

The Western Ecologies of F. Scott Fitzgerald

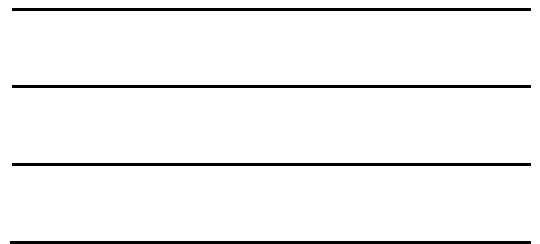
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While criticism of American literature revolves around issues of gender, race, and narrative theory, among others, perhaps the one of the most recent, dynamic, and salient critical studies is that of environmental literary criticism (or “ecocriticism”). Since the formal organization of the environmental critical movement in the early 1990s, it has evolved from a nature-oriented, Western-centered approach to one concerned with the global. In her 2013 essay, “Globality, Difference, and the International Turn in Ecocriticism,” environmental theorist and literary scholar Ursula Heise clarifies “some of the challenges [such as the importance of place and nonhuman alterity] that confront environmental literary criticism, or ecocriticism, which has taken its own global turn in the last decade” (637). I concur with Heise that turning these ecocritical issues, and ecocriticism as a whole, towards the global sphere is beneficial and necessary for the development of this critical movement. Ecocritical scholarship may serve to shed light on both local and global environmental concerns, such as issues of region and climate change, respectively. One area of literature that plausibly offers insight for present-day environmental arguments is the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald. To argue that Fitzgerald was a conscious advocate for land preservation—that he spent his days considering the destruction of natural forests and rivers as notable American environmentalists, such as John Muir, George Perkins Marsh, or George Catlin, did—would be inaccurate. And yet, a nuanced reading of Fitzgerald’s work potentially brings to the fore environmental concerns through matters of ecology, such as land use, nature, regional difference, and habitat. Through an ecocritically valenced textual examination of three short stories based in the American West, I aim to show the value of reading Fitzgerald’s literature through the lens of environmental criticism and as somewhat prophetic to contemporary

arguments of the catastrophe of climate change in the Anthropocene. While the rich ecologies created within these stories have various results, they often circle around the idea of human-nonhuman intertwinement and eventual destruction. In this way, Fitzgerald's work offers insight into how contrasting ecologies of 1920s America were a part of producing both the local and global environment of today.

As he is one of the most popular fiction authors of the twentieth century, scholarship on Fitzgerald is vast, particularly scholarship that covers his themes of isolation, loss, and Jazz Age values. These major themes reflect the characteristics of literary modernism, popular in a hardened post-World War I atmosphere. In addition to this scholarship, the ecocritical themes in Fitzgerald's works also have the potential to resonate with the contemporary ecocritical movement. A movement with stakes as high as ecocriticism deserves thorough examination. A part of that thoroughness is considering the overlapping factions within ecocriticism. These factions include, but are by no means limited to, environmental literary criticism, ecocriticism, and conceptions of the Anthropocene. It is through these three valences that I will examine Fitzgerald's stories "Winter Dreams," "The Ice Palace," and "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," respectively. All three were written and published early in his career¹ and are set in the American

¹ Critics generally place the early period of Fitzgerald's professional writing career between 1917 and 1924, from the time he received acclaim for his plays written for the Triangle Club, the student-run play company at Princeton University, to just prior to the publication of *The Great Gatsby* (Hook 15).

West.² In doing so, I will show that Fitzgerald's writing is imbued with the kind of understanding now called environmental criticism.

Ecocriticism began and gained traction as part of the environmental literary critical field, a theoretical framework used by scholars who consider the interaction between literature and the environment (Buell 417). Environmental literary criticism is a term that often but not always overlaps with ecocriticism. Perhaps the clearest way to state their relationship is to note that all environmental literary criticism is ecocriticism, but not all ecocriticism is environmental literary criticism. While environmental criticism centers on the practice of literary theory, ecocriticism is used in a wider variety of humanitarian and scientific practices. Yet both are concerned with the relationship between systems, regardless of whether those systems are human or nonhuman. When explaining the increased concentration on environmental issues both within and outside of academia, Lawrence Buell, a fundamental voice in environmental criticism, writes in his 2005 *The Future of Environmental Criticism* that "issues of vision, value, culture, and imagination are key to today's environmental crisis" (5). Buell's staunch belief, as he reiterates in an article published six years later, that "the arts of imagination [...] can

² In this paper, the "American West" refers to all land west of Chicago because, in the stories that I will examine, Fitzgerald describes these regions as "West." Therefore, areas that would be considered today as "Midwestern," such as Minnesota and Wisconsin, are considered by Fitzgerald and this study as "West." I choose stories that take place in the American West because in the early twentieth century, it remained a region of exploratory terrain. The Northeast, of which Fitzgerald wrote frequently and famously, is the region the author most considered home. His relationship with New York City and its surrounding areas encouraged journeys repeatedly traced in his work: characters move to New York in search of financial and social success, achieve moderate success in said areas, then identify the emptiness that remains despite this journey. The West, in a varied but not entirely opposing manner, appears to be a place that offers allegories of both destructive and successful ecologies. It is a region that, less populated than all others, once held the potential for opportunity, a newness that encouraged innovation.

contribute significantly to the understanding of environmental problems” establishes a compelling *need* for environmentalism criticism. This critical examination is one path to understanding the source of environmental crises. Buell’s belief in the integration of literature and environment has been central to the budding environmental criticism movement. It endorses a reading of literature from an environmentally aware position that, until the late twentieth century, had been under-utilized, fragmented, and possibly, in some instances, ignored entirely. While I think Buell’s avocation to “address [...] environmental concerns qualitatively” has the potential to lead to a lack of quantifiable, scientific data—critical to successfully arguing any point—his vocal and written opinions have played a significant role in downplaying the “impracticality” stigma of academia. The intertwined relationship between literature and the environment is immense, and further examination of this relationship may enhance current understandings of environmental crises.

