Chapter 4th

REFLECTION OF JAZZ IN SELECTED SHORT STORIES
Reflection of Jazz in Selected Short Stories

Fitzgerald has also displayed much of his talent as a writer through his short stories. He wrote an estimated 180 stories. These stories are considered as vivacious and psychologically insightful. This may be due to the poor some of the stories or because the author himself held a negative opinion of them.

Many short stories represent Fitzgerald’s development as a writer despite the uneven quality of the stories and the criticism. He experimented with his technique while writing stories. It allowed him to develop various methods and themes. Fitzgerald has created successful styles and ideas while writing the stories likely served as the foundation for his novels. For instance, critics have found that Winter Dreams and The Swimmers led to the making of The Great Gatsby. Similarly, Love in the Night prompted Tender is the Night in terms of its setting on the Riviera and its prose style. Similarly, the themes of wealth and idealism are simultaneously found in the novels as well as in the short stories.

The sale of his stories to periodicals which Fitzgerald made a considerable portion of his income. But he did not like that necessity required him to earn money from story writing. He often regretted that he had to bend the plots and themes of his stories in order to meet the interests of specific periodicals’ readers. His contemporaries also are of the view that the story genre was not a satisfactory outlet for a
writer of his calibre. The novelist Charles Norris directly warned Fitzgerald that he would be finished as a respected author if he continued to pander to the Post’s readership. In spite of this, he earned as much as $4,000 per story at the height of his literary career. One of Fitzgerald’s formulaic romances, the happily-ending Popular Girl, was sold for thousands in 1922. Unfortunately, the early financial and literary success he had with his stories was limited. The impressive profits slowly gave way to diminished sales and finally ending in to rejection in 1937 by the Saturday Evening Post.

Some of the best stories were complied for readers in the increasingly impressive collections: Flappers and Philosophers (1920), Tales of the Jazz Age (1922), All the Sad Young Men (1926), and Taps at Reveille (1935). The first two collections were written in bursts of prolific creativity. Fitzgerald was still fairly young. These stories demonstrated his literary abilities, technically and creatively. The last two proved his maturity and control as a writer. This maturity is defined as a “consistency of voice” as well as the professional experience to best make use of his natural talents as a writer. Fitzgerald’s sophistication as a writer is increased because his editors wanted new or varied material in terms of style and subject matter with his every collection, Fitzgerald was encouraged to experiment with various literary concepts and techniques. Sometimes he produced the inferior writing which was disliked by the author. Eventually he applied some of the more successful concepts and techniques that he developed in his story writing to his novels. Fitzgerald’s ideas often reverberate throughout the bulk of his writing
rather than being separated into those in his stories and those in his novels. Many of his themes and settings are recycled:

Since Fitzgerald perforce wrote stories while he was working on novels, certain “cluster stories” introduced or tested themes, settings, and situations that are fully developed in the novel. He routinely “stripped” passages from a story for reuse in a novel.¹

The principal themes in his writing are found in more works than the *Cluster Stories*. Many of his short stories are connected with specific elements. The readers find his ambivalence about wealth as well as his idealism in his writings. The stories in general suggest the theme of ego being linked to income which is seen in *Gatsby* and *Paradise*.

One such story which upholds the themes found in *Gatsby*, especially themes about money is *The Swimmers*. The timing of this story’s publication was directly before the Wall Street Crash of 1929 in the *Saturday Evening Post* was particularly poignant. The plot has an American man, Henry Marston, living in Europe with his French wife, Choupette and his children. He decides to move back to America to make more money even though he and his family have been living comfortable on less in Europe. Henry wants to purchase a fancy car and buy his wife modern appliances. He says to his wife to gain wealth because he thinks it is the right thing to do as an American:

I’m tired of getting ahead on your skimping and saving and going without dresses. I’ve got to make more money. American men are incomplete without
money.²

The theme of the importance of wealth continues to feature prominently throughout this story, particularly when Choupette wants to divorce Henry and does not want “a cent of [his] money,” but she wants keep their children. Henry is willing to give Choupette a divorce and whatever material possessions she wants but he does not want her to raise their children alone because he fears that she and her new wealthy beau, Wiese will produce an overly indulgent home life: “I’d rather apprentice them to a trade than have them brought up in the sort of home yours and Choupette’s is going to be”. He is also aware that her interest in the children is not maternal but, rather, without them her family will consider her suspect. Wiese believes he can force Henry’s hand stating that he is “one of the richest men in Virginia,” and that money is power:

