



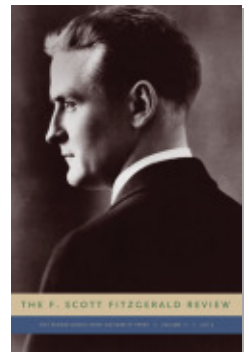
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Dick Humbird and the Devil Wagon of Doom

Cars, Carnivores, and Feminine Carnality in *This Side of Paradise*

Richard M. Clark

In Beach Haven, New Jersey, on the first day of July 1916, beachgoers gaped in horror as “the fin of a fish” approached twenty-five-year-old Charles Epting Vansant (“Dies after Attack”). While “blood sprea[d] over the surface of the sea” (Everson), lifeguard Alexander Ott raced to Vansant’s rescue but arrived too late. According to Jack Ott, Alexander’s son, as the lifeguard pulled Vansant onto the beach, “blood was pumping onto the sand” (qtd. in Fernicola 7). Vansant died several hours after the attack. Five days later, bathers in Spring Lake, New Jersey, witnessed a similar scene. As lifeguards responded to a swimmer in distress, “a woman cried that the man in the red canoe had upset.” But the man had no red canoe. When the lifeguards reached him, Charles Bruder, a bellhop at the Essex & Sussex Hotel, “cried out that a shark had bitten him and then fainted.” After the rescue party brought Bruder to shore, they examined the carnage: “[H]is left leg had been bitten off above the knee and the right leg just below the knee. The shark had nipped his left side, for there were marks of teeth beneath the arm.” A doctor was summoned, but “before one arrived . . . the man was dead” (“Shark Kills Bather”). Thirty miles away, denizens of Matawan, New Jersey, “had been sympathetically affected by the reports of the death[s] of Charles E. Vansant and Charles Bruder. But those places were far away, and the tragedies had not touched them closely” (“Shark Kills 2 Bathers” 1).

The good folks of Matawan would feel more than sympathy on 12 July 1916. To their everlasting regret, they scoffed at reports of shark sightings in Matawan Creek. When twelve-year-old epileptic Lester Stillwell began “screaming and yelling and waving his arms wildly” as his “body was swirling round and round in the water,” fellow swimmers mistook his throes for a seizure; but rescuers would find Stillwell’s body “so terribly torn by the shark” that “he died of loss of blood” (“Shark Kills 2 Bathers” 1). The shark also mauled Joseph Dunn, badly injuring his leg as he fled after the initial attack (3). Twenty-four-year-old

Stanley Fisher dove into the creek and retrieved Stillwell's body, but, before he got to the shore, the shark struck again: "Those who reached him found [Fisher's] right leg stripped of flesh from above the hip at the waist line to a point below the knee. It was as though the limb had been raked with heavy, dull knives." Fisher "died before he could be carried to the operating table" (3). In the summer of 1916, these terrifying incidents became a national sensation, competing for space with news of the war on front pages and even coming up in a 14 July meeting between President Wilson and his cabinet, who resolved to dispatch the Coast Guard "to use every means necessary for driving the sharks away or killing them." That same day, in the House of Representatives, New Jersey Congressman Isaac Bacharach proposed "an appropriation of \$5,000 to aid in the search for man-eating sharks along the New Jersey coast" ("Cabinet Discusses Sharks").

The shark emerges as an important image in *This Side of Paradise*, the novel F. Scott Fitzgerald began writing about sixteen months after the New Jersey attacks.¹ As he and his college friends return from a "gay party" in New York City (*Paradise* 85), Fitzgerald's protagonist Amory Blaine compares the automobile to a shark, a fitting metaphor considering the role of the car in liberalization of sexual mores during the period and Fitzgerald's anxiety over these changes. As many commentators have pointed out, Fitzgerald equates sex with evil in *This Side of Paradise*—and automobiles gave young couples of the 1910s something they could not attain in their parents' parlors: a private space in which to experiment with sex. Early in the novel, Fitzgerald alludes to the automobile's key role in courtship practices of the period: when Amory describes an attractive female prospect, he adds that she's "got a car of her own and that's damn convenient" (52). Much like the aquatic "man-eater" (as period articles described the shark) killed four swimmers, the "devil wagon"² destroys Dick Humbird, the widely admired campus big man who posthumously transforms from a model of aristocratic glamour to a symbol for debauchery. In addition, newspaper and magazine articles published around the time Fitzgerald composed his first novel associated motor vehicles with emancipated women, who, because of advanced automobile technology, took to the wheel en masse, and the war in Europe, where motorized vehicles facilitated troop and arms movement—and killing. Thus, the automobile, with its link to promiscuity, becomes a vehicle of moral death at the hands of beautiful, evil women and literal death in armed combat.

Cars and car accidents play an important role in many of Fitzgerald's works, often with sinister implications. Kenneth G. Johnston notes that "[t]he

automobile and the dream girl are inextricably linked in Fitzgerald's fiction" and lists more than a dozen works in which cars play important roles in the male protagonists' romantic affairs. As Johnston points out, car accidents and accidents narrowly avoided loom large in *The Great Gatsby* especially: "The auto accidents, or near-accidents, in the novel—Daisy's hit-and-run, Jordan's near miss of a workman, and the accident of the drunken guest who drives into a ditch fifty feet from Gatsby's door and Tom Buchanan's outside of Santa Barbara—all convey the carelessness, recklessness, and irresponsibility of the times, as well as of the individuals immediately involved" (48).³

Deborah Clarke also finds a strong link between women and automobiles in Fitzgerald's oeuvre: "women and cars" add up to a "deadly combination." Clarke notes that Fitzgerald derives the name Jordan Baker from "two cars marketed to women, the Jordan Playboy and the Baker Electric" and that Nick describes Jordan's driving as "rotten." In addition, Nick associates Jordan's poor driving skills with "her dishonesty, recalling her various lies and rumors of moving a ball in a golf tournament at the same time he is accusing her of bad driving." Moreover, of course, "when Daisy is at the wheel, people die." Considering this evidence, Clarke asserts, "If women are constructed through automobility in Fitzgerald's world, one sees scant hope for the future of human-kind" (57).