Present-day environmental issues have many causes, ranging from anthropocentric practices to natural processes. As environmental literary criticism has evolved, so have the concerns it addresses. In Buell’s view

the “working conception of “environment” has broadened in recent years from “natural” to also include the “urban,” the interweaving of “built” and “natural” dimensions in every locale, and the interpenetration of the local by the global.

(The Future of Environmental Criticism 12)

Buell’s explanation of environmental criticism’s development suggests an intertwining of systems: “built” and “natural,” birds among cities, Northerners traveling South, and vice versa. There are an infinite number of possible system-to-system interactions, and it is

among these potential interactions that the more broadly focused ecocritical practice comes to the fore.

The fundamental action explored by ecocriticism is *interaction* and, often, *reaction*. In the introduction to one of the landmark environmental literary criticism anthologies, *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), its editor Cheryll Glotfelty asserts that all ecocriticism “shar[es] the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (xix). Glotfelty’s point is that an awareness of the ways that the human world is interwoven with the physical one is fundamental to ecological criticism, and that other ecocritics share this view. One site for this interaction is culture, a society’s common practices, beliefs, and actions. She expands on the importance of culture to the physical world, clarifying that ecocriticism considers

[t]he interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and nonhuman. (xix)

Inherent in this argument appears to be the stance that, because culture and the environment are intertwined, environmental crises are often a by-product of cultural practices. Glotfelty’s conclusion is, indeed, congruent with the notion of the Anthropocene. Human culture now systematically impacts the environment in a way it has never before. Literature, as a form of textual human culture, holds incredible potential for examining this impact. As such, she encourages the quest to examine authors “whose work manifests ecological awareness,” stressing that “the horizon of [textual] possibilities remains open” (xxiv). It is possible that Fitzgerald’s literature might

“manifest ecological awareness.” Indeed, Fitzgerald’s texts appear to be setting up ecologies within themselves. These ecologies take the form of, among others, self-invention, place, and human-nonhuman.

Fitzgerald’s notion of place attaches itself to, among other entities, geographical regions. The majority of his stories and novels, including those I will discuss later and many that I will not, explicitly state their main characters’ regional backgrounds. This practice, among others that I will examine, demonstrates Fitzgerald’s attention to place. In a 2011 article written with Karen Thornbar, Buell and Heise argue that “ecocriticism’s attention to place recognizes [...] the interconnectedness between human life/history and physical environments to which works of imagination [...] bear witness” (“Literature and Environment” 420). This claim of interconnectedness between humans and physical environments possibly explains both Fitzgerald’s consistent placing of his characters and their attachment to that place, whether that place is Manhattan, Minnesota, a cattle ranch in Wyoming, or somewhere in between. Ecological criticism accounts for all notions of place, rural and urban alike.

The idea of ecocriticism as considering only “green,” nature-oriented environments has passed. While critics continue, of course, to examine the relationship between the human and rural space, “second-wave scholarship [since the early 2000s] has shown greater interest in literatures pertaining to the metropolis and industrialization” (“Literature and Environment” 419). Urban environments are now where more than eighty percent of Americans reside; as a result, the relationship between the city and the human is a critical one to consider, particularly due to the environmental concerns caused by urban living (air pollution, water pollution, and sanitation, among others). The

increased examination of cities in ecocritical practice reaffirms the fact that humans both destroy and feel attachment to their space. In the conclusion of her 2013 article, Heise agrees with Robert Kern's argument that "all texts are at least potentially environmental (and therefore susceptible to ecocriticism) in the sense that all texts are literally or imaginatively situated in a place" ("Globality, Difference, and the International Turn in Ecocriticism" 640). As ecocritics continue to contemplate the notion of place in texts, they seem likely to also track the ability of humans to impact these places.

The time period of considerable human impact on the natural environment has come to be referred to as the Anthropocene. The idea of the Anthropocene centers on the fact that humans now, unlike previous periods in history, impact their environments in a noticeable way. Today, much of what is happening to the natural world is happening because of human culture. The term originated in a newsletter released by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program, the organization that studies the phenomenon of global change (Connor). The newsletter was written by atmospheric chemists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, who proposed using the term "anthropocene" to describe the time period when "human activities started to have a significant global impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems" (Borenstein). The Anthropocene signifies that what is happening to the natural world is happening because of human culture. As ecocritics Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Asberg, and Johan Hedren state in their 2015 article about the progression of environmental humanities as an academic field,

[t]he Anthropocene signals an important shift in how humans are coming to understand our relation to the environment. In the context of the Anthropocene,

we no longer have the luxury of imagining humanness and culture as distinctly separate from nature, matter, and worldliness. The world is everything that is the case, and nowadays we are more obviously all in it together. (68)

In addition to further emphasizing the ecocritical belief in interaction, Neimanis's notion of human-nature togetherness also sparks the idea of human *responsibility* for the state of the natural world. This idea of responsibility belongs in the realm of ecocriticism because it can, potentially, add incentive for the way humans approach their relationships with the environment. It is plausible that human consumers are unaware of the negative effects of their actions on their surroundings and, therefore, see no need to change their behavior. But, if these same consumers knew the consequences of how they live their lives, it is plausible that they might, at some point, change their behavior. The impact of the idea of the Anthropocene appears to still be in its somewhat early stages, filled with humans who fail to understand that their actions *are* impactful in sometimes positively and often negative ways.

I mention the Anthropocene because Fitzgerald's most Western-based story, "The Diamond As Big As The Ritz," seems to approach the ideas both of how humans affect the environment and the devastating consequences of these effects. While Fitzgerald could not have known about climate change, his story implies that ecotastrophe³ is not impossible. Even without climate science and quantitative damage, the visionary concern of "Diamond" with the extreme intertwining of the human and the environmental allows its modern-day audience to discern what we now call the Anthropocene. Fitzgerald's

³ "Ecotastrophe" is a portmanteau, the combination of "ecological" and "catastrophe," used by ecocritics, including Heise, Buell, and Glotfelty. The term's popularity has risen with the popularity of the environmental critical movement.

somewhat prophetic sense of ecotastrophe suggests that his other works could possibly carry with them a sense of the impact of human-nonhuman interaction. The potential ecologies of Fitzgerald's literature are not limited to his short stories. His most renowned work, *The Great Gatsby*, appears to also be involved in matters of ecology.

