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The Inexhaustible Variety of Life:  
Satire of the Nouveau Riche in Petronius' Satyricon,  
Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, and Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby

Sheila Hovis Byrd

A dissertation presented to the  
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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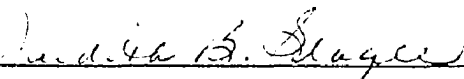
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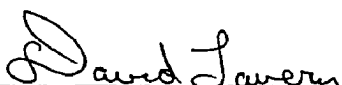
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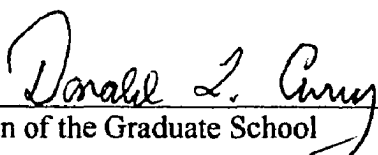
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## Abstract

### The Inexhaustible Variety of Life:

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Sheila Hovis Byrd

Satire of the nouveau riche crosses boundaries of time, culture, and genre to reveal similar characters and themes. This study delineates the similarities of characterization and themes in satire of the nouveau riche in Petronius' Satyricon, Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby.

Petronius' Imperial Rome as depicted in his fragmentary, antique novel; Moliere's seventeenth-century France as depicted in his comic drama; and F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jazz-Age America as depicted in his modern novel produce similar satiric views of the nouveau riche figure in a decadent, manipulative world. Each satirist presents a narrator or commentator as the satiric voice of reason. This character both participates in action and judges the actors.

The nouveau riche characters are a product of a money-hungry society where practically every person is self-interested. The nouveau riche individuals struggle, manipulate, or even cheat to climb the social ladder and claim a place of aristocracy or power. However, their money does not guarantee them happiness, and they never achieve their goals. Their lack of education and breeding, as well as their gaudiness, contributes to their failure. These parvenus are surrounded by parasitic characters, looking for a host.

One constant theme of this type of social satire is the decadence of society. This

decay stems from the importance each character places on money and is reflected in characters' actions. Violence, death, and usury are three ways in which social satire depicts the decadence of society. Often, the structure of satire emphasizes the static lives of the characters in their struggle to gain money and power. The satirist discloses through symbolism that wealth may appear to make people happy, yet the wealthy characters are sad and hollow. Whether the satirist describes people, places, situations, or abstract concepts, he reveals a sterile, wicked, static wasteland which lacks love, peace, or joy.

## Acknowledgments

Although this study bears my name, many people are responsible for its completion. Dr. Larry Gentry, my dissertation director, gave me his guidance and his genius. Dr. Gentry familiarized me with satire in his graduate satire class and introduced the idea of Gatsby as satire. Dr. Gentry has given his time, ideas, and opinions without hesitation. I also express deep appreciation to Dr. Judy Slagle, my second reader, for her insightful and constructive comments. Additionally, I am indebted to the graduate English faculty members for directing and influencing my thoughts and ideas.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### Satire of the Nouveau Riche: An Overview

Satire, like the term Romanticism, has accumulated much baggage over time. It is an important literary concept with many facets. Satire uses humor to point to human vice and folly. Highet describes satire as "the literary equivalent of a bucket of tar and a sack of feathers" (155). Satire can be harsh or urbane, but in either case, the purpose--correction--is the same. Satire, then, serves a purpose for humanity; it is a didactic art with a relevant theme. One obstacle to satire is its temporal nature; however, satire usually deals with timeless and universal themes, so it is not necessarily outdated. In fact, satire is historical in that cultures, no matter how extreme in time and attitude, produce some strikingly similar satiric pieces of literature. There are many examples of religious satire in different places and eras ranging from Aristophanes' classical Greek comedy Clouds to the modern American work Stranger in a Strange Land by Robert Heinlein. Therefore, although the satirist may be speaking to her/his contemporaries, the themes of the piece may be relevant to the past or for the future. Guilhamet applies Levi-Strauss's "concept of *bricolage*" as an analogy for satire:

In *La Pensee Sauvage*, Levi-Strauss defines the art of *bricoleur* as consisting of odds and ends or whatever is available. What is produced, bricolage, is analogous to myth. Among the genres of traditional literary theory, satire is most like this form of art. Both employ fragments of an earlier civilization or culture to construct a contemporary pattern or system of signs. Satire adapts elements of other genres to create a form not far removed from pastiche in its outward appearance and method of composition. The essential meaning of this structure inheres in this method of composition or bricolage. By piecing together what is left over from a disintegrating past, the satirist forms a prism through which the present can be refracted. Just as the latest mythmaker uses outworn structures to construct his new perspectives, the satirist employs what is left over from a great

literary tradition to reflect on contemporary shortcomings. (166)

Several characteristics help define satire; one is the satirist's vantage point. The satirist establishes a position of normalcy, which is often voiced directly in the work via a character or narrator. For example, Moliere's character Cleante in *Tartuffe* is the voice of reason. Cleante knows that while Tartuffe and other hypocritical religious men can not be trusted, some religious men are sincere. Towards the end of the play, Cleante berates Orgon for going too far:

You've [Orgon] recognized your recent grave mistake  
 In falling victim to a pious fake;  
 Now, to correct that error, must you embrace  
 An even greater error in its place,  
 And judge our worthy neighbors as a whole  
 By what you've learned of one corrupted soul? (V.i.)

Cleante expresses the norm for the world of the play, which consists of all kinds of satiric stupidity. Frye comments, "For effective attack we must reach some kind of impersonal level, and that commits the attacker if only by implication, to a moral standard. The satirist commonly takes a high moral line" (235). Usually, the satirist has a clear idea of reason, but in his opinion almost no one is reasonable, and he points to this fact either subtly or overtly. Robert Elliott argues that the satirist "is of society in the sense that his art must be grounded in his experience as social man; but he must also be apart, as he struggles to achieve proper distance. His practice is often sanative, as he proclaims; but it may be revolutionary in ways that society can not possibly approve, and in ways that may not be clear even to the satirist" (215).

Another interesting characteristic is that satire is a mixed bag. It relates to many other methods which are sub categories of it. These include such elements as burlesque, lampoon, and parody. These categories can be a complete, independent work such as

Chaucer's Sir Thopas, or they can be used in combination to produce a satiric work such as Petronius' Satyricon.

Another important factor is that satire is grounded in intellect. The reader must be fairly intelligent to comprehend the gist of the humor. Due to satire's humorous nature, it can be read as simple humor; but with acquired knowledge, the same text is satiric. Any number of examples illustrate this idea: Animal Farm, Gulliver's Travels, or Huckleberry Finn can be read as amusing children's tales or as satire for the intellectual reader. Furthermore, since satire is concerned with so many methods, it can intrude in unexpected places. Often, a satiric sentence, paragraph, or episode may be found in an otherwise unsatiric work. Edward Bloom delineates the mixture of satire in this manner:

*Bleak House* and *Ulysses* are not satires in the generic sense, and yet they assimilate satiric moments, scenes, and characters. The same could be said of plays by Wilde or Shaw . . . Nor is the use of satiric interludes--phrases, descriptions, occurrences, analogies--confined to strictly literary performances. There exists a large body of works whose primary purpose is nonliterary polemic.

(37)

Thus satire is a basic element similar to water due to its pervasive and necessary nature. Further, satire, like water, is necessary to civilization, for it is a type of therapy as opposed to a violent act. Paulson writes, "What we remember from satire is neither character nor plot . . . but a fantastic image, or a series of them." Paulson defines many of these images as revolving around cannibalism, which becomes a metaphor for aggression (The Fictions of Satire 9-10). Satire is an aggressive genre. It may be aggressive because of its attack nature, but it may be very calm. Like water, it can be a roaring waterfall as in the case in Juvenalian satire, or it can be a lazy river as is Horatian satire. Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope are respective examples as Swift readily

admits in a letter dated 1725 to Pope: "The chief end I propose to myself in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it" (264).

To consider satire as genre severely limits its chameleon nature. Style is perhaps the better description. As mentioned, many writers use satire mixed into a text which is not meant to be in a genre known as satire. Robert Browning is an excellent example, for generally he is known as a Victorian poet specializing in dramatic monologues; however, his poetry is filled with satiric elements such as irony. Much of the Bishop's conversation with his "nephews" in Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" is ironic: "And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray/ Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,/ And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?" (73-5). Therefore, satire, similar to water, can be mixed with other elements and blended to the point that it becomes subliminal. As a matter of fact, satire is everywhere, especially in the post-modern world. In the ever-increasing pessimistic twentieth century of world wars, the Holocaust, nuclear brinkmanship, violence, and environmental concerns, satire abounds. A plethora of satiric television shows exist such as The Simpsons, a direct parody of the innocent nineteen fifties sitcom Father Knows Best. Married With Children is an award-winning sitcom which is a burlesque of any functional-family-fifties sitcom such as The Donna Reed Show or Leave It To Beaver. The long-running Saturday Night Live targets anything, especially news. American movies also have many satiric elements from Demolition Man, which uses scatology and targets political correctness, to black comedies such as War of the Roses or Heathers.

Satire usually aims at the intellect to arouse thoughtful laughter. It is as much the average person's literature as tattoos are the poor person's art. In post-modern, frustrated, paranoid, liberated society, satire allows for the absurd; it even celebrates it. Theater of the Absurd stems from the satiric vantage point that the human condition is ridiculous.

Part of satire's pervasiveness stems from the fact that it takes many forms and can be mixed readily. Just as water can be rain, sleet, hail, mist, ice, glacier, fog, slush, snow--

satire can be in the form of burlesque, parody, irony, scatology, etc. For this reason the original meaning of the word satire is "a dish filled with mixed fruits" (Holman 474).

Satire targets humanity or human institutions for improvement, generally using a humorous attitude. For example, Kurt Vonnegut targets the idea of equality enforced by law in his short story "Harrison Bergeron." He uses the humorous technique of irony by which the government proposes to reduce everyone to the lowest common denominator. George C. Wolfe satirizes African-American stereotypes and parodies Hansberry's A Raisin In the Sun in his play The Colored Museum (1985).

Water, to be life-sustaining, must contain two Cs: cleanness and clarity. Satire must contain two Ts: target and technique. Although satire throughout the ages has targeted some universal human institutions such as medicine, formal education, religion, and marriage in such works as Moliere's The Physician in Spite of Himself, or Dickens' Hard Times, it is somewhat temporal. Frye contends, "To attack anything, writer and audience must agree on its undesirability, which means that the content of a great deal of satire founded on national hatreds, snobbery, prejudice, and personal pique goes out of date very quickly" (234). Modern society may find it difficult to relate to the temporal satire of Aristophanes. His play The Frogs, which targets Athenian political decadence, is as foreign to modern humanity as Doonesbury's target Nixon would be to the ancient Greeks. Although universal themes, characters, and images alleviate some of the temporal loss, they must, however, be grounded in history. Rosenheim writes, "It is difficult to make any meaningful historical assertion about all of womankind; it is, on the other hand, perfectly possible to speak in conventional historical terms of modern American women--and hence to satirize them" (321).

One constant which has remained is the Utopian/Dystopian connection. Satire has been concerned with Utopian societies forever as evidenced in Plato's Republic to More's Utopia to Well's A Modern Utopia and, finally, moving in grand satiric fashion from "no place" or "good place" to "bad place" with dystopian literature such as

Huxley's Brave New World, Orwell's 1984, and Atwood's Handmaid's Tale. All of these dystopias have a connection to fantasy and science fiction. Hight notes, "Satiric tales are often improbable, and do not object to being impossible" (Anatomy of Satire 208). The rhetorical nature of satire has disappeared in the twentieth century, and satire has taken on the style of a mixture of laughter and tragedy featuring anti-heroes like John in Brave New World. Satire can be categorized according to its purpose: political, religious, social, etcetera. Each category specializes in the potential or real follies surrounding the subject.

One such category is social satire, which includes satires of manners and social status, and satire of the nouveau riche falls into this category, for it hinges on social stratum and manners. Evidently, satire of the nouveau riche never goes out of style in time or place. Even a democratic society such as America, where a poor Mississippi boy can become a King (even if it is just a king of rock and roll music), produces from time to time satire of the nouveau riche. Satire of the nouveau riche appeals to people with old money, for they recognize the gaudiness and absurdity of the uncultured fool, and it appeals to the middle class or poor because they see the same uncultured, pretentious fool. Each group views the character, but with different attitudes. The aristocrats are snobbish about their "closed" society, while the middle class/poor are snobbish about the fact that they, given the opportunity, would never be so foolish. Guicharnaud, describing Moliere's comedies, notes, "This misunderstanding with oneself is the source of a drama which goes round in circles--the drama of mania: but such maniacs are quite simply caricatures of ourselves to the extent that we live according to our passions" (8). Bray, who writes, "all the ones we laugh at so freely, are filled with unreason . . . The laughing spectator detaches himself from responsibility for what he laughs at; he implicitly refuses to be . . . Jourdain" (58), concurs with Guicharnaud's assumption.

Gaudiness is just one of the facets explored in the nouveau riche satire. Legacy

hunters and parasites are other aspects. Legacy hunting is as old as time; it never goes out of style, and it is not foreign to any audience. Legacy hunting and parasitic behavior both stem from the love of money which originally produces the nouveau riche. Again, audience members can enjoy the idea of legacy hunting through self-denial.

Gaudiness and all that it entails is often portrayed in a fantastic plot, for plot in satire is often unsystematic; illogical; improbable. The illogical plot lends itself to the importance of chance. Another aspect of the illogical plot is the juxtaposition of ideas; for example, often there exists a contrast between violence and calmness in satiric plot. This juxtaposition is connected to the idea that there is no design in life. Thus audience is paramount to satire, for it is to them the satirist speaks.

The focus of this study is to explore three classic examples of satire of the nouveau riche: Petronius' Satyricon, Moliere's The Would-be Gentleman, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby. Each of these works, though separated by time, culture, and genre exhibits similar characterizations and themes. Each work differs due to the circumstance under which it was written. Petronius is entertaining a court audience in Nero's Rome, while Moliere is writing specifically at King Louis XIV's request to include Turkish ballet. Ashton suggests, "Many of Moliere's plays were interspersed with dancing and some of them were ordered by the king solely as vehicles for the ballet" (61). Besides, Moliere's theater incorporates slapstick comedy as part of its heritage from *comedia dell'arte*. Mander finds that Moliere "combined--triumphantly--the high arts of music and dance with the lower art of farce in a form of his own invention, the ballet-comedy" (26). Fitzgerald is writing as a representative of the lost generation in modern America. In each case, however, though from different eras and cultures, the writer portrays a similar character in the nouveau riche and a similar society full of manipulative, cannibalistic behavior.



It is important to note that there is a tradition of social satire of the nouveau riche which extends beyond era or nationality. Satirists more than other writers are heavily indebted to tradition. Fitzgerald was, of course, influenced by various writers including Petronius, but more importantly, the influence stems from a satiric tradition. The Great Gatsby, a premier Jazz Age novel, contains many satirical elements, including incongruities of action and reaction, imitation, and caricatures, but especially it is a critical comment on the American dream. Critics have been slow to accept Gatsby as satire. Roulston writes, "Indeed, the most depressing aspect of some of the scholarship about the novel [Gatsby] is how it misses not merely the satire but the humor" (62). Many critics such as Moyer, Fussell, Bewley, and Morris have discussed and disseminated Fitzgerald's criticism of the American dream and Gatsby as an American historical novel. Sklar admits, "The Great Gatsby became a novel about the nature of America, but it carried its social values and historical perspective into a realm of universal symbols and suprahistorical myths" (224). Gatsby presents both. It is, preeminently, a satire of the American Dream and of America itself. Gatsby, himself, is a caricature of a nouveau rich who seems to attain the dream, with the exception of the girl, in the opportunistic American landscape. Yet many historical empires have produced much the same situation, and Fitzgerald was aware of this literary tradition. One of his main references in writing Gatsby was Petronius' Satyricon. MacKendrick comments that the "mature Fitzgerald" sees "in Trimalchio the symbol of a sick society" (307). Most critics acknowledge that the "Trimalchio's Feast" episode is especially present in Gatsby. Audhuy joins the growing list of critics who note that Fitzgerald, according to his letters, wanted to "entitle his book Trimalchio in West Egg" (114). Along with this reference is the often-quoted line from chapter seven in which Nick remarks, "It was when curiosity about Gatsby was at its highest that the lights in his house failed to go on one Saturday night--and, as obscurely as it had begun, his career as Trimalchio was over" (113). Trimalchio and Gatsby are similar, and this reference is not a mere allusion; rather, it is a

metaphor extended throughout the novel which focuses on the kinship of the narrators, Nick and Encolpius, and the nouveaux riche figures, Gatsby and Trimalchio. Moreover, Petronius' Satyricon guides the structure of Gatsby, including certain characterizations, themes, and critical commentary. Drennan notes,

This connection [Satyricon and Gatsby] is apparent from the novel's working title . . . and by the fact that there exist striking parallels between the two works' respective parvenus: like Gatsby, Trimalchio has amassed great wealth, throws sybaritic parties for swarms of dissolute guests (who secretly mock him), and carries with him the boorish manners of his servile past into a new and glittering milieu. (146)

Petronius' work is a form of Menippean satire: Hadas describes Satyricon as "our fullest example of the alternative form of Menippean satire, blending prose and verse" (295).

Hadas also notes the complete originality of Satyricon (298).

Sandwiched between these two similar works concerning social status is Moliere's depiction of the overreacher Monsieur Jourdain, the parvenu/subject of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. Riggs asserts Williamson's view that Moliere's play "ridicules the common bourgeois impulse to imitate aristocratic customs and costume, or even to 'become' noble" (26). Although Moliere's form is drama and his text is shorter than either Satyricon or The Great Gatsby, his work is quite similar to these others. Turnell defines Moliere's technique in this manner: "His starting-point is always the individual man or woman, but his characters are all representative, are all rooted in the society of their time, and he goes on to make an anatomy of his society in which some of the deepest as well as some of the most controversial problems are debated" (53). Moliere's comedy consists of excessive exaggeration, but Hightet believes exaggeration is necessary "to produce the full effect of satire on the stage" (197).

The three narratives contain strikingly similar characterizations and themes. In each work, the nouveau riche character is the centerpiece of the work, and he is surrounded by

voyeurs, sought by parasites, and attracted to aristocrats. The nouveau riche is a person with new money who is outside the aristocratic circle but who has enough money to imitate them. Duff's description of Petronius' Trimalchio is a pertinent description of any nouveau riche character, whether he be an American Gatsby or a French Jourdain:

Trimalchio is drawn as the representative of a new rich class whose social aspiration in any community must always be entrance at all costs into the envied circle of people of quality--that old caste which it must ape in default of manners and traditions of its own and whose culture it must affect with a nervous sense of inferiority imperfectly concealed under blatant self-assertion.

(Literary History of Rome 142-3)

The observers serve as narrators and/or commentators on the actions of society, especially on the actions of the nouveau riche. These spectators are the voice of reason, the satiric vantage point, the norm. The narrator/commentator also acts as a foil to the mysterious, gaudy, uneducated, misplaced nouveau riche, who stands alone, separated from either class and surrounded by people who are critical of his/her actions or by the parasitic people who want some of the money or action which will lead to money. The nouveau riche is also alone in striving toward the aristocratic society which is a ruthless and closed clique.

Satyricon, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, and The Great Gatsby all focus on similar themes, including the decadence of society which is directly related to money. Decadence is evinced in the critical commentary of the present day and nostalgia for the past and is pointed to by the tawdry parties full of self-interested people. Shero acknowledges Trimalchio's banquet as "the sole form generally speaking, of private social entertainment among the Greeks and Romans; it filled the place in their social life that is occupied today by the many different kinds of parties and social gatherings with which we are familiar" (126). A violence/death nexus is present in the works as part of the decadence. The very structure of each work produces a feeling of decay, for in each

plot there seems to be much movement, and there is; but the results are closer to pandemonium than to any structure. The frenetic activity leads to nothing. Kernan finds that this "absence of plot" is "the most striking quality of satire." He writes, "We seem at the conclusion of satire to be always at very nearly the same point where we began. The scenery and the faces may have changed outwardly, but fundamentally we are looking at the same world, and the same fools, and the same satirist we met at the opening of the work" (270).

The three texts portray manipulative relationships, illusory themes, and ironic technique. Usurious relationships prevail in all three texts. Besides the parasites who attach themselves to the nouveau riche characters and the rich characters, most of the equivalent relationships are based in pure usury. In addition, appearance versus reality is a common theme to each work. The illusion involves many components such as time, place, people, and ceremony. Each nouveau riche character is enmeshed in illusion and has traded an inherent identity for a created one. This adopted identity allows the character to transcend reality for illusion. Furthermore, a large component of satiric technique is irony. Petronius, Moliere, and Fitzgerald know the value of irony and discrepancy to satire, and each author applies these techniques liberally. The works chronologically progress from one dystopia to another.

The dystopic journey to modern America via seventeenth-century France begins in Ancient Rome. This journey has just enough variance to be interesting and enough similarity to be comfortable, and characterizations provide the entrance.

## Chapter II

### Characterization

The characters of satire serve the two important functions of satire: they may function as targets (nouveau riche, parasites, upper class), or they may function as technique (narrator). In other words, the characters of any satire are vastly important in that they offer exaggerated views of the target and may serve as the voice of reason or of the author's important vantage point. The device of the narrator is often used in satire to give immediate commentary on the absurd action of the nouveau riche character. When a narrator is not used, as in drama, a character or several characters must act as a norming device, the voice of reason. Besides the narrator, the actual characters serve various functions. Satire of the nouveau riche has a set of characters in common, such as the actual person or persons who have acquired riches and who are the main target of the satire, the parasites who surround this luxurious character and are lesser targets in that they are repulsed and desirous of the riches, and the true upper class who are also lesser targets but are often more despicable than the other characters. In fact, the nouveau riche character may be buffoonish, moronic, and pathetic, but the true upper class characters are depraved, selfish, and ruthless.