This Side of Paradise reflects period angst over the car as a means of feminine individualism and sexual expression. Clarke asserts that women learning to operate motor vehicles represented nothing less than the dawning of "a new era." With the car, women could escape the home and "dr[ive] into the public sphere, exercising control of the latest technology" (10). For Clarke, the popularity of the automobile in the early 1900s fits well with the rise of modernism: "The car conveys not just technological power but individual autonomy, granting the driver control over speed, time, and direction. This makes it an apt vehicle for modernist individualism but with a gendered twist: that autonomy was available not only to men but also to women" (12). Fitzgerald celebrates this modernist individualism in *This Side of Paradise*; his protagonist's journey ends in an apotheosis of self-awareness: in the final line of the novel, Amory Blaine, standing alone, gazing at the Princeton campus, exclaims proudly that he "know[s] [him]self" and nothing else—and that appears to be enough (260), for self-knowledge becomes something of a Holy Grail in the novel. But this celebration of autonomy and freedom appears to apply only to men. Sexual aggression in women—like any penetration of the male sphere—is met with nothing but fear and derision. The car's association with sexual—and especially

feminine—freedom, I believe, makes it as much a horror as the collection of witches and vampires who serve as female characters. Their allure makes them even more dangerous: beautiful, emancipated women frighten Amory, but he cannot resist their charms. At the end of the novel, Amory concludes that beauty in women is “[i]nseparably linked with evil” (258), yet he spends his young life coveting and pursuing physically appealing women.⁴

Time and time again, period articles link the automobile to women, and in particular, to women confidently taking up residence in a formerly male-only territory. “Auto Improvements for Women Drivers,” which appeared in the 26 November 1911 *New York Times*, shows that automakers saw women as a vital segment of the market: they “[we]re catering to the vote of the feminine side of the household” by “supplying vehicles far better adapted to their needs.” The language here—the appeal to the “vote of the feminine side”—links the female driver specifically to women’s suffrage and, therefore, to the rise of the woman during the period in general. Moreover, automakers altered the vehicles in an attempt to bolster the woman driver’s “confidence”: newly designed car doors better “protected and shielded” the driver, and a woman could drive “know[ing] that the winds and gusts which constantly threatened to play with lap robes and skirts to her annoyance are shut out by the doors.”

A 12 August 1914 *New York Times* article, suggestively titled “Woman Teacher Talks Confidence,” profiled Miss Francis J. Thornton, “one of the few women instructors of automobile driving in the United States.” Thornton discussed demeaning attitudes toward women drivers: “In the early days of automobiling . . . there was much opposition to the idea of women driving motor cars because it was that they were too frail to drive a ‘devil wagon.’” Female drivers, according to Thornton, “were looked upon as being mannish because they undertook to do what at that time was believed to be a ‘man’s job.’” She cites the positive economic impact of the female driver: “[T]he fact that a woman can drive a car means a great saving in chauffeur hire as well as in carfares.” But, of course, she does not mention the negative impact on all of those suddenly unnecessary male chauffeurs. Again, the woman’s gain comes with a man’s loss: she will usurp the working man’s place at the wheel just as she would in industrial jobs during World War I. In addition, her argument becomes one for feminine self-assertiveness, a call for a new “confidence” that would have rattled traditionalists: “The main point that I impress upon my pupils is confidence in driving, and I have noticed the good results this point has accomplished.” This new confidence behind the wheel mirrors the feminine assertiveness in sexual matters that Fitzgerald documents in *This Side of Paradise*.

In an article in the February 1915 *Scribner's Magazine*, Herbert Ladd Towle detailed the rise of the woman driver, beginning the article by conjuring an image of the confident woman driver, and ending his description with a slap at the "callow" young man in the passenger seat:

Young girls, most of them, hardly out of their teens—they meet you everywhere, garbed in duster and gauntlets, manipulating gears and brakes with the assurance of veterans. Not always in the little lady-like cars, either. If you visited last summer a resort blessed with good roads, whether East or West, you saw "sixes" of patrician fame and railroad speed, with Big Sister sitting coolly at the wheel, pausing at the post-office on their way for a country spin. And you wondered if the callow youth seated beside the competent pilot would ever have the gumption to handle a real car himself! (214)

The young man takes the passive role as passenger, the woman the active. Towle even suggested that the young man lacked "gumption," a term that implies that the youth had no courage or, in other words, manliness or "drive" ("Gumption"). Towle also detailed the advances that led to this revolution: "Cars are being perfected, not merely in delicacy of control, but in the total elimination of certain demands for strength and skill. Engine-starters—now next to universal, save on the lightest cars—are the most notable instance. You no longer need to crank or dexterously 'snap her over'" (214). With these innovations, sales figures for cars purchased for women drivers rose considerably. Towle polled automakers informally about "what proportion of their sales are for women's use." One anonymous source, who manufactured cars "above the average in both power and price," estimated that, in Detroit, women accounted for sixteen percent of his sales, "and he thought the same proportion would hold good elsewhere." A manufacturer that focused on "building enormous numbers of a light car particularly suited to women's use" claimed that women accounted for "better than ten per cent" of its sales nationwide. Another, which produced "a popular small roundabout, estimates that twenty-five per cent of his sales are for women" (217).

By 1917, women's interest in motor vehicles had risen to the level of sensation. The 9 January *New York Times* reported, "Women nearly captured the National Automobile Show at Grand Central Palace yesterday" ("Women in Throngs"). The surprising number of women at the show "was noticed and commented on with much satisfaction by automobile men as proof that the automobile had won its way as a woman's vehicle as well as a man's." Automakers saw the

possibilities in the women's market and continued to add "refinements" that would attract women consumers: "Wherever an accessory could be added that would attract women, this was done. In the choice of the upholstery, in installing toilet cases in the tonneau of the closed cars, and in other matters women's taste was considered." But women's interest did not end with such superficial concerns. Yes, they inquired "about matters naturally interesting to their sex, such as upholstery"; however, "many were interested inquirers about the mechanical parts and construction of the various cars. One demonstrator grew weary trying to make clear the mysteries of the 'differential.'" Salesmen began touting the physical and mental health advantages of driving: "Driving a car, it is asserted by automobile salesmen, is the best of exercise for women," for "it is the greatest steadier of women's nerves known and that it disciplines self-control" ("Women in Throngs"). According to Clarke, "The car, as a powerful machine, may have been initially perceived as the province of men, but women were quick to claim its potential" (10)—and the attention auto manufacturers began lavishing on the female consumer indicated that they recognized this. Clearly, women had infiltrated another traditionally male territory.