Lauded by many as The Great American Novel, *The Great Gatsby* continues to be read by thousands each year. One literary critic who agrees with this praise, Maureen Corrigan, author of a 2014 book on the novel and its enduring popularity, asserts that *Gatsby* "says something *big* about America" (*So We Read On* 8). Perhaps part of this "big"-ness is the idea of human and environment found throughout the novel. Among many other topics, Corrigan examines the way Fitzgerald uses geography, landscape, and diverse cultures in *Gatsby* to reflect the novel's central themes: feelings of loss, nostalgia, the need for noise, and hopelessness in post-World War I America. As such, she uses ecocritical methods to examine the resonance and genius of this enduring, quintessentially American novel. Corrigan's discussion of *Gatsby*'s ecologies suggests the potential of Fitzgerald's stories, all written within half a decade of each other, to also contain ecological material.

A sizable section of Corrigan's book focuses on *Gatsby*'s New York City setting. Throughout *Gatsby*, Corrigan argues, Fitzgerald appears to be combining the elements of the city's "perpetual drabness" with its "quick bursts of excitement" (88). She describes how a few of the city's many qualities function in the novel: its messiness ("New York is too messy and unpredictable for *Gatsby*"), its wonder ("New York as something commensurate to man's capacity for wonder"), its potential for upward mobility ("the 'airmindedness' of the twenties: a sense that nothing was too high or too far to be out of

reach”), and its destructive nature (“Dreamers often come to bad ends in New York stories. The city attracts those who aspire to something greater, something different; oftentimes, it destroys them”) (90, 91, 102, 72, 87). Corrigan attributes some of these New York characteristics to Fitzgerald’s perception of the city and others to Gatsby’s perception. Her analysis of the novel includes both Fitzgerald’s nostalgia for New York City and Gatsby’s use of it as a refuge. She emphasizes the way the characters of *Gatsby* reflect the dynamic, hopeful, and, at times, unforgiving nature of New York. Corrigan’s opinion of the relationship between human (the novel’s characters) and environment (New York City) balances between New York as “the land of ambition and success” and New York as “engulfing [...] in all of its too-muchness” (84-5). These two sides reflect aspects of Gatsby’s journey: spurred by ambition⁴ and, ultimately, engulfed by his attempt to become a man of the East.⁵ Corrigan explores the relationship between the novel’s humans and their environment, and, in doing so, presents one aspect of *The Great Gatsby*’s ecologies.

While Corrigan examines the novel’s other important environments, she discusses these environments less thoroughly than she does New York City.⁶ This gap leaves room for an ecocritical approach to these less analyzed spaces. A physical space in the novel

⁴ Fitzgerald conveys Gatsby’s ambitious nature when narrator Nick Carraway states that “[t]he truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself” (*The Great Gatsby* 99).

⁵ Fitzgerald’s description of the first meeting between Gatsby and Daisy contains textual elements that foreshadow Gatsby’s death, including “eyes” and “water.” Carraway narrates, “Gatsby, pale as death, with his hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets, was standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my eyes” (*The Great Gatsby* 91). It seems plausible to consider that he is overwhelmed by Daisy in the same way he is overwhelmed by New York; as Corrigan puts it, “he’s drawn to New York as he’s drawn to Daisy, and both attractions are fatal” (Corrigan 88).

⁶ Understandably—Corrigan cannot cover every aspect of *Gatsby*.

that holds potential for presenting ecological considerations is the valley of ashes, a “grey land [with] spasms of bleak dust” (*The Great Gatsby* 27). Fitzgerald describes it as follows:

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (27)

This limbo functions as the setting for the novel’s climax. In the valley of ashes, Daisy, who is driving Gatsby’s car, accidentally strikes and kills her husband’s mistress, Myrtle. Gatsby takes the blame and is subsequently murdered by Myrtle’s husband. These critical plot points aside, the valley of ashes also functions as a metaphor for three of the novel’s central themes: loss, death, and hopelessness, as well as the loss of an less burdensome, ecological way of life.

The ecological tragedy of the valley of ashes is that though it is between New York and West Egg, two vibrant spaces, the valley is a space of desolation. Corrigan explains how the valley of ashes “offers not only a drive-by tour hopelessly detoured but also a vision—consciously indebted to T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* (1922)—of what a landscape abandoned by God looks like” (21). In addition to being a place that reflects the modernist sentiment of the loss of theological faith, the valley of ashes also seems reminiscent of a tragedy committed almost three centuries prior: the 1626 “purchase” of

Manhattan by the Dutch trading company and the later removal of the Lenape tribe. I use quotation marks there because the trade was, as stated by the Dutch West India Company's 1626 documentary evidence, "the Island of Manhattes from the savages for the value of 60 guilders. It is 11,000 morgens in size" (Marton). The Lenape tribe traded the island of Manhattan in exchange for, in 2016 USD, European tools valued at approximately \$10,000. Within three decades, the group of the Lenape tribe based in Manhattan was almost gone, killed by disease or trade disputes with the Dutch (Otto 91). With this history of the island in mind, the valley of ashes possibly takes on additional meaning. It represents the destructive intersection of Manhattan-based European settlers and Native Americas. The valley of ashes could represent both where the memory of this Native American tragedy has gone and what become of the physical space because of European mentalities; it is a "desolate area of land [...] where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens." 1920s Manhattan, a mirage of a vibrant city, resides next to its "crumbling" dumping grounds. People traversing the valley drive fast, possibly because if they slow down the ashes might fall on them, covering them with this representation of America's sullied past. The relationship between the valley of ashes and Gatsby (or Daisy or Nick) suggests that the interaction between larger systems has also gone awry. The position of the valley of ashes highlights the possibility that patterns of environmental ecologies pervade all of Fitzgerald's works.