#### The Narrator

Encolpius, the hero-narrator of The Satyricon, is both observer and participant in the action. Even during Trimalchio's episode where Trimalchio is the center of attention, it is through Encolpius' eyes that the reader views and participates in the action. Encolpius is a misplaced voyeur on a quest for love. At various times, Encolpius watches Eumolpus, Ascyltus, and Bargates (Petronius 101). He peers through darkness and keyholes to see the absurd action. When he is at Trimalchio's banquet, he both participates in and observes the action. Arrowsmith refers to Petronius' use of the "spoofing detachment" of

"Encolpius' fastidious eyes" (Introduction xviii-xix). Encolpius appears to be quite detached partially because he makes no straight-forward commentary on the various episodes; he simply observes. Hadas writes,

The even-voiced exposition carries a heavier impact than outraged preachment, for those who have eyes to see. . . . What makes such implied criticism possible and effective is the fact that the principals of the story are educated people. (296)

Encolpius is quite often contemplative. MacKendrick notes, "Encolpius, particularly, the intellectual, is given to Proustian self-flagellation and introspection" (311). One indication of Encolpius' introspection is his negative comments on education, especially rhetoric, at the beginning of The Satyricon (1-7).

Encolpius is a classless wanderer, impotent both literally and figuratively, and is pursued by a divine vengeance which makes him impotent sexually. He allegedly has committed some past misconduct against Priapus, the fertility god, who is taking revenge upon him. His affairs are quite often arranged for him by someone else; nevertheless, his love and sexual exploits move him from one catastrophe to another. He is molested by the Priapus priestess and her comrades, and Circe unsuccessfully attempts to seduce Encolpius. In the Satyricon's fragmentary state (we have but fragments of the fifteenth and sixteenth books of what is evidently a twenty or twenty-four book narrative), Encolpius is left with no one.

One lengthy episode centers around Encolpius attending a fantastic banquet given by the nouveau riche Trimalchio. Encolpius accompanies Agamemnon to the banquet and is accompanied by Ascyllus and Giton. Encolpius, although enthusiastic about getting a good meal, feels out of place at Trimalchio's party. Encolpius, reminded by one of Agamemnon's slaves that "Trimalchio's giving the meal" (Petronius 25), references the fact that he is not familiar with this kind of event:

To tell the truth, I had almost tossed my share away, thinking the eggs were really addled. But I heard one of the guests, obviously a veteran of these dinners, say,

"I wonder what little surprise we've got in here." (31)

Encolpius is a shrewd observer, and Petronius through certain incongruities makes a critical comment on several aspects of the Roman Empire. Arrowsmith notes the "subtle and also deeply literary" quality of the Satyricon (Introduction xvii). Trimalchio is the main victim of this criticism, for he is obviously uneducated and vulgar. Encolpius, upon first viewing Trimalchio, is awed by his vast wealth:

There he stood, rigged out in undershirt and sandals, nothing else, bouncing a big green ball the color of a leek. When he dropped one ball, moreover, he never bothered to stoop for it, but simply took another from a slave who stood beside him with a huge sack tossing out fresh balls to the players. (25)

Encolpius emphasizes Trimalchio's vulgar opulence through his conspicuous consumption. Later, Encolpius will be further amazed upon entering Trimalchio's fabulous house. He notes that he is "drunk with admiration" of Trimalchio's wealth. When he views the house upon his visit, he writes, "I was gaping at all this in open-mouthed wonder . . ." (26, 27). Encolpius is a participant, too. He is present at Trimalchio's banquet. He often just follows along: at the banquet, he follows Agamemnon. At Croton, he follows Eumolpus. Palmeri points to the fact that Encolpius "occupies a peripheral role" and at the same time is "the object of his author's satiric parodies" (36).

Encolpius, while envious of Trimalchio, is scornful of him. He tires of Trimalchio's vast array of tricks and boasting. By the time the guests go to the baths, he is ready to avoid Trimalchio: "The bath itself was narrow and shaped like a coldwater cistern, and we found Trimalchio standing in the middle of the pool. But even here there was no escape from his revolting bragging" (73). Encolpius is ready to leave the feast before it is over: "The whole business had by now become revolting" (78). He refers to his "heaven-sent opportunity" to leave Trimalchio's dinner (79). He even finds it hard to get away from the place and fails during his first attempt: "Utterly soaking and shaking all over, we

asked the porter to open the gate and let us out. 'You're badly mistaken, gentlemen,' he replied, 'if you think you can leave by the same way you came. No guest in this house ever goes out by the same door again. There's one way in and another way out'" (73). Palmeri describes Encolpius as "a social parasite who accepts the powerful and rich man's largesse and lauds him to his face, yet judges him behind his back as vulgar, untalented, and uneducated" (28). Later, however, as Encolpius enjoys the riches at Croton, he dreads the thought of returning to his "old life of poverty" (152).

Encolpius appears to be rather harsh in his judgments of people. When he believes Trimalchio's cook forgot to gut the pig, Encolpius is furious:

My own reaction was anger, savage and unrelenting. I could barely restrain myself and leaning over, I whispered to Agamemnon, "Did you ever hear of anything worse? Who could forget to gut a pig? By god, you wouldn't catch me letting him off, not if it was just a fish he'd forgotten to clean." (Petronius 47-8)

Of course, this is one of Trimalchio's tricks, and Encolpius is duped because the pig yields sausages and blood puddings. Encolpius' superior attitude does not stem from his education; thus he is less likely to seem snobbish. Encolpius' education is important because it does not save him or his friends from any of the various ludicrous situations in which they find themselves. Petronius permits the reader to judge Encolpius by the incongruity of his superior attitude juxtaposed to his predicaments. Arrowsmith observes: "For in this way the mocker [Encolpius] is mocked in return, his pretensions exposed in his own rhetorical passion and his cool raffish eye clouded by what he cannot see: his own absurdity" (Introduction xviii).

The characters in drama replace the need for a narrator. Dramatic convention allows for characters to voice the author's viewpoint, so necessary in satire. In Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, sensible characters are directly juxtaposed to the silliness of the nouveau riche or the haughty corruption of the true nobility. The characters, of



course, are commenting on the action as if they are standing outside the stage, yet they are a part of the action. Through dramatic convention, Moliere provides the satiric vantage point voiced first by Jourdain's music and dance instructors, who like Encolpius, ridicule Jourdain for his lack of grace, yet they also seek the money he has. The Music Master refers to him as "nice property" (I) but wishes Jourdain were better versed in the art forms. The Music Master concludes that "he pays well" (I). Both the Music Master and the Dance Master in true Molieresque fashion provide the audience with a portrait of the foolish Jourdain. The Music Master describes Jourdain:

True enough, our man has no cultivation; he gets everything all wrong, and he is sure to applaud the wrong thing; but his money purifies his bad taste. His fat purse is full of critical insight; his approval is convertible into cash; and this ignorant commoner is a lot more useful to us, as you are well aware, than that noble amateur of the arts who introduced us to him. (I)

On the heels of this comment comes the Dancing Master's ironic proclamation that "a man of character should never show any concern" for "material advantage" (I). These men seek and scorn money.

The main characters who act as narrator/commentators of social norms are Mme. Jourdain and Jourdain's servant, Nicole, who continually comment on Jourdain's asinine behavior. These two serve as perfect commentators, for they represent the two classes with whom M. Jourdain should associate: the bourgeois and servants respectively. Mme. Jourdain also serves as the pragmatic woman, the voice of reason. She tells Jourdain early on that his "behavior has been making everybody laugh for quite some time" (III). She also calls him "crazy" because he has decided to "hang around with the nobility" (III). She is aware, unlike Jourdain, that Dorante, the nobleman, is simply using her husband: "and all the attentions he [Dorante] shows you are just to take you in" (III). Nicole, who laughs uncontrollably at Jourdain's fancy clothes, seconds Mme. Jourdain's allegations.

All of these periphery narrators serve as participants with and voyeurs of the nouveau riche Jourdain. The instructors give Jourdain advice on elegance, as the music master explains, "It is necessary sir, that the music fit the words" (I). At one point, Mme. Jourdain sends Nicole to spy on Jourdain and Dorante, telling her, "What can they be arguing so much about? Sneak over and see if you can't pick up something" (III). These voyeur/participants are the voice of Moliere. In short, they are the norm to which Jourdain is juxtaposed.

Mme. Jourdain emerges as a blunt woman who is bold, cold, and even pompous. Her treatment of Jourdain's friend Dorante is impertinent even if he does deserve it. She does not hide her pique with him and at one point says, "I wasn't born yesterday" (III). She is the voice of reason, which the audience recognizes as the norm.

Another aspect of her pragmatism derives from her various criticisms. In her asides to her husband during his initial meeting with Dorante, she assesses first Jourdain and then Dorante. She comments that Dorante "scratches" Jourdain "where he itches" with flattery (III); she also notes that Jourdain's new clothes look "as silly behind as in front" (III). In her asides to her husband, she criticizes Dorante as a charlatan: "He won't be satisfied until he's ruined you"; "He's nothing but a crook"; "He'll suck you dry, down to your last penny" (III).

F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby incorporates a narrator quite similar to Encolpius and Mme. Jourdain in technique and attitude. Although Gatsby is the main focus of the novel which bears his name, Nick cannot be ignored, for he makes sweeping commentary and is quite often a participant in the action, connecting with the characters he is observing. Nick, similar to Encolpius, is a misplaced voyeur on a quest. At various times, Nick watches Gatsby, Myrtle Wilson, and Tom and Daisy Buchanan with a critic's intense focused vision without their awareness of it. He peers through darkness and windows in an effort to see. When he is a part of the action, he imagines himself as a

voyeur, or at least as being spied upon. In Tom and Myrtle's apartment, Nick imagines himself to be not only there, but also the "casual watcher" on the street "looking up and wondering" (Fitzgerald 36). This image notes Nick's dichotomous detachment and involvement in the action.

Nick is a marginal figure, for he is neither a part of the established wealthy class of Daisy Fay, Tom Buchanan, or Jordan Baker, nor of the lower class of Myrtle Wilson, George Wilson, or Mr. Gatz. His residence is symbolic of his peripheral presence. Nick's perspective allows him to be the detached observer of both worlds. Additionally, his narration occurs from a distance in time. More than the other characters, too, he is detached due to his contemplative, intellectual nature. Brucoli believes this time delay in the narrative is "to strengthen the impression that the narrator is the author" (119).

Nick is thrown together with women from both the upper- and lower-class worlds in the guise of Jordan Baker and Myrtle Wilson's sister Catherine. These alliances are arranged for him, not by him. Nick, from the start, names his quest as becoming "the 'well-rounded man'" (4). Dryson notes, "Carraway's desire for emotional detachment had, from the start, a certain pessimism underlying it--an acceptance of disenchantment which finds expression in some of the most characteristic of his reflections" (123).

Nick's relationships are impotent, and he is impotent to right the wrongs of the characters who surround him. After Gatsby's death, Nick longs for "a sort of moral attention" (Fitzgerald 2). The key to Nick's impotence is his misconduct involving the near engagement, referenced by Tom and Daisy at their dinner party and later acknowledged by Nick himself. This misconduct appears to be a social faux pas; nevertheless, Nick leaves the West because he will not be "rumored into marriage" (20). He now avoids this kind of trouble but longs for someone: "Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, I had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs, and so I drew up the girl beside me, tightening my arms" (81). Midway through the text, Nick again confronts his loneliness as he imagines "romantic women"

whose lives he could "enter," and he feels "a haunting loneliness" (57). Nick's age is wrapped in a Prufrockish loneliness: "Thirty--the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning briefcase of enthusiasm, thinning hair" (136). Symbolic of Nick's desire to appease his loneliness is Nick's bond business and his time devoted to studying bonds (57). He studies bonds in business, society, and love. Another component of his impotence stems from his sexual ambiguity. Keath Fraser argues that through various episodes and imagery, Nick is sexually enigmatic. Fraser comments on the nebulous episode with Mr. McKee:

It is an odd scene because Nick never goes to lunch with McKee and McKee never reappears. Odder still is the fact that Nick joins McKee in his apartment when no invitation, apart from the one to lunch, is spoken, and no rapport between the two men at Myrtle's party is established--except for Nick's having wiped a spot of dried lather from McKee's cheekbone when McKee has dozed off in a chair. (141)

Fraser supplies additional support of this concept such as Nick's description of McKee as "a pale feminine man" and phallic imagery where McKee absently holds the elevator lever (142-3). Long describes McKee as a "wife-dominated photographer hinted to be more homosexual than heterosexual" (110). Indeed, McKee's wife certainly seems to be trying to cure him. At Tom and Myrtle's party, she proposes that her husband "could make something" of Myrtle (31) or that he "could do something with" Catherine, Myrtle's sister (33). If McKee's photography substitutes for his sexual impotence--he has photographed his own wife "one hundred and twenty seven times since they have been married" (30)--Mrs. McKee's proposal that McKee photograph the other women in the room may be a suggested method of cure for his impotence. Nick, as Fraser notes, is interested in the masculine Jordan Baker. Fraser writes, "As a champion athlete she, like Tom, is at home in the world of men. In addition, according to Nick, she has a 'hard, jaunty body' (59), a body 'like a young cadet' (11). She is, moreover, androgynously

named . . ." (149). Jordan Baker's name is certainly an odd name for a female character; it is (probably coincidentally) reminiscent of Moliere's Jourdain. Fraser further notes Nick's descriptions of Tom's body as characteristic of Nick's admiration of it. Even when Nick thinks of his past girlfriend, his language concerning her denotes masculinity. He remembers her in this manner: "I'd been writing letters once a week and signing them: 'Love, Nick,' and all I could think of was how, when that certain girl played tennis, a faint mustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip" (59-60). Fraser connects Nick with Encolpius through a "quest for love" (151) and by name. Carraway is a seed, and Encolpius possibly means womb (152). Nick's situation, then, is the modern Americanization of Encolpius' plight in *Satyricon*. Bruccoli notes in the *Apparatus for F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* that Ring Lardner calls to Fitzgerald's attention that Nick could not have been in the lower level of the train station because none exists; however, Fitzgerald does not change the phrase to "platform" or anything else. Bruccoli suggests that Fitzgerald does not change it because "he may have wanted the connotations of *lower level*" (34). This phrase may suggest Nick's activities with McKee as subculture. In both cases, neither Nick nor Encolpius can be coupled nor be sexually at ease. Fraser notes, "Now Nick (or Dud, as Fitzgerald conceived him) fails with women as Encolpius does, though not for lack of trying" (69).

Although Nick is detached, Fitzgerald allows his ambivalent attitude concerning Gatsby to vacillate between faith and faithlessness until the incidents are over, and Nick feels that Gatsby is a worthy person. He tells Gatsby, "'You're worth the whole damn bunch put together'" (Fitzgerald 154). Nick begins his narration with, "I'm inclined to reserve all judgments" (1), and his final judgment is that "Gatsby turned out all right at the end" (2). Donaldson finds that Nick "disapproves of those who do *not know how to act*"; this is the reason his opinion vacillates concerning Gatsby who is "a walking compendium of social gaucheries" (131).

As a detached, contemplative observer, Nick, like Encolpius, feels out of place at the gregarious, outrageous parties. Nick defines himself as one of the "few guests who had actually been invited" (Fitzgerald 41). Moreover, he feels "purposeless and alone" (42). Nick is aloof as portrayed in his inability to connect intimately with anyone. Nick plays the part of the author, a silent watcher, who will write an account of the events in the future. As evidence he writes the names of Gatsby's guests on an old train timetable which he preserves until he is writing this book.

Nick's voyeurism results in his first introduction (and the readers') to Gatsby. Nick observes Gatsby from afar, connecting him majestically with the "silver pepper of the stars" (Fitzgerald 21). Nick sees Gatsby as "he stretched out his arms" toward what Nick distinguishes as "a single green light" (21-22). Nick has already noted Gatsby's enormous estate as "a colossal affair by any standard" (5). He, too, will be further impressed by Gatsby's wealth to which he aspires, yet detests. Nick's Miniver-Cheevy attitude of scorning the gold he seeks is presented in his description of Gatsby as a man "who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn"; however, at the same time, Nick buys books to study, "promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew" (4). Nick is a student of making money, like the student, Encolpius, and they both are confronted with wealth to which they aspire but despise. Mizener comments, "His [Fitzgerald] use of a narrator allowed Fitzgerald to keep clearly separated for the first time in his career the two sides of his nature, the middle-western Trimalchio and the spoiled priest who disapproved of but grudgingly admired him" (171). Thrown into the midst of riches, Nick often wants to escape the wealthy: "I'd be damned if I'd go in; I'd had enough of all of them [Tom and Daisy] for one day, and suddenly that included Jordan too" (143).

Nick is quite rigid and unsympathetic. Parker notes that Nick's "interior rules" are a "condition of his coldness" and defines Nick as "a careful scrutineer of persons" (38). Nick's pompous attitude is interwoven into the fabric of the text. From the beginning,

Nick warns that he might be critical, for his father has given him advice against criticizing (Fitzgerald 1). Yet throughout the text, he comments critically on various people. He describes Tom as having a "supercilious manner" (7), Myrtle as having "surplus flesh" (25), Myrtle's sister, Catherine, as having a "sticky bob of red hair" (30), and Mrs. McKee as being "shrill" (30). Indeed, the text is a series of criticisms from Nick's viewpoint. Nick's facetious remarks, according to Langman, are "the sign[s] of a mind prone to notice, with quiet enjoyment, whatever is ridiculous in human behavior" (37-8). Neuhaus finds Nick's self-righteousness a failure because the "snobbish Nick" sees himself in Calvinistic terms as one of the "elect, possessed of congenital moral wealth" (48-9). However, Nick's attitude allows the reader to judge his educated self-evaluation against his experiences, and he is found lacking.

#### The Nouveau Riche

Each text presents a fully developed nouveau riche character. Petronius introduces the ex-slave Trimalchio while Moliere produces the transcendent bourgeois Jourdain, and Fitzgerald offers the former poor farm boy Gatsby. Petronius' Fortunata and Fitzgerald's Myrtle Wilson serve as minor nouveau riche characters. All of these nouveau riche characters are mysterious, gaudy and uneducated, critical of the "lower" classes, and misplaced in society. This nouveau riche is an overreacher who has reinvented her/himself or is following a procedure to reinvent her/himself.

Petronius' nouveau riche character Trimalchio, whose name means great and rich, is reinvented to suit his fortune. He informs his guests, "Once I used to be like you, but I rose to the top of my ability" (Petronius 76). He is aware of the vital importance of money and declares to his guests, "No money and you're nobody. But big money, big man. That's how it was with yours truly: from mouse to millionaire" (Petronius 78). Encolpius learns of Trimalchio and his associates in bits and pieces during Trimalchio's dinner. Upon entering Trimalchio's house, Encolpius views an amalgamation of

Trimalchio's devised life in enormous "frescoes." He sees Trimalchio as a young slave, an apprentice, and a politician (Petronius 27). Trimalchio's entrance into his party is officious. Encolpius learns of Fortunata's nebulous background ("you wouldn't have taken bread from her hand"), Trimalchio's outrageous wealth ("more farms than a kite could flap over"), and of Trimalchio's associates, ("And don't sneer at his friends. They're all ex-slaves, but every one of them's rich" ) (34). Eventually, Encolpius hears part of Trimalchio's story from Trimalchio himself.

Clearly, from the fragments of stories concerning Trimalchio, he does not acquire his wealth normally by birth: he succeeds abnormally; his past life has been hard, and despite his flaws he is agreeable. Goodyear writes, "Trimalchio is a complex character: he now wallows in luxury and self-deception, but was once resilient and faced a hard world on its own terms. For all his coarseness and ostentation he is not utterly unlikable" (637). Trimalchio becomes acquainted with the feeling of wealth through his mentor, his master. His master-cum-mentor puts his complete trust in Trimalchio. Trimalchio recounts for his guests that he was his "master's pet" and defines himself as his "master's brains" (Petronius 76). Although Trimalchio does receive a legacy, he needs to make more money, so he begins to build his empire (76-7).

The satiric portrayal of the nouveau riche targets gaudy conspicuous consumption, vulgarity, and lack of education; Trimalchio is no exception, reveling in conspicuous consumption from the beginning. Encolpius, upon first seeing Trimalchio playing ball, notices the "real refinement was two eunuchs standing on either side of the circle, one clutching a chamber pot of solid silver, the other ticking off the balls" (25-6). Menelaus forewarns them, "'What you're seeing now is just the prelude to the show'" (26).

All of Trimalchio's possessions are larger than life, and his vulgarity is wrapped in his actions and words. Hadas notes that "every conceivable breach of taste, in the food and in service, in the host's conduct, dress, and souvenir gifts, in conversation, is perpetrated to display affluence and respectability" (297). When a silver dish hits the floor, Trimalchio



has the slave to sweep it "out the door with the rest of the rubbish" (Petronius 31); he relishes in bragging about his wealth. Encolpius mentions Trimalchio's constant bragging even in the bath (73) and shows his wealth in other ways, too: each guest has "a table to himself" (32); his skeleton (the usual *momentum mori*) is unusual because it is "cast of solid silver, and fastened in such a way that the joints could be twisted and bent in any direction" (32). His lavish party is not extravagant enough for him; he must tell of his "hundred bowls" of silver "that hold three or four gallons apiece" and his "thousand goblets" (49). Then Trimalchio must go a step further by showing Fortunata's and his jewelry:

"Still, I must admit I've got a bracelet that weighs a good ten pounds on its own. That was the value of two or three thousandths of my profits for the year, the same amount I gave to Mercury as the patron-god of business." To prove his boast, he ordered a pair of scales brought in and the weights passed around for us to test.  
(66)

Duff notes, "The atmosphere of display is everywhere" (Roman Satire 98).