The liberated and aggressive female featured in these articles arrives early in *This Side of Paradise*. As soon as his main character reaches puberty, Fitzgerald begins constructing the link between sexuality—especially in association with physical feminine beauty—and evil. In "A Kiss for Amory," Fitzgerald offers a vision from the bitter Minnesota winters of his youth: the bobbing party, a popular amusement of the time that entailed a horse-drawn sled carrying a group of youngsters to a country club dance. Fitzgerald sets the scene in mid-December 1909 at the Minnehaha Club, where thirteen-year-old would-be lovers Amory Blaine and Myra St. Claire, who have been separated from the rest of the party through Amory's machinations, enjoy a clandestine encounter in "the little den of his dreams." A fire blazes while the "witch"—the girl always seems to be super- or sub-human—and the sexual loom (20). Readers witness the Fall of (a) Man. As Amory and Myra prattle and pose, Amory suddenly "lean[s] over quickly and kisse[s] Myra's cheek. He had never kissed a girl before, and he taste[s] his lips curiously, as if he had munched some new fruit" (21). The symbolism is more than a bit heavy-handed, considering the novel's title. Kissing Myra initiates Amory into the world of sexuality/evil, virtually synonymous terms in Fitzgerald's *Paradise/Paradise*, and sets the tone for the rest of the novel.

Throughout *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald describes women as predators—witches, vampires, or creeping, carnivorous beasts who conjure the devil—while

portraying male characters as naïve victims of feminine wiles. Their aggression shocks the young protagonist, much like the 1916 shark attacks shocked the nation. After kissing Myra, Amory experiences “[s]udden revulsion . . . disgust, loathing for the whole incident” and “desire[s] frantically to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss anyone; . . . he want[s] to creep out of his body and hide somewhere safe out of sight, up in the corner of his mind.” The kiss makes Amory want to “creep” (21), a verb that appears often in foreboding passages throughout the novel and a movement associated with femme fatale Eleanor Savage (206), who appears later. He has been contaminated, initiated into sin—he, too, becomes a creeper. To Myra’s plea for another kiss, Amory responds “passionately”: “I don’t want to!” When the understandably angry, exasperated girl threatens to inform her mother of the indiscretion, Fitzgerald dehumanizes, transmogrifies her: she morphs into “a new animal of whose presence on the earth he had not heretofore been aware” (21). Adam/Amory becomes aware of Eve’s/Myra’s true—and horrifying—sexual nature.

This “new animal” surprises Amory, just as the shark surprised bathers—and scientists. According to Fernicola, “from 1891 to July 1916 the scientific world expressed the firm view that sharks will *not* attack a living man, at least not in temperate waters” (xxiv). Until the 1916 attacks, the country’s “foremost authority on sharks,” American Museum of Natural History Director Dr. F. A. Lucas “doubted that any type of shark ever attacked a human being” (“Many See” 1). But, in light of the new evidence, the subtitle of the 14 July 1916 *New York Times* article containing Lucas’s comments announced, “No Longer Doubted that Big Fish Attack Men” (“Many See” 1). The new version of an old animal took the country unawares, much like the New Woman blindsides Amory Blaine.

In fact, the shark’s mechanized surrogate in the novel, the car, delivers Amory to this ill-fated meeting. Eager to strike a romantic pose, Amory uses an automobile accident as an excuse for his late arrival at Myra’s house. When an alarmed Myra asks if anybody has been killed in the accident, Amory replies, “Oh, no—just a horse—a sorta grey horse” (18). In positioning himself to experience a sexual rite of passage—his first kiss—thirteen-year-old Amory describes a scene indicative of a technological and logistical rite of passage for the country: the horse, an outmoded source of transportation, succumbs to its successor, the motorized vehicle. Fast times lie ahead. In order to catch up with the sleigh carrying the bobbing party, Myra and Amory will take “the machine” (18)—her family’s limo—which throws the young couple together, literally: “Thick dusk had descended outside, and as the limousine made a sudden turn she was jolted against him; their hands touched.” A “thrilled” Amory muses over the perfect

atmosphere the car provides: "There was something fascinating about Myra, shut away here cosily from the dim, chill air; Myra, a little bundle of clothes, with strands of yellow hair curling out from under her skating cap" (19). As the bobbing party comes into view, Amory, no doubt wishing to get Myra away from the chauffeur's prying eyes, implores her to tell the driver to pass the party and proceed directly to the Minnehaha Club. The future, the motor car, outpaces the past, the horse-drawn conveyance, as Amory rides toward adulthood, in the form of the first fumbblings of sexual maturity.

The young couple's using the automobile as a means to separate themselves from the group, and most importantly from parental figures, reflects new courtship practices during the period—practices in which the car would play a leading role. A movement toward more liberal sexual mores had begun before World War I—the war advanced this shift—and the early chapters of the novel document these changes. Amory reacts with a mixture of surprise, chagrin, and exhilaration to the new behavior he witnesses. In "Petting," a subsection of Book One set a few years after the Myra affair, Amory notes the changes in young women's behavior in the mid-1910s—and offers his typically puritanical disapproval: "Amory saw girls doing things that even in his memory would have been impossible: eating three-o'clock, after-dance suppers in impossible cafés, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery, yet with a furtive excitement that, Amory considered, stood for a real moral let-down."