This thesis will examine the ecologies of three of Fitzgerald's short stories, all set in the Western United States. I will consider issues of self-invention in "Winter Dreams," attention to regionalism in "The Ice Palace," and the foreshadowing of ecotastrophe in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz." By reading these stories through the lens of

environmental criticism and contrasting their different ecologies, I hope to make plausible the ways that Fitzgerald's work is, in fact, engaged with matters of the environment.

Prelude: The West as a Region of Hope

The western ecologies in these stories seem to express a sense of loss. In "Winter Dreams," the protagonist loses all remnants of his adolescent desires. In "The Ice Palace," a relationship falls apart due to regional difference. In "Diamond," environmental catastrophe destroys both the humans and the landscape. This loss could be the result of two theories that speak to the interaction of Americans with their environments: Thomas Jefferson's idea of the yeoman, articulated in his 1787 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and historian Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 Frontier Thesis.

The yeoman idea associates the practice of farm labor and working directly with the natural environment with a virtuous way of life. Jefferson states his vision of agrarian Americans as follows: "[t]hose who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue" (Query XIX). He acknowledges that the yeoman lifestyle does not come with the most financial gain; however, it "takes on a new, elevated status" by exemplifying civic virtue and independence from "corrupt city influences" (Hettle 15). While belief in the yeoman became popular and appreciated in theory from the late eighteenth century until the Civil War, its practicality was questioned from the time Jefferson proposed it. The reality of forsaking monetary security for purity never became popular; even Jefferson himself owned slaves who tilled his land. Therefore, a subtle

sense of loss for the yeoman farmer—who, in reality, never was—could possibly pervade the historical relationship between Americans and American land.

A little more than a century after Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, another landmark theory regarding the relationship between American people and American land appeared. On July 12, 1893, at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Turner presented his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," whose prominence is shown by being the source of the Frontier Thesis. Turner asserts that westward expansion—the ability of American people to migrate to then unoccupied (other than by indigenous populations) U.S. territories—is "the most important factor in American history" (Chapter I). According to Turner, "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development" because "so long as free land exists, the opportunity for a competency exists, and economic power secures political power" (Chapter I). He claims that "American democracy came out of the American forest, and it gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier" (Chapter IV). The frontier, here synonymous with the American West,⁷ enabled ideas and lifestyles that promoted individualism to flourish in the United States. This individualism is inherent to American democracy (Chapter IV). As such, the closing of the frontier in 1890⁸ threatened to thwart "that coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and acquisitiveness"—that is, the fundamental characteristic of "dominant [American] individualism" (Chapter I). The

⁷ The majority of Turner's argument interchanges "the frontier" and "the American West" because the American West is where the frontier was most recently found.

⁸ The 1890 United States Census stated that the American frontier had "disappeared." There were no longer population densities of less than two people per square mile in any area of the United States ("Following the Frontier Line, 1790 to 1890").

1890 closing of the frontier causes Turner to question how American democracy would develop in the future.

To Turner, before the closing of the American frontier, the West had held a kind of hope. In a similar manner, the concept of the yeoman emphasized land as the source of civil virtue. Both theories are alert to the environment and highlight the importance of ecology in American democracy. It can be argued that these ideas might have a presence in Fitzgerald's stories, particularly those in which he investigates the American West. These stories question how the recently populated⁹ American West functions. A part of that investigation is undertaking the ecologies possibly present in this once hopeful region.

1. The Climate of Self-Invention in "Winter Dreams"

This story appears to consider the ecologies of self-invention. Implied in the concept of self-invention is the hope of creating (or recreating) an aspect of self. Dexter Green, the protagonist of "Winter Dreams" (1922), attempts self-invention through upward mobility. While Dexter's socioeconomic advancement occurs largely outside the narrative and is only mentioned in descriptive passages, the story centers on this advancement through his romantic relationship with the wealthier Judy Jones. Throughout the story, Fitzgerald equates Judy to climate, elements of the natural environment, and seasons. Fitzgerald's framing of the story shows the direct effect of climate on Dexter. As such, it appears that, through climate (and therefore, Judy Jones),

⁹ Here I am using "populated" to refer to the white American population; the region was, of course, previously populated by indigenous people, whose presence these white Americans either ignored or eradicated.

this story's ecologies show Dexter's journey of self-invention.

From the first passage of the story, it is clear that Dexter is psychologically intertwined with the natural environment. His desire for self-invention—or, the as the story calls it, his “dreams”—seems deeply involved with the status of his surrounding climate. The second paragraph of the story suggests Dexter's association between climate and ambition. The story's third-person narrator describes how

[i]n the fall when the days became crisp and gray, and the long Minnesota winter shut down like the white lid of a box, Dexter's skis moved over the snow that hid the fairways of the golf course. At these times the country gave him a feeling of profound melancholy—it offended him that the links should lie in enforced fallowness, haunted by ragged sparrows for the long season. (27)

Dexter's melancholy comes from the inability of the golf course to be utilized in the winter. The golf course functions as a representation of Dexter's desires.¹⁰ This issue of not reaching one's potential seems both to haunt and to entice Dexter, who, as described in the early pages of the story, quits his job as a caddy, “[passes] up a business course at the State university [for...] an older and more famous university in the East,” by age twenty-three has “bought a partnership in a laundry,” and “before he was twenty-seven owned the largest string of laundries in his section of the country” (28-30). The narrator reveals these facts before the emotional ties between Dexter and Judy begin, perhaps as a manner

¹⁰ After all, Dexter's last name is Green, a possible nod towards golf greens, the areas of trimmed grass surrounding the hole on a golf course. The course is also where he meets Judy Jones the first two times. Her presence at the Golf Club is simultaneous with Dexter's actions of self-invention (at age fourteen, quitting his job as a caddy, and, at age twenty-three, deciding to pursue Judy). His last name also connotes his innate connection to the natural world, which could be another reason why climate affects him in such a powerful way.

of framing Dexter's priorities at the time of their courtship (which is when the majority of the story occurs; the narrative covers the period between Dexter's twenty-third and twenty-fifth birthdays). He has made money and will go on to make more. He has been out East and will eventually return East. However, within these pages, Dexter is in a position marked by both opportunity and vulnerability. In a sense, Judy Jones slows time, which allows the narrative to occur. Because Dexter relates her to his "dreams" (she *is* the "winter dreams" in the story, as I will examine later), he craves her desire for him. The narrator explains that Dexter "wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves" (29). Indeed, described six times in the story as a varying shade of gold, Judy is one of those "glittering things." Winter dreams connect to Judy, who connects to "glittering things." Therefore, when the narrator states, "Dexter was unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams," the implication seems to be that Dexter acts based on his desire for the "glittering thing," whether that thing be Judy or "making more money than any man [his] age in the Northwest" (29, 34). For Dexter, ambition takes the form of both glittering things and Judy, and so he invests himself in these relationships. Fitzgerald creates conflict, however, when Dexter's relationship with Judy becomes destructive and can no longer endure.