In conjunction with the ostentation, Trimalchio aspires to being accepted as nobility in the future in death; his tomb will connect him to aristocracy. This connection of acceptance is an illusion which will balance his reality of being displaced in society. In fact, Trimalchio thrives on illusion and literally performs several illusory tricks during his party. One such trick is the gutting of the pig (Petronius 48). Moreover, he participates in illusions such as his death drama during the party, and more importantly, he plans to present himself as aristocracy on his tomb. In his description of his tomb, one request includes "a picture of myself sitting on the judge's bench in official dress with five gold rings on my fingers and handing out a sack of coins to the people" (71).

Arrowsmith notes,

Trimalchio had no right to the gold ring of the equestrian order. Indeed, his very insistence on "five gold rings" after death is fairly convincing evidence of his

disability--not to speak of his desire. Posthumously, of course, he may wear the rings with impunity, and Trimalchio typically proposes to go whole hog. (Note 109)

From his being unaware of his vulgarity to his lack of education, Trimalchio is a caricature of the nouveau riche; his vulgarity is depicted in his comic being which is hinted at from his appearance at his banquet: "Trimalchio was carried in, propped up on piles of miniature pillows in such a comic way that some of us couldn't resist impolitely smiling " (30). One of the best examples of his comic character and his lack of education is his misuse of language and his shallow intellect. His dialogue is full of mixed adages. One example is Trimalchio's pronouncement, "The god of war . . . is a real democrat" (Petronius 31). Arrowsmith points to the fact that Trimalchio's proverb is a reference to war where all men may possibly die, and "Trimalchio, as usual, misapplies his proverbs" ( Note 192). Trimalchio's drivel is riddled with amalgamations and misquotes, for instance, his confusing Medea with Cassandra (Petronius 49). Repeatedly, Trimalchio, through his misinformation, shows his lack of education. From his misunderstanding of Corinthian bronze (48-9) to his conglomerated story of Helen of Troy (57-8), Trimalchio proves himself to be ignorant and uneducated. He boasts of his "two libraries, one Greek and the other Latin" (46), and he confesses he is "no orator" but reads enough about "law to use around the place" (46). Goodyear notes the juxtaposition of styles of the "narrative" given to the "'educated' characters" versus the narrative given to "Trimalchio and the other freedmen" (638). Gilleland mentions that Petronius reproduces "with substantial exactness" the "mistakes and mannerisms" of Trimalchio and the "uneducated and illiterate freedmen" (xxiii).

Trimalchio is misplaced and alone. His loneliness is indicated by his announcing, "Nobody in this whole house . . . loves me as much as that mutt" (63). He realizes that he must trick his slaves into loving him by reading his will: "'But I'm telling you the contents of my will so my whole household will love me as much when I'm still alive as after I'm

dead" (70). Arrowsmith summarizes the situation: "That will is Trimalchio's only power over the living; nothing else but that knowledge sustains either him or those who depend on him" (Ancient Writers 842). Trimalchio also knows that he must put this notice on his tomb: "THIS MONUMENT DOES NOT PASS INTO THE POSSESSION OF MY HEIRS" (71), so that his heirs will not sell the materials which will make up the tomb.

Fortunata, formerly a chorus girl ("Believe me, you never saw anyone do grinds the way she can") (50), is also a nouveau riche. She is a complement to Trimalchio, an extension of his personality. Fortunata is necessary to Trimalchio's wealth, for she is the literal source of his great wealth. In his narrative of his rise to fortune, Trimalchio credits Fortunata with supplying him "a hundred gold coins" which he calls the "yeast" of his "wealth" (Petronius 77). Fortunata's image is of gaudy materialism. Besides her apparent name, she wears "massive ankle-rings of twisted gold," "golden slippers," bracelets, and a golden hair net (66-6). Her clothes are obtrusive: "She promptly appeared, her dress bound up . . . high by a pale green sash . . . beneath her cherry-colored tunic" (65). Yet, she is described as discreet: "A regular tightwad, never drinks, and sharp as they come" (34). She is also powerful, "Now, god knows how or why, she's sitting pretty: has Trimalchio eating out of her hand. If she told him at noon it was night, he'd crawl into bed" (34). Duff writes, "The host's wife, Fortunata, a keen managing person with pronounced likes and dislikes, is the able controller, because the brains, of the household" (Roman Satire 99). Still, her managing the household is her chance at power in the same way Trimalchio lords over his slaves and guests. Moreover, she enjoys ostentation; after a trip to the baths, Encolpius realizes that "Fortunata had laid out some of her prize possessions" (74). In true nouveau riche characterization, Fortunata is illustrated in a comic manner. She is classically comic when Habinnas topples her off her roost (66).

Although not directly stated, it is hinted that she distrusts the lower classes, for she will not rest until material possessions are out of sight, "'You know how she is,' said

Trimalchio. "Until she's put the silver away and divided the leftovers among the servants, she won't touch even a drop of water" (65). She is, similar to other nouveau riche characters, rude and crude in her manners, for she argues openly with Trimalchio, and she is similar to Gatsby who introduces himself to Nick confessing, "I'm afraid I'm not a very good host" (48). Fortunata is not a good hostess. She does not appear until she is forced by Habinnas who tells Trimalchio, "Well, if she doesn't come and eat right now . . . I'm leaving" (65).

In Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, the nouveau riche character Jourdain is also mysterious in that the audience is never told why he wants to be accepted as nobility. He simply says, ". . . as for me, I think there's nothing so splendid as to associate with noble lords. They have the monopoly of honor and civility. I'd gladly give two fingers off my hand, to have been born a count or a marquis" (III). Dorimene may be the cause or the effect of his desire to be a gentleman. He does want his daughter to become a marquis through marriage. He revels in being called a gentleman and tells his tailor, "Gentleman, sir! That's what comes from dressing like a person of quality. If you go around always dressed as a commoner, no one will say to you: 'Gentleman, sir!'" (III).

Jourdain obviously has quite a bit of inherited money to feed his desire, and there is a hint that this money, similar to Gatsby's, has notorious origins. Mme. Jourdain explains, "They [Jourdain's father and father-in-law] both piled up money for their children, and now perhaps they're paying dear for it in the next world; you don't get so rich by being honest" (III). Jourdain lends money to Dorante, pays for music, dancing, fencing, and philosophy lessons, buys new clothes, entertains guests, and has "enough property" for his daughter to marry nobility (III). The play begins in medias res, with no explanation of his desire; however, satire does not need a reason, simply a target. Thus the reason is not important; what is important is the situation of the gaudy, uneducated Jourdain's pretense.

Jourdain's gaudiness is witnessed in his clothes and his actions and his parties. Jourdain is interested in conspicuous consumption. He wants to dress the part of a gentleman but fails. Hall argues that Jourdain's clothes "reveal and emphasize his bourgeois identity, especially perhaps when he carefully counts out tips to the Garçons Tailleurs who dress him up at the end of Act II" (124-5).

But Jourdain is willing to wear or do anything in imitation of the nobility. When the Merchant Tailor tells Jourdain that "All the people of quality" wear flowered prints upside down, then Jourdain accepts the coat (II). Likewise, Jourdain decides to have a "musicale at home every Wednesday or Thursday" because the Music Master explains to him that "people of quality" follow this routine (II). Riggs suggests that Jourdain "sees *quality* as a body of material and social advantages releasing its 'owner' from the usual limitations" (405). Jourdain's gaudy actions also include his giving tips excessively. After the Tailor has completed his business, he addresses Jourdain as "Monsignor" and receives a tip; the Tailor follows this approach by addressing Jourdain as "Your Grace" which causes Jourdain to fork over a larger tip. Jourdain exclaims, "Faith, if he goes as far as Royal Highness he'll have my whole purse! . . . Here; that's for My Grace" (II). Jourdain dons his new clothes for show and instructs his servants, "Follow me, while I take a little walk to show my new suit around town. And especially, both of you be sure to walk directly behind me, so that everybody can see that you belong to me" (III).

Besides the scheduled musicales, Jourdain entertains excessively. His wife describes the scene: "For my part, I am scandalized by the kind of life you are leading. I vow I don't recognize our own house. You'd say it was carnival time here every day; and to make sure of it, from early morning on there's nothing but a great row of fiddlers and singers, enough to disturb the whole neighborhood" (III). Nicole complains about the "gang of people" always there to be attended and cleaned up after. In fact, Jourdain's plans include entertaining Dorimene (III), which he tells Dorante, "There are no expenditures I wouldn't make. if they would help me find the way to touch her heart" (III). Dorante, in

his plot to use Jourdain's resources to woo Dorimene, employs a caterer, singers, and dancers for Jourdain's party. It is quite an extravagant affair. In much the same fashion as Trimalchio's banquet, Dorante catalogues a lengthy roster of foods in mock-epic fashion (IV). Gaines notes that Dorante's party "furnishes the setting for the count to show off his qualities as a conversationalist and his thorough knowledge of table manners, much to the detriment of the host, for whom Dorimene expresses her keen revulsion" (162).

Nick's list of Gatsby's guests is a similar mock epic device; his list of names is satiric by suggesting animals, and, according to Long, Nick's incidental comments concerning the guests divulge "their aimless and mismanaged lives" (23).

Jourdain's lack of education is most evident in his language which begins or stems from his approach to learning. Jourdain is utilitarian in his approach to learning; and his interest is in its usefulness, not its beauty. Jourdain's use of language has the specific purpose of pursuing Dorimene. He explains to his instructor, "And by the way, I must take you into my confidence. I am in love with a person of very high rank, and I should like to have your help in writing something in a little note I want to drop at her feet" (II). Jourdain's attitude toward education foreshadows Gatsby's. For Gatsby, education at St. Olaf does not fit his "destiny," and his slight Oxford connection gains him entrance into the aristocratic circle. Jourdain has no conception of logic, ethics, or physics, so he reduces his learning to spelling and begins with vowels of the alphabet. According to White, Jourdain's attitude concerning language is its seductiveness; White notes, "It promises gateways to prestige, social and personal change, pleasure. After vowels, then consonants, he joyously creates prose" (164). Jourdain learns rudimentary sounds similar to a baby's first imitative sounds. Gaines writes, "The height of Jourdain's exploitation by his fellow bourgeois is reached when the philosophy teacher goes further than any of his colleagues and sells the dupe something he already possesses--the ability to pronounce 'o' and 'u'" (157). His discovery of the poetry/prose dichotomy of speaking may be the funniest, most ridiculous mark of his comic nature: "Well, I'll be hanged! For more than

forty years I've been talking prose without any idea of it" (II). Later he disparages his wife and Nicole for not recognizing that he is speaking prose (III). All of this fuss over Jourdain's language and learning culminates in his greeting to Dorimene:

Madame, it is a very great distinction to me to find myself so fortunate as to be so happy as to have the happiness that you have had the kindness to grant me the grace of doing me the honor of honoring me with the favor of your presence; and if I had also the merit of meriting a merit like yours, and if heaven . . . envious of my bliss . . . had granted me . . . the privilege of finding myself worthy . . . of the . . .

(III)

This is reminiscent of Moore's idea that the "gift of speech is the mark of the intelligent or civilized man; natural man, animal man is frequently speechless" (40).

Jourdain's stuttering and repetition is suggestive of Trimalchio's jumbled speech, but it harks toward Gatsby's worn out phrase, "Old Sport." Jourdain, Trimalchio, and Gatsby all use vague language which contains what another satirist, Mark Twain, describes as the difference between "lightning and the lightning bug" (qtd. in Ayers 252).

Jourdain, as Dorante mentions to Dorimene, is "a good bourgeois, and rather ridiculous in his behavior" (III). Similar to his display of clothes, Jourdain's speech patterns mark him as outside of nobility. Moliere employs language for impact. It functions as a metaphor for measuring nobility. From Jourdain's infantile sounds at the beginning of the play through his bumbling speech to the Turkish finale in which he imitates the gibberish, bastard and nonsense words, his lack of education is manifested. Language acts as a social meter. Dorante's gift of gab, plus his outrageous expenditures, help him to win Dorimene. Jourdain's inept realization concerning language allows him to be gulled. Riggs notes, "The ceremony accomplishes its end by manipulating words - by creating a new language convenient to its purpose. In the process, it enacts a conception of language as an essentially arbitrary collection of sounds whose meaningfulness exists only for those located inside the charmed circle" (29).

Jourdain, in his quest for quality, is critical of lower classes, the bourgeois. When Mme. Jourdain speculates that people should not try to rise above their place in society, Jourdain is disdainful: "Those views reveal a mean and petty mind, that wants to remain forever in its base condition" (III). He is arrogant when charged with descending from a merchant by Mme. Jourdain: "Drat the woman! She never misses a chance! If your father was a merchant, so much the worse for him; but as for my father, it's only the ignorant who say so" (III). He refers to Nicole and Mme. Jourdain as "ignorant women" because they do not accept his new lifestyle, nor do they understand his learning: "Oh, what a dreadful thing it is to have to deal with idiots!" (III). Jourdain also disparages the Tailor: "That damned tailor makes me wait until a day when I have so much to do! He makes me furious. May the quartan fever take the hangbird tailor! To the devil with the tailor! May the galloping plague seize the tailor! If I had him here now, that infernal tailor, that dog of a tailor, that pig of a tailor, I'd . . ." (II).

Jourdain is misplaced in society and alone. Mander writes, "All the other characters in the play consider him to be a bourgeois; he alone views himself as a nobleman. This isolates him. Thus although he is an amusing monomaniac, he, too, is a loner in his world of private fantasies" (167). In short, he is out of his league when associating with the nobility. Benichou suggests that "the bourgeois character was by tradition incompatible with gallantry" (64). He is not accepted by the nobility; he is simply used. His pseudo relationship with Dorante is for Dorante's convenience, and Dorimene is completely unfamiliar with him. He will not accept his place as a bourgeois; thus, he is not accepted by them. His wife and Nicole continually point to his folly, while the other bourgeois (the instructors and tailors) use him for money. Jourdain is under the illusion that he is accepted by the aristocracy and that his wife, Nicole, and Corvielle are simpletons. All of them, both nobles and bourgeois, dupe Jourdain. They unite to hoodwink him with the Turkish ceremony. Gaines argues, "Jourdain is . . . totally alone in his illusions at the end of the comedy, and he completes his isolation by breaking any remaining social ties in his



last lines . . ." (164). Jourdain exemplifies the misplaced individual to whom Mme. Jourdain refers in her long, serious speech about a son-in-law:

As for me, it's something I'll never consent to. Alliances with people above our own rank are always likely to have very unpleasant results. I don't want to have my son-in-law able to reproach my daughter for her parents . . . If she should happen to come and visit me in her grand lady's carriage, and if by mistake she should happen to fail to salute some one of the neighbors, you can imagine how they'd talk. "Take a look at that fine Madame la Marquise showing off," they'd say. "She's the daughter of Monsieur Jourdain, and when she was little, she was only too glad to play at being a fine lady . . ." (III)

Jourdain spends his time and money "playing at" being a gentleman to no avail. He comes across as utterly ridiculous, as the Prufrockish fool who lives his life in unreality with no chance to become nobility and who has simultaneously lost his fabled object of affection. Gaines mentions,

Jourdain's road to noble privilege runs through the means of personal relations purchased with his family's patrimony, rather than through the time-sanctioned acquisition of ennobling lands and offices. . . . Jourdain's mistake lies not in his aspiration to join the New Nobility but in his attempt to avoid dealing with the gatekeeper of social mobility--the monarch. (159)

Jourdain is never unsure of his place although it is apparent to other characters and to the audience that his goal is unattainable.

Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby employs Nick to lead the reader through Gatsby's mysterious past by way of Gatsby's mansion; to a silent viewing of Gatsby, the man; to his party; and finally to Gatsby personally. Nick provides a gradual background of Gatsby that is finally completed at the end when Mr. Gatz arrives for Gatsby's funeral.

The first Gatsby party Nick attends is full of gossip concerning Gatsby's past, his familial relations, and his business connections. There is great concern about the origin of his wealth. In the first minutes of the party, Nick hears such alleged stories about Mr. Gatsby as "he killed a man" and "he was a German spy during the war" (Fitzgerald 44). Later in the evening, Nick is supplied with more information including Gatsby's Oxford connection (49). However, the first hint of his real identity is formed by Nick himself:

I would have accepted without question the information that Gatsby sprang from the swamps of Louisiana or from the lower East Side of New York. That was comprehensible. But young men didn't--at least in my provincial inexperience I believed they didn't--drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound. (49)

Tom later refers to Gatsby as "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (130). These rumors and innuendoes establish Gatsby as non-aristocracy.

Despite the fabulous rumors, Nick eventually hears Gatsby's own story of wealth as does Encolpius from Trimalchio. Gatsby has not acquired his wealth by birth, so this leaves him out of Tom and Daisy Buchanan's world. Gatsby's story of wealth begins with his mentor, Dan Cody, who trusts Gatsby with his life. Gatsby is "employed" by Cody "in a vague personal capacity," as Cody places "more and more trust in Gatsby" (Fitzgerald 101). Although Gatsby never receives Cody's legacy, he does receive a "singularly appropriate education" (102). Gatsby, similar to Trimalchio, is a self-made man. He, too, is concerned with money. Gatsby never says this directly, but every action epitomizes this idea. Gatsby takes for granted that Nick has the same obsession with wealth, for Gatsby offers him what Wolfsheim later refers to as a "business gonnegtion" (71). Nick realizes that Gatsby "must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty" (Fitzgerald 99). The Young James Gatz is "haunted" by "a universe of ineffable gaudiness" (Fitzgerald 99). Jay Gatsby is this dream incarnate. Brian Way notes Gatsby's vulgarity: "When Nick tells Gatsby that his house looks like the World's

Fair, and reflects that his guests 'conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park'; or when Tom Buchanan calls Gatsby's car a 'circus-wagon,' the implications are clearly unfavorable" (104). Tom Buchanan lambastes Gatsby's vulgarity: "An Oxford man!" He [Tom] was incredulous. 'Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit'" (Fitzgerald 122). Way notes, "When one laughs at his car, his clothes, his parties, his autobiographical confidences, one is not merely amused, one is responding, through him, to the fertile, creative ludicrousness of life itself" (102).

In conjunction with Gatsby's vulgar show of wealth is his necessity to astonish and dazzle Daisy with this money. He, akin to Jourdain, will spare no expense to impress Daisy. The extravagant parties where everything is catered and perfect exemplify this necessity. Nick speculates that even the moon is provided by the caterer (Fitzgerald 43). Nick recounts Jordan Baker's explanation: "I think he half expected her [Daisy] to wander into one of his parties, some night" (80). His arranged meeting with Daisy by way of Nick is for the purpose of showing his wealth, as Jordan explains to Nick, "He wants her to see his house. . . . And your house is right next door" (80). Immediately after this conversation, Nick comes home to find Gatsby's house illuminated, and Gatsby is admiring it from Nick's vantage point (82). The whole business of showing off his house to Daisy epitomizes gaudiness and conspicuous consumption. Gatsby mentions the beauty of his mansion to Nick, and during Gatsby and Daisy's reunion, Gatsby, Daisy, and Nick enter in the grand manner from "the big postern" (91) rather than across Nick's lawn. They meander through the opulent rooms, and, finally, Gatsby shows off his clothing as one aspect of his riches (93). Nick and Daisy see some of Gatsby's many possessions, and Nick's reaction is snide: "I was going to ask to see the rubies when the phone rang, and Gatsby took up the receiver" (95). Morsberger observes, "Gatsby's attempts to impress Daisy by emulating her opulence are pathetic; lacking inbred taste, he throws gaudy parties, drives a 'gorgeous' yellow car, and has an extravagant wardrobe

complete with stacks a dozen high of shirts in coral, apple-green, orange, and lavender stripes and scrolls" (128).

Gatsby's language betrays him as uneducated despite the fact that he alludes to being educated at Oxford. Gatsby's use of language is stilted, but not formal, especially the more he talks. He uses cliché piled upon cliché because he is unable to articulate his feelings. Nick admits on their ride to New York that until this point he found Gatsby "had little to say" (Fitzgerald 64). During the ride, however, Nick notices "the very phrases" are "worn . . . threadbare" (66). When Gatsby's flat language is compared to Nick's formal, stylized commentary, Gatsby is found lacking in education. Neuhaus wittily explains Gatsby's lack of education juxtaposed against Nick's lavish prose:

One interesting passage gives an excerpt from Gatsby's talk with Nick and thus provides a measure for what is attributed to him earlier and later. His own diction is direct, unembellished, and with a functional banality that allows Nick (Fitzgerald's omniscient voice at this point) to project on to it whatever he chooses. "I can't describe to you how surprised I was to find out I loved her, old sport. . . . Well, there I was, 'way off my ambitions, getting deeper in love every minute, and all of a sudden I didn't care. What was the use of doing great things if I could have a better time telling her what I was going to do?" (52)

Gatsby's education is elsewhere questioned by the owl-eyed man who cannot believe the books in Gatsby's library are "real" (45). Brucoli notes that Gatsby's books have never been read (Apparatus 124).