The "petting party," which entails much illicit kissing, becomes the "great current American phenomenon" during Amory's freshman year at Princeton. For Fitzgerald, these parties evince a break with the Victorian past: "None of the Victorian mothers—and most of the mothers were Victorian—had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed. 'Servant girls are that way,' says Mrs. Huston-Carmelite to her popular daughter. 'They are kissed first and proposed to afterwards'" (61). The passage reflects a major shift in courtship practices—from "calling" to dating—in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Peter Ling describes the early twentieth-century fashion of the gentleman caller: "The convention of calling . . . was a bourgeois custom based on the concerns and capabilities of the middle classes" and "involved three of the pillars of bourgeois life: the family, respectability, and in particular, privacy. The focal point of calling was gaining admittance into the private family sphere of the home" (18). The "Victorian mothers," to whom Fitzgerald alludes, exercised great power within this system: "As guardians of the home, women were the chief arbiters of who could call and who would never be invited" (Ling 19).

Mrs. Huston-Carmelite's ignorance about her daughter's activities demonstrates the waning of her influence, but her disdainful reference to the promiscuity of "[s]ervant girls" reveals the roots of the new practices in the lower classes. While upper- and middle-class parents could provide a private place for their daughters and their callers—a space shielded from the public gaze but still subject to parental supervision—the lower classes could afford no such luxury. According to Ling, "Cramped lodging houses made the social niceties of 'calling' ludicrously impractical" for working-class families. Newly arrived immigrants tried to perpetuate Old World traditions like "chaperonage and female seclusion" but to no avail, for crowding and the necessity of multiple incomes—even from younger female family members—precluded bourgeois-style courtship practices (Ling 19). As a result, the lower classes "pioneered dating as an expedient born of the opportunities offered and the comforts denied to them." To escape parental supervision, upper- and middle-class youth would follow their poorer counterparts into the crowded urban settings. "These 'bohemians' began to perceive the possibility of a new freedom arising from the anonymity of crowded city streets" and spearheaded a "revolution in etiquette" (Ling 19–20).

With this revolution came new terminology, and Fitzgerald provides something of a lexicon in *This Side of Paradise*. He tells us that "[t]he 'belle' had become the 'flirt,' the 'flirt' had become the 'baby vamp'" (62). But Fitzgerald uses the phrase "Popular Daughter" or "P. D." to describe the most recent incarnation of the New Woman (61). The P. D. engages in much more intimate courtship rituals than her predecessors: "The 'belle' had five or six callers every afternoon. If the P. D. by some strange accident has two, it is made pretty uncomfortable for the one who hasn't a date with her. The 'belle' was surrounded by a dozen men in the intermissions between dances. Try to find the P. D. between dances; just *try* to find her" (62). Despite this "moral let-down," Amory cannot deny the P. D.'s allure: he "[finds] it rather fascinating to feel that any popular girl he met before eight he might quite possibly kiss before twelve." The automobile sped up the movement from calling to dating, and, not surprisingly, the P. D. takes full advantage of the car's offer of petting privacy: "[I]t *was* odd, wasn't it?—that though there was so much room left in the taxi the P. D. and the boy from Williams were somehow crowded out and had to go in a separate car. Odd! Didn't you notice how flushed the P. D. was when she arrived just seven minutes late?" College-age Amory recounts a conversation with a girl in a limo: "Why on earth are we here?" he asked the girl with the green combs one night as they sat in someone's limousine, outside the Country

Club in Louisville.” In a passage pregnant with meaning in a novel that equates women, sex, and evil, the woman replies, “I don’t know. I’m just full of the devil” (62). The privacy of the “devil wagon” provides her with the opportunity to act out her fiendish proclivities.⁵

As he does with Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald uses the automobile to construct a frivolous female character in *This Side of Paradise*. Just as the car plays a crucial role in Amory’s abortive and horrifying tryst with Myra, so it becomes an important factor in Fitzgerald’s portrait of Amory’s first true paramour, the promiscuous—by the period’s standards—Isabelle Borgé. A few years after the unfortunate incident with Myra, Amory embarks on an affair with Isabelle, a childhood playmate who has, since their last encounter, “developed a past” (61). In other words, as Isabelle’s cousin Sally informs her, tales of Isabelle’s loose behavior have spread—all the way to Princeton: “I guess [Amory] knows you’ve been kissed” (64). They reconnect at a party at the Minnehaha Club, again in a private den, perhaps the very den Amory and Myra occupied years before. Fitzgerald locates this latest romantic encounter in the same setting to demonstrate the changes in Amory since his embarrassing performance at the bobbing party. Amory, like society at large—this encounter takes place after the onset of war in Europe—seems to have adapted somewhat to modern mores. The couple sit “in the den, with their hands clinging and the inevitable looming charmingly close.” Isabelle, the typical P. D., lets her mind wander, assigning the automobile a prominent role in her youthful fantasies: “The future vista of her life seemed an unending succession of scenes like this: under moonlight and pale starlight, and in the backs of warm limousines and in low cosy roadsters stopped under sheltering trees—only the boy might change, and this one was so nice” (71). A group of partiers interrupt the pair before “the inevitable” occurs, but, later in the novel, when he finally does kiss Isabelle, Amory calls the experience “the high point of vanity, the crest of his young egotism” (88).

But a tragic incident, which, quite literally, haunts Amory for the rest of the narrative, punctuates his affair with Isabelle and links sexuality with monstrosity and the war between the sexes with the war in Europe. Again, the automobile plays a leading role: one of Amory’s Princeton classmates, Dick Humbird, dies in a car accident. Johnston believes that Fitzgerald uses the car in this instance “to convey the shattered dream”: a “future full of promise” dies with the “idealized” Dick Humbird during that fateful late-night drive (51). But I question whether Dick’s future holds such “promise,” for Dick becomes a symbol of the same kind of “carelessness, recklessness, and irresponsibility” that Johnston sees

in the characters of *Gatsby* (51). In his posthumous appearances in the novel, Dick is closely linked with sexually promiscuous women, chorus girls Phoebe and Axia, and the prostitute Jill. Although he appears only briefly, Dick emerges as a pivotal factor in the sex-beauty-evil equation. He becomes a model for Amory, who considers Dick “a perfect type of aristocrat.” Other students “dressed like him, tried to talk as he did”; Dick “seemed the eternal example of what the upper class tries to be.” The first chink in Dick’s armor appears when Amory learns of his idol’s nouveau riche roots: “[H]is father was a grocery clerk who made a fortune in Tacoma real estate and came to New York ten years ago.” After hearing this news, “Amory [feels] a curious sinking sensation” (78). All is not as it seems to Amory, and Dick will fall even further in his estimation in the section that follows, when the big man proves to represent a perilous path, one that leads—literally—to damnation.

