: 0052: 0102; 1958: 0052: 0103; 1958: 0052: 0140.

that the setting of the “mantis’ trap” is the place most dreaded by prohibition reformers. Another still in the keybook shows Anthony and Dot sitting at a table of the speakeasy cluttered with many empty bottles and a full ashtray. Dot is touching Anthony’s hand putting him, as Printzlau wrote, “to a tremendous test,” but he seems to be willing to retain “his purity of morals.”¹⁰⁹⁷ Neither the Spanish nor the Swedish novelization mention Anthony’s flirt, suggesting that these scenes might have been cut in foreign versions of the film.

Book three, section two “A Matter of Aesthetics”

In the penultimate section of Fitzgerald’s book, while Anthony is stationed in the South, Gloria dates aviators, drinks at parties and “without his continual drain upon her moral strength she found herself wonderfully revived.”¹⁰⁹⁸ By contrast, toward the end of the film her cinematic counterpart becomes over emotional and devoted to her husband; *Variety* notes that she *even* starts doing some work around the house.¹⁰⁹⁹ According to the *Moving Picture World*, the near-death experience at the Marietta’s train station had marked “the awakening of Gloria.”¹¹⁰⁰ The couple’s “economic emergency,” notes the Swedish novelization, “brought out all the best in Gloria, and all the worst in Anthony.”¹¹⁰¹ Several stills represented her in a demure way: a simple and homely housecoat has now taken the place of the fashionable party dresses she wore before the accident; instead of fixing cocktails, the audience now sees her spreading butter on bread.¹¹⁰²

¹⁰⁹⁷ Olga Printzlau, “Little Hints for Booklovers.”

¹⁰⁹⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 401.

¹⁰⁹⁹ “The Beautiful and Damned,” *Variety*.

¹¹⁰⁰ Roger Ferri, “The Beautiful and Damned.”

¹¹⁰¹ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 2.

¹¹⁰² 1958: 0052: 0150; 1958: 0052: 0107.

In the writer of the Spanish novelization's words, a "true woman, full of abnegation and love" has reawakened in her. Hoping to solve their financial problems, she decides to meet Bloeckman to ask him for a part in his variety.¹¹⁰³ At this stage, Printzlau added a complication typical of the movies belonging to the topical subgenre that Larry Langman labelled "the lure of footlights" and its "accompanying dangers."¹¹⁰⁴ One of the more outspoken silent films about the perils young women faced along the Gay White Way was Reicher's backstage drama *The Chorus Lady* (1915), which incidentally starred Cleo Ridgely as a streetwise chorus girl sharing many features with her character in *The Beautiful and Damned*.

While in the book Gloria fails the screen test the producer has set up for her because the director had a younger woman in mind, in the film adaptation she refused the part "because of its high price."¹¹⁰⁵ Far from depicting Bloeckman as the typical Jew corrupter of American society and women, Fitzgerald presents him, in Edward A. Abramson's words, "as an exemplar of dignified behaviour," who tries to help Gloria get the part because he has feelings for her. If Fitzgerald parallels the immigrant impresario's rise with the Patches' decline (he slowly "gentrifies him," as Abramson puts it), in the Swedish novelization Gloria says to Anthony: "Don't you understand what terms a man of Bloeckman's calibre has in mind when he offers the role of Diva to a poor, young woman!"¹¹⁰⁶ When Gloria refuses his advances, the theatrical magnate writes her: "there are no works suitable for you." His fictional counterpart, by contrast, finds another role awkwardly fitting for her: that of "a very haughty rich widow."¹¹⁰⁷ While, as Kirk Curnutt notes, Fitzgerald's novel reflected

¹¹⁰³ "El Precio de la Belleza: por Marie Prévost," p. 26.

¹¹⁰⁴ See Larry Langman, *American Film Cycles*, pp. 43-45.

¹¹⁰⁵ Roger Ferri, "The Beautiful and Damned."

¹¹⁰⁶ Edward A. Abramson, "Aliens, Stereotypes, and Social Change: The Jews and Hollywood in F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction," *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, 24 (2005), 116-36, p. 116; p. 120.