Gatsby displaces himself in society, for he is uneducated and comes from a poor background. These facts contribute to his being uncomfortable around the old-money people. He does not mix and mingle with them in any capacity. The only time he does is to announce to Tom that Daisy is leaving him, and in this affair he is a complete failure. Living in the "less fashionable" West Egg, Gatsby is strictly not a part of the old money world (Fitzgerald 5). Gatsby's exclusion is emphasized by the aristocratic Daisy who is

"offended" by Gatsby's West Egg parties (108). The riding woman's invitation and Gatsby's response is indicative of his non-aristocracy. Gatsby is more comfortable with his notorious friend, Meyer Wolfsheim, than with the East Eggers. MacKendrick comments, "Gatsby and his gangster and cafe society friends are in but not of the society with which they live"; they are similar to Trimalchio's "menagerie" of "parvenus: yesterday a garret, today a mansion" (310). Gatsby misplaces himself in society, and his incongruity is germane to his romantic illusion. Gatsby is utterly alone, separated from his dream of Daisy at first by money and then by time. When the novel begins, he is literally separated from Daisy's world by the bay. He does not mix and mingle with his party guests. His aloneness is apparent in his death scene and consequent funeral. Despite Nick's efforts, no mourners except Mr. Gatz, Nick, a few servants, and Owl-Eyes attend the funeral. Owl Eyes serves as the chorus/commentator in this scene who is appalled at the lack of mourners. When Nick tells him that nobody came to Gatsby's house, Owl-Eyes replies, "'Why, my God! they used to go there by the hundreds'" (176).

Despite the fact that Gatsby is a romantic hero, he is also a comic character. In this respect, he resembles Don Quixote. Gatsby functions as a caricature of the nouveau riche. Way notes, "The living Gatsby who dominates one scene after another is the creature of comedy not myth--a literary relative not of Davy Crockett but Trimalchio" (100). Furthermore, Way argues that Gatsby's death need not "negate" his "effect as a comic character" (103). Neither Gatsby nor Trimalchio are aware of the vulgarity of their parties. Hadas defines Trimalchio's banquet as the epitome of the "malaprop banquets" satirized (170). Gatsby's parties function in similar fashion in twentieth-century America.

Comic discrepancy is apparent via Nick, caught between the "bizarre and tumultuous" accident in Gatsby's driveway and Gatsby transfixed formally waving goodbye to the oblivious crowd (54-6). This incident recalls Encolpius and Ascyltus' attempted escape from Trimalchio's banquet where they fall into the pool. Both episodes are pure slapstick.

In addition to the central nouveau riche character of Gatsby, Fitzgerald depicts Myrtle Wilson, the minor nouveau riche character. Her portrayal, similar to Gatsby, is one of gaudiness, lack of education, criticism of lower classes, displacement, and loneliness. Myrtle's gaudiness is apparent in her dress, her actions, and her chosen decor. Nick informs the reader that Myrtle changes her "costume" to "an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-colored chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room" (30). Her change of dress inspires her personality:

With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently affected moment by moment, and as she expanded the room grew smaller around her, until she seemed to be revolving on a noisy, creaking pivot through the smoky air. (30-1)

Her transmogrified demeanor now resembles Trimalchio's, for she dominates the room. The apartment is gaudy with furniture which overpowers it because of its proportions and print of "ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles" (29).

Myrtle's actions toward buying and her attitude toward her guests are ostentatious. From the moment she and Tom are in the city, she is engrossed in purchasing: she buys a magazine and toiletries, she chooses a new cab for transportation, she purchases a dog, and a bed and milk for the dog. Nick describes her arrival: "Throwing a regal homecoming glance around the neighborhood, Mrs. Wilson gathered up her dog and her other purchases, and went haughtily in" (28). She proceeds to throw a party and to make a list of things to buy: "I'm going to make a list of all the things I've got to get. A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ashtrays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk bow for mother's grave that'll last all summer. I got to write down a list so I won't forget all the things I got to do" (37). Myrtle tells Mrs. McKee, who compliments Myrtle's dress, "It's just a crazy old thing . . . I just slip it on

sometimes when I don't care what I look like" (31). Later, she becomes magnanimously patronizing toward Mrs. McKee: "My dear . . . I'm going to give you this dress as soon as I'm through with it. I've got to get another one tomorrow" (37). Myrtle's nonchalance about her dress is another example of her imitation of the wealthy. Her lack of education is apparent from her chosen reading material consisting of movie gossip magazines, "scandal magazines of Broadway," and a book entitled Simon Called Peter which the Yale-educated Nick pronounces as "either it was terrible or the whiskey distorted things, because it didn't make any sense to me" (29). Myrtle's language reflects her lack of education. Besides the misuse of words such as "appendicitis," she uses the catch-phrase, "My dear." Berman notes that this phrase is "self-classifying" and "means as much to her as 'old sport' does to Gatsby" (64). For Fitzgerald, language is a social meter in that it indicates "sensibility" (Langman 38). Myrtle is also critical of the lower classes in a more overt way than Gatsby, "'My dear,' she told her sister in a high, mincing shout, 'most of these fellas will cheat you every time. All they think of is money. I had a woman up here last week to look at my feet, and when she gave me the bill you'd of thought she had my appendicitis out'" (31). At another time, Myrtle reacts negatively to the lower classes: "'I told that boy about the ice.' Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. 'These people! You have to keep after them all the time'" (32). Instead of sympathizing with the class to which she belongs, she belittles them. This is reminiscent of Gatsby's intolerance of his father's manners (175) or of Nick's description of Gatsby's parents, which he could only have gotten from Gatsby himself: "His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people--his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all" (99).

Apparently, Myrtle Wilson is as misplaced as Jay Gatsby in the aristocratic society. Social order is an important aspect of the people and their relationships. The obvious fact is that no matter how hard they try, the poor can never ascend to the place of the

aristocrats. Myrtle Wilson and Jay Gatsby try to attain this place, but both of them fail to the point of annihilation. Their comic nature lies in this inability.

Myrtle Wilson, in her love nest with Tom Buchanan, is a marvelously funny character until Tom breaks her nose and she is transformed into a merely pathetic figure. Her scorn of the lower classes is great verbal irony. Gatsby is comic, too. When he is invited to go to dinner by the woman on horseback, accompanied by the cavalier Mr. Sloane and Tom, he does not understand the aristocratic rules. While both Tom and Nick understand that Mr. Sloane does not concur with the invitation, Gatsby falls headlong into accepting and is left standing on his front porch holding his hat and coat (104-5). This scene, set beside his first meeting with Daisy where he knocks the clock off the mantle, reveals that he is not part of their world. He is merely imitating it.

Myrtle, identical to Gatsby, is left utterly alone as witnessed in the incident where she is locked in her garage apartment, looking literally at the aristocratic life in the guise of Tom, Jordan, and Nick in Gatsby's automobile. This life is just out of her reach; she cannot penetrate it. Her self-made marginal position separates her from her husband's world ("he wasn't fit to lick my shoe") (35), and from Tom's. In the end, her isolation culminates in her destruction, for she runs to join a speeding world and dies trying to catch it.

Myrtle is a clone of Gatsby, and she is a more immediate characterization of a nouveau riche, for her conversion is instantaneous from poor garage owner's wife in the ash heaps to parvenu/mistress of the rich master in New York. Myrtle's gaudy and comic behavior enhances Gatsby's characterization. In short, she acts as the overt, ridiculous nouveau riche figure juxtaposed to Gatsby's subtle romanticism which results in ridiculous behavior not far removed from her own. Myrtle's dream of marrying Tom and going away is no different from Gatsby's dream of marrying Daisy and retreating into the past.



### Parasites

Each of the nouveau riche characters attracts parasites who are only interested in the fact that these people have money. These parasites insinuate themselves into the life of the nouveau riche by being guests, or in some other way taking advantage of the host's wealth.

Trimalchio's guests including Encolpius—"At last the third day had come with its prospect of a free meal . . ." (25)—are obviously interested in procuring food and entertainment, and Trimalchio is aware of this. Trimalchio's awareness is shown when Habinnas enters his banquet just off the heels of Scissa's banquet to honor a dead slave. Habinnas describes the banquet as a "fine spread for that poor slave's funeral" (64) but is annoyed by having to pay homage to the slave: ". . . though it cut across my grain to have to pour out half my drinks as an offering to the poor boy's bones" (64). Trimalchio is not offended by Habinnas' attitude; in fact, he understands this parasitic relationship, for he asks Habinnas, "But what did they give you to eat?" (64). Habinnas further acknowledges the guests' opportunist attitude toward the banquet: "Oh yes, and they passed around a dish of olives pickled in caraway, and some of the guests had the nerve to walk off with three fistfuls" (65). This action is a mirror of Encolpius' own action during Trimalchio's banquet:

Dangling from the hoop were chaplets of gold and little jars of perfume, all, we were informed, presents for us to take home. I filled my pockets and then, when I looked back at the table, saw a tray garnished with little cakes; in the center stood a pastry statuette of Priapus with the usual phallus propping up an apron loaded with fruits and grapes of every variety. You can imagine how greedily we all grabbed, but then a fresh surprise sent us off again into fresh laughter. For at the slightest touch the cakes and fruit all squirted out jets of liquid saffron, splattering our faces with the smelly stuff. Naturally enough, the use of the sacred saffron made us conclude that this course must be part of some religious rite, so we all leaped to

our feet and shouted in chorus, "LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR, FATHER OF OUR COUNTRY!" Even this act of homage, however, failed to prevent some of the guests from pilfering the fruit and stuffing their napkins full. And I, of course, was among the chief offenders, thinking nothing in this world too good to fill the pockets of Giton. (58-9)

Even before the banquet begins, Trimalchio is surrounded by parasites. During Trimalchio's massage, Encolpius observes that ". . . right before his eyes, the three masseurs were guzzling away at the finest of his rare Falemian wines" (26). This parasitic relationship continues during the entire episode of Trimalchio's feast. Obviously, his guests are taking advantage of him. Encolpius refers to Trimalchio as a "table tyrant" and is grateful when Trimalchio excuses himself (39).

Other parasitic situations and references occur during the cena. In a discussion concerning the dead man, Chrysanthus, Phileros notes that Chrysanthus "listened" to his slaves, "so naturally they took him in the end" (40). Agamemnon is described as "an old hand at wangling return invitations" (50) because he applauds Trimalchio's jokes and has a generally toady attitude. In short, Trimalchio presides over a group of people who care nothing for him personally. When a slave falls on Trimalchio, the guests are not concerned with him. Encolpius recounts the scene:

Just at this point the ladder toppled and the boy on top fell down, landing squarely on Trimalchio. The slaves shrieked, the guests screamed. We were not, of course, in the least concerned about the boy, whose neck we would have been delighted to see broken; but we dreaded the thought of possibly having to go into mourning for a man who meant nothing to us at all. (51)

Trimalchio's guests even laugh at him.

Later in the narrative, Encolpius encounters another example of a parasite, Philomela. Philomela is described as an "extremely respectable matron . . . whose ample charms in younger days had enabled her to come into several large legacies. Now old and faded,

however, she made it her practice to offer her daughter and son as wards to childless old men with money, and in this way managed to keep her talents green and flourishing into the second generation" (177). Every word used to describe Philomela and her own words are ironic. She is the basest parasite, lacking respectability, pandering her children in the hopes of obtaining a legacy. After the encounter with Philomela's children, Petronius goes one step further in his portrait of parasites. The legacy hunters must resort to cannibalism in order to inherit any money. Eumolpus' fabled legacy at Croton can only be inherited by eating his dead body. He states, "All those who come into money by the terms of my will shall inherit only upon satisfaction of the following condition: they must slice up my body into little pieces and swallow them down in the presence of the entire city" (181). Eumolpus intends to play this harsh trick on these base characters. Petronius appropriately uses literal cannibalism to develop the extremity of human manipulation.

Jourdain, too, is surrounded by parasites. His instructors, as already mentioned, endure him for his money in the same way Trimalchio's guests endure him. They even wish there were more men like Jourdain who were willing to pay to be a gentleman (I). The Tailor, too, is willing to go to any length to get money from Jourdain. Gaines writes, "The teachers are simply pursuing their livelihoods, searching for an introduction to lucrative social circles, and trying to recoup the losses incurred in serving the penniless Dorante" (156). These minor parasites prefigure the grand parasite, Dorante. Dorante uses Jourdain in every possible way, and his manipulation of Jourdain is based on Jourdain's desire to be nobility. Dorante taps into Jourdain's desire to be a gentleman and exploits Jourdain with this desire. Dorante's ploy is apparent when he tells Jourdain, "I was talking about you this very morning in the King's bedchamber" (III); Jourdain's response is predictable, for he is both flattered and swayed by this false information. Although Jourdain is unaware of Dorante's manipulation, others such as Mme. Jourdain see through him.

Dorante is to Jourdain what Agamemnon is to Trimalchio, for Dorante is able to trick Jourdain out of even more money:

Dorante: That's all correct. How much does it come to?

M. Jourdain: Sum total, fifteen thousand eight hundred francs.

Dorante: The sum total is quite correct: fifteen thousand eight hundred francs. Now add two hundred pistoles you can give me now; that will make exactly eighteen thousand francs, which I will pay you at the earliest possible moment.

(III)

Dorante uses Jourdain's money for himself and for entertaining Dorimene; he uses Jourdain's house and hospitality as he tells Dorimene, "Well, my dear lady, what place can my love find to entertain you properly, since, to avoid gossip, you won't let me use either your house or mine?" (III). Dorimene is an innocent parasite, for she enjoys the hospitality of a person she doesn't know: "I don't know, Dorante; it seems to me rather peculiar, to let you bring me into a house where I don't know anyone" (III). Although Jourdain is unaware that Dorante is gulling him, Jourdain does realize that money must be spent to win Dorimene's heart (III).

Fitzgerald depicts parasites around Gatsby, too. Petronius' legacy hunters are similar to the Klipspringers of Gatsby's world. Besides, Gatsby's guests come to his parties, "without having met Gatsby at all" (41). Floating around at Gatsby's parties are the "young Englishmen" who, Nick believes, are "agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity" and who realize that it could be theirs "for a few words in the right key" (Fitzgerald 42). They are hoping to attach themselves to wealth, and they will do anything for money. Nick notes that these men all look "a little hungry" (42). Their hunger is reminiscent of Petronius' metaphor of the parasite in search of food at the banquet; later, the parasite exchanges sex for money, and finally the parasite is involved in the grotesque cannibalistic ritual for an alleged legacy. Fitzgerald separates

Klipspringer, Gatsby's boarder, to represent the idea of the parasite, for when Gatsby dies, Klipspringer's only interest is his shoes; besides, he has already latched on to a new host (170).

Both Trimalchio and Gatsby have told stories of their own rise and education through parasitic relationships. Trimalchio describes his relationship to his master: "For fourteen years I was my master's pet. But what's the shame in doing what you're told to do? But all the same, if you know what I mean, I managed to do my mistress a favor or two. But mum's the word: I'm none of your ordinary blowhards" (76). Gatsby or rather James Gatz, as Nick assumes, "smiled at Cody"; answered some of Cody's questions, ("one of them elicited the brand new name"); and was hired by Cody "in a vague personal capacity" (101). Similarly, Jourdain is under the impression that Dorante will introduce Jourdain at court and into the nobility.

### The Upper Class

The true upper class is spared no mercy in satire. Although aristocrats have education and are not gaudy, they lack morals, ethics, and sympathy. Petronius gives no picture of nobility. He does reference the fact that the educated like Eumolpus are men "whom rich men despise and hate" (86) due to their abilities (Arrowsmith 202 note). Arrowsmith describes him in full detail: "Eumolpus may be an atrocious poet, a lower-class Lucan, a hypocrite, a pederast, and a thief, but he also has a certain style; he is, like Nikita Khrushchev in Robert Frost's description, 'a grand old ruffian'" (Ancient Writers 850). The closest imprint Petronius gives of an upper class person is of Eumolpus' student at Pergamum. This young boy is interested and participates in a usurious relationship between himself and Eumolpus. As it turns out, he is more insatiable than Eumolpus (86-9).

Moliere rarely misses an opportunity to delineate aristocracy, yet he is not unfair in his portrayal of nobility. Ashton finds, "The noble in his plays sometimes proves himself to be an unprincipled scoundrel but one would scarcely expect Moliere to pretend that human weaknesses are confined to any one class" (117). Dorante is a scurrilous nobleman/parasite whose lack of morals permit him to use Jourdain and to betray the woman he loves. Dorimene believes Dorante is spending all of his money too loosely on her: "I am disturbed by the expenditures I see you making for me, and for two reasons: one, that they obligate me more than I like, and two, that I am sure--if you will forgive me--that you aren't making them without embarrassment; and I don't want that" (III).

The audience may forgive Jourdain since he is merely a naive buffoon, but Dorante is akin to Iago, convincing Jourdain that he can buy Dorimene's love:

You have taken the right course to touch her heart. Women love above all things to have people spend money on them; and your frequent serenades, and the continual offerings of flowers, and the superb fireworks on the lake, and the diamond ring she received in your name, and the party you are preparing for her--that sort of thing speaks far better in favor of your love than all the words you might utter to her in person. (III).

Romanowski suggests, "Moliere's satire cuts both ways, mocking both the bourgeois, unfettered by convention, but a bit dense and pretentious, and the clever, but mired-in-convention and exploitative aristocrat" (41).

Dorante is not a true friend to Jourdain, for he is unsympathetic toward Jourdain's attitude about Lucile's marriage. When Dorante finds that Corvielle and Cleonte are conning Jourdain, Dorante is interested: "Besides, we have a ballet due us. We shouldn't let it be wasted. And I want to see if my scheme for the performance works out well" (V). Dorante is not a thorough champion of love; like Iago, he enjoys the con game. The only difference in Dorante and Iago stems from the tragic/comic dichotomy of destroying a man's soul or destroying his reputation. In either case, Dorante gets what he wants; he

uses Jourdain's resources, dupes him, and wins the girl. Mander comments, "He [Dorante] exploits Jourdain's enthusiasm and voracious ambition for his own purposes" (170).

In The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald's American aristocracy segregate themselves in the "fashionable" East Egg (5). The threesome, Tom, Daisy, and Jordan, begin and end together in their world of beauty and power. Beneath the facade of beauty lies corruption and emptiness. Perosa writes:

The social tone of Tom, Daisy, and Jordan is sophisticated and blasé, and they have no sympathy for Gatsby, with his childish and impulsive sentimentality. Gatsby is outside their world from the very beginning, and his attempt to separate Daisy from her "aristocratic" background and surroundings is doomed to fail. The disparity of social levels from which they spring makes it impossible for him to satisfy her deeply rooted need for gentility and social distinction. (70)

West Egg, on the other hand, is a symbol of the nouveau riche landscape. East Egg residents are always snobbish toward the West Egg inhabitants. The man on the horse (Mr. Sloane) who accompanies the woman and Tom to Gatsby's mansion is a good example. He leans "back haughtily in his chair" (103), and he does not concur with the woman's supper invitation to Gatsby and Nick (103-4). West Egg is embodied in Gatsby's parties and in his possessions, especially his car. Malcolm Cowley writes:

The characters are visibly represented by the cars they drive: Nick has a conservative old Dodge, the Buchanans, too rich for ostentation, have an "easy going blue coupe," and Gatsby's car is "a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns"--it is West Egg on wheels. (71)

Tom and Daisy are portrayed as being at odds with one another. From the initial dinner party at their mansion, Tom is first seen outside on the front porch in a stance exhibiting his total control (7). Daisy is inside as if dominated by him or as a possession. At the dinner table, even their conversation is at odds. Tom's racist remarks are serious at least to him; Daisy comments nonchalantly on Tom's ideas: "'Tom's getting very profound,' . . ." (13). During the dinner, Nick (and consequently the reader) finds that Tom and Daisy are separated in the most intimate way: Tom has a mistress, and Daisy knows this. After dinner, Daisy entertains Nick on the verandah while Jordan is reading to Tom (18). Tom and Daisy even disagree on small things such as Jordan Baker's family's lack of concern for her youthful freedom (19). Throughout the novel, Tom and Daisy are separated. Tom goes to New York without Daisy. He drags Nick to meet Myrtle, but he often goes to New York without Daisy: "The fact that he [Tom] had one [a mistress] was insisted upon wherever he was known. His acquaintances resented the fact that he turned up in popular restaurants with her and leaving her at a table, sauntered about, chatting with whomever he knew" (24). Nick and Gatsby see Tom without Daisy when they lunch in New York (74). Tom appears at Gatsby's door with another couple, but again Daisy is absent (102-3). Although Tom and Daisy come to Gatsby's party together, they are separated, for Tom joins a group of people at a different table from Daisy and Nick (107). Of course, Daisy has been with Gatsby at Nick's house before supper is served (107). On the climactic trip to and from New York, Tom and Daisy ride in separate cars. Despite these facts, Tom and Daisy stick together because they are alike. This union is clinched when Nick spies them through the pantry window after Myrtle's death:

Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table, with a plate of cold chicken between them, and two bottles of ale. He was talking intently across the table at her, and in his earnestness his hand had fallen upon and covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and nodded in agreement.



They weren't happy, and neither of them had touched the chicken or the ale--and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together. (146)

This image explains in microcosmic fashion their lives together. They are together without emotions, opposite each other in attitude, yet dependent upon one another. They are united by their aristocracy in Nick's words: "They . . . drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together" (6).

On his first encounter with Daisy and Tom, Nick cannot understand why Daisy doesn't "run out of the house, child in arms" (21), but the fact is Daisy is tied to Tom. She tells Gatsby, "I did love him once--but I loved you too" (133). Tom affirms Daisy's words: "Why-- there're things between Daisy and me that you'll never know, things that neither of us can ever forget" (133).