On your side there’s an obstinate prejudice: on mine there are forty million dollars. Don’t fool yourself. Let me repeat, Marston, that money is power. You were abroad so long that perhaps you’re inclined to forget that fact. Money made this country, built its great and glorious cities, created its industries, covered it with an iron network of railroads. It’s money that harnesses the forces of Nature, creates the machine and makes it go when money says go, and stop when money says stop.³

For Wiese, not only does money rule America as a nation and economic structure, it rules its land and natural entities. Wiese then informs Henry that he intends to make sure Choupette keeps her children. His money allowed him to uncover a fictitious psychiatrist
who supposedly treated Henry four years ago and would testify to the nature of a nervous breakdown he had at that time. Though this information about Henry’s past mental state is slander, when Henry hears of this, he feels as if from a material blow. Fitzgerald’s use of diction hints that money has “weight,” in a physical sense as well as in a conceptual manner.

However, there is a reversal of power of money over nature. Fitzgerald suggests that the value and influence of money has been overstated with this. Henry’s original assessment of the importance of wealth as that which makes the man and thereby bolsters his ego lessens. He begins to see value in himself as an individual through his frequent swims in the ocean which allows him to connect with nature.

Wiese and Choupette request to meet with Henry on his motorboat to negotiate terms of the divorce. When the motorboat threatens to drift out to sea Henry the only one who can swim, finds him in the position of power. He secures written guarantees that he can keep the children, places the papers in an oiled-silk pouch which hangs from his neck and swims towards the shore. It is the most challenging swim of his life. But from it he gains everything he wants including a new perception of his country:

[He] had a sense of overwhelming gratitude and of gladness that America was there, that under the ugly debris of industry the rich land still pushed up, incorrigibly lavish and fertile, and that in the heart of the leaderless people the old generosities and devotions fought on, breaking out sometimes in fanaticism and excess, but indomitable and undefeated.  

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From Henry’s thoughts, the impression of the older sense of the American dream, the idea of “America” itself, rather than the lofty, conspicuously wealthy class of *Gatsby* is expressed. He refers to “the land,” with its abundance of natural resources and an idealistic “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” people. He is simply appreciating the land and people who strive as well as the willingness of the heart, which is the final line of the story. While Fitzgerald may be somewhat opposed to the desire for wealth, he admires certain aspects of the American dream that correspond to idealism. What he idealizes is not necessarily improvement or upward mobility but the striving for improvement. This requires a kind of wanderlust, freedom, and constant movement:

Americans, [Henry] liked to say, should be born with fins, and perhaps they were—perhaps money was a form of fin. In England property begot a strong place sense, but Americans, restless and with shallow roots, needed fins and wings. There was even a recurrent idea in America about an education that would leave out history and the past, that should be a sort of equipment for aerial adventure, weighed down by none of the stowaways of inheritance or tradition.⁵

Here, the American dream is represented in favourable terms. The goal for Americans is to omit the past altogether as opposed to tirelessly climbing the ladder of mobility. The American drive for wealth is represented by a youthful restlessness that seems exciting, particularly when compared to the solidity of England. Americans themselves are hinted to be natural creatures in constant motion such as fish and birds. He idealizes them as beings that are free to take part
in an adventure rather than weighed down by the past.

Fitzgerald also demonstrates the uniqueness of the American condition while discussing the possible problems with having wealth. For instance, in the Americans-in-Europe story *One Trip Abroad*, a couple, Nicole and Nelson Kelly, described as nice, young and newly married are travelling around Europe. They have recently come into quite a bit of money and have decided to go to Europe to pursue their creative interests. Nicole intends to paint and Nelson to sing.

Like *The Swimmers* and *Babylon Revisited*, in this story, Fitzgerald details the expatriate experience showing at first that the Kellys are happy. They are in the beginning content to be alone with one another while exploring Europe. The Kellys turn down offers from friends to go out by considering life to be better than any show. When they finally accept an invitation to join another couple on their travels, Nicole regrets the decision fearing that doing so may harm their bond: “In the eight months of their marriage she had been so happy that it seemed like spoiling something”. Eventually, their prolonged travel in Europe and the continued partying with friends makes them listless. They begin to drink excessively out of boredom. After a few years, they become unfaithful to one another and their youthful, romance fades:

“It’s just that we don’t understand what’s the matter,” [Nicole] said. “Why did we lose peace and love and health, one after the other? If we knew, if there was anybody to tell us, I believe we could try. I’d try so hard.”