Judy Jones functions as many women in Fitzgerald's story do: as the desire the male protagonist cannot have and, in some cases, never truly existed as he imagined. As Corrigan states in *So We Read On*, Daisy and New York both led to Gatsby's death by being a person or place he desired but could never attain. However, as literary critic Clinton Burhans states,

Dexter survives with most of his limited dreams realized but having lost twice the richest dimensions of those dreams; primarily, he symbolizes the power and also the tragic fragility of the imaginative past. Gatsby is killed, but he dies with his illimitable dreams intact; ultimately, he symbolizes man's unquenchable and tragic capacity for imagining a perfection he not only can never achieve but also inevitably destroys in pursuing. (412)

I concur with Burhan's assessment; unlike Gatsby, who dies before the dream of Daisy fades (if it ever would have), Dexter must confront the idea of Judy as only "all right"-looking ("Lots of women fade like that," his business associate Devlin quips) and lonely ("Winter Dreams" 41). It's not Judy's changed physicality that devastates Dexter; rather, it's the recognition he is forced to come to; as he puts it to himself, "these things are no longer in the world! They had existed and existed no longer" (41). This destruction of the glittering Judy causes Dexter to breakdown because "the dream was gone" (41). Dexter's vanquished dreams seem reminiscent of the unrealized potential of the agrarian farmer. Or, in a potentially more connected way, his knowledge of a dream that "had existed and existed no longer" channels the sentiment of the Frontier Thesis, which acknowledges the loss of the frontier and ponders how America will develop in its absence. While there is no definitive proof that Fitzgerald was explicitly acknowledging Jefferson or Turner, the ecologies of identity (self-invention being a *part* of the existence) nonetheless are a part of this story.

In addition to Dexter's desire for self-invention through Judy Jones, Judy herself is ambitious for something she currently lacks. As Bert Bender reaffirms in his article regarding the biological issues in the male protagonists of the Gatsby cluster, "the force

of beauty drives many of Fitzgerald's young men, as Dexter is 'unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams' of Judy Jones" (407). But what about Judy herself? In addition to being the prod to Dexter's ambition, Judy has her own agenda and source of happiness: herself. Her own delight is her ambition. The story's narrator describes¹¹ how

[s]he did it all herself. She was not a girl who could be 'won' in the kinetic sense—she was proof against cleverness, she was proof against charm.... She was entertained only by the gratification of her desires and by the direct exercise of her own charm. Perhaps from so much youthful love, so many youthful lovers, she had come, in self-defense, to nourish herself wholly from within. (34)

At this moment in the text, Judy seems to be contrasted with Dexter. While Judy "nourishes herself wholly from within," Dexter is "filled with hope" by the month of October (34, 27). Judy's ability to fulfill herself, functioning as her own source, functions as one of the reasons why Dexter *also* views her as a source of his actions. She entices him, stirs him, and compels him to take action. Because Judy does not depend on Dexter in the same way that he depends on her, he interacts with her with insecure humility, unsure of how to competently entertain her.

This ability to act independently of (hu)man functions as a further connection between Judy and climate. As the narrator relays at the beginning of the story, Dexter has no control and is noticeably affected by the weather, just as he seems to have no control

¹¹ It should be noted that because the narrator appears not to be objective, the audience cannot be sure whether or not this description of Judy is psychologically accurate. One example of the narrator's control over elements of the story— here, it's timeframe— is when the narrator states, "It is with one of those denials and not with his career as a whole that this story deals" ("Winter Dreams" 29). However, because this entire story is told from the narrator's perspective, the audience can either accept the story from his vantage point or not. In considering "Winter Dreams," it seems worthwhile to deem the narrator's descriptions as acceptably accurate.

and to be impacted by Judy. During their first dinner together, just prior to their first sexual encounter, the narrator describes how “she led him out on the dark sun-porch and deliberately changed the atmosphere” (33). Here, Fitzgerald establishes a direct connection between Judy and climate. As literary critic Ronald Berman writes in a 2005 article, “Winter Dreams” contains “an atmospheric sexuality that is by no means mild.... Judy is described in the most skilled and haunting erotic prose that Fitzgerald ever wrote” (60). The “atmospheric sexuality” Berman references suggests yet another connection between Judy and climate: that of sexuality, a practice that almost always goes hand-in-hand with desire. Judy seems to function beyond mere symbolism, as other female characters in Fitzgerald’s works have been said to do (for example, Daisy Buchanan). She is truly “atmospheric,” as is evident by the narrator’s descriptions of her. When Judy is first introduced as a young woman, as opposed to as the eleven-year-old girl abusing her nurse with a golf club, the narrator describes how

[t]he color in her cheeks was centered like the color in a picture— it was not a “high” color, but a sort of fluctuating and feverish warmth, so shaded that it seemed at any moment it would recede and disappear. This color and the mobility of her mouth gave a continual impression of flux, of intense life, of passionate vitality. (31)

Judy’s vibrancy is a part of her characterization. To Dexter, it seems to be thrilling and perhaps dangerous. At this point in the story, Dexter has not yet become involved with Judy. And so, though he seems to sense her vibrancy, his perspective on her appears to revolve around that characteristic. However, almost two years later, after their tumultuous romance, Judy unexpectedly appears in front of Dexter at the Golf Club. He turns, and

the narrator describes her as “a slender enameled doll in cloth of gold: gold in a band at her head The fragile glow of her face [blossoming] as she smiled at [Dexter]. A breeze of warmth and light blew through the room” (37). At this point, though her glow remains, her presence is one that could almost be characterized by calmness and delicacy. She is a “slender enameled doll,” the glow is “fragile,” and she brings with her a “breeze”—this is certainly a change from the “continual expression of flux, intense life, [and] passionate vitality” that she gave off a few years prior. Perhaps this change occurs because, after her maltreatment, Dexter is beginning to realize that to place his dreams of self-invention in the reality of a relationship with Judy would mean that he would never achieve them, because she refuses to commit to him. And so, after their next disastrous failed attempt at romance, he lets the reality of Judy go, but maintains his belief in the *idea* of Judy. These “winter dreams” remain with him over the next five years, until they are unwittingly destroyed by Devlin in a Manhattan skyscraper.