Daisy and Tom have similar morals. Tom uses Myrtle as a plaything, and Daisy uses Gatsby. Daisy's responses toward Tom during the litigious scene in New York betray the fact that Gatsby has been used by Daisy. Her words sound vindictive when she tells Tom, "You're revolting," or when she mentions his scandal in Chicago (132). When Tom insists that he loves her, she retorts, "As if it mattered to you" (134). In this situation, instead of focusing on her love for Gatsby, she dwells on Tom's negligence. It reduces her love for Gatsby to revenge on Tom. At the moment of crisis, Daisy flounders and is unsure of what is happening (132-3). Daisy may be worse than Tom, for Gatsby's love, as established by Nick, is idealistic, while Myrtle's love for Tom is materialistic. Gatsby's initial attitude toward Daisy is mercenary, but his attitude changes (149). His romantic commitment is to Daisy; however, Daisy is unable to stay committed. Once the young Gatsby is gone, Daisy's faith wanes as she begins "to move again with the season" (151). Gatsby's odds of attaining his dream are much greater than Daisy's, yet he loyally accomplishes his goal and comes to reclaim his Daisy. Daisy's youthful impatience, "She

wanted her life shaped now, immediately--and the decision must be made by some force--of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality--that was close at hand" (151), leads her to Tom. When she plays with Gatsby, she has no thoughts of really leaving Tom. Her actions--the fact that she often cries when she is with Gatsby--along with her words indicate that she will stay in the safety of her riches. She betrays Gatsby because she is weak, yet her weakness is fortified by Tom's money and his aristocracy. Perosa estimates that Daisy "has made her choice, and has chosen security and wealth, four years with Tom have hardened her character and made her careless and ruthless in her malice. Gatsby's dreamy attachment has no chance with her" (68).

Tom's use of Myrtle is reciprocated by her. Her intentions are to get material possessions from Tom. In that way, their relationship is on par. He likes the common women like Myrtle or the Chicago chambermaid, and Myrtle, in turn, likes things. She buys things with Tom's money, including a dog and fancy collar; she makes lists of things she is going to buy. Tom never leaves her but only because she is killed before he tires of her; this relationship is as temporal as his last one or his future "sprees." His violent treatment of Myrtle is balanced by his avowal of love for her: "And if you think I didn't have my share of suffering--look here, when I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard, I sat down and cried like a baby. By God it was awful--" (180). Tom is not responsible for her death; and he is, if the reader believes him, acting as a vigilante concerning Gatsby's death, for he tells Nick, "That fellow [Gatsby] had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car" (180). This action of Tom's although inexcusable is predictable due to his other beliefs such as racism and chauvinism.

Tom's money and status give him power both literally and figuratively. Tom is established early as a physical power: "Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at

New Haven--a national figure in a way . . ." (6). Nick's description of Tom lends itself to power and arrogance. Tom is a "sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner" (7). His eyes are "arrogant" and have "established dominance over his face"; he appears to lean "aggressively forward" (7). His clothes do not conceal "the enormous power of that body," and his voice is "a gruff husky tenor" with a "touch of paternal contempt in it" (7). Bewley suggests that Fitzgerald's "description of Tom" denotes "those ruthless generations who raised up the great American fortunes, and who now live in uneasy arrogant leisure on their brutal acquisitions" (50). Tom's physical power is stressed by Daisy who claims that Tom has bruised her finger (12). This foreshadows and complements Tom's power over Daisy's feelings. He is able to speak for her: "She's not leaving me!" Tom's words suddenly leaned down over Gatsby" (134). Tom's capability to catch Myrtle's eye is tied to his moneyed appearance as she tells Nick, "He had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes, and I couldn't keep my eyes off him . . ." (36). Tom's appearance is different from that of Myrtle's pallid husband who "borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in . . ." (35). Tom had won Daisy in the same way; he had bought Daisy a pearl necklace worth "three hundred and fifty thousand dollars" (77). Once Tom has won Daisy and Myrtle, he establishes dominance over them. Basically, Tom dominates most everyone with his money, including Wilson. Later, Tom, predictably enough, also physically dominates Wilson, "Picking up Wilson like a doll, Tom carried him into the office, set him down in a chair, and came back" (142). Similarly, when Tom comes against Gatsby, Tom is shown to be dominant. In this case, Fitzgerald favors Gatsby as he presents him opposite the repulsive Tom Buchanan. Where Gatsby's relationship with Daisy is pure, Tom's relationship with Myrtle is sordid. The reader never experiences Gatsby's and Daisy's affair; however, Nick is conspicuously present when Tom and Myrtle disappear into the bedroom or when they violently fight (29, 73). Where Gatsby is polite and passive, Tom is rude and aggressive; Tom is described as a person who is savagely hated (7). Where

Gatsby is romantic and idealistic, Tom is cynical and realistic. At the end of the novel, Nick notes, "'Jay Gatsby' had been broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice" (148). Perosa argues, "Tom is ruthless in his attack. With the physical strength of an athlete and hardened by his lifelong habit of command, Tom succeeds in striking Gatsby's weakest points until he makes him incapable of further resistance" (65). Thus much of Gatsby's favorable position is emphasized by Fitzgerald through Gatsby's ignoble foil, Tom Buchanan. Lehan estimates, "He [Fitzgerald] made Tom Buchanan an adulterer, a bully, a snob, and a liar, the embodiment of unprincipled behavior" (Craft of Fiction 116). Similar to Encolpius, who is disgusted by Trimalchio's childish behavior, Nick is sickened by the winner, Tom, whom he sees as a child: ". . . I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child" (181). Daisy is in league with Tom finally. She allies herself to his aristocratic self against Gatsby's: "'Please, Tom! I can't stand this any more.' Her frightened eyes told that whatever intentions, whatever courage she had had, were definitely gone" (135). Tom and Daisy are a part of the "distinguished secret society" and no person can infiltrate that society (18). They lack sympathy for anyone beneath them, including Wilson, Myrtle Wilson, or Jay Gatsby. They are irresponsible and arrogant; Nick denounces them: "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy--they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made . . ." (180-81). Tom's arrogance is apparent in his racism and chauvinism; Daisy's is apparent in her disapproval of Gatsby's parties and guests.

Tom and Daisy are not the only aristocrats in Fitzgerald's novel. Jordan Baker is a part of the moneyed Buchanan world. She is first introduced as their associate. Nick's description of Jordan augments her arrogance:

She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of

it--indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in. (8-9)

Nick feels that Jordan presents "complete self-sufficiency" (9). She speaks "contemptuously" of West Egg (11). Jordan is cool. Her coolness is obvious throughout the novel, but it is pronounced in the New York hotel. During the harangue while Daisy is "terrified" and Gatsby and Tom are arguing, Nick notices that Jordan "had begun to balance an invisible but absorbing object on the tip of her chin" (135). The discussion concerning bad drivers surrounding her is more than symbolic of the action or foreshadowing of the accident; it is a metaphor of her personality. She is "incurably dishonest"; Nick recalls that she "left a borrowed car out in the rain with the top down, and then lied about it--" (58). This dishonesty is reinforced by Nick's recollection of a newspaper story claiming that Jordan had cheated during a golf tournament (58). Jordan's shady past is similar to Gatsby's, but her aristocracy will insulate her. She is a liar-cheat in the same vein as the Buchanans.

Characterization in these three works put the reader firmly in the world of satire. Criticism abounds in each work, and so much of the criticism is universal. The narrators and commentators, Encolpius, Mme. Jourdain, Nicole, and Nick, express the important satiric norm. They act to inform the reader/audience of the target. In short, these commentators are the voice of reason, expressing the voice of the author. When Encolpius and Nick criticize other characters' behavior, they are speaking for reason. When Mme. Jourdain denounces her husband's tomfoolery, she is voicing Moliere's satiric vantage point.

The targets in these social satires include the nouveau riche, who are mysterious, gaudy, uneducated, critical of lower classes, misplaced, and isolated from society. They are self-made in the image of the aristocracy, yet they miss the mark because of their lack of breeding and education. The nouveau riche characters reject their origins but are

rejected by the aristocrats to which they aspire; thus, they are isolated and alone. Another character target is the hangers-on or parasites who, literally and figuratively, feed off of the nouveau riche host. The party guests, who care nothing for their hosts, epitomize parasitic behavior. Each text portrays party attendants as self-interested. Aristocrats are also satiric targets. These characters are vile and repulsive in their attitudes and exploitation of other characters. Dorante and Tom Buchanan are lacking in any resemblance to a moral code. Thus, the aristocracy lacks true nobility.

The characterizations show few reasonable persons. Most of the world depicted consists of fake, decadent, or manipulative people without emotions or intellect who are driven by a desire to obtain wealth. This wealth will allow them to manipulate and control others. These characters will enhance the themes of each text and will portray a decadent society which is violent and careless. Most relationships are based on exploitation and on people treated as commodities. Hence the characterizations are representative of the themes. They lend reciprocal support. For instance, the theme of decay is corroborated by violent characters like Wolfsheim and exploiters like Dorante. The satirist reveals a world where romantic illusion is shattered to reveal a repulsive reality. The themes point to the criticism of society's manners and attitudes.

## Chapter III

### Themes

#### Decadence

One classic satiric theme is decadence of the modern day, whether it be Petronius' Imperial Rome, Moliere's Seventeenth-Century France, or Fitzgerald's modern America. Kernan remarks that "In the satirist's vision of the world decency is forever in a precarious position near the edge of extinction, and the world is about to pass into eternal darkness" (256). While some characters voice this idea directly, it is also treated in the various imagery, themes, and structure of the texts. Langman points to the fact that "social corruption" in Gatsby serves "as more than a background or framework for Gatsby's story. Gatsby himself is at once its product and its leading spirit" (40). Classically, satire has a voice somewhere in the text longing for the "good old days" in contrast with the present time. Edward Bloom notes, "[T]he satirist often appears to yearn for a Golden Age because he cannot reconcile himself to contemporary follies and improprieties" (246). As surely as Petronius voices this longing through Eumolpus and Ganymedes, Fitzgerald voices it through Tom Buchanan. These nostalgic voices point to the decaying modern times.

Satyricon begins with Encolpius lambasting the professors for "strangl[ing] true eloquence" (4). Encolpius complains that great art is dead. He mentions the "great days" of Sophocles, Euripides, and Thucydides (4). Later, Eumolpus traces the decadence of his time to "the love of money" (Petronius 89). His ironic statement concerns the very activities in which he participates: "As for our own time, why, we are so besotted with drink, so steeped in debauchery, that we lack the strength even to study the great achievements of the past. One and all, we traduce the dead and slander our great tradition. We are professionals of corruption; vice is the subject we teach and learn" (90). Later, in his poem "The Civil War," Eumolpus notes that as opposed to yesterday,

today one finds "perversion everywhere" in "girl-men" who "mew our manhood up" (139). He, of course, is a participating pervert. Upon meeting Giton, Eumolpus is immediately attracted to him. Concerning this passage, Arrowsmith writes, "Throughout the *Satyricon*, a great deal of the irony depends upon the reader's understanding and recognition of pointed disparities between practice and profession" (Note 210). Besides Eumolpus' attraction to Giton, Eumolpus is a pederast who seduces his boy pupil in Asia (87). Another pessimist, Ganymedes, one of Trimalchio's rich friends feasting at the dinner, lambastes Rome for being too expensive: "I couldn't buy a mouthful of bread today. And this damn drought goes on and on. Nobody's had a bellyful for years now" (41). Clearly, he is feasting at the very moment he is making this statement. Later during the banquet, he, still complaining of expenses, declares, "Why, I've practically had to pawn my clothes and if bread prices don't drop soon, I'll have to put my houses on the market" (42). This is a direct parallel to Tom Buchanan's fear of losing power and control in his world. Ganymedes blames society's ills on lack of spirituality:

I'll stake my luck on it, the gods have got a finger in what's been happening here. And you know why? Because no one believes in the gods, that's why. Who observes the fast days any more, who cares a rap for Jupiter? One and all, bold as brass, they sit there pretending to pray, but cocking their eyes on the chances and counting up their cash. Once upon a time, let me tell you, things were different.

(42)

Similarly, Tom Buchanan is Fitzgerald's prophet of doom. He announces, "Civilization's going to pieces" (13). He spouts racist theories as the root of the problem: "The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be--will be utterly submerged" (13). He further defines himself as one of the "dominant race" who must "watch out or these other races will have control of things" (13). The obvious irony is that Tom Buchanan has more control over everything than anyone else in the novel. He represents wealthy



aristocracy who wields power over Daisy, Wilson, and Gatsby. Often, his power is defined by his bodily strength, and he, more than once, is described by Nick as "crunch[ing] gravel under his boots" (16, 109). Lhamon suggests that Gatsby's parties are "imitative failures compared to Tom's wedding party" and "Tom's party won the girl" (173). Not only is Tom a racist, but he is also a chauvinist. He says that Jordan should not be allowed to "run around the country" (19). Later he includes all women in his chauvinistic tirade: "By God, I may be old-fashioned in my idea, but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish" (104). The incongruity lies in Tom's belief in his own superiority and his own depraved affair with Myrtle Wilson with whom he could not couple if she were not allowed to "run around the country." He is, in fact, one of the "crazy fish" he describes. Daisy is cynical as she tells Nick, "'You see I think everything's terrible anyhow . . . Everybody thinks so--the most advanced people. And I *know*. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything'" (18).

### The Cena

The various images of outrageous behavior, violence, and death all contribute and reveal the theme of decadence. The supreme reflection of decadence is the extravagant parties given by Trimalchio, Jourdain, and Gatsby. Highet explains, "One of the chief themes for satiric description is the Painful Dinner, at which what ought to have been a pleasant occasion turns into a surgical operation without anesthesia lasting several hours" (221). Fitzgerald, as already mentioned, intended to tie Gatsby to his predecessor, Trimalchio. Their parties, along with M. Jourdain's, are structured similarly. Most of the party guests are self-interested. The parties are chaotic, with argument, laughter, violence, and gossip. Brian Way notes these similarities between Trimalchio's banquet and Gatsby's parties: "Trimalchio's banquet . . . has certain obvious resemblance with Gatsby's parties. Both are set in times of wealth and decadence. . . . The guests in each

case are a motley collection of adventurers and entertainers, while the two hosts are nouveaux riches with the uncertain taste common to that position" (105). Both parties are chaotic with a variety of events, and both end with bizarre, although comic, situations. The organization is also similar in that people have separate tables, enjoy luxurious food, are enveloped in music, are served two meals and play in the water (a swim at Gatsby's and a bath at Trimalchio's).

Parties work well to convey the theme of decadence, for all manner of people and activities take place. These parties are at once a cornucopia of information and experience concerning inhumanity and excesses of civilization and a microcosm of the exterior world. Way writes, "The names and scraps of rumors are interwoven to show how people are being hurried indiscriminately together in the frenetic pursuit of money and pleasure--the wealthy, the criminal, the disreputable, the pretentious, the showy and the frivolous, the rootless and the abandoned--even the respectable" (94). The list of party attendants' names Nick supplies is curious:

From East Egg, then, came the Chester Beckers and the Leeches, and a man named Bunsen, whom I knew at Yale, and Doctor Webster Civet, who was drowned last summer in Maine. And the Hornbeams and the Willie Voltaires, and a whole clan named Blackbuck, who always gathered in a corner and flipped up their noses like goats at whosoever came near. And the Ismays and the Chrysties (or rather Hubert Auerbach and Mr. Chrystie's wife), and Edgar Beaver, whose hair, they say, turned cotton-white one winter afternoon for no good reason at all. . . and the Stonewall Jackson Abrams of Georgia, and the Fishguards and the Ripley Snells. Snell was there three days before he went to the penitentiary, so drunk out on the gravel drive that Mrs. Ulysses Swett's automobile ran over his right hand. (61-2)

This list continues on with twice as many names in grand satiric fashion. Prigozy notes that the names quite often are animal names (102-3). This is reminiscent of the animal

fable designations which point to the negative nature of this clan who are presented in "mock epic fashion" similar to an epic "catalogue of ships" (Eble 5). Elmore defines the list in this manner: "It invokes the epic catalogs of *Paradise Lost* in the same breath as the comical guest lists of Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (as has been pointed out by A. E. Le Vot) and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* . . ." (84). Likewise, Jourdain's parties fit easily into these descriptions with musicians, singers, and dancers. Also, Jourdain supplies an abundance of food. Jourdain's party is an elaborate showpiece meant to impress Dorimene and insinuate himself into nobility by acting as they do.

Trimalchio's banquet is given to people who care nothing for him; they are relieved when he goes to the bathroom; they only want his food, and Encolpius, especially, thinks his conversation is ridiculous: "We thanked him for his kindness and understanding, but we tried to hide our snickers in repeated swallows of wine. And yet we were unaware that we had slogged only halfway through this 'forest of refinements,' as the poets put it" (45). His banquet is chaotic, consisting of a variety of circus tricks by "tumbler" and "clowns" (51). Duff notes that "the *Cena Trimalchionis* repeats stock-features of Greek banquets like the performances by acrobats and reciters, the appearance of the uninvited guest (Habinnas), the quarrel and the dog-fight" (*A Literary History of Rome* 150). Trimalchio performs many illusions during his parties which lend to the confusion and circus-like atmosphere. In fact, the chaos of his party fits the Eagle's "Hotel California" song's theme of being trapped in a decadent, chaotic place. Besides the various tricks, there are several occasions of argument, laughter, and gossip.

From the moment Encolpius enters the house, he must beg for one slave or another's freedom from abuse. Trimalchio himself disparages several slaves, and the guests are reduced to supplicants. Any time a slave is saved from abuses, there is much jocularly and cheers. The place is noisy and confused as slaves continuously move around changing dishes, talking, singing off-key, and as Trimalchio and Habinnas make late and

conspicuous entrances. Trimalchio is carried in, and Habinnas drunkenly stumbles in leaning on his fat wife. Besides this, the dog is let loose, the slaves are invited to sit down, and pandemonium reigns. Arguments occur between various people. Ascyllus, unable to "swallow his snickers," begins to laugh uncontrollably (54) and is attacked by Hermeros who calls Ascyllus a "bum" who is "not worth a good boot in the ass" (54). Ironically, it is this argument which brings out the best in Trimalchio who tells Hermeros, "He's a little hotheaded, so show him you're made of better stuff. It's the man who gives in arguments like this who wins every time" (57). Also, Habinnas and his wife, Scintilla, argue over Habinnas' favorite slave boy (67-8). One major argument breaks out between Trimalchio and Fortunata. Physical abuse and tears ensue. Mixed amongst this calamity is the gossip concerning Trimalchio, Fortunata, and their guests.

The banquet lasts through the night and ends, at least for Encolpius and the reader, in illusion and chaos. Trimalchio's pseudo-death pageant is interrupted by firemen who invade the banquet, thinking his house is ablaze. Moreover, Trimalchio's pseudo-death, enacted during his party, closely parallels Gatsby's literal death. Trimalchio, after describing his tomb, pretends to be dead, and nearly everyone bursts into tears. However, Trimalchio is half aware that these people only care for his wealth. For this reason, he wants a notice carved over his tomb which states that his "heirs" will not "inherit" his tomb; therefore, they cannot sell it after his death (71).

Although Moliere in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme only shows us one of Jourdain's parties, there are hints throughout of his other entertainments. Of course, neither Dorante nor Dorimene cares anything for Jourdain. Dorante is using Jourdain's resources for his own sake, and Dorimene does not even know Jourdain. Mme. Jourdain describes the continuous parties in her house in a way which reiterates Trimalchio's banquet and foreshadows Gatsby's: "For my part, I am scandalized by the kind of life you are leading. I vow I don't recognize our own house. You'd say it was carnival time here every day; and

to make sure of it, from early morning on there's nothing but a great row of fiddlers and singers, enough to disturb the whole neighborhood" (III). This chaotic effect is achieved on stage during the preparation with an influx of musicians and dancers. This dinner party itself is chaotic due to Dorante's double-dealing. However, the best model of chaos is achieved through Mme. Jourdain crashing Jourdain's party. She, Jourdain, and Dorante argue; then she attacks the innocent Dorimene: "And you, madame, for a great lady, it's neither pretty nor decent for you to bring trouble into a family, and to allow my husband to be in love with you" (IV). As a result of the altercation, Dorimene chastises Dorante and leaves with him following after her (IV). Mme. Jourdain and her husband are left on stage arguing while the lackeys are busy carrying off the tables and dishes. At this point, the bedlam continues because the illusion involving Covielle, Cleonte, and Jourdain begins. Thus the party is carried on with the mock Turkish ceremony and completed in an orderly fashion with the ballet of nations.

Before the argument ensues, Dorante catalogues the food in much the same way Encolpius does at Trimalchio's banquet and as Nick will catalogue Gatsby's guests. Jourdain's entertainment is better than Trimalchio's because the noble Dorante has actually arranged it. Obviously, if Jourdain had chosen it, the entertainment would have been as gauche as Trimalchio's. Jourdain's letter to Dorimene is analogous to his lack of taste in entertainment. The philosopher tries to embellish Jourdain's language but cannot make Jourdain see the poetic use of language:

M. Jourdain: So, I'd like to put in a letter: "Beautiful Marquise, your lovely eyes make me die of love."

Philosophy Master: Put it, then, that the rays of her eyes reduce your heart to ashes; that for her sake you suffer night and day tortures of--

M. Jourdain: No, no, no. I don't want all that. I just want what I told you:

"Beautiful Marquise, your lovely eyes make me die of love." (II)

Technically, the bumbling Jourdain, of course, could not have chosen the ballet, for this was requested entertainment from King Louis IV. In any case, Jourdain's party ends like Trimalchio's, and the result is the same. Trimalchio's re-enactment of his death dramatizes the fact that he is living an illusion that people care for him and that he will be remembered nobly. The dramatic irony, however, is emphasized by the fact that Encolpius desperately wants to escape; he is unconcerned with Trimalchio; thus he leaves. Jourdain's party, too, dramatizes the illusion in which he lives. Everyone tricks him. He thinks he has achieved his goal of nobility through the marriage of his daughter to the son of a Grand Turk, yet not only has he missed this mark, he has also missed his chance with Dorimene and Dorante. So Jourdain is left dangling in a world of illusion.