Although, they do not perceive the reason for the failure of their
romance, it is presumably their lifestyle specifically its indulgence and lack of direction afforded by their wealth, that causes them to lose the innocence and autonomy they once had.

However, the narrator hints at their problem throughout the story with the addition of a doppelganger couple that mirrors the actions of the Kellys in the plot. We first see the doppelgangers in the beginning of the story, directly after Nicole agrees to join the other couple. Nicole mentions the mesmerizing couple to Nelson:

“I passed that couple in the hall just now... that young couple—about our age... that we thought looked so nice... I’m almost sure I’ve met the girl somewhere before.”

The couple referred to were sitting across the room at dinner, and Nicole found her eyes drawn irresistibly toward them. They, too, now had companions, and again Nicole... felt a faint regret.7

Here, the other young wife is joined by a new companion just as Nicole meets the other couple. Soon she sees her once again when their group is invited to watch a native dance in which the female dancers remove articles of their clothing. The dance makes Nicole uncomfortable, but she does not want to leave and appear to be a prig. However, when Nicole recognizes the other wife getting up and leaving quickly, she follows suit, but she is upset with Nelson for not leaving with her. In another example in which time has passed in the story, Nicole who is happy because she is young and good-looking is struck by the appearance of the other wife who is dressed extremely smartly. Later, after Nicole discovers Nelson’s affair and lashes out at him and the Kellys notice a woman sitting on the other side of the café
where she is:

Something strident and violent had happened across the café; a woman screamed and the people at one table were all on their feet, surging back and forth like one person.... [F] or just a moment the Kellys saw the face of the girl they had been watching, pale now, and distorted with anger.  

Even the destruction of the Kellys’ romance is highlighted in the actions of the other wife. John Kuehl notes that the doppelgangers for the Kellys are always referred namelessly. They appear with similar physical descriptions to that of the Kellys. The thoroughness with which Fitzgerald has depicted the similarity of both couples indicates that perspective is deliberate in this narrative. The flaws and problems of the Kellys are enhanced by the doppelgangers and by the Kellys’ final perception of themselves. Nicole finally perceives the doppelganger to be a representation of she and Nelson—“They’re us! They’re us! Don’t you see?” Fitzgerald then ends the story with the Kellys recognizing that they are alone together once again, and the ominous storm that was approaching diffuses into a tranquil moonlight. Here, Fitzgerald has not necessarily suggest that romance can exist only in a vacuum but that excessive idleness brought on by wealth, creates problems for romance and dreams. He also insinuates that Americans with their drive for continued improvement and motion may not conform well to more established, European ways or that the innate drive of Americans did not take well to an expatriate experience which valued history over change.

The inevitability of change on one’s dreams is a feature of
Winter Dreams, one of the Gatsby cluster stories which Fitzgerald wrote in September, 1922. The Gatsby cluster stories included passage which he would later reuse in the novel itself; other Gatsby cluster stories were Dice, Brassknuckles & Guitar, Absolution, The Sensible Thing, and The Rich Boy, which was written and published after Gatsby These stories exemplifies the sensuous and physically descriptive prose found in Fitzgerald’s later novels a technique which lends itself to the timelessness of his writing. His humour, such as that in Gatsby as well as the dialogue and mannerisms with which he depicts his characters, tend to date his writing, specifically as 1920s or thereabout. Winter Dreams lacks the humour found in his novel. But it may be one of Fitzgerald’s strongest stories because it reiterates the themes found in Gatsby regarding money and romance, which are in many ways particular to the American condition. Specifically it reveals what dreams or idealism respectively, motivate and drive characters. Many of Fitzgerald’s characters, their specific dreams and idealism is their reason for existing, and this is no exception for the main character of Winter Dreams. The plot of this story is similar to Gats by and the romance of Jay Gatsby towards Daisy in that a young Dexter Green falls in love with a young socialite, Judy Joyce. In this case, Dexter is not able to marry Judy for a reason aside from his financial status—because of the capriciousness of her affections. Dexter has achieved financial independence by the time he meets Judy as an adult but since she has discouraged a suitor because he was poor, Dexter assumes that his money will give him an upper hand in winning her over. She has other wealthy suitors, but she is more concerned with whichever suitor piques her interest at the moment
versus the suitor’s financial and socioeconomic status.