The final aspect of the ecologies of self-invention in “Winter Dreams” is that of geography. This story has three settings: Black Bear Village, Minnesota; an unnamed city “from which Black Bear draws its wealthy patrons” (i.e., Saint Paul¹²); and New York City. Dexter is born and raised in Black Bear, the resort town where he and Judy first meet when he is a teenage caddy. Dexter’s opinion of his hometown—“he always gave Keeble, Minnesota as his home instead of Black Bear Village. Country towns were well enough to come from if they weren’t. . . used as footstools by fashionable lakes” —offers a possible source of his ambitious craving to self-invent (27). Dexter’s displeasure with

¹² Though Fitzgerald does not explicitly name Saint Paul as a setting in his work, one can deduce the location of this unspecified city as Saint Paul because, at 150 away, it is the only metropolitan area near the actual Black Bear Lake, Minnesota.

his childhood background and his correlation between geography and success becomes evident when he claims that

[h]e knew he was better than... the men from the great prep schools with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers. He was newer and stronger. Yet in acknowledging to himself that he wished his children to be like them he was admitting that he was but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang. (32)

Dexter acknowledges here that the men of the East are not necessarily “newer or stronger” but that “he wants his children to be like them.” On the next page, he thinks, “carelessness was for his children.” With this line, Fitzgerald seems to suggest that the consequence of seeking self-invention is having careless children. Or, in the words of Dexter, that the fathers of the careless children of the East are successful men who ensured their success by seeking it since their origins in small towns across the United States.

The last scene of “Winter Dreams” signals both the apex of Dexter’s self-invention and the subsequent loss of it. The setting is Dexter’s Manhattan office, “where he had done so well... that there were no barriers too high for him” and where his Western business associate mistakes him as someone “probably born and raised on Wall Street” (39). Dexter has gone as far East in the United States as one can, and he, as best as the audience can tell, has risen as high professionally as one can. Yet his dreams are with young Judy Jones, who has remained with him, imaginatively, since he left the West. Devlin’s word of a “faded” Judy “devastate[s] [Dexter because] he had thought himself safe from further hurt; now... he finds himself not only losing her again but,

worse, losing the ability to go on loving her” (Burhans 406). This loss signals the loss of Dexter’s winter dreams, Judy, and his “atmospheric” connection. Through his connection to Judy and to the environment, Dexter had an unattainable goal towards which to climb. Though this goal was an ambitious one (Judy never spent more than a few days with only Dexter by her side), it spurred Dexter forward; however, the loss of Judy calls into question whether self-invention, perpetuated by those winter dreams, is a valid goal. Looking from Manhattan window, a professionally successful Dexter, poised to be the father of careless children, mutters, “Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more” (41). Like the land-based theories of Jefferson and Turner, “Winter Dreams” offers images of a “a thing that will come back no more” and is perhaps also invested in portraying the ecologies brought about by the elusive desire for self-invention.

2. Attachment to Region in “The Ice Palace”

“The Ice Palace,” Fitzgerald’s 1920 short story of a romance between two young adults from different parts of the United States, appears interested in questions about the ecologies of regions. Through the Southern Sally Carrol Happer and the Midwestern¹³ Harry Bellamy, Fitzgerald exposes the difficulties of leaving one part of the country for another. In a manner similar to “Winter Dreams,” Fitzgerald uses instances of severe

¹³ Though the narrator consistently refers to the region where Harry Bellamy resides and Sally Carrol visits as “the North,” literary critic Sawako Taniyama concludes that, as in “Winter Dreams,” the unspecified town is Saint Paul. Taniyama draws this conclusion from the “relatively young wealth and its social insecurities” of the town, a characteristic of Midwestern cities in Fitzgerald’s time (308). Additionally, Saint Paul was known for hosting a sizable annual Winter Carnival that featured an ice palace (309). For clarity’s sake, from this point on, I will refer to this region as “the North,” as the story itself does.

climate to affect these two characters' behavior. In this manner, the story appears to involve itself with attachment to place and ecologies of regions.

The relationship between weather and human behavior in this story is undeniable. "The Ice Palace" opens with a description of Tarleton, Georgia, Sally Carrol's hometown. The tone is one marked by slowness, sleepiness, and nostalgia. The story begins:

The sunlight dripped over the house like golden paint over an art jar, and the freckling shadows here and there only intensified the rigor of the bath of light. The Butterworth and Larkin houses flanking were entrenched behind great stodgy trees; only the Happer house took the full sun, and all day long faced the dusty road—street with a tolerant kindly patience. (115)

The language of this opening paragraph suggests a blend with nature. The sun "drips," there is a "bath of light," the Happer home "takes full sun." With this blend is a slowness that comes across verbally. A few sentences later, Sally Carrol—described as "a girl brought up on memories instead of money"—yawns her first line: "Good mawnin'" (115-6). The dialect of each Tarleton citizen is smattered with apostrophes ("eatin'," "bout," "swimmin'," "an'," "at's," "s'pose," etc.) in what seems to be an attempt to soften their speech, perhaps as a way of making them too "drip [...] like golden paint over an ant jar" (116-7).¹⁴ The town's seemingly automatic association with its natural surroundings

¹⁴ Interestingly, in this story, Sally Carrol practices code-switching, "the alternating or mixed use of two or more languages" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Her Southern dialect, so prevalent with Clark, disappears almost completely when Harry arrives in Tarleton. Through their entire dialogue, Fitzgerald assigns her no Southern dialect. For example, her greeting to Clark – "mawnin'" – becomes, upon her fiancé's arrival, "Are you mournful by nature, Harry?" (116, 119). And, when she returns to Tarleton, her first words are, "Good mawnin'" (134).

marks the environment in which Sally Carrol grew up. Further, the exaggerated description of these Southern elements perhaps foreshadows her conflict with Harry and her inability to blend in up North as she does in Tarleton.