“Under the Arc-Light,” the section that describes Dick’s demise, begins ominously. After a night of partying in New York City, Amory and friends drive back to Princeton in two cars. Amory senses “tragedy’s emerald eyes glar[ing]” at him and begins to string together “the ghost of two stanzas of a poem . . . in his mind”: “*So the gray car crept nightward in the dark, and there was no life stirred as it went by. . . . As the still ocean paths before the shark in starred and glittering waterways, beauty high, the moon-swathed trees divided, pair on pair, while flapping nightbirds cried across the air*” (84–85). Here, in Amory’s mind, the automobile and shark converge. The car’s color resembles that of a shark, and it “cre[eps]” like the terrifying Eleanor Savage as she seduces Amory later in the novel. Because Fitzgerald tends to associate the automobile with debauchery, and debauchery leads to both moral and physical destruction in *Paradise*, the shark, the “man-eater” responsible for the brutal 1916 attacks, becomes a particularly apt metaphor. Thus Fitzgerald connects the automobile, a facilitator of *moral* death for young men at the hands of devilish, sexually aggressive women, to the shark, the bringer of a particularly gory brand of *physical* death.

Dick, the driver of the first car (Amory rides in the trailing vehicle), has drunk heavily but, despite the pleas of his passengers, Jesse Ferrenby and Fred Sloane, “wouldn’t give up the wheel.” When he comes upon Dick’s dead body lying in the street, Amory stands over him, examining the carnage, just as the rescue party at Spring Lake must have stood over the dying Charles Bruder after setting him on the sand. As he gazes at Dick’s “cold” though “not expressionless” face, Amory notes that this “heavy white mass” represented “[a]ll that remained of the charm and personality of the Dick Humbird he had known—oh, it was all so horrible and unaristocratic and close to the earth. All tragedy

has that strain of the grotesque and squalid—so useless, futile . . . the way animals did. . . . Amory was reminded of a cat that had lain horribly mangled in some alley of his childhood.” (86)

In death, Dick, the nouveau-riche college boy who looks like an aristocrat but cannot live up to the fading tradition, becomes emblematic of the mixing of classes associated with the new courtship rituals. As his body lies on the pavement, Dick’s humble lineage shows: his prone position after the accident appears “so . . . unaristocratic” to Amory. In addition, because Amory describes Dick earlier as resembling “those pictures in the ‘Illustrated London News’ of the English officers who [had] been killed” (78), Dick prefigures the many young American men who will die in the Great War. In fact, both Ferrenby and Sloane—Dick’s passengers on that fateful night—will die in combat. That Dick meets his death in an automobile has special significance to a novel that features war and women as murderers—literally or morally, respectively—of innocent young men. Frederik L. Rusch calls “the death-dealing automobile” in the Humbird episode “a key metaphor for what is wrong with our world” (32)—and, in Fitzgerald’s novel, the evil, beautiful, sexually aggressive woman represents everything wrong. Put her behind the wheel or in the back seat, and she becomes doubly dangerous.

The automobile lives up to its “devil wagon” moniker, in a quite literal sense, later in *This Side of Paradise*. The dead Dick Humbird’s returning as a demonic apparition as Amory takes part in a drunken debauch in New York makes even clearer the connection between Humbird’s death in a car accident and Fitzgerald’s feminine brand of evil. Amory and a Princeton friend, Fred Sloane, meet two women, Phoebe and Axia, in the city, and, after a night in a New York bar, the women invite the men to their apartment. While at the bar, Amory swears that he sees “a pale fool” (107) staring at him; after the foursome repair to Phoebe and Axia’s flat, just as Axia places “her yellow head on his shoulder” and sexual “temptation cre[eps] over him like a warm wind” (108)—again, the creeping—he sees the man again and runs from the apartment (109–10). The ghastly figure reappears as Amory runs through the streets; Amory later realizes that “the devil or—something like him” (114) pursues him and that the figure had “*the face of Dick Humbird*” (111). According to James E. Miller Jr., the Humbird episode “connects sex not only with evil but also with death” (30). I believe that Miller’s argument can be taken a step further. As I mentioned above, when Humbird first enters the novel, Amory likens him to the photographs of deceased British officers in the *Illustrated London News*. Later, the devil, in the form of this dead young man, a representative of the many young

men who would die in the war, appears during an evening of sexual temptation, strengthening the beauty-sex-evil equation and linking it not just to death but to World War I deaths specifically.

Debauchery kills Dick while ammunition kills Ferrenby and Sloane. Nonetheless, Amory's comment about Dick's resemblance to *Illustrated London News* photographs places Dick among the war dead. This connection—between war, women/sexuality, and the deaths of young men—makes perfect sense in the cultural context of the war years. In "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," Sandra M. Gilbert argues that World War I functions as "a climactic episode in some battle of the sexes that had already been raging for years" (283). Enlistment propaganda drove wartime and postwar anxiety over gender roles, for it positioned women as encouraging young men to join the war effort; in many cases, the war posters positioned women as *the* reason to fight. Antagonism between the sexes certainly existed before the war, but the war gave the antifeminists a rallying point. War posters often featured images of women in distress or imploring men to enlist, which, according to Gilbert, influenced wartime gender relations. She points to a British recruiting poster that depicts two women and a child looking through a window at marching soldiers; the words, "Women of Britain say—Go!" adorn the poster. According to Gilbert, "The female censoriousness implicit in that slogan was made explicit by the fact that at times the vigorous, able bodied 'war girls,' who had once been judged wanting by even the weakest of young men, became frighteningly judgmental about their male contemporaries," even handing out white feathers to male noncombatants (291).