Judy is often insensitive to the feelings of others by her capricious behaviour. The narrator mentions, “[w]hen a new man came to town every one dropped out—dates were automatically cancelled”. At the same time Dexter perceives that Judy’s apparent selfishness, her “need” to be admired and her callous forgetfulness regarding her suitors is not entirely deliberate. He supposes that she is somewhat reckless in her behaviour as a form of self-preservation brought on to protect herself from too many overly-enthusiastic suitors. She is also somewhat self-sufficient, perhaps in a narcissistic sense, but, at the same time, she relies heavily on the attentions of her suitors to fulfil her egoism:

[Judy] was entertained only by the gratification of her desires and by the direct exercise of her own charm. Perhaps from so much youthful love, so many youthful lovers, she had come, in self-defense, to nourish herself wholly from within.  

Judy’s behaviour also suggests the American characteristic of freedom and restlessness seen in the other stories. Though she seems self-concerned and selfish, Judy does not appear to be in control of her behaviour or to understand the motivations for her actions, partly because she is a flat character. Fitzgerald does not develop these motivations. On the other hand, she seems to be driven by some unperceivable force as Dexter is driven inexplicably by his own winter dreams. She is simply as Dexter notes, makes “men conscious to the highest degree of her physical loveliness”. In the end, Dexter does not end up with Judy presumably because of her fickle
behaviour. When he hears of her again, he is told that she has changed dramatically—the former exuberant and beautiful Judy has been reduced to someone with “pretty eyes.” She is no longer anything special and her husband is known to be unfaithful to her—a great departure from her former romantic situation. As a result, Dexter’s winter dreams and the implied hope that he and Judy will be reunited end abruptly with his knowledge of her changes. In other words, Dexter seemed to be living for the vague notion that the perceived “failure” of his youth, not marrying Judy Jones, would someday be rectified. He can no longer idealize Judy and the loss of his dream seems to affect him more dramatically that the initial loss of her.

Dexter may be the more interesting and multi-dimensional character in the story because of his very quest for Judy and for what she represents to him. Dexter begins the story as a bright and motivated adolescent. He is smart and successful as a caddy, but he is also “dissatisfied” with his place in society, like so many of Fitzgerald’s characters. His youthful dissatisfaction expresses itself in the form of dreams he creates while caddying on the golf course. Unlike some of the others, Dexter caddies only for pocket money. His father owns the second best grocery store in his town. But Dexter has bigger dreams than that of managing his father’s grocery store which he makes while caddying for wealthy men like Mr. Mortimer Jones. He calls him—when he quits abruptly one day the best caddy he ever had, perhaps in appreciation of his driven behaviour and hard work. Dexter decides at age fourteen that he is too old to caddy anymore. He is motivated at an early age partly by little Judy. At this time he is a
bratty adolescent, and he refused to serve as a caddy. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Dexter’s character is his ability to dreamlike Gatsby. He wants to be a part of Mortimer’s and little Judy’s world rather than a brilliant assistant to it. His appreciation for and anticipation of his dreams are displayed in his preference for fall and the emergence of his winter dreams over spring:

Dexter knew that there was something dismal about this Northern spring, just as he knew there was something gorgeous about the fall.

Fall made him clinch his hands and tremble and repeat idiotic sentences to himself, and make brisk abrupt gestures of command to imaginary audiences and armies. October filled him with hope which November raised to a sort of ecstatic triumph, and in this mood the fleeting brilliant impressions of the summer at Sherry Island were ready grist to his mill.¹⁰

Dexter’s winter is a time in which he day dreams about all of his potential greatness which is spawned from his experiences as a caddy during the summer. Here winter, the season of hibernation and rest serves as a symbol of latent dreams. This latent quality of dreaming and anticipation seems to define him. When he meets Judy again when they are older, she represents everything he has striven for in the winter. Dexter does not simply want Judy as a rich girl: “He wanted not association with glittering thing and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves”

However, the motivations for Dexter’s wants and even for his highly instinctual dreams founded in youth are ambiguous and elusive
even to Dexter. It is as if Fitzgerald suggests that the drive within certain individuals is inexplicable, but the addition of these dreams/drives defines the individual:

[His winter dreams] persuaded Dexter several years later to pass up a business course at the State university—his father, prospering now, would have paid his way—for the precarious advantage of attending an older more famous university in the East, where he was bothered by his scanty funds. But do not get the impression, because his winter dreams happened to be concerned at first with musings on the rich, that there was anything merely snobbish in the boy.... Often he reached for the best without knowing why he wanted it. 11

Here, the narrative voice interjects and the reader is instructed not to judge Dexter because his desires are deeper than snobbery. This is Dexter, and his yearnings for certain glittering things cannot be accounted for or separated from his person.