¹¹⁰⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 435.

the “anxiety of a burgeoning age-consciousness [illustrating] the desire throughout American culture to segregate youth from age,” Seiter excluded the ageing theme from the film adaptation, thus oversimplified Fitzgerald’s study on Gloria’s maturing.¹¹⁰⁸ Rather than bringing ageing into a picture marketed as a story of “gilded youth,” Warner Brothers preferred to turn Bloeckman into the trite lust-driven predatory stage impresario whose offer Gloria has to refuse “because of its high price.” Fitzgerald’s representation of Gloria, as Abramson notes, “desolate at her aging, having placed an inordinate value on youth” was lost inasmuch as in the film, according to the novelization of *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, she lists herself among the *young* women who aspired to become a Diva.¹¹⁰⁹ Fitzgerald’s complex “examination of the causes and consequences of wasted youth” and his dramatization of the “dread of growing old,” was lost in the transfer to the screen.¹¹¹⁰ If one of the minor characters in the book predicted “a sombre end” for the two protagonists “in the loss of Gloria’s ‘looks’ and Anthony’s ‘constitution,’” the *New York Times* noted that, by the end of the film, “they are both still beautiful and not damned a bit.”¹¹¹¹ In adapting *The Beautiful and Damned*, Warner Brothers decided it was more profitable – borrowing Lois’s line from Fitzgerald’s 1920 story “Benediction” – that “youth shouldn’t be sacrificed to age.”¹¹¹²

Book three, section three “No Matter!”

Whereas in the last section of the book Fitzgerald describes Anthony and Gloria as “players who had lost their costumes, lacking the pride to continue on the note of

¹¹⁰⁸ Kirk Cutnutt, “Youth Culture and the Spectacle of Waste,” p. 82.

¹¹⁰⁹ Edward A. Abramson, “Aliens, Stereotypes, and Social Change,” p. 20.

¹¹¹⁰ Kirk Cutnutt, “Youth Culture and the Spectacle of Waste,” p. 92.

¹¹¹¹ “The Screen in Review,” *Picture-Play Magazine*.

¹¹¹² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Flappers and Philosophers*, p. 141.

tragedy,” the *New York Times* reported that at the end of the film “the hero drinks harder than ever [...] and the heroine becomes sentimental.”¹¹¹³ Following the book, Muriel visits the disheartened couple and quarrels with Anthony, as shown by a still in which the two stare angrily at each other.¹¹¹⁴ In another photograph, Anthony is pouring himself a drink, which suggests that the reason triggering the argument in the film was the same as in the novel: Anthony’s drinking “in the daytime.”¹¹¹⁵

In 1922, as discussed in Chapter Four, a film made under Hays’s supervision was required to carry a moralizing message. In September of that year, Harry M. Warner had endorsed Hays for “making known the great scope of [film] for the transmission of clean, wholesome and instructive ideas.”¹¹¹⁶ A still in the keybook shows Gloria holding her head in a melodramatic way looking at a table full of empty bottles and glasses, seemingly left by Anthony after his argument with Muriel.¹¹¹⁷ Whereas in Fitzgerald’s book Gloria falls out of love and loses respect for Anthony, *Motion Picture News* reported that, in the concluding reels, “the action is quite different from the book. The bride would indulge in memories of her honeymoon and she is resolved to mend her ways.”¹¹¹⁸

The writer of the Swedish novelization suggested that, despite his wife’s reformation, Anthony “did not realize that there was an easy way of showing Gloria his love, namely to stop with Jazz, bootleggers, writer’s issues and hopeless inheritance speculations.” This decision should have come to him on that special day marked by an unexpected visit by Tanner for their third wedding anniversary. While

¹¹¹³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 437; “Another Flapper Story.”

¹¹¹⁴ 1958: 0052: 0109; 1958: 0052: 0111.

¹¹¹⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 442.

¹¹¹⁶ Harry M. Warner, “Warner Production Plans for Season of 1923.”

¹¹¹⁷ 1958: 0052: 0113; 1958: 0052: 0114.

¹¹¹⁸ Laurence Reid, “The Beautiful and Damned.”

the Fitzgerald emphasized in the novel that “the anniversary passed, uncelebrated, unnoticed,” the Swedish version of the film foregrounded the event right from its very title *Tredje Bröllopsdag* (“third wedding anniversary”).¹¹¹⁹ The Swedish novelization depicts Gloria and Anthony experience an epiphany after having realized what day it was: “They looked at each other. The third wedding anniversary! How things changed since the day they promised to love each other in sickness and in health.”¹¹²⁰ The title of the French version of the film also refers to Gloria’s “epiphanic awakening.” *La Bourrasque* (The Storm) resonates with both metaphorical and literal meaning: a still in the keybook reveals that Gloria’s near-death accident at the train station was shot under a redeeming storm. “And then,” *Screenland* magazine comments, “regeneration.”¹¹²¹

The Times Herald reported that “the third anniversary finds the young husband with 15 cents in his jeans and a wild desire to buy his wife a 25 cent bunch of violets.”¹¹²² According to the Swedish novelization, Anthony’s redemption took longer than Gloria’s: “In his dazed mind there was something more important than sorting himself out and correcting his mistakes: to find Bloeckman and teach him the price of insulting a decent woman.”¹¹²³ A still in Warner Brother’s keybook shows Anthony confronting the impresario in front of his theatre but “the conflict did not

¹¹¹⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 333.