American war posters used the same kinds of images—often with erotic undertones. An Army enlistment poster portrays Germany as a giant ape climbing onto the shores of America as he grasps a bare-breasted female figure in one arm and a club in the other (Paret et al. 25). A poster sponsored by the Associated Motion Picture Advertisers depicts a stern Uncle Sam telling prospective recruits, "It's up to you: protect the nation's honor," as he stands over a ravaged—and, again, scantily clad—woman (54). The general theme of American propaganda was that men were being called to arms "to protect virtuous American womanhood" (Zieger 151).

Not only did archival sources from the mid- to late 1910s associate the war with women and the car with women, they also highlighted the motor vehicle's prominent role in waging modern war. In the February 1915 *Scribner's Magazine*, Charles Lincoln Freeston lauded the automobile's contributions to the war effort: "The motor, in short, has 'speeded up' the war in a way that could

never have been dreamed of by former generations.” Car manufacturers had long “impressed upon the military and other authorities the indispensability of mechanical locomotion for war purposes as well as those of peace.” All they required was “war itself to demonstrat[e] the truth of their contentions in full” and, Freeston adds enthusiastically, “what a demonstration!” (186). Freeston attempts to place the automobile’s role in the war in a positive light, emphasizing its ability to feed troops efficiently and get help to wounded soldiers more quickly: “One British soldier . . . testifies to the fact that food is regularly driven right into the firing-line and served out under a hail of shells. Another, describing a violent artillery engagement, states that the drivers of the motor-lorries worked untiringly, and undoubtedly saved many a wounded man who otherwise would never have got away” (193). But Freeston adds to his list of the motorized vehicle’s accomplishments its ability to get ammunition to the front: “Never, too, have the firing-lines been kept so continuously in action, for motor-lorries have brought up ammunition in constant relays; they have been driven right up to the very front, and shells and cartridges have been served out as fast as they were required” (186). Freeston does not seem to notice—or prefers not to point out—that the efficiency that the motor vehicle promotes increases the death toll greatly. Yet, whether he realizes it or not, his descriptions elucidate the automobile’s contribution to the carnage.

Charles A. Selden’s “American Motors and the War,” which appeared in the February 1916 issue of *Scribner’s Magazine*, opens by underscoring how the motorized vehicle distinguished the Great War from previous wars: “Even the epigrams have failed to stand the test of the world’s greatest war. Napoleon’s remark that an army travels on its stomach must be revised to read that an army travels on its gasoline.” Like Freeston, Selden focuses on and celebrates the automobile’s positive innovations: “The gasolene [*sic*] makes better and surer provision for the army’s stomach than it ever had before,” and “thousands of lives, otherwise lost, have been saved by the ever-ready ambulances which have wrought as wonderful an advance in the humane work of warfare as in its capacity for destruction.” But he acknowledges more explicitly the higher casualty rates that accompany logistical efficiency, even if he cloaks the information in wordplay: because of the motor vehicle’s effectiveness, “there is no shortage of the figurative food for cannon in an emergency calling for the quick shift of a body of men from one point in the line to another. And with them goes the literal food of the cannon in the shape of adequate stores of ammunition” (206). By August 1916, several months before President Wilson declared war, the U.S. military recognized the virtues that Freeston and Selden had enumerated.

The *New York Times* reported that the United States had begun experimenting with motorized vehicles in “a series of tests in the transportation of troops by companies, battalions, and regiments under conditions simulating actual warfare” at Fort Sam Houston. Major General Funston, Colonel Root, “and every officer who witnessed or participated in the tests” agreed “[t]hat the auto-truck ha[d] absolutely proved its efficiency and utility as the best means of rapid transportation to the firing line, as well as in the quick bringing to the front of supplies and ammunition” (“Taking Infantry”).

Freeston’s article indicates that, especially at the beginning of the war, the Germans took more strategic advantage of the motor car than any other country, tethering the car more tightly to a country that British propaganda of the period positioned as evil incarnate, the dreaded Hun that raped and murdered its way through Belgium and the French countryside. As Freeston boasts, motorized vehicles simplified Germany’s invasion of Belgium: “What the war has taught us more than anything else, perhaps, is the value of the fast-moving armored car with light guns. The Germans had provided themselves with large numbers of these before they invaded Belgium” and used them to “effectually terrorize the inhabitants” (197–98). Moreover, the Germans innovated the use of “the motor-plough” to dig trenches (196). These vehicles “[were] capable of cutting a trench four feet wide by four feet deep, and [could] even be used for the grewsome purpose of burying the dead!” (197). Motorized vehicles created the trenches that contributed greatly to the bloody, years-long stalemate on the French countryside and were then employed to bury, in mass graves, the great number of fatalities they thereby created.

But the Germans played the victims in an episode that perhaps encapsulates the motor vehicle’s role in the war and the break between the nineteenth century and modernity. Freeston describes a “dramatic incident” involving “a group of half a dozen French motor-’buses, . . . each packed with fifty soldiers” that encountered German cavalry: “The officer on the leading ’bus gave the order to charge, and the driver, opening his throttle to the full, sent the six-ton mass hurtling down the hillside, while the troopers opened fire from the windows.” Then, according to Freeston’s anonymous witness, “[h]orses were hit and bowled over” while “the ’bus swayed ominously, its violent skidding doing almost as much damage as the rifle-fire from the interior. This daring act had broken the resistance,” and “the enemy fled across the country, leaving several men and horses on the field” (194). Those using the horse as a vehicle—a relic of the nineteenth century—fell victim to the automobile, just as Amory and Myra use her “machine” to outpace the horse-drawn bob early in *This Side of*

Paradise. As Freeston adds, “even a motor-lorry is twice as speedy as a horse and could easily outpace cavalry” (199).