The first instance of a character interacting with a different region than his place of origin comes when Harry visits Sally, now engaged, in Tarleton. The giddy, impulsive tone of Sally Carrol is contrasted with Harry's pragmatic, more stoic manner. For example, the two visit a Confederate cemetery. After pointing to the row of soldiers' graves marked "Unknown," Sally cries, "I can't tell you how real it is to me, darling— if you don't know," to which Harry replies, "How you feel is beautiful to me" (120). It is a well-intentioned response, and an audience can surmise that Harry wants to be kind; however, he feels nothing about the specific topic that makes Sally emotional. As such, this point in the story suggests a gap between the relationship between two people (Harry loves how Sally feels) and those two peoples' relationships to their cultures (Sally's sentimentality towards the unknown graves of Confederate soldiers). Fitzgerald does not appear to make a judgment as to whether or not this gap is a positive or negative one. Even by the story's conclusion, when Sally Carrol has concluded that this gap is one she does not like (she leaves Harry because she does not adjust to the North), the question of whether or not Sally's decision was the right one goes unanswered.

Sally Carrol's sentimentality and energy seem to cast her as a caricature of a character; indeed, she almost is, except for one critical aspect that makes her different from the story's other Southerners: she *wants* to travel and live in the North. Taniyama asserts that Sally is "lazy but with an ambitious side" (312). I believe that Sally Carrol's laziness seems to be a condition of her environment, but her ambition is almost in

defiance of it. Consider Sally Carrol's explanation when her Tarleton friend, Clark Darrow, asks her why she's "gettin' engaged to a Yankee":

"I want to go places and see people. I want my mind to grow. I want to live where things happen on a big scale.... Tied down here I'd get restless. I'd feel I was—wastin' myself. There's two sides to me, you see. There's the sleepy old side you love; an' there's a sort of energy—the feelin' that makes me do wild things. That's the part of me that may be useful somewhere, that'll last when I'm not beautiful any more." (117)

This statement hints at the tension of the story: even though she wants to interact with different regions, understands the benefits of doing so, and has considered the negative consequence of not doing so, Sally Carrol ultimately finds her experience in the North too destructive to bear.

Section III of "The Ice Palace" introduces the North and, as in the opening description of Tarleton's clear alignment of the south with warmth and slowness, the imagery of the North as cold and stark is unmistakable. Sally Carrol peers out of the Pullman after an overnight trip from Georgia to Minnesota and describes how

[t]he snow had filtered into the vestibules and covered the floor with a slippery coating. It was intriguing, this cold, it crept in everywhere. Her breath was quite visible and she blew into the air with a naive enjoyment.... She stared out the window at white hills and valleys and scattered pines whose every branch was a green platter for a cold feast of snow. Sometimes a solitary farmhouse would fly by, ugly and bleak and lone on the white waste. (121)

Sally's immediate observations of the North suggest a combination of both positive and negative reactions. She blows into the air with enjoyment, but it is "naive" enjoyment. She is "intrigued" but describes the houses as "ugly and bleak and lone on the white waste." This description suggests that while Sally Carrol is optimistic about her ability to embrace this Northern region, her instinctive reaction is one of rejection. Because Sally Carrol, not Harry, is the protagonist of "The Ice Palace," the third-person narrator's descriptions appear to align with her perceptions, judgments, and observations. Indeed, the most frequent descriptions used during Sally Carrol's stay in the North are "icy," "cold," "snowy," "freezing," and "dark." Sally Carrol's language, while she says it is "home because [Harry is] there," suggests the emphasis she puts on the cold weather, and she becomes lonely because she appears to be the only person in town who is uncomfortable. She has become the "solitary farm house, ugly and bleak and lone on the white waste." Eventually, she collapses, overtaken by the massive, unnatural, sculpted piece of ice she has entered. Inadvertently abandoned by her fiancé, Sally Carrol almost freezes to death, which is perhaps a suggestion that this unknown region has finally overtaken her and her desire for self-invention.

The structure of the ice palace itself offers a sense of ecology of Harry Bellamy's "The North" and the environment. Harry describes the ice palace, an attraction at the town's annual Winter Carnival, to Sally Carrol as "built out of blocks of the clearest ice they could find—on a tremendous scale" (125). Yet when Sally Carrol sees it, she offers a different description, saying that "on a tall hill outlined in vivid glaring green against the wintry sky stood the ice palace... three stories in the air, with battlements and embrasures and narrow icicled windows" (132). Sally Carrol views the palace as "against

the wintry sky,” as though the sky and the palace are in opposition to another, and she seems to carry the idea of opposition with her as she enters the palace. One possible explanation for her discomfort with the palace, besides the fact that it is (in Sally Carrol’s words) “co-old!,” is the uncanniness of a natural object so clearly manipulated by human hands. In her analysis of “The Ice Palace,” Taniyama asserts that

[t]he ice palace is intended to represent the naturalness of people living in the cold climate of the North and their mastery over nature. Having converted natural ice into architecture, the people of Harry Bellamy’s community have forgotten that the ice blocks and the natural elements they represent are still dangerous.... In this way, Fitzgerald condemns the twentieth century’s unreflective impulse to conquer nature. (309)

I concur with Taniyama’s assessment of the significance of the physical structure of the ice palace in this story. The unnaturalness of the ice palace makes Sally Carrol uncomfortable, and, again, she seems to be the only person to feel this dread. Ultimately, her experience in the ice palace is the catalyst that sends her back to the South where she immediately experiences “the wealth of golden sunlight pour[ing] a quite enervating yet oddly comforting heat over the house” (134). Sally is back home, “comfort[ed],” if somewhat lifeless, a state possibly caused by her realization that her attempt at self-reinvention has failed.