Dexter is a bit of a snob regardless of the narrator’s suggestions, especially in the sense that he is dissatisfied with himself compared to the rich characters of the story. His personal dissatisfaction at not being born rich does not reach the level of insecurity present in the character of Michael in *The Bridal Party*. He acknowledges to himself that he wishes “his children to be like them” and that he is “but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang”. Like Michael, he does worry about his dress and his mannerism while recognizing that the truly rich do not have to do this. The children of the rich can be careless, but Dexter knows what he is
and what patterns of behaviour he must stick to:

His mother’s name had been Kricslich. She was a Bohemian of the peasant class and she had talked broken English to the end of her days. Her son must keep to the set patterns.\textsuperscript{12}

These lines reveal a darker side to Dexter’s winter dreams. They are as if a form of compensation for his not having been born rich. In this way, money is linked to his ego and Dexter makes money for compensation rather than idealism.

The dream persists with Judy but with the “loss” of the old Judy, it is finally relinquished. As Fitzgerald writes, “sometimes he ran up against the mysterious denials and prohibitions in which life indulges;” this occurs without discouraging him. Judy’s denial does not destroy him, but the complete dissolution of his dream leads to a loss of purpose for Dexter, almost like a death:

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck’s soft down.... Why these things were no longer in the world! They existed and they existed no longer.\textsuperscript{13}

He associates his memories of Judy with the place their interactions occurred which lends a visceral quality to his dream. Importantly, he tries to bring up these images and when he realizes that “Judy” is gone, he is struck by their absence, though these memories were already in the past for Dexter. Finally, when he
accepts their absence he is able to grieve for himself and for the loss of this place in a physical and chronological sense:

For the first time in years the tears were streaming down his face. But they were for himself.... For he had gone away and he could never go back any more. The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.14

In this passage, he grieves for the very end of his youthful, winter dreams. It is a mature if disheartened acceptance that they were nothing but an illusion. But he also grieves for his inability to dream again. He seems to lack an understanding of his identity without his dream: “long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone” and “I cannot care. That thing will come back no more”. Fitzgerald suggests that with the loss of Dexter’s idealism, he also loses himself who he used to be with this

Idealism and dreams are the characters’ most moving, essential influences, but sometimes they clash with the characters’ decisions. This occurs in Babylon Revisited which considered being one of Fitzgerald’s best short stories. First published in the Saturday Evening Post, December, 1930, this story reflects on several of Fitzgerald’s themes in a more sophisticated manner than in the other stories, including attitudes that steer characters away from their dreams and problems such as alcoholism. Specifically, two motifs are contrasted in the story that of the return to Babylon, the ancient center of
sumptuousness and wickedness, and “that of the quiet and decent life at home that [Charlie] wishes to establish for his child,” arguably, his dream. The main character, Charlie Wales had a difficult time reconciling these two motifs in the past. He expresses dissatisfaction at the way he has behaved but in the story. Since Charlie’s wife’s death, Honoria, Charlie’s daughter, has been the ward or her aunt, Marion, and her uncle. Charlie wants to have custody of Honoria returned to him, but this proves difficult for Charlie because Marion does not consider him dependable. She cannot forgive him for his lifestyle of partying and recklessness with money which is, as she perceives it, his responsibility in her sister’s death.

Similar to the author’s attempts to free himself from alcoholism, Charlie rehabilitates himself in order to create a stable home for his daughter and to gain her back from Marion. Like Fitzgerald, he too drinks to excess, and has squandered money during these periods of intense drinking. However, he assures his sister-in-law that he has been rehabilitated by staying away from former influences and by taking one small drink each day, as not to allow his cravings to get too big. Marion decides against returning Honoria to Charlie after a few of his former, “Babylonian” friends stop by and make a bad impression on her. Charlie, too, is no longer impressed with his old friends because they tend to use him:

[They were] an unwelcome encounter. They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from their strength.\(^{15}\)
Charlie sees that his former friends want to use him since he has gotten himself together; they remain the same and are only interested in novelty and superficial happiness.