The media made a sensation of the automobile’s contribution to war and, especially, of women who operated motor vehicles in the combat zone, strengthening the connection between women, cars, and battlefield death. In her 1994 article in *Historian*, Kimberly Chuppa-Cornell points out that women drivers transported wounded and took part in relief work behind enemy lines. Relief organizations drew women “of culture and means,” fluent in French and “the intricacies of auto mechanics. Drivers usually performed their own maintenance work, including oil changes, small repairs, and cleaning” (468). The women of agencies like these became the “main source of food, supplies, and transport” for devastated French villages, “bolster[ing] the peasants’ spirits and ensur[ing] their survival” (467). These women carried out their duties at great personal risk. During a frenzied period of combat in June 1918, “Le Bienetre drivers . . . found themselves driving into unknown territory in the middle of a battle to deliver supplies” (470). Even the grave bodily risks inherent in armed combat were no longer solely the province of men.

And newspapers devoted much ink to the woman war worker, documenting, according to Chuppa-Cornell, a change in the way women were perceived: “The decorative and pampered lady who had supposedly typified women drivers before the war gave way to the industrious and hardy motor corps woman in many postwar articles” (470). Men served as fodder for advanced weaponry on the battlefields of Europe while women rose up and infiltrated men’s traditional places, making men appear increasingly expendable. The *New York Times* celebrated the new, highly competent and extremely confident woman who patrolled the battlefields. A 1916 article titled “Women Brave Guns to Nurse Wounded” emphasized the danger in the women’s errand: “[C]ollecting the wounded is not at all as easy as running over to the railroad station to meet the trains. The women drivers of the ambulances go right up to the clearing stations within reach of the big guns.” In the same article, Kathleen Burke, representing “the Scottish Women’s Hospitals for foreign service” on a lecture tour of the United States, elaborated on the importance of women’s activities—and the role of motor vehicles—for her audience: “They think nothing of getting a bit of shell through the bonnets of their cars.”

Moreover, as the United States mobilized for war, the woman driver served her country’s home front. On 15 July 1917, the *Times* published an article outlining the mission and duties of the National League for Women’s Service. Among its many services, the League prepared its members “to co-operate with the

Red Cross and other agencies dealing with any calamity—fire, flood, famine, economic disorder, &c., and in time of war to supplement the work of the Red Cross, the army and navy, and to deal with the questions of woman's work and woman's welfare" (Marshall). A 7 April 1918 article in the *Times* detailed the activities of the Women's Motor Corps, whose members had to provide their own vehicles and "[were] organized upon the military plan. They [had] weekly infantry drills, and they practice[d] shooting, entering contests with the marines and other organizations" ("Women's Motor Corps on Call Day and Night"). But, beyond the fact that this military organization featured the novelty of a female constituency, "the basic fact about them [was] not spectacular. It [was] just hard work." They drove to New York hospitals and "[took] convalescents for an outing," performed "ambulance work," and "[s]everal of them [worked] for the Department of Justice Secret Service in ways that cannot be divulged." Women encroached upon the traditionally male world of war work—even taking positions kept secret for the sake of national security—and employed motor vehicles to power their infiltration.

Having witnessed the media's lionization of the woman war worker, Fitzgerald creates an even stronger link between women and war in Book Two of *This Side of Paradise*, which takes place after Amory returns from combat. The stakes are certainly higher for Amory: unlike the Isabelle dalliance of Book One, the Rosalind affair becomes much more than a childish flirtation. Amory's feelings for Rosalind demonstrate growth, a diminishing of the egotism that marked his dealings with Isabelle: "[Rosalind] had taken the first flush of his youth and brought, from his unplumbed depths, tenderness that had surprised him, gentleness and unselfishness that he had never given to another creature" (194). Moreover, Rosalind's rejection nearly destroys Amory; Isabelle merely "spoil[s] [his] year" (93).

Otto Friedrich points out that Fitzgerald uses terms associated with the battlefield to describe Amory's interactions with Isabelle, but military terminology becomes pervasive in the Rosalind episode. When Amory mistakenly enters Rosalind's bedroom, she announces, "This is No Man's Land" (163), the phrase World War I combatants used to describe the territory between the two enemy trenches, an area often littered with rotting dead bodies. After Amory realizes that he has fallen in love with Rosalind, the stage directions declare the "*battle lost*" (173). Later, when Mrs. Lawrence, a friend of Amory's mentor Monsignor Darcy, asks Amory about his wartime experiences and comments that he "look[s] a great deal older," Amory explains that his world-weary appearance results from "another, more disastrous battle" (196), referring to

his recent breakup with Rosalind. In these passages, Fitzgerald makes explicit his equation of the horrors of the war in Europe with the terrifying battle of the sexes. And, with the ruthlessness of a shark, Rosalind tears Amory to pieces. Realizing that her prospects will depend entirely on her husband's wealth, Rosalind rejects Amory because of his financial shortcomings and enters a loveless relationship with the rich Dawson Ryder.

In basing her jilting of Amory on monetary concerns, Rosalind acts as a shark—not the flesh, blood, and cartilage creature that trolled New Jersey waterways in the summer of 1916, but in the figurative sense of the word. She becomes the shark-like businessperson who, in her drive for great wealth, cares little about the emotional repercussions of her actions. The shark functions as a metaphor in Book One but comes to life in Book Two in female form. As Amory's limited prospects become clear, Rosalind, with cold calculation, cuts Amory from her life.

The connection between women and evil becomes even clearer during Amory's rebound affair with the beautiful but suicidal Eleanor Savage, who "was, say, the last time that evil crept close to Amory under the mask of beauty" (206). For Clinton S. Burhans, "the last weird mystery" that Eleanor represents is actual sexual intercourse; he believes that the episode finally prompts Amory to link beauty, sex, and evil: "Eleanor's beauty . . . apparently leads him into a sexual relationship with her through which beauty in women becomes one with their sexual appeal and thereby associated with its connotations of evil" (617). Like Myra, Eleanor Savage is described as "a witch," and, most telling, Eleanor's eyes "glitte[r] green as emeralds" (210), a feature that links her to Dick Humbird's death. "Under the Arc-Light" begins with a line that foreshadows Dick's imminent demise: "Then tragedy's emerald eyes glared suddenly at Amory over the edge of June" (84). Obviously, Eleanor can bring nothing but trouble. This emerald-eyed, sexually appetitive witch—Amory's first experience with sexual intercourse—becomes nothing less than a sister to tragedy itself.