Though its descriptions of both the North and the South are stark, almost dichotomous, the story does not seem to suggest that these two regions are incompatible. For example, Harry appears content in the South (though unengaged with Sally Carrol’s particular interests), and Harry’s father is from Kentucky, which, as Sally Carrol

describes, “made him a link between the old life and the new” (127). The ecologies of region do not lead to destruction; however, the story does suggest the difficulty of combining two lives unwaveringly attached to their places of origin. In this way, the story seems to suggest that if humans cannot successfully adapt to environments beyond the one with which they are comfortable, they will not properly progress. Indeed, neither Sally Carrol nor Harry develop as characters between the story’s first page and its last, with the exception of Sally Carrol realizing she, in fact, does not enjoy “go[ing] places and see[ing] people.” Because Sally Carrol and Harry’s ecologies of regions fail, this story possibly approaches the way that lost opportunity can result from *overattachment* to place.

3. The Prophetic Awareness of Ecotastrophe in “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz”

“The Diamond as Big as the Ritz,” written in 1922, contains physical destruction on a larger spatial scale. While there are instances of loss, death, and destruction in Fitzgerald’s other works, they normally occur *within* a person (or between two people). If we look at the three stories considered thus far, Myrtle and Gatsby’s death (along with Judy Jones hitting her nurse with a golf club) are the most physically violent acts we see, and these instances of violence occur between humans. However, “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz” depicts physical destruction to both humans and nonhuman beings—specifically, to the natural environment. Through this physical destruction, “Diamond” shows an awareness of the possibility of ecotastrophe. In this story, the ecotastrophe that occurs (a family detonates a mountain comprised of “*one* diamond, one cubic mile without a flaw,” so that no one else may use or own it) is caused by the family’s overuse

of natural goods, greed, and faulty rationalization (“Diamond” 6). Through an analysis of both the story’s Western setting and its display of ecotastrophe, I hope to show that an ecocritical reading of “Diamond” might allow today’s readers to discern the possibility of what we now call the Anthropocene.

Like “Winter Dreams” and “The Ice Palace,” regional movement occurs in “Diamond.” The story’s protagonist, John T. Unger of Hades, Mississippi, accepts an invitation from his classmate Percy Washington to spend the summer at the Washington family’s “home in the West” (“Diamond” 2). It is during John and Percy’s train ride that Percy reveals that his “father... is by far the richest man in the world” because he “has a diamond bigger than the Ritz–Carlton Hotel” (2). Percy’s pragmatic tone suggests he has no quandaries about his family’s use of the diamond and believes it is his family’s to be utilized. It could be argued that Percy’s mentality reflects the cultural mindset that has led to the Anthropocene: what is happening to the natural world is happening because of modern-day practices of land use.

The geographical setting of “Diamond” also, plausibly, correlates to Turner’s anticipation that the closing of the frontier would change the political and cultural values of the United States. The Washington family represents the now vanquished ideal of the Western pioneer. In fact, this modern family staunchly opposes the pioneer mentality of allowing “wilderness to master the colonist” (Turner, Chapter IV). The narrator describes how Percy’s grandfather, “a Virginian, a direct descendant of George Washington and Lord Baltimore” decided after the Civil War to “go West [to] start a cattle and sheep ranch,” and had “been in Montana less than a month” when he discovered that the mountain on which he had indiscriminately decided to settle was comprised of a diamond

(“Diamond” 6-8). This discovery of the diamond—which hinges between the natural elements and the human significations of wealth, consumerism, desire, and, when used with malicious intent, greed and pride—causes the man who has “gone West” to become again a man of, in Turner’s terms, the East. As people of the East, the Washingtons (who become increasingly malevolent with each subsequent generation) consume and capitalize on the natural elements of the West; in doing so, they also create an ecological wasteland. They come, they exploit, they destroy; and in that destruction, they themselves are wiped out. This progression seems to reflect Turner’s anxious vision of United States’ political future because it depicts a country in which Eastern practices have become the norm for all Americans. Central to what is now possibly the standard exploitation of the natural world is the humans’ overuse of it.

The descriptions of the Washington family’s home in Montana themselves reflect the opulence in which the characters live. Each description seems to be exaggerated, as though to reflect the Washington family’s disregard of the nonhuman. What they own is far beyond what they need (or what they can realistically use), and the result is waste. For example, John describes that when walking down the hallway of the Washington home, “they would be treading on furs of every texture and color or along corridors of palest ivory, unbroken as though carved complete from the gigantic tusks of dinosaurs extinct before the age of man” (6). These images specifically highlight the man’s conquering of nonhuman beings (the once-furred animals and elephants) while reminding the audience that man has not always existed. This reminder possibly foreshadows the human extinction (on a minor scale) that occurs near the end of the story, when every person on

the Washington's Montana property is either killed by or narrowly escapes the mountain's detonation.

The opulence of the Washington household reflects the economic truth that when a person has too much of something, he or she values it less. Fitzgerald shows an ironic consequence of this truth when Kismine Washington (Percy's sister, who becomes romantically involved with John and escapes the mountain's destruction with him) brings a pocketful of rhinestones, instead of diamonds, when she and Unger leave Montana. Upon realizing her mistake, she laughs and says, "I [must have] opened the wrong drawer. They belonged on the dress of a girl who visited Jasmine. I got her to give them to me in exchange for diamonds. I'd never seen anything but precious stones before" (25). Kismine's mentality touches on the relationship between overuse and the nature of value. The human desire for what is less available (for Kismine, it is rhinestones) seems related to another environmental element of this story: in using something, humans often kill it. Use of an object diminishes it, which makes us want it more. Fitzgerald heightens this tension further with Percy's father Braddock Washington's decision to destroy what he values most: the diamond-mountain.

The ecotastrophe that occurs at the climax of "Diamond" is both devastating, as