In Fitzgerald's satiric novel, Gatsby's parties are chaotic; his guests do not come to see him. Most of them do not even know him; in fact, as Nick says, "People were not invited—they went there" (41). At another time, Nick describes Gatsby's Rolls-Royce as "an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains" (39). Throughout the first part of the novel, before Gatsby's parties cease, Nick meets people from different social strata who have been to one of Gatsby's parties. Jordan Baker mentions Gatsby when Nick first meets her, and it is implied through her conversation when Nick sees her at Gatsby's party that she has been there before (42-43). Myrtle's sister, Catherine, knows Gatsby, too, for she tells Nick that she was at one of Gatsby's parties "about a month ago" (32). As mentioned above, Gatsby's guests care nothing for him. His real funeral approximates Trimalchio's pseudo-funeral. None of his guests attend. Even the boarder Klipspringer does not attend. The guests are conspicuously absent. In fact, Gatsby's death is an ordeal. No person connected with Gatsby except Nick and Gatsby's father attend his funeral. None of his business associates or party attendants care enough for him to bother with attending, sending

flowers, or even calling in their condolences. Nick, who has made a concentrated effort to inform people of Gatsby's death and arrangements, futilely waits: "The minister glanced several times at his watch, so I took him aside and asked him to wait for half an hour. But it wasn't any use. Nobody came" (175). The final blow is Owl-eyes' judgment of Gatsby as "The poor son-of-a-bitch" (176). Gatsby's guests gossip a great deal about him. From the time Nick first attends one of Gatsby's parties, he hears stories about Gatsby, stories which portray Gatsby as murderer, German spy, bootlegger, and nephew to Von Hindenburg. Fantastic stories float around concerning Gatsby:

Gatsby's notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who had accepted his hospitality and so become authorities upon his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news. Contemporary legends such as the "underground pipe-line to Canada" attached themselves to him, and there was one persistent story that he didn't live in a house at all, but in a boat that looked like a house and was moved secretly up and down the Long Island Shore. (98)

MacKendrick explains, "They sneer bitterly at Gatsby on the courage of Gatsby's liquor, and by accepting his hospitality become authorities on his past" (309). Interestingly enough, the people who gossip about Gatsby do not care if he is a murderer or traitor; they fluctuate "between his cocktails and his flowers," discussing him without concern (61). These people do not care about him. When they come and find that he is no longer having a party, they leave without trying to see what has happened (113). One party-goer announces, "I like to come [to Gatsby's parties] . . . I never care what I do so I always have a good time" (43). Minter comments that the "few [invited] guests" and "strangers . . . come together . . . in search of the host no one knows" (86).

All of these unconcerned guests contribute to the chaos which denotes Gatsby's parties. His parties are circus events where people do "stunts all over the garden" (47). However, Gatsby remains detached from this commotion. The juxtaposition of Gatsby standing and formally waving to his guests while they, unaware of him, chaotically

attempt to leave despite the "bizarre and tumultuous scene" (54) of a minor automobile accident in Gatsby's drive parallels many events in Trimalchio's dinner. Nick notes that the guests "conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks" (41). The parties are chaotic with music, "various bursts of laughter" and stage acts, dancing, and "champagne . . . served in glasses bigger than finger bowls" (47). There is dancing outside; people wander in and out of the house, and the garden is crowded with people. Nick and Jordan find the drunken owl-eyed man in the library. Later, Nick wanders into a chaotic room full of people listening to a girl singing and crying:

Whenever there was a pause in the song she filled it with gasping, broken sobs, and then took up the lyric again in a quavering soprano. The tears coursed down her cheeks--not freely, however, for when they came into contact with her heavily beaded eyelashes they assumed an inky color, and pursued the rest of their way in slow black rivulets. A humorous suggestion was made that she sing the notes on her face, whereupon she threw up her hands, sank into a chair, and went off into a deep vinous sleep. (57)

This singer represents the chaos in microcosm. She is a dichotomy of passion and apathy. Later, during the early morning hours, Nick realizes that most of the couples are fighting (52). The last indication of chaos is the accident in Gatsby's driveway (54).

Nick describes Gatsby's next party as "the same sort of people, the same profusion of champagne, the same many-colored, many-keyed commotion" (105). Nick and Daisy sit at a table with "a massive and lethargic woman" who gets her head dunked in the pool (107-8). During this same party, there is a group of people swimming (110). As for arguments, Tom and Daisy have words during and after the party. At the party, Tom wants to sit with another group of people rather than sit with Daisy and Nick, and Daisy sardonically replies, "Go ahead . . . and if you want to take down any addresses here's my



little gold pencil" (107). Later they argue over Gatsby's business and his guests (109). Neither Tom nor Daisy is at home among these vulgar people.

Both of Gatsby's parties end in illusion, at least for him. The first party ends with the aforementioned accident. Juxtaposed against this calamitous incident is Gatsby standing aloof, "his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell" (56). At this moment, Nick feels "a sudden emptiness . . . flow[ing] from the windows and the great doors, endowing [Gatsby] with complete isolation" (56). This scene recalls the illusion of the isolated Richard Cory on the sidewalk contiguous with the "people on the pavement" (838). The final party which Tom and Daisy attend also ends with Gatsby's illusion that Daisy can obliterate four years of marriage with Tom, and she and Gatsby can go back to Louisville and pick up where they left off (111).

Myrtle's party is similar to Gatsby's, a microcosm of Gatsby's parties. Disinterested people are there to sleep, drink, and stumble around in a smoky haze. Dessner notes, "Myrtle Wilson's parties are also similar in kind [to Gatsby's parties]. Complete with their uninvited guests, like Nick who wanders in and out, Myrtle's parties are just a cheaper version of Gatsby's 'pigsty' and Buchanan's wedding train" (174).

### Violence

Violence is found in all three works. Violence whether it is comic as in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme or whether it is pathetic as in The Great Gatsby is a symptom of a decaying society. The people who act in a violent manner are symbolic of a society without morals.

Encolpius lives in a violent world where survival is difficult. Although Petronius depicts comic violence in the episodes with Encolpius and the Priapus priestess, he also depicts serious violence in episodes in which Encolpius and Giton are whipped on Lichas' ship (113). Trimalchio's argument with Fortunata becomes seriously violent:

At last she used the supreme insult: "Dog!" At this Trimalchio exploded with

rage, reached for a wine cup and slammed it into her face. Fortunata let out a piercing scream and covered her face with trembling hands as though she'd just lost an eye. Scintilla, stunned and shocked, tried to comfort her sobbing friend in her arms, while a slave solicitously applied a glass of cold water to her livid cheek. Fortunata herself hunched over the glass heaving and sobbing. (75)

The violence is often intermingled with comedy and sometimes violence is mirrored in comic drama: "Suddenly . . . our gallant Giton turned the edge of his razor against his own manhood, threatening at one fell blow to lop away that root of all our troubles . . . For my part, following Giton's example, I several times lifted my razor to my own throat, no more intending, of course, to kill myself than Giton intended to castrate himself" (118). Juxtaposed to this comic violence is the violent shipwreck which ends Lichas' life (129-131).

Moliere also depicts a violent world. Gossman notes that Moliere's answer to this violence is duplicity: "The only weapon against violence and blackmail is ruse and hypocrisy" (215). Moliere's use of violence is comic, too. Nicole's sword fight with Jourdain is an example. Perhaps the epitome of comic violence is the argument and fight among the instructors. As they begin arguing over which of their art is best, the Fencing Master proclaims, "Thus we can see how highly we swordsmen should be esteemed in a state, and how far the science of fencing is superior to the useless branches of knowledge, like dancing, music, and--" (II). The Dancing and Music Masters take issue with this claim (II). The argument deteriorates into a fight just as the Philosophy Master (a man of logic and words) enters. Even ignorant Jourdain recognizes the Philosophy Master's ability: "Hello, Monsieur Philosopher, you arrive in the nick of time with your philosophy. Come and make peace among these people" (II). The Philosopher coolly denigrates violence: "Is anything more base and shameful than that passion, which turns man into a wild beast? Should not reason be the mistress of all our actions?" (II). Almost

immediately, though, the Philosopher jumps--he is not drawn to it--into the ruckus. Although he gets out of the fray with the promise to satirize the other instructors, he is unable to use words or logic to stop their fighting. Jourdain decides, "There's nothing I can do about it, and I won't get my dressing gown dirty trying to separate you" (II). Ironically, this is the one time Jourdain acts in a gentlemanly fashion. The point of the discrepancy is, besides the fact that words are as meaningless here as they are at the pseudo-Turkish ceremony, that man is bestial and that despite any efforts of control, man will remain bestial. Furthermore, each artisan is uncouth. This is a paradox, similar to the modern-day talk show hosts who end up fighting on the set. It is an oxymoron akin to the high school football team known as the Fighting Poets from Sidney Lanier High School in Montgomery, Alabama. The real problem in Moliere is that these men reflect his world.

Although Fitzgerald's prose is poetic, violence abounds in The Great Gatsby and is not restricted to the lower classes. Fitzgerald's violence, similar to Moliere's, involves both classes entangled. The aristocratic Tom breaks the peasant Myrtle's nose using "a short deft movement . . . with his open hand" (37). Clarence Endive from East Egg fights with "a bum named Etty" at one of Gatsby's parties (62). The war lurks behind the novel with Nick's allusion to it (3) and Gatsby's medal (67). Meyer Wolfsheim's name and cuff buttons ("the finest specimens of human molars") and his gangster talk insinuates a violent and careless society (70-3). Dan Cody's persona is one of violence: "I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby's bedroom, a gray, florid man with a hard, empty face--the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon" (101). Myrtle's violent death foreshadows and begets Gatsby's and Wilson's deaths. Violence infiltrates middle class people's lives, while the aristocratic individuals, although sometimes involved in the ruckus, survive it unscathed.

Fitzgerald's idea of the money/violence nexus is proverbial; the love of money is the root of all evil. In Fitzgerald's world, money is the cause and effect of violence. The violence of the texts culminates in the lurking death in the atmosphere of society. Death is overt in Satyricon and Gatsby; it is not prevalent in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. Both Trimalchio and Gatsby are just beyond death's grasp.

### Death

The Satyricon depicts a carpe' diem/death junction. The Romans were concerned with living life to its fullest, and Arrowsmith argues that luxuria is the central theme of Petronius' novel (Ancient Writers 837). The Romans were excessively gregarious, and carpe' diem, as well as death, predominates Trimalchio's feast. Throughout, the banqueters are exposed to excessive wealth and food interspersed with death imagery. Trimalchio recites his carpe' diem verse:

Nothing but bones, that's what we are.

Death hustles us humans away.

Today we're here and tomorrow we're not,

so live and drink while you may! (32)

Tied to the carpe' diem theme is Trimalchio's obvious concern with death. One of the first insights given into Trimalchio's obsession with death is Agamemnon's slave explaining to Encolpius, "He's [Trimalchio] real swank. Got a big clock in his dining room and a uniformed bugler who blows a horn every hour so the old man won't forget how fast his time is slipping away" (25). Just prior to this, Trimalchio has mused on the fact that "wine lasts longer than . . . poor suffering humans." He then instructs his guests to "soak it up, it's the stuff of life" (32). After the boy slave falls on Trimalchio during the banquet, Trimalchio sends for writing materials and composes this platitude: "We think we're awful smart, we think we're awful wise, / but when we're least expecting, comes the big surprise. / Lady Luck's in heaven and we're her little toys, / so break out the wine and

fill your glasses, boys" (52). Trimalchio's actions are often governed by his obsession with death. When he excuses himself to use the bathroom, he comes back to the table connecting constipation with death: "Well, anyone at table who wants to go has my permission, and the doctors tell us not to hold it in. . . . Take my word for it, friends, the vapors go straight to your brain. Poison your whole system. I know of some who've died from being too polite and holding it in" (45). Later, when a cock crows in the distance, Trimalchio goes through a superstitious ritual involving pouring wine on the floor, changing a ring from one hand to another and explaining, "Buglers don't bugle for kicks, and that cockcrow means there's a fire nearby or somebody's died. Don't let it be bad luck for us, please heaven. Whoever fetches me that calamity-crowing rooster first, gets a fat reward" (74). Trimalchio's superstitions emphasize his lack of education; however, this particular one focuses on death with which Trimalchio is so concerned, yet he intends to buy death by rewarding the rooster's captor. Trimalchio's story of the Sibyl in the Bottle may be the crux of the death/decadence theme. The interned Sibyl simply wants to die. Helen Bacon argues, "Every allusion in the conversation is a distortion of literature or mythology--Cassandra killing her children, Niobe shutting Daedalus in the Trojan horse. Only this one, which he presents as personal experience, is based on a genuine tradition" (270). After describing his tomb in Browningsque fashion, Trimalchio cries, "We all have to die, so let's live while we're waiting! Come on, everybody, smile, be happy" (72). Palmeri delineates Trimalchio's obsession:

Trimalchio is obsessed with death; he carries in mind the date of his own death as foreseen by a soothsayer, and he responds to the prospect of death with works of art--culinary, theatrical, verbal, or pictorial--which lend a new if unreal existence to creatures who are already dead. His dishes, riddles, puns, and stories consistently substitute cultural production for natural reproduction. (35)

The guests at the party are also concerned with death. Seleucus announces that taking a bath every day will cause premature death; he goes on to discuss an acquaintance's death

and funeral ceremony. He ruminates on the fragile human state: "Just goes to show you. What are men anyway but balloons on legs, a lot of blown-up bladders? Flies, that's what we are. No, not even flies. Flies have something inside. But a man's a bubble, all air, nothing else" (39). This, reminiscent of Gloucester's existential language in King Lear—"As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods, / They kill us for their sport" (IV.ii.36-7), epitomizes the senselessness of life and death. Death is a theme continued until the fragmented end when Eumolpus explains the method of obtaining his fortune after he dies (181). Even the comic episode with Lichas ends with his death. Encolpius contemplates death upon discovering Lichas' body:

"Where are they now," I cried, "all your anger and your greatness? But two little hours ago you boasted of your pride of power and your manhood's strength and yet, what are you now? Food for the fish, for every crawling creature in the sea. Of all the mighty ship you once commanded, not one poor saving spar is left you in your utter shipwreck. And yet we scheme and hope, stuffing our foolish hearts with dreams, scrimping and saving, hoarding the wealth we win by wrong, planning our lives as though we had a thousand years to live! Why, why? One little day ago this man too looked over his accounts and reckoned up his worth; he too had fixed the day on which he thought his ship would dock. And now, O gods, how far he lies from his destination!" (130)

In Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Moliere has very little mention of death, yet there is one important point the Philosophy Master makes: "Without knowledge, life is almost an image of death" (II). This statement is descriptive of Jourdain, for he lacks intellect, taste, and understanding. Hubert notes, "Jourdain does not know how to distinguish between theory, words, and concepts on the one hand, and objective reality on the other" (225). In this attitude, Cleonte is Jourdain's direct foil. Cleonte understands that a "stolen title" is "unworthy of a decent man" (Iii). Carpe diem is an underlying element in Le

Bourgeois Gentilhomme, for Jourdain seizes the moment to become noble. He refuses to wait and supposes that his dream is fulfilled. During Jourdain's dinner party, the singers perform a carpe diem song:

Drink, my comrades, drink;  
 The hour's propitious.  
 Let your glasses clink;  
 The wine's delicious.  
 Too swift our steps we bend  
 To the dark shore,  
 Where love is at an end,  
 And we drink no more. (IV)

Fitzgerald's uses of themes related to death are more overt than Moliere's or Petronius'. Although Gatsby is never portrayed as overly concerned with death, Nick makes several references to the inevitability of death. Piper explains Nick's connection to death:

The second kind of knowledge that Nick possesses, in contrast to his neighbor, is his ever-present awareness of man's mortality . . . Not only is Nick continually aware of death, and his narrative strewn with death images, but the entire novel seems to have been conceived by Fitzgerald as the expression of a death wish--a wish that, in the earliest surviving draft of The Great Gatsby, Nick actually voices at the conclusion of Chapter I. (107-8)

One indication of Piper's argument is Nick's thoughts as he, Tom, and Jordan leave New York: "So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight" (137). This reference is obviously foreshadowing; more important, however, is Gatsby's unexpected death. Death lurks in Gatsby in Wolfsheim's reminisces and "cuff buttons," and in the dead valley of ashes. Gatsby is concerned with carpe' diem and death. The rich people of Gatsby are living in a pseudo-utopia. Superficially, they are completely comfortable, and

they live for the moment. They languidly and luxuriously enjoy each moment. Nick describes the first dinner party at Tom and Daisy's mansion:

They knew that presently dinner would be over and a little later the evening, too, would be over, and casually put away. It was sharply different from the West, where an evening was hurried from phase to phase toward its close, in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in sheer nervous dread of the moment itself. (13)

Myrtle explains *carpe' diem* as the reason for her becoming involved with Tom, telling Nick: "All I kept thinking over and over was 'You can't live forever; you can't live forever'" (36). Daisy, too, feels that "fate" moves the West Egg "inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing" (108).

Underneath the facade of luxuriousness, however, lie the empty and incomplete lives of the wealthy. Miller notes that Nick's initial trip to Tom's and Daisy's is akin to "slow motion" which involves "super-sophisticated conversation about nothing at all and the suggestion of sexual intrigue in Tom's mysterious telephone conversations, reveal a life lived on meaningless and purposeless levels and surfaces in which sex is no more than a 'game of chess'" (246). Later, Nick recounts Daisy's awareness of this vast emptiness: "'What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon?' cried Daisy, 'and the day after that, and the next thirty years?'" (118). Daisy's literal language describes her purposeless existence as she tells Nick, "I'm p-paralyzed with happiness" (9). Fitzgerald censures Tom and Daisy as "careless people" who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness . . ." (180). Tom, who appears to have most of the control, is described as someone who would "drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game" (6). Nick points to the fact that Tom's life "savors of anticlimax" (6). Daisy and Tom are drifters who, in Nick's words, "drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together" (6). Gatsby's uninvited guests, too, drift in and out of the parties. Even Gatsby is



described as having the "quality" of "restlessness" with "always a tapping foot somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a hand" (64). The only people who are not drifters are the valley of ashes dwellers who are tied to the land similar to Roman slaves, but they live empty lives, too, and they do desire escape.

### Stasis

Another indication of civilization's decadence is found in the very structure and content of each work. The gyrosopic structure of each plot resembles a roulette wheel or, more precisely, the wheel of fortune. None of the characters accomplish their goals. The plots appear to be moving fast, but there is no progression. In each story people struggle and die or struggle only to live on in unaccommodated stasis. Edward Bloom explains that "In the satiric plot . . . we seldom if ever *see* change" (106).

There exist large and small patterns of stasis in Satyricon. Bacon describes the fabric of the text in this manner: "They [Encolpius and his associates] blunder and scrounge their way through a curious and highly varied jumble of experiences . . ." (263). Encolpius is struggling from the beginning to find his way: "But I had forgotten where our rooms were and kept losing my way. Worse, whichever road I took, I somehow kept coming back to the place where I had started" (8). Ascyltus has the same experience as he tells Encolpius, "I've been running around like crazy. I must have covered the whole city, but I couldn't find our rooms anywhere" (9). Encolpius, besides literally running in circles, wants to achieve sexual potency but is constantly thwarted until the end. While running from Lichas, Encolpius runs right into him and becomes a passenger on Lichas' ship. Encolpius' long speech after Lichas' death, part of which has already been quoted, is a plethora of cyclic images:

Why, doom is everywhere, at any time. And other things betray, not just the sea alone. Look how the soldier's weapons fail him. You see the consummation of

your every hope, and what happens? The great house you built falls in, crumbles, buries you in the rubble of your dreams. The man who had no time to lose falls from his chariot and loses his time forever. The glutton chokes to death; the miser starves of his own stinginess. Why, if you calculate our chances in this life, what do they cry but death? Shipwreck is everywhere. But I hear someone object: those who drown at sea die unburied. Lord, lord, as though it mattered how this deathbound flesh should die! Fire or water or the wear and tear of time, what does it matter? Death or death: the end is always the same. (130).

As hard as each character tries, nothing happens. Encolpius remains the classless wanderer. He has achieved sexual potency at the end of the fragment; however, he is still wandering. Trimalchio, for all his opulence is still an ex-slave. The legacy hunters of Croton receive no legacy, for there is nothing to obtain. Palmeri suggests, "The prevalence of contingent and random fortune, which moves the plot through chance meetings and close misses, misfortunes, and rescues, implies that identity in this world can be guaranteed only by surrender to the uncontrollable madness of love" (21).

Jourdain, the monomaniac, achieves nothing. His obsession with establishing himself as nobility is never accomplished. Every action he takes, from the various self-improving lessons to the denial of Cleonte' as his son-in-law, is aimed at becoming a gentleman. Unlike Jimmy Gatz, he does not write a list of self-improvement such as elocution and poise; he simply enacts them with a philosophy or fencing instructor.