At the same time, their visit prompts Charlie to revisit “Babylon” by reflecting on his mistakes in the past, such as his carelessness with money. These former mistakes reflect Charlie’s former way of thinking is illogical and somewhat superstitious:

He remembered thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number, hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab.... I had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering... his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont. 16

He remembers his money given in the passive voice, as if to demonstrate just how separate he is from his past actions. Now, he understands why he has been so extravagant. His behaviour was almost superstitious in an attempt to distance himself from the concern and love he had for his family. He demonstrates that his behaviour and thinking has changed at dinner with Marion, and he wants to believe in more valuable concepts:

A great wave of protectiveness went over him. He thought he knew what to do for her. He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. 17

It demonstrates that Charlie has changed and his actions reflect
these changes. Furthermore, his attitudes suggest grounded thinking, could not be further from those he held when his wife was living.

Marion does not understand or believe that Charlie has changed. She still thinks of him in terms of his extravagance with money which she may not approve of because of her own unacknowledged envy for his wealth. She says she is protecting Honoria by not returning her to Charlie and she is only willing to consider doing so because he has more money and can better provide for her. Charlie recognizes their difference by explaining that the aunt and uncle are “not dull people” but are “very much in the grip of life and circumstance”. In a sense, Marion’s inability to forgive allows her to hold Honoria as collateral, but it is really her bitterness at the circumstances which prevents her from allowing Charlie to take Honoria. It is also Marion’s envy at Charlie’s wealth which causes her to maliciously maintain her control of Honoria, in that she is the one thing his money cannot buy. In a less spiteful manner, Marion has different views about how money ought to be used compared to Charlie. She is careful with it because it has value for her, while Charlie used it in the past it as something simply to enjoy. As mentioned, part of the reason that Marion despises Charlie is his past prodigal attitude with regards to money. Their differing views are shown in how they react to the perception of Americans in Europe before the crash:

“It seems funny to see so few Americans around.”

“I’m delighted,” Marion said vehemently. “Now at least you can go into a store without their assuming you’re a millionaire. We’ve suffered like everybody,
but on the whole it’s a good deal pleasanter.” “But it was nice while it lasted,” Charlie said. “We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us." 

The “Babylon” of Charlie’s former days hold no appeal for Marion, because she does not have a positive experience with its lavishness because she was not a part of it, and she has no experience with money directly. On the other hand, Charlie has vivid memories of these lavish times. He regrets them because they prevent him from being a father to his daughter:

There wasn’t much he could do now except send Honoria some things; he would send her a lot of things tomorrow. He thought rather angrily that this was just money—he had given so many people money.

These lines show that Charlie does not value money as highly as his daughter. They hint at his frustration with the importance Marion places on money because he sees what is truly worthy in life. In all, Charlie has reached a state of having a realistic and grown-up dream. With his wife gone, he simply wants to take care of and raise his daughter. He accepts the mistakes he has made in the past and takes responsibility for them. He tries to learn from the past by sobering up and living with his true dreams in mind.

Unlike Charlie, the main character in “The Bridal Party” still has to develop his character and learn to worry less about transient concerns like money. Bruccoli describes this story as an “examination of the influence of money on character” because it reveals the influence that being wealthy as well as the concept of wealth has on
shaping one’s identity. For instance, the central character, Michael, is wholly distracted because he thinks that he does not have enough money to marry his girl, Caroline. Their romance ends because he is too concerned about money to pick up on Caroline’s unhappiness which is unrelated to their financial situation. Later, Michael runs into Caroline in Paris who tells him that she is engaged to be married to Rutherford who is a wealthy businessman. Michael, who is invited to the wedding and bridal party, tries to think of ways to prevent the marriage. Michael assumes that Caroline’s marriage will result in her unhappiness and he believes that his happiness is inseparably tied to hers:

“Nothing will ever be the same again,” he said to himself. “She will never be happy in her marriage and I will never be happy at all any more.”

Through a strange twist of fate, Michael gains a fortune just as Rutherford loses his before the wedding. Even knowing this, Caroline decides to marry Rutherford and is “radiantly happy” at her bridal party.

Michael mistakenly believes that Rutherford is successful in love because he is wealthy, when it is more likely his assertive, confident demean or that gives him an edge. On the other hand, Michael’s character is highly insecure at his lack of money. Rutherford criticizes Michael’s insecurity and suggests to him that women do not appreciate this characteristic:

Women aren’t so darn sensitive. It’s fellows like you who are sensitive; its fellows like you they exploit—all your devotion and kindness and all that.”
Michael is highly sensitive, particularly about how others may view his lack of finances and he projects his own sensitivity onto Caroline. At the same time, his sensitivity makes him highly observant. He picks up on physical indicators of wealth and propriety in one’s dress. In addition, he is overly sensitive about how he is dressed: “[Michael] felt suddenly that his dinner coat was old and shiny; he had ordered a new one that morning. In another example, he feels slightly ashamed because he is wearing incorrect attire for the occasion: “he was still a little embarrassed at not wearing a morning coat, but he perceived that he was not alone in the omission and felt better”. Later, Michael is pleased because he is wearing a “new dinner coat,” a “new silk hat,” and “new, proud linen,” which makes him feel “rich and assured,” at least for a moment.

Michael’s attention to the details of clothing does not help him with Caroline’s heart, but the final passage of the story suggests that he better understands the problems of being poor and its level of importance compared to other concerns. In the thick of the bridal party, he has been watching Caroline and Rutherford dance together as they are obviously in love. Suddenly he understands what is important and what has been of value to Caroline:

Michael was cured. The ceremonial function, with its pomp and revelry, had stood for a sort of initiation into a life where even his regret could not follow them. All the bitterness melted out of him suddenly and the world reconstituted itself out of the youth and happiness that was all around him, profligate as the spring sunshine. 22

The very world seems to alter for the better for Michael in this
moment; he is happy and sees fullness in life. In the end, Michael’s way of thinking changes, and he understands that his focus on what he has lost is unnecessary and believes that love is more important than money.

Fitzgerald's short stories of the period also depict his personal reactions to the youth of the age. Dolly, who tries every scheme to catch *The Rich Boy*.

Another little thing, Marcia of "*Head and Shoulders*", declares: "All life is just going around kissing people."

In "*Babylon Revisited*," Charlie Wales has a full realization of his own loss caused by moral decadence and demonstrates his progress toward moral integrity.

Charlie came to believe in character—"to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything else wore out."

The wrong-doer in "*Dalyrimple Goes Wrong*" determinedly makes one moral compromise after another, excusing himself by emphasizing "it was being hard that counted." Contrariwise, Fitzgerald was to write in a letter:

The absolute amoral attitudes expressed by Braddock Washington and his family in "*The Diamond as Big as the Ritz*" may be considered an extreme example, but Fitzgerald is again accenting his conviction of moral deterioration caused by greed.
"May Day" presents a wide contrariety of characters floundering in varying degrees of moral degradation. The story was intended to be the history of "the general hysteria of that spring which inaugurated the Jazz Age." Gordon Sterrett has been ruined by the war and his own weaknesses, including his proneness to drink. Gordon is told by Dean, from whom he is trying to borrow money: "You seem to be sort of bankrupt—morally, as well as financially." Moral and emotional bankruptcy, even more than financial bankruptcy was Fitzgerald matters of the gravest concern. In a letter to his daughter, he tries to convince her of their importance.

Describing himself in The Crack-Up, Fitzgerald uses the quotation from Matthew "Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?"

Illustrated also in "May Day" is the destructive power of mob violence and a description of those left with "nothing." Examples are two recently discharged soldiers who are now in the vaguely uncomfortable state before they sign up for their next bondage. They are uncertain, resentful and somewhat ill at ease. The ex-soldiers manage to steal, get drunk, take part in a riot, and break a man's leg. One of them gets himself shoved out a window to his death and the other is thrown in jail, all within a period of twelve hours. Fitzgerald evokes the sympathy of the reader, however, for such wasted lives and causes one to join him in more harsh censure of another character in the story, Edith Bradin. Wrapped in her own arrogance, Edith is disdainful of any indication of lack of sophistication in others to the revelation that outward sophistication is all she possesses.
In the same way the necessity for money plagued Fitzgerald from time to time. It plagued some of Fitzgerald's characters as well. In one of his early stories, "Head and Shoulders," its chief character finds it necessary to take employment in an inferior position that does not give proper play to his remarkable intellectual capacity. His dreams and purposes of an outstanding career fade and he finally discovers that it is his wife who is considered the intellectual whereas he himself is only the "shoulders." He had chosen love and anonymity. Also included in his first collection of short stories, *Flappers and Philosophers*, published in 1921, is the tale of "Dalyrimple Goes Wrong.

Dalyrimple was not convinced "—that honest poverty was happier than corrupt riches." He is Fitzgerald's representation of the young war hero coming home to find that his war-won glory was short-lived. Yet, although Dalyrimple chose the immoral way toward riches he found himself rewarded in spite of his lack of "virtue."