In the chapter that follows the Eleanor episode, the appearance of an automobile foreshadows yet another struggle with sexual evil—and the return of Dick Humbird's apparition. As Amory walks along the boardwalk in Atlantic City, his college friend Alec Connage—Rosalind's brother—pulls up in a "low racing car." Alec invites Amory into the car to share a "wee jolt of bourbon" and introduces him to Jill, "a gaudy, vermillion-lipped blonde" prostitute (225). While Rosalind exchanges true love with Amory for the financial comfort of marriage to Dawson Ryder, Jill, an even more voracious breed of female

shark, trades sex for money. They take the car to the “deep shadows” of “an unfrequented sidestreet.” The combination of booze, blonde, and automobile reminds Amory of college parties and dead friends:

“Do you remember that party of ours, sophomore year?” he asked. . . .

“Do I? When we slept in the pavilions up in Asbury Park—”

“Lord, Alec! It’s hard to think that Jesse and Dick and Kerry are all three dead.”

Alec shivered. (226)

After accepting Alec’s offer of a room adjoining his and Jill’s at a nearby hotel, Amory gets out of the car to walk: “Declining further locomotion or further stimulation, Amory left the car and sauntered back along the boardwalk to the hotel” (226). Perhaps remembering the hard lessons of that college party, he leaves behind the car and the alcohol, the two ingredients in Humbird’s fatal accident.

Again, the automobile ride precedes an encounter with evil. As Amory sleeps that night in the room adjoining Alec’s, hotel detectives burst in to question Alec, whose bringing Jill to Atlantic City for a sexual tryst constitutes a violation of the Mann Act. As the detectives pound on the door, Amory notices “other things in the room besides people.” One of these entities, a less tangible incarnation of Humbird’s malevolent spirit, hovers over the frightened and distraught Jill: “[A]n aura, gossamer as a moon-beam, tainted as stale, weak wine, yet a horror, diffusively brood[ed] already over the three of them” (228). A more benign entity—the recently deceased Monsignor Darcy’s spirit—counters the evil aura, and Amory decides to take the blame for Alec.

The incident crystallizes Amory’s understanding of the connection between sex and evil. His clear thinking in the hotel room shows his maturity; he can now recognize and make some sense of evil. In the novel’s final pages, Amory travels the road to Princeton—this time on foot. Perhaps experience has taught him to leave behind the motorized vehicle. Alone, with no woman at his side, and no “devil wagon” to steer—or destroy—him, Amory finally makes sense of the connection between sex, beauty, and evil: “The problem of evil had solidified for Amory into the problem of sex. . . . Inseparably linked with evil was beauty—beauty . . . of great art, beauty of all joy, most of all the beauty of women” (258). Then, walking through a graveyard, he encounters “a row of Union soldiers” and finds that he “want[s] to *feel* ‘William Dayfield, 1864’” (259). The modern man, severed from his past, harks back to a simpler time, even a simpler war, perhaps, and “think[s] of dead loves and dead lovers” (259–60).

Again, images of war casualties succeed an episode that presents revelations about the nature of women and sex.

In the paragraph that follows, Fitzgerald offers the novel's oft-quoted encapsulation of his generation's challenges:

Here was a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a reverie of long days and nights; destined finally to go out into that dirty grey turmoil to follow love and pride; a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken. (260)

The culprits in the deaths of these Gods are anybody's guess, but I suspect we might find the fingerprints of women and war at the scene of the crime—or, perhaps, lurking nearby, preparing for the feeding frenzy.

Notes

1. Fitzgerald claimed to have "[b]egun novel" in a ledger entry dated November 1917 (qtd. in West 3). The poem containing the shark-automobile comparison appears in the first extant drafts of "The Romantic Egotist," an early version of the novel that became *This Side of Paradise* (Fitzgerald, *Manuscripts* 333).

2. The phrase "devil wagon" appears often in the *New York Times* throughout the first decade of the twentieth century and gradually disappears in the 1910s. Headlines of the period include "Prince Pu, from Devil Wagon, Sees Chinatown," "Mr. De Voe's Devil Wagon," and "The Devilish Devil Wagon."

3. Johnston also looks at entries from Fitzgerald's *Ledger* and briefly treats "A Night at the Fair" (1928), "Forging Ahead" (1929), "Winter Dreams" (1922), *The Great Gatsby*, *This Side of Paradise*, *The Last Tycoon*, "On Schedule" (1923), "The Smilers" (1920), "Presumption" (1926), "Trouble" (1937), "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" (1922), "The Usual Thing" (1916), *The Beautiful and Damned*, "He Think He's Wonderful" (1928), *Tender Is the Night*, "The Family Bus" (1933), and "First Blood" (1930).

4. According to Sy Kahn, such an attitude toward sex is a product of the period: for young Americans of the 1920s, "morality" and "sex" are interchangeable terms. Frequently, the judgment of 'right' and 'wrong' behavior rests almost exclusively on sexual behavior. Evil is identified with sex: there the devil wields his greatest powers" (178). Kahn believes this relationship between evil and sex in *This Side of Paradise* was the primary reason the book became such a sensation, for it "dramatized [Fitzgerald's readers'] own youthful dilemmas" (179): "Like many of his readers, Amory idealized women but found it difficult to maintain his ennobled feelings when they were tested by flesh and blood [and] the frequent dilemma of the Puritan conscience" (178).

5. In his 1931 essay "Echoes of the Jazz Age," Fitzgerald looked back on the automobile's role in the changing courtship rituals during his college years:

The first social revelation created a sensation out of all proportion to its novelty. As far back as 1915 the unchaperoned young people of the smaller cities had discovered the mobile privacy of the automobile given to young Bill at sixteen to make him "self-reliant." At first petting was a desperate adventure even under such favorable conditions, but presently confidences were exchanged and the old commandment broke down. As early as 1917 there were references to such sweet and casual dalliance in any number of the "Yale Record" or the "Princeton Tiger." (131)

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