¹¹²⁰ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 3. In the Spanish novelization, Gloria asks Anthony to take her out for dinner to celebrate that “beautiful day three years earlier when they vowed to be the eternal fiancés.” “*El Precio de la Belleza*: por Marie Prévost,” pp. 27-28.

¹¹²¹ On March 7, 1924, the French film magazine *Cinémagazine* announced the release of *La Bourrasque* and published a brief synopsis of the film. “Les Présentations,” *Cinémagazine*, 7 March 1924, p. 416. The film was screened from September 12 to September 18, 1924, at the Maillot-Palace in Paris. “Les Billets de ‘Cinémagazine,’” *Cinémagazine*, 12 September 1924, p. 437. The set still 1958: 0052: 0142 shows members of the Warner Brothers’ crew on the train tracks holding a hydrant and directing the flow of water toward the incoming train. “The Picture of the Month,” *Screenland*, January 1923, p. 35.

¹¹²² “*The Beautiful and Damned* Film Doesn’t Indict Flappers.”

¹¹²³ *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 4.

end favorably for him.”¹¹²⁴ The Spanish novelization describes Anthony being beaten up by the workers of the Varietés and thrown into a ditch.¹¹²⁵ He tries to reach home but, according to *The Times Herald*, he is punched again.¹¹²⁶

The still shown in Fig. 28 suggests that the film adhered to the book’s subsection significantly called “The Beating,” in which a “Samaritan” helped Anthony get home after the confrontation with Bloeckman. Once at his flat on Claremont Avenue (the same street in which Fitzgerald lived in 1919), Anthony tells the two men he could not pay the fare; “in answer to the [taxi driver’s] suggestion the fist of the Samaritan shot out like a battering-ram and sent Anthony crashing down against the stone steps of the apartment-house.”¹¹²⁷ H. L. Mencken, as noted in Chapter Four, had jokingly declared he bespoke the part of the taxi-driver in the film.¹¹²⁸

A still shows the scene following the beating, in which Gloria in her nightgown comforts her husband who lies bruised on the pavement, still holding the symbolic violets. According to *Motion Picture News*, after the beating Anthony “finally appreciates his worthlessness.”¹¹²⁹ His “regeneration” is complete, too. As the Spanish novelization notes, Anthony tried to hide the moral and physical pain he suffered. He gives Gloria the violets and the money she lent him [...] he asks for forgiveness and promises he will find a job so that his grandfather would also forgive him from beyond the grave.”¹¹³⁰

¹¹²⁴ 1958: 0052: 0056; 1958: 0052: 0058; *Tredje Bröllopsdagen*, p. 4.

¹¹²⁵ While in the novel Fitzgerald manipulates the reader’s sympathy to be on the side of the now gentlemanly Bloeckman when he punches the very drunk Anthony who called him “a Goddam Jew,” in the film the audiences were inclined to side with Anthony as a (albeit intoxicated) husband who wants to defend his wife’s honour.

¹¹²⁶ “*The Beautiful and Damned* Film doesn’t Indict Flappers.”

¹¹²⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 474.

¹¹²⁸ “Freud Explains Such Errors.”

¹¹²⁹ Laurence Reid, “The Beautiful and Damned.”

¹¹³⁰ Ironically, in the book Anthony spends the “dollar in change to live over the weekend” that he borrowed from Gloria in a speakeasy. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 458.

Three stills in the keybook reveal a scene that is not included in either of the novelizations: some time after the beating, as suggested by Anthony's bandaged arm, Seiter filmed him having a heated argument with Dot. In one of the still, the soubrette is pointing at a picture of Gloria, a graphic way to express she did not know he was married. In another picture, Dot is confronting Anthony, probably after discovering he had a wife; he is protecting himself from the attack with the non-bandaged arm. This suggests that, while in the end of the novel Anthony is described in aggressive behaviour, in the film adaptation he becomes the victim of the soubrette's rage. Although it is not clear how the girl left the house – in the novel Anthony blacks out while insanely trying to throw a chair at her – Printzlau reports that, “the menace which so nearly destroyed [the couple], is itself destroyed and they learn that “love to be understood must be lived.”¹¹³¹

Following the source text, Gloria and Dick come home from the trial to tell Anthony that the judge has reversed his grandfather's decision. But, while in the book Gloria looks at Anthony with “a faint horror” when he does not react to the good news and behaves like a “pert child,” in the film the “redeemed wife” first hugs him lovingly, and then joins her hands in prayer.¹¹³² The pressbook reports that “the old man's will is broken and the young fellow and his wife sail for Europe.” *Photoplay* observed that “where Fitzgerald left his young people heart broken, dulled but with their measure of happiness, the screen adaptation sees to it that they have their proper and visible regeneration.”¹¹³³ The last scene showed the now glamorously dressed

¹¹³¹ Olga Printzlau, “Little Hints for Booklovers,” p. 52.