Dexter Green, in "Winter Dreams," did not need money for food nor to care for a family. He had a dream of glittering things of which Judy Jones, daughter of "a rich man," is the symbol. As Fitzgerald describes him:

Ultimately, Dexter manages to make money soon after earning his college degree. After becoming the successful owner of a string of laundries, Judy Jones again came into his life.

She was the emblem of wealth—not earned but established—which he could only touch not possess. Years later, when Dexter
learns of her faded loveliness, he realizes his winter dreams have also faded and left nothingness.

Another Fitzgerald character who, as one of his chief traits, admires money is John Unger of Hades, Mississippi, who attended St. Midas' School near Boston. One of his rich acquaintances is Percy Washington. Invited to his friend's home for a visit, John learns that Percy's father possesses *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz*. "'He must be very rich', said John simply. 'I'm glad. I like very rich people. The richer a fella is, the better I like him'." John is amazed by the wealth of the Braddock Washington chateau, located in a hidden valley beside a diamond mountain. He falls in love with a daughter, Kismine, and then learns he will not be allowed to leave the secluded treasure trove alive. The day prior to his scheduled murder, planes arrive to bomb the valley. As a bomb hits the slave quarters, Kismine exclaims, "There go fifty thousand dollars' worth of slaves at pre-war prices. So few Americans have any respect for property." John, Kismine, and her sister Jasmine escape before the mountain is purposely destroyed by Braddock Washington when God refuses his bribe. Mistaking rhinestones for diamonds in their hurry to escape, Kismine and John find they have nothing of value left except their love for one another. Fitzgerald manifests in this story the amorality which he felt was a frequent companion of wealth. Mr. Washington had been sure that God had his price; he was only fearful that he had not made his bribe large enough. After all, wasn't "God made in man's image?"

Also Anson Hunter, in *The Rich Boy,* was born to inherit, with other children of the family, a fortune of fifteen million
dollars. The assurance of established wealth contributed to Anson's self-reliance and a confidence which was displayed in the form of condescension or toleration of those who were not as "solvent" as he. He fell in love with a rich girl but soon found he could not give to Paula what she required—himself. The discovery; several years later, that Paula was happy without him was a tremendous blow to his ego, leaving him purposeless and old. Fulfilment of his desires was impossible, for at every opportunity Anson found a withholding of himself which formed an impassable gulf to others. Yet, when others were showing him affection or revering his supremacy, Anson enjoyed a kind of happiness.

Fitzgerald’s stories as a whole suggest that dreams and idealism are the basis for all his significant characters’ motivations and an important part of the human psyche. However, when these characters become too concerned with becoming wealthy or with the extravagances and luxuries that come with money, their idealism and dreams tend to be circumstantial. In other words, when the desire for money becomes too severe, it creates an all-encompassing egoism, a focus on the self that pushes others away. The relationship between love and money in Fitzgerald’s writing is that “too much money militates against true love,” particularly because those who have too much money lose their ability to empathize and truly care for others. On the other hand, as in The Bridal Party when the characters are too focused on getting money, they push away their potential for love and happiness. When their financial needs and concerns are moderate and balanced with other concerns and when ego is not linked to financial
worth, idealism and dreams take precedence.

In summary, the commonalities among the main characters in these short stories, Henry Marston, Nicole and Nelson Kelly, Dexter Green, Charlie Wales, and Michael of *The Bridal Party* support Fitzgerald’s questioning of the impact of wealth, particularly as it relates to love. Henry, the Kellys, and Charlie each speak to the potential havoc that money can play on relationships, whether romantic relationships or those between family members and acquaintances. These characters’ stories show the freedom and luxury afforded by wealth, but also the ennui and envy that comes about when money becomes the primary form of sustenance in individual’s lives—as opposed to their innate dreams and capabilities. Michael, too, represents a preoccupation with money at the expense of all other concerns particularly true happiness. Dexter intertwines his dreams with his focus on money, as does Michael, such that he cannot quite understand why all his dreams are not reached—why he cannot marry Judy—when he has wealth. Perhaps these characters have in common their fixation on gaining wealth. It is certainly is not unusual in the motto of the American Dream which is to the extent that they believe becoming wealthy will fix all of their ailments and allow them to reach their dreams. What they lose in elevating the importance of wealth to this degree may be their own sense of humanity and an understanding of the value of their unique idealism.
REFERENCES