Jourdain's intent to marry his daughter into nobility also goes unaccomplished. His act of becoming a mamamouchi is pure nothingness. Again, his actions are useless. Finally, Jourdain's many resources, time, and energy do not win him the love of Dorimene. Instead, she remains in her class, matched with her kind, and he remains in his bourgeois existence mated to his bourgeois wife.

Fitzgerald portrays this same mired existence. Nick decides that life consists of people striving toward nothingness: "A phrase began to beat in my ears with a sort of heady excitement: 'There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy, and the tired'" (81). Nick is forever bondless and goes back to his origination point in the midwest. He is never able to establish a relationship, a successful career, or a friendship. He recognizes this on his thirtieth birthday: "I was thirty. Before me stretched the portentous, menacing road of a new decade" (136). Daisy is left in a loveless marriage and achieves no dream other than the one she is born into. Jordan remains careless: She tells Nick that she is "a careless driver" and that she does not plan to change (178). Wilson annihilates himself. Myrtle never escapes the ash heaps no matter how much vivacity she emits. Of course, Gatsby, whose every action is to obtain his dream of Daisy, fails miserably. Berman contends, "These people are in motion, but what they do should not be confused with action. They are adrift in terms of several kinds of transitions, including those between moral infancy and maturity" (44). Although the novel seems to be full of activity with parties and "interesting people . . . who do interesting things" (91), nothing happens. The activity is frenetic and empty. Berman argues, "We are accustomed to think of The Great Gatsby as a story of mobility and change, but it is also a story of disguise, that is to say, of appearing to change while remaining the same" (8).

### Usury

As mentioned earlier, the nouveau riche characters are surrounded by parasites. This situation is taken further in each of the texts because practically every relationship is an exploitative one, and these relationships compose one component of a corrupt society. These relationships support the decadence attached to wealth, and they mirror a commercialized society where mammon is God. True love, which is rare, is hard or impossible to sustain.

Petronius explores relationships from the prospect of love and usury. All characters are self-interested where love is concerned. Bacon comments, "The heart is dead. Love is an attitude, or a business, or a game of chess" (267). Eumolpus, toward the end of the fragment, engages in an avaricious relationship with Philomela's children. This relationship is the prostitution of her children for alleged inheritance. Further, Petronius unites Trimalchio and Fortunata in a relationship which depends on usury from beginning to end. Trimalchio gets his "seed money" from Fortunata. She, in turn, trades her lowly post for a comfortable, luxurious lifestyle. Nothing indicates their love for one another. Gossip informs Encolpius that Fortunata has the upper hand in the relationship. When Trimalchio is possibly hurt, she is upset, but Petronius positions her in close proximity with the guests who may be required to pretend they care for Trimalchio if he is, in fact, hurt. She is jealous of Trimalchio's other unions such as the "remarkably pretty boy" (74), and the short episode includes a brawl between the two of them. Trimalchio himself accentuates the usury when he announces, "Doesn't that slut remember what she used to be? By god, I took her off the sale platform and made her an honest woman. But she blows herself up like a bull frog. She's forgotten how lucky she is. She won't remember the whore she used to be" (75). Trimalchio treats Fortunata as a commodity, and he reminds her of this fact during their altercation: "Take my advice, vulture, and keep your own nose clean. Don't make me show my teeth, sweetheart, or you'll feel my anger" (76). Before this melee, Trimalchio has asserted how much a woman costs: "I want you to see the chains and fetters our women load themselves with; this is how we poor bastards are bankrupted" (66). Habinnas agrees with Trimalchio: "If it weren't for the women, things would be as cheap as dirt. But money--they waste it like water. Swallow it cold and good and piss it hot and useless" (66). These women are tied directly to money, but the widow of Ephesus is subtly portrayed as a trophy to the "happy warrior" who "enjoyed a total triumph" of her body (124).

The Milesian tale of the widow of Ephesus provides another usurious relationship. Although the story seems to point to fidelity, loyalty, and true love, it decays into a story of infidelity and dishonesty. The soldier "laid determined siege to her [the widow's] virtue" (124), and she acquiesces. This story is about bargain and exchange; she exchanges supper for sex, and later she exchanges a former lover's corpse for a living lover. Because the miraculously chaste woman finds a lover five days after her husband's funeral and sexual consummation occurs in her husband's tomb, her infidelity is emphasized. The soldier wants the widow's body, then needs her husband's body; thus their relationship is cheapened into a transaction. Eumolpus, the narrator of this tale, intends to show the "fickleness of women, the wonderful ease with which they became infatuated, their readiness to abandon their children for their lovers, and so forth" (121). Clearly, he provides a cynical view of love. Bacon notes, "The 'Satyricon,' like the 'Waste Land' contains a series of rapes, seductions, intrigues, and esoteric sexual adventures in high and low life. And here too is sensuality without joy, satiety without fulfillment, degradation without grief or horror" (267).

Eumolpus is the leader in the legacy-hunting scheme in Croton. When the stranger informs Eumolpus, Encolpius, and Giton that Croton is made of "two classes: the makers of wills and those who pursue the makers of wills," it is Eumolpus who immediately devises a plan (132). Encolpius describes the scene: "More astute than the rest of us, Eumolpus considered this new situation very carefully, declaring that such a method of getting rich did not at all displease him" (133). Petronius offers a concentrated portrait of vultures when Eumolpus and company pretend to be wealthy in Croton. Encolpius says, "And so we lived for some time at Croton . . . Eumolpus, drunk with his success, had so far forgotten the past that he began to boast to his intimates that no one in Croton dared to cross him and that, for any crimes we might commit, he could easily get us off through the influence of his new friends" (151). This episode is part of the decadence and is comparable to Gatsby's ability to break traffic laws because of his wealth and a corrupt

police official (68). Eumolpus' experience and insight into usury and pseudo-love enables him a successful ruse at Croton. He has already related the story of his relationship with the boy student at Pergamum. This relationship involves gifts exchanged for sex. The boy prostitutes himself for special gifts supplied by Eumolpus as Eumolpus knew he would.

Moliere's play involves a hint of usury in Dorimene and Dorante's relationship while Jourdain's illusory relationship with Dorimene is based on usury. Dorante expresses to Jourdain that gifts are the way to win a woman (III). Dorante's opinion can be taken lightly because he is such a rotten character. However, later Dorimene expresses much the same idea. She tells Dorante, "Yes, but you don't say that I am becoming involved every day, by accepting such excessive evidences of your devotion" (III). She voices this idea not once, but twice: "I am disturbed by the expenditures I see you making for me . . . they obligate me more than I like" (III). Dorimene's attitude lends credence to Dorante's advice to Jourdain to spend plenty of money to win Dorimene's heart. Of course, Dorante's explanation to Jourdain is to allow him to borrow from Jourdain, yet the money does go to encourage Dorimene. More important, Dorante may be interested in Dorimene because she is an available rich woman. His marriage with her will make him wealthy. Thus his parasitic relationship to Jourdain is the bridge to a new host, Dorimene. Dorante, then, is both parasite and usurer. His association with Jourdain is parasitic, for he only uses Jourdain's money and other resources, but they are not on par. Jourdain is not nobility. Dorante's relationship with Dorimene, however, is on par. Although he has no money, they are both aristocrats. His parity is tied to his status in society and his birthright. A noble, his education and finesse, implied in his language, put him in the inner circle of aristocracy.

Jourdain, clearly outside of Dorimene's circle, has an illusory relationship with her. Even his illusions produce a usurious relationship. According to his actions and words, Jourdain is willing to spend any amount of money to buy Dorimene's love. If he wins it,

he, like Gatsby, will be a part of the magic aristocratic circle. It is clear, however, that neither Jourdain nor Gatsby has the finesse to fit into the rich, cultured world of the aristocrats.

Moliere focuses on these usurious relationships, while his subplot involves true love between the two couples: Cleonte/Lucile and Covielle/Nicole. The traditional formula of the young lovers being thwarted by the father is present, but Moliere does not seem to dwell on this. His real concern is the nouveau riche's ridiculous shenanigans. These lovers are almost thwarted in the name of social stratum. Jourdain's first question to the suitor, Cleonte, develops this theme: "Before giving you an answer, sir, I ask you to tell me if you are a gentleman" (III). Because Cleonte states that he is not a gentleman, Jourdain refuses his daughter's hand in marriage. Jourdain explains, "All I have to tell you is that I want a son-in-law who's a gentleman" (III). M. Jourdain's daughter Lucile is also a commodity. Jourdain will give her to the highest bidder defined by him as a gentleman: "I have enough property for my daughter; all I need is honor; and I want to make her a marquise" (III). Gaines argues, "Lucile's marriage has meaning for him [Jourdain] only as a means of procuring aristocratic honor" (161). Jourdain plans to exchange his daughter and her dowry for a name and an aristocratic place in society. Benichou notes that the stereotypical attitude of the bourgeois character is the "same jealousy and same instinct of possessiveness into love that they put into all things. They speak of their beloveds . . . as proprietors" (64). In Moliere's play, true love is seen as a luxury one cannot afford in a manipulative, corrupt society.

Fitzgerald produces a world devoid to true love. All of these empty people fail. This motif begins in chapter one when Gatsby stands alone and reaches toward Daisy's house and is repeated again when Myrtle stands at the upper window and looks down on Tom, Nick, and Jordan. Gatsby will never achieve a true relationship with Daisy; it will simply be a brief affair (21). Fitzgerald explores relationships and finds that no love exists. He

admits in a letter to Edmund Wilson that he "gave no account" to "emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy" (341). Gatsby's love is, similar to his life, an illusion and Nick loves no one. Daisy and Tom's relationship is a cold, sometimes brutal, emotionless arrangement based on lies, entanglements, and secrets. Myrtle and George are not in love. If George loves Myrtle, it is an impotent, captive love. The Tom/Myrtle union is similar to the Dorimene/Dorante union in that Myrtle is seeking wealth. Tom is her ticket out of the ash heaps. Myrtle's sister, Catherine, informs Nick, "She really ought to get away from him' [George] . . . 'They've been living over that garage for eleven years. And Tom's the first sweetie she ever had'" (35). Myrtle tells everyone that her marriage to Wilson is based on the fact that she thought he was a "gentleman" (35). Mrs. McKee's marriage to Mr. McKee is a usurious one. Chester McKee saves Lucille from marrying "a little kike" (34). She relates, "I knew he was below me. Everybody kept saying to me: 'Lucille, that man's 'way below you!' But if I hadn't met Chester, he'd of got me sure" (34-5). The closest case of true love is Gatsby's for Daisy, and this love is thwarted. If Daisy does love Gatsby, the union is not resolved. As already mentioned, her association with Gatsby may be akin to Tom's association with Myrtle, except Daisy uses Gatsby to even the score with Tom. In either interpretation, true love is unaccommodated. Person argues that the theme of *Gatsby* is "the mutual alienation--of men and women before the materialistic values of modern society" (251).

The two main female characters Daisy and Myrtle have one thing in common: their relationship with Tom Buchanan. Both relationships are usurious. Tom is the "force" which shapes Daisy's life (151). He wins her with "pomp and circumstance" which includes expensive pearls and a fabulous wedding party (77). After her drunken waffling episode, Tom's pearls are put around her neck, and she marches to wed him and become his possession. The pearls are equivalent to the fancy collar which Myrtle buys (with Tom's money) for her dog. Myrtle (and Daisy) are owned as bitch-dogs by Tom, but Mr. Wilson connects the dog collar with Myrtle's other life (158). When Myrtle meets Tom,



she is swayed by his rich appearance and is with him as a means to get out of her dreary life which leads to the idea of commerce:

Myrtle's falling in love with Tom is unforgettable for her . . . Her recollection is itself framed by the strip of ads running over windows and doors. We are forced by the prose that Fitzgerald uses to recognize Myrtle's own natural sense of their connection to her feelings. Is it too much to say that her feelings respond to images and commodities? (64)

The two women Nick comes into contact with through Tom are used as bribes. Jordan is supplied to Nick by Tom and Daisy. Daisy says, "In fact, I think I'll arrange a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I'll sort of--oh--fling you together" (19). Daisy, a possession herself, knows the way to win Nick over; she will give him his own female possession. Myrtle, Tom's correlative possession, does the same thing when she invites her sister Catherine to the apartment as an escort for Nick. Myrtle says, "Come on, . . . I'll telephone my sister Catherine. She's said to be very beautiful by people who ought to know" (28). These women are offered to Nick as clearly as Gatsby offers him a chance to make money as a returned favor for arranging the meeting with Daisy.

### Appearance Versus Reality

Appearance versus reality is enmeshed in the themes of decay, stasis, and usury. Edward Bloom describes the satiric ideology of reality:

The satirist's plot reconstructs a quicksand reality. Somewhere, he knows, there is substance, but disaster is more likely than fulfillment to reward the search for it. Reality is disguised by treachery made absurd, by illusion and corruption enacted with Chaplinesque pathos. Whatever the disguise, the victim remains. Because this vision of reality tends to be kaleidoscopic and fragmented rather than disciplined by successive events, it does probably translate itself into an appearance of "disjunctiveness." (107)

This theme is connected to the absurdity of life when things, people, places, and ceremonies are not as they appear.

The axis for illusion is the nouveau riche character whose individual identity is an illusion. Trimalchio, Jourdain, and Gatsby are interested in self-creation, and they will use any illusion to portray their created identity. They each carry the seed of their being. Hanak's description of Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme as "the alienation of man from reality due to an exaggerated confidence in everything except nature" (503), adequately defines Trimalchio, Jourdain, and Gatsby.

Trimalchio may not enter fully into his illusion, but he creates a dream just the same. He produces pictures of his real life in the frescoes upon entering the house, but his tomb will be designed to portray him as born aristocracy (71). Guilhamet defines Trimalchio as "a modern success story":

He has risen from slavery to enormous wealth and prestige. But his rise has come through corruption, not out of it, and his origins and ignorance dog his every attempt to recreate his image. Having become a vile master, he remains always a slave. Thus he represents Roman society from top to bottom in its love of money, its superstition and bad taste. (42)

Trimalchio's banquet is an illusion full of tricks, puns, and conundrums. Palmeri contends that Trimalchio uses "his position as a rich host to garner flattery and applause" (35).

Jourdain and Gatsby, especially, are able to enter fully into the creation of their dreams. For Jourdain, this dream creation is becoming the mamamouchi. Covielle describes Jourdain as a "madman" (V). Jourdain's gentlemanly desire is connected to future time; he wants to be a gentleman now. Gossman describes Jourdain as a character

who is "moved primarily by" a "desire to force the world to recognize him" (216). He does not want to begin building a bridge to an aristocratic life for his future generations. His reason for becoming a mamamouchi is that he will be a "paladin," and "the equal of the greatest lords on earth" (IV). Jourdain could after all give his daughter to Cleonte, who is one of the rising merchant class. This is the first step in the social ladder from bourgeois to nobleman. However, Jourdain opts for immediate recognition as a nobleman. Gossman notes that Jourdain "does not aspire to any *real* change, only to a change in appearances, and only what is necessary to achieve this change in appearances has usefulness and value in his eyes" (246-7). Throughout the play, Jourdain lives a fantasy. Pellissier defines him as "Plato's concept of the ideal comic character" because he is "self-ignorant" but is powerless to "pose a threat to others." Further, Pellissier notes that Jourdain's "fixed idea" (of becoming a gentleman) affects his "entire personality [which] has been colored by delusion" (152). This "delusion" is what allows Jourdain, according to Pellissier, to be "manipulated" by words designed to flatter his "false-image" and to accept the improbable story that his father was "a gentleman who bought cloth to be distributed among his friends who reimbursed him" rather than a lowly cloth merchant (153). Riggs describes Jourdain's new identity as "a void of non-meaning" (409). Jourdain has achieved what Gatsby cannot. Jourdain's illusion becomes his reality. McBride says that the ceremony has "transformed his exile and the jeering world into a unified whole held together by nothing more than the power of his illusions, which are however more real than reality" (135).

Gatsby, lost in his illusion, is annulled by other characters who are realistic and who refuse to accept his illusion. For Gatsby, the dream is high society and Daisy's exclusive love. Gatsby's illusion extends to the fact that he does not want Daisy to know the real James Gatz, and he rejects knowing the real Daisy:

There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of

his dreams--not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. (97)

Daisy is older, she has loved another man who happens to be her present husband, and she has a child. Although these factors are real, Gatsby ignores them. Gatsby's illusion involves past time. When Nick warns, "You can't repeat the past," Gatsby is incredulous: "Can't repeat the past?" . . . "Why of course you can!" (111). Nick realizes that Gatsby wants "to recover something, some idea of himself" (111). Perosa notes, "Fulfillment destroys the dream"--as Fitzgerald himself was to write. A long-cherished, sentimental illusion can be shattered by a mere brush with reality, or at least reduced to smaller dimensions. Gatsby's enormous dream is bound to suffer from any contact with reality" (64). Gatsby's reaction to Pammy, Daisy's child, who is the tangible symbol of passing time and Daisy's union with Tom, is disbelief (117). Gatsby aspires to being accepted by retreating into the past with Daisy; her denial of Tom will blot out the present and any intervening years between the past and the present. This absurd idea balances illusion against reality. Lhamon writes, "Indeed, the focus in *Gatsby* is on power, on the ability to control reality for one's purposes. Therefore, Fitzgerald demonstrates social position most notably by his characters' ability to order environmental elements: material space, time, and people" (167).

Gatsby throws parties that resemble "amusement parks," and his personality is a persona of "his Platonic conception of himself" (Fitzgerald 99). He desires to attain a "nice girl" from the wealthy aristocracy by attaining wealth criminally and passing himself off as aristocracy (148). His claim as an Oxford man is backed by proof via a photograph (67). In his waking dreams, Gatsby accepts "a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality" and "a promise that the rock of the world was founded on a fairy's wing" (100). His ultimate goal is to have Daisy deny the time she has spent with Tom,

and Nick is astounded that Gatsby actually believes he can "repeat the past" (111). Later, when Gatsby, who wants to remove Tom from Daisy's life as if he were cancer, meets Pammy, Daisy's and Tom's child, Nick says that Gatsby "kept looking at the child with surprise. I don't think he had ever really believed in its existence before" (117). This tangible child does not fit into Gatsby's colossal illusion. Critics continuously link Gatsby's dream to the American dream. In the American dream everything turns out fine; it is an Edenic myth of happiness before the fall. Gatsby's dream reflects this Edenic myth, for he wants to return with Daisy to a past time, prior to her marriage to Tom and the birth of their child. Fiedler notes, "Fitzgerald's young men go east . . . in quest . . . of . . . an absolute America; a happy ending complete with new car, big house, money, and the girl!" (qtd. in Fraser 152).

The very structures of Satyricon, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, and The Great Gatsby hinge on illusion versus reality. Encolpius is never quite sure of Trimalchio's artifice or proposals; Jourdain does not recognize the Turkish sham; Nick is unsure of Gatsby's nebulous past. Trimalchio's delusion of grandeur is tied to the future in death; Jourdain's is tied to the present; and Gatsby's is tied to the past. Further, all of the illusions are corrupt because the dreams themselves are corrupt; the dreamers are corrupt and living in a corrupt society. Illusion progresses from Trimalchio, who purposely will leave an illusion of himself in posterity, to Jourdain's illusion, which is sustained throughout the play, to Gatsby's illusion, which is ambiguous. Nick believes that Gatsby finally recognizes reality, yet this is mere supposition on Nick's part. Jourdain's illusion is left intact. Pellissier notes that Jourdain is "completely oblivious to the fact that nothing turns out well" (154). Unlike Jourdain or Trimalchio, Gatsby's illusion is broken by his death. These characters' illusions are universal symbols of the nouveau riche characters' desires to enter into the realm of what Jourdain refers to as "people of quality." Gossman describes Jourdain's behavior as "the desire *to be distinguished* is a desire to be

distinguished from one group by being recognized as a member of a superior group, the superiority of which the aspirant himself necessarily recognizes" (208).

### Symbolism

Symbolism enhances the illusion. From Trimalchio's illusory tricks to Eumolpius' invented fortune, to the fake appearance on Lichas' ship, nothing is as it seems. Jourdain is hooked into a false ceremony and false fiancé for his daughter. Gatsby is inundated with symbols of time: a broken clock or an old time table. Lehan explains, "Fitzgerald depicts the dreamer--vulgar and tasteless--trying to turn back the clock. His hopeless task, his fidelity of purpose, even the shoddiness of the dream itself--all combine to make Gatsby's attempt poignant and touching. Gatsby is Sisyphus without self-knowledge or cosmic understanding" (Craft of Fiction 109). Illusion involves many people who are not as they appear. Many characters assume roles or have double identities or recreate themselves.

Trimalchio is self-created along with most of his guests, who are all ex-slaves but loaded with money. Agamemnon, the scholar, assumes the role of supplicant to procure free meals. Fortunata is self-created. Even Niceros' story of the wolfman is part of the theme of double identity. Later, Eumolpus, along with Encolpius and Giton take on the role of rich man and his lackeys in Croton. Encolpius and Giton disguise themselves as slaves on Lichas' ship.

Jourdain's desire is to become a creation of his own illusion. He wants to be a gentleman and becomes a mamamouchi. Dorante pretends to be Jourdain's friend, but his real role is a self-centered one. Cleonte and Covielle role play to obtain their desire. Mme. Jourdain and Nicole accept this behavior as a means to an end.