¹¹³² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 216.

¹¹³³ “Saves Your Picture Time and Money.” As Richard Astro observes, Fitzgerald concludes *The Beautiful and Damned* with “an unusual and highly effective technical device in which Anthony and Gloria are seen for the last time, not through their own or through the author's eyes, but as they appear to two totally disinterested spectators.” Richard Astro, *Vandover and the Brute and The Beautiful and Damned*,” p. 411.

couple smiling from the deck of a ship accompanied by the subtitle reading, “Gloria, darling, I’ll try to be worthy of you and our good fortune.”¹¹³⁴

Fitzgerald had difficulty in writing the novel’s conclusion, of which three versions survive.¹¹³⁵ In late December 1921, he wired Perkins to tell him that Zelda did not like the ending of the serialization of the novel because it was too didactic.¹¹³⁶ The editor agreed with her and Fitzgerald opted for an ironic conclusion where Anthony announced: “I showed them. It was a hard fight, but I didn’t give up and I came through.”¹¹³⁷ Most of the reviewers agreed with the *Yale Literary Magazine*’s view that the ending was the novel’s fault: “How on earth can you sympathize with their salvation and ‘victory’ [likely referring to the novel’s epigraph, which reversed the idiom “to the victor belongs the spoils” into “the victor belongs to the spoils”] in the end, when it consists merely of winning money to which they apparently had no right but the skill of their lawyer?”¹¹³⁸ What this and the other reviews did not take into account is that the Menckonian “morale” of the book is stated by Gloria in the sub-section “In Darkness”: “There’s only one lesson to be learned from life [...] That there’s no lesson to be learned from life.”¹¹³⁹

Although *Exhibitors Herald* believed that the changes made by the scenarist to the novel’s conclusion had “improved [it] immeasurably,” virtually all the other film magazines criticized Printzlau’s reinterpretation of it. *Picture Play* noted that the happy ending “wasn’t at all what its young author meant.”¹¹⁴⁰ An anonymous article

¹¹³⁴ As mentioned in “*The Beautiful and Damned Film Doesn’t Indict Flappers*,” p. 3.

¹¹³⁵ See James L. W. West III, “Introduction,” p. xxi.

¹¹³⁶ Matthew J. Bruccoli and Margaret M. Duggan, eds., *Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, p. 89. The discarded ending of the serial is reprinted in Mary Jo Tate, *F. Scott Fitzgerald from A to Z*, p. 14.

¹¹³⁷ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 484.

¹¹³⁸ Thomas Caldecot Chubb, *Yale Literary Magazine* (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 62).

¹¹³⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, p. 125.

¹¹⁴⁰ “Special Cast in *The Beautiful and Damned*”; “The Screen in Review.”

that Fitzgerald pasted in his scrapbook commented “Isn’t it incredible that the beautiful and the damned should [...] leave the scene with virtue triumphant? [...] Isn’t it rather more probable that this inheritance would act as a final shove into moral oblivion?”¹¹⁴¹ *Moving Picture World* pointed out that while in the novel’s ending Gloria’s and Anthony’s “future happiness [is] a matter of personal conjecture,” in the screen version “one sees [them] starting on a journey that promises everlasting happiness.” But the pragmatic reviewer continued by defending the scenarist “for tragic or questionable conclusions involve too great a speculation, and, after all, *The Beautiful and Damned*, while produced to entertain, to the trade and exhibitors in general, is merely a merchandise, the commercial value of which gauges its worth to the theatre owner.”¹¹⁴²

While F. Scott Fitzgerald is renowned for his “faculty of guessing right,” a contemporary literary critic seemed to have surpassed him when he wrote in a review of Fitzgerald’s second novel: “Someday, Mr. Fitzgerald is going to write a book that will be warm, human, and precious.”¹¹⁴³ The critic continued: “it will be a mighty different affair from [*The Beautiful and Damned*]. And he had better do it soon – for it won’t be long now before the bottom drops out of the market for jazz literature. The barometer is falling!”¹¹⁴⁴ While Warner Brothers was finishing the shooting of *The Beautiful and Damned*, Fitzgerald started gathering the first ideas for his third novel, which was indeed a “mighty different affair” from his previous one, although the contemporary literary market would prove the reviewer’s doomed prophecy correct.

¹¹⁴¹ Helen De Motte, “*The Beautiful and the Damned*: Example of all that Should not be Done,” in F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Scrapbook III*.

¹¹⁴² Roger Ferri, “*The Beautiful and Damned*.”

¹¹⁴³ As he wrote in a letter to Zelda Fitzgerald qtd. in Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People*, p. 5.

¹¹⁴⁴ Edward N. Teall, “Trumpets Herald Scott Fitzgerald” (Repr. in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, ed. by Bryer, p. 79).

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