Gatsby is self-centered, but he is not alone. Berman notes that most of the Gatsby characters have double identities:

Gatsby aside, much else in his story depends on self-falsification. The theme was deep and wide in American culture during the twenties. And virtually all the major figures in *The Great Gatsby* are self-falsifying. They exist in a strange, dual relationship to themselves--sometimes, as in the case of Myrtle Wilson, actually living two lives. We see each character twice: as they would like to be seen, and as they are. (74)

Part of the problem with self-creation of the nouveau riche is that it is not in depth; it is only a facade. Walker applies this facade to Jourdain: "The donning of the elegant costume seems to possess the greatest magic for Jourdain, both as he puts on his fine suit at the start and the Turkish outfit at the end. Intellectual or mental symbols are worthless to him" (127). All three characters change their names or titles. Trimalchio takes his former master's name, Jourdain takes the pseudo-title of mamamouchi, and James Gatz becomes Jay Gatsby.

Symbolic settings enhance the illusory theme, especially for Satyricon and Gatsby. Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, on the other hand, is illusion on stage in the dramatic tradition. Fernandez argues that Jourdain is "wholly unaware" of his ridiculousness and his "perception" of himself "never coincide[s] with that of the spectator" (51). Mould explains the theater as illusion:

The reality of . . . theatrical illusion was prevalent in human activities and is mirrored in Moliere's theater. His audience liked to recognize on stage representations of characters and situations familiar to their daily life, yet they wished the theater to be far enough removed from the reality they knew to be comic. Moliere's theater created a link between the reality of illusion in life and the illusion of reality in the theater. His plays are often realistic in their portrayal

of characters and social mores; the illusion closely resembles the reality of daily existence. It was, of course, precisely this realism which so delighted and infuriated Moliere's contemporaries. (522)

In Satyricon, Encolpius is often caught in a maze. The city at the beginning is a maze, for Encolpius and Ascyltus (8-9). Encolpius, later, describes Trimalchio's house as a "labyrinth" in which he is "trapped" (73). Encolpius repeatedly goes to the wrong place because he mistakes one place for another.

In Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Nick explains the confusion of location as he tells the reader that West Egg and East Egg are similar with "identical contour and separated only by a courtesy bay" and that "their physical resemblance must be a source of perpetual confusion to the gulls that fly overhead" (5). However, this identity is an illusion, for he notes, "To the wingless a more arresting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size" (5). In short, West Egg is "less fashionable" (5) than East Egg. West Egg is nouveau riche; East Egg, aristocracy. Each time the two societies of East and West Egg are interwoven, there is a distinct difference. At one of Gatsby's parties, Nick and Jordan sit with a group of people from East Egg: "Instead of rambling, this party [group of people] had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the country-side--East Egg condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gayety" (45). Nick also experiences illusions concerning New York City. For him, it is a very romantic place with a "wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world" (69), and "anything can happen" there (69). At another time, Nick imagines New York City as a "pastoral" place which could easily host "a great flock of white sheep" (28). New York City holds, for Nick, romantic encounters:

I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives, and no one



would ever know or disapprove. Sometimes, in my mind, I followed them to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets, and they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness. (57)

The reality of New York is that it is wrapped in violence and mundane activities. It is in New York City that Myrtle's nose is broken, Rosy Rosenthal is shot "three times in his full belly" (71), and Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby vehemently argue. Besides the violence, Nick spends disciplined days studying and working on the bond business in New York City.

Thematically, the books are similar. The illusory nature of people, things, time, and places is interconnected with a decadent society full of manipulative and self-centered people. The illusory society is a completely fake society. Even if it seems romantic, it is unreal. The multitude of ridiculous situations in all three books lends themselves to the absurdity and decadence of the ages respectively. The authors explore humanity in a social setting; for this reason, the books are episodic, usually moving from one social situation to another, and these social settings advance the theme of decadence.

## Chapter IV

### Conclusion

Petronius, Moliere, and Fitzgerald were all working in a new form, and chronologically, these authors progress from urbane to biting satire. Petronius' satire does not fit the classical Roman formula. Gilleland delineates the differences:

The *Satiricon* is devoted entirely to amusement, without pretense to the moral purpose or reform so characteristic of the true Roman satirists. It has a depth of realism in language and description foreign to other ancient romances, both comic and serious. Above all, it contains a passive cynicism, a mockery of all things, and a sense of the ludicrous foreign to other writers of antiquity. We do not find in Petronius the rage of a Juvenal, the grumbling of a Tacitus, or the prurience of a Suetonius. Instead, . . . it is farcical laughter, a phrase used in the orgy with

Quartilla, which seems to epitomize the spirit of the *Satiricon* and its author. (xli)

Thus, Petronius' Satyricon is considered an original work and an antique novel. Moliere, at the king's request, produces a dramatic form to incorporate dance. He achieves a tight connection with plot and theme in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. The ceremony and the ballet of nations logically fit the comedic action, and the comedy is a reflection of society. Walker writes, "To say that his [Moliere's] comedies sought to correct the ways society is an error; while showing human follies he sought to mirror man and not chastise him" (23). By the time Fitzgerald writes, there is little trace of slapstick humor unless it is encased in violence. In the same vein, before Fitzgerald began writing Gatsby, he states, "I want to write something *new*--something extraordinary and beautiful and simple + intricately patterned" (qtd. in Bruccoli 4). Later, he regretted that the readers/critics did not understand his work. Fitzgerald was disappointed in the lagging sale of Gatsby and attributed it to the variety of mediocre reviews the book received. In a letter to Maxwell Perkins, Fitzgerald complains of the hopeless situation: "There's no use for indignation against the long suffering public. . . . Most of the reviewers floundered around in a piece

of work that obviously they completely failed to understand and tried to give it reviews that committed them neither pro or con until someone of culture had spoken" (181).

Perhaps he was referring to their neglect concerning his satiric plot.

Possibly connected to the new form are these texts' problematic titles. Petronius' title, Satyricon, is vague enough to be questioned as either satire or satyr. Gilleland notes, "No title certainly given to the work by Petronius himself has come down to us. . . . The best evidence in the MSS however points toward *Satiricon*, a Greek adjectival form of the genitive plural" (xxi). Moliere, producing a new form called comedie-ballet, used the oxymoronic title, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. Fitzgerald could not decide among several choices, including *Trimalchio in West Egg*. He even wanted to change the title at the last minute to *Under the Red, White, and Blue*. Bruccoli notes, "Fitzgerald's uncertainty about the title lasted for five months as he considered and rejected 'Trimalchio', 'Gold-Hatted Gatsby', 'Gatsby', 'The High-Bouncing Lover', and 'On the Road to West Egg'. On March 19 he settled on 'Under the Red, White, and Blue', but by then it was too late to change the title" (6). These problems of titling indicate Fitzgerald's intention toward subtle satire. In this context, Fitzgerald's describing Gatsby as *great* works ironically. Mizener writes, "Out of Gatsby's ignorance of his real greatness and his misunderstanding of his notoriety, Fitzgerald gets most of the book's direct irony" (176). This technique is similar to describing Jourdain as a *bourgeois* gentleman. Ciccone comments that Moliere's title explains his theme:

In this sense, however, we need go no further than the title to understand Moliere's theme: bourgeois and gentilhomme are inherently contradictory terms. In attempting to unite them in one person, Jourdain actually creates a new class, a class as much isolated from its bourgeois surroundings as it is excluded from the aristocratic world it would appropriate. (62)

Satirists use similar techniques including irony and incongruity for emphasis. Each of these texts is full of irony, and irony is often used overtly as in the pederast Eumolpus'

discourse concerning decadent sexuality or Jourdain's denunciation of his "ignorant" wife and servant. Irony is also woven into the very structure of each text. Irony is interlaced into the characters via their relation to money and their lifestyles. Thus, the technique is inextricably linked to the target.

The educated, intelligent, or perspicacious characters are either ignored, useless, or hollow. Petronius produces the student Encolpius, who is literally and figuratively useless and impotent, and the artist, Eumolpus, who is immoral and hollow. Moliere follows this pattern with the educated instructors of music, dance, and philosophy who are hollow and the pragmatic Mme. Jourdain who is ignored by her shallow husband. Fitzgerald creates Nick and Tom, both Yale graduates, who are respectively useless and hollow. All of these characters wander in a wasteland which cannot be healed.

Each text focuses on money as power, so each person who does not have money strives toward that goal. Repeatedly, characters work to attain money by all kinds of methods, legal or illegal. The parasitic and manipulative characters who are seeking wealth add to the theme of hollow men. Ironically, money increases no person's happiness. It may make life more luxurious, as in Trimalchio's case or easier to survive discord as in Daisy's, but the characters with money cannot obtain their greatest desires.

Trimalchio has no true love, no humanity, and most important to him, he cannot cheat death. He is obsessed with death, and although he would like to manipulate and control death, he will never be able to do it. His money cannot buy more time on earth than his destiny allows. Jourdain is unable to buy taste or education; he will never be a gentleman. He throws a good deal of money toward his pursuit to become nobility, yet he ends where he begins as a mere bourgeois with a daughter married within his same class. What Jourdain really needs to buy is the same thing Trimalchio needs: Time. Jourdain wants to bypass the generations of evolving into nobility by spending money to do it immediately. Romanowski describes Jourdain's impossible desire:

Not that ennoblement was impossible, but it was a long process usually covering

three, often four generations. . . . [O]ne ascended slowly up the economic ladder into the educated, upper levels of the bourgeoisie, and then finally into the ranks of the "noblesse de robe" through various means: through buying of "charges" that carried noble titles with them or through military service, or through letters of the King granting nobility, which in the course of the 17th century became harder to obtain. . . . However, though this type of ennoblement resulted in higher social standing, it could never make one a member of the old-line aristocracy of the sword, for one could only be born of such a rank . . . he is not even close to becoming a member of the new nobility. (38)

Fitzgerald's American aristocracy is restless and unhappy. Tom's life is empty, Daisy is miserable, yet they stick together in their vacuous existence. Bewley argues, "In *Gatsby* we see that the charming irresponsibility of the flapper has developed into the criminal amorality of Daisy Buchanan, and that the smug conceit of the Rich Boy has hardened into Tom Buchanan's arrogant cruelty" (51). Gatsby's immense fortune can purchase neither taste nor education nor his greatest desire: Daisy. Gatsby really is trying to buy time, too. He wants to repeat the past, manipulate it, and control its outcome. He feels he has this power since he has, at least in his mind, manipulated his past through redesigning himself to fit his own needs. However, he is left suspended in time and alone. Gatsby's story is the culmination of where Trimalchio and Jourdain are headed. Lehan notes that Gatsby is the "dreamer distorted" (73). However, Trimalchio and Jourdain remain in their dream; they are not direct rivals with their exemplar as is Gatsby with Tom Buchanan. Trimalchio, in his death mime, is convinced through flattery that his fellow humans love him. Jourdain is left in a happy fantasy world. Howarth describes Jourdain's illusion as "a sociable place, peopled with hangers-on who flatter his vanity" (223).

The final, major irony is that characters continuously strive against nothing. They may look as if they are moving toward a new beginning, yet they are quagmired or they regress. They often struggle for individuality in a stratified society. Trimalchio, Jourdain,

and Gatsby are all aware that identity will allow them to achieve their goals. Trimalchio presents his identity as all powerful. He has control over his wealth, wife, slaves, and guests. Jourdain presents himself as striving to live a courtly, noble life. Harrison comments, "As he hires various tutors to teach him music, dance, fencing, and philosophy, Jourdain appears to recognize that success in society entails a mastery of systems of self-presentations" (77). Gatsby must introduce himself as independently wealthy and educated to reclaim Daisy. He displays a photograph of himself at Oxford to prove his education; he displays his vast wealth directly to Daisy by showing off his mansion, his fancy car, and his tailor-made clothes. All of the targeted nouveau riche characters' gaudiness, lack of education, and criticism of lower classes is tied to their illusions. They feel that they are different, and this attitude misplaces and isolates them in society. Because the characters are basically spinning their wheels, the plots are episodic and even illogical.

Encolpius, Eumolpus, and Trimalchio are static characters. Encolpius achieves sexual potency, but he remains a classless wanderer. Jourdain is left in stasis, and he even regresses. He spends money for nothing; his daughter's will is fulfilled, not his, and he loses his object of desire. Gatsby and Myrtle, for all their resolution, are also left in stasis. Myrtle is first locked away in her garage apartment; then, she is killed and her dynamism is gone: "The mouth was wide open and ripped at the corners, as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored so long" (138). Gatsby is as static as his "Platonic conception of himself" (99). Nick notes that Gatsby's identity is the seventeen-year old perception of himself; he does not mature from that point (99). Nick himself regresses by turning back to the west from which he had originally escaped. Everything remains exactly as it was. Klipspringer sings of the irony of life in the song, "Ain't We Got Fun?": "*One thing's sure and nothing's surer / The rich get richer and the poor get--children / In the meantime, / In between time-----*" (97). Palmeri contends that

"Narrative satires do not end with an achieved harmony; the struggle they embody between opposed views of the world reaches no satisfactory resolution or synthesis" (4).

Reason is at stake in each text. Repeatedly, Encolpius and other characters face unreasonable behavior. Trimalchio's pseudo-death and Eumolpius' requirement in his will for his supplicants to eat his flesh to gain a non-existent legacy are thematic episodes concerning unreasonable behavior. Jourdain's self-centered insistence on uniting his daughter with a gentleman or his behavior concerning Dorante lend themselves to non-reason. Moreover, Jourdain is completely unreasonable in all of his actions due to his ridiculous obsession. Moliere sustains unreason throughout the play. McBride notes that the "arrival" of the philosophy teacher conveys "unreason . . . to its most ludicrous potential" (137). Gatsby's idea to turn back the clock is as unreasonable as Tom's insistence that civilization is undermined by non-Aryan races.

Satire begs for performance because it speaks to all of society pleasantly through comedy but concerns serious subject matter for all of society, and all three of these texts have been performed on stage or produced in film. Moliere, of course, wrote for performance. Slater writes, "Moliere repeatedly asserted that he regarded his plays as acting texts. He maintained that seeing a performance was what counted, and that reading the play came a very poor second" (161). Moliere's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme is still performed quite often, and there is at least one film version plus a recent television version. Slater notes that "Moliere has left the director very free" (164). According to Savoie, the 1970 French television version of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme was "treated in a grotesque manner [and] The text was not respected" (656). In the 1959 film version of Moliere's play, the farce is quite obvious; in fact, Jourdain and his cohorts (especially the instructors) are stooges. The major discrepancy between Dorimene and Jourdain is very apparent. Petronius' Satyricon uses some theatrical devices. Palmeri comments, "Petronius frequently provides props that emphasize the theatricality of the scene, for example, the blunted razor with which Giton pretends to cut his throat (94) and his

genitals (108)" (22). Walsh mentions that the dramatic technique of Roman mime inundates *Satyricon* (24). *Satyricon* was transformed to film in *Fellini Satyricon* (1969) which is a grotesque rendering of the novel, with Trimalchio's banquet as the centerpiece. Bernard Dick contends that Fellini's film is influenced greatly by the late nineteen sixties:

Fellini has achieved his purpose. On the one hand, he wanted to portray "a completely alien world" that had "the enigmatic transparency, the indecipherable clarity of dreams" (p. 26). On the other hand, he wanted to establish parallels between the time of Petronius and the time the film was made: "We can find disconcerting analogies between Roman society before the final arrival of Christianity--a cynical society, impassive, corrupt and frenzied--and society today, more blurred in its external characteristics only because it is internally more confused" (p. 43). (148)

In this manner, Fellini proves that satire is timeless and universal. However, Dick finds that Fellini fails by enforcing "order" on the "fragmentary" plot. "Such order," writes Dick, "is illusory" (157). Bondanella notes that Fellini's "scenario outline" is "radically" different from the "original literary text" (185). Bondanella is correct; Petronius' plot is barely perceptible in large episodes of Fellini's film. Although the decadence is apparent in Fellini's film, much of the ironic discrepancy is lost. *The Great Gatsby* has been the subject of one play, performed during Fitzgerald's lifetime, and three film versions. Each film has been adapted and the book's elements have been reorganized to match the current trends. Fitzgerald, according to Dessner, "borrows cinematic techniques for Nick Carraway's narrative" (175). Margolies believes that *Gatsby* "has proven too much of a challenge for its adapters" (197), and every adaptation displays "very little of Fitzgerald's incisive satire" (198). Margolies describes the first silent film version (1926) of *Gatsby* as a failure because it "deviated widely" from the plot of the novel and gave the novel "a happy ending" (191). The second film version (1949), according to Margolies, failed because of Hollywood's "Production Code" which required a great deal of "moralizing" to



be "added" to the plot (192). Margolies notes that the third film version (1974) was also a failure, although closer to the plot line. The characters were miscast, especially Robert Redford as Gatsby. Margolies concludes that "Robert Redford's matinee-idol face, blonde hair, and far too even voice in no way fit Fitzgerald's description of 'an elegant young roughneck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd'" (197). Berman notes, "The Great Gatsby relies on the familiarity of its own audience, after a generation of movies, with the signs and conventions of film" (152).

Satire serves not only the function of instruction, but also it has a dichotomous role in time, for it is both temporal yet as a universal truth; it becomes a historical record. For example, Satyricon functions by applying a universal truth of corruption and decadence of humanity to a specific historical culture. Historically, empires are corrupt, and Petronius portrays the corruption of the Roman Empire just as Moliere portrays a corrupt France, and Fitzgerald portrays a corrupt America. This corruption is shown in the three texts through decadence, lack of emotions, apathy, and hypocrisy. Although the Satyricon is a fragment, the existing part portrays an Epicurean, hedonistic empire. Arrowsmith argues that "Petronius believes that perversion and also impotence are typical symptoms of a luxurious and unnatural society" (Ancient Writers 841). Ogilvie describes the Satyricon as "wickedly observant of life and manners" (195). Moliere uses drama as a mimetic art. Jourdain's world is Moliere's, and the illogical, corrupt, loveless characters are Moliere's French society. Gossman contends that Moliere's insight is prevalent today:

And what is the modern search for "status symbols" if not a new and yet easily recognized form of Jourdainism? Even to-day the Jourdaines are more naive and frank in their simple adoration of the world . . . . . What Moliere said three centuries ago . . . has become one to the most widespread phenomena of our age. Nearly all of us, from the highest to the lowest, suffer from the neuroses that afflicted the comic heroes of Moliere. (249)

Mander defines Moliere's "advice" as this: "Man lives in a community, sometimes an evil one. It is necessary to make concessions to this community and to respect certain rules of the game even when, as sometimes occurs, one's humanity thereby suffers a loss. The important thing is survival" (46). Moliere through dance imposes order on the chaos in the same manner as Nick, who desires things to be at a "sort of moral attention forever" (2).

Fitzgerald's Gatsby is a waste-land world as is Petronius' Satyricon. T. S. Eliot ties his Wasteland to Petronius as surely as Fitzgerald ties Gatsby to both Eliot and Petronius. Repeatedly, critics note the valley of ashes as a symbol of the modern waste land. Fitzgerald portrays the American dream as a corrupt, empty, fruitless, degenerate failure. There are no winners in Gatsby. Gatsby portrays, through Nick Carraway's perspective, a satire of the American Dream, the materialism of a capitalist society, and the vulgar Jazz Age which is similar to Petronius' portrayal of his vulgar, corrupt Roman Empire. Fussell describes Gatsby in conjunction with capitalist America: "Beauty, the presumed object of aesthetic contemplation, is commercialized, love is bought and sold. Money is the means to the violent recovery or specious arrest of an enchanting youth" (44). Bewley effectively defines Gatsby as a novel that is "a criticism of American experience" (125). Fraser ties Fitzgerald's satire to Petronius': "Yet Fitzgerald's narrator, not unlike Petronius's, does describe in his own odyssey a parody, a parody of the American dream which rises to the poetic height we have come in The Great Gatsby to accept as its most indigenous quality" (152). MacKendrick observes, "For Petronius is not the first, nor Fitzgerald the last, to be called monstrous by the critics for describing their age as they see it: socially, intellectually, politically corrupt" (314). All three authors fill the landscape with hollow men. Eumolpus, Dorante, and Tom Buchanan epitomize the self-centered, manipulative, inhumane persons of the wasteland society. Besides the empty characters, there are the displaced ones such as Encolpius, Jourdain, and Gatsby who have trouble finding their way.

Satire deals with what Nick describes as "the inexhaustible variety of life" (36). Petronius, Moliere, and Fitzgerald follow this formula, for their texts are a series of nexuses. Collectively, their texts describe differing sexuality, love and lust; education and ignorance; taste and gaudiness; meaning and meaninglessness; order and chaos; morality and amorality; purpose and purposelessness; beauty and ugliness; benevolence and malevolence; regeneration and decay; maturity and immaturity; reality and illusion; life and death. Spacks notes that satire "involve[s] . . . audiences in a special tension of perception, encourage[s] complacent superiority only to shatter it, tease[s] the onlooker until he does not know whether he feels pleasure or pain" (377). Highet's tribute to satire is also definitive:

Hail, Satire! Hail, clear-eyed, sharp-tongued, hot-tempered, outwardly disillusioned and secretly idealistic Muse! Mother of Comedy, sister of Tragedy, defender and critic of Philosophy, hail! You are a difficult companion, a mistress sometimes elusive and tantalizing, sometimes harsh and repellent; but in your mercurial presence no one is ever bored. Stupidity, Self-satisfaction, Corruption, the Belief in Inevitable Progress--these and other intellectual monsters, produced spontaneously from the waste energy of the human mind, you have destroyed again and again. Still they are reborn, and still you arise to destroy them. (243-4)

All literature, though born from the vision of the artist, is borne from a time and place which connects everyone: Humanity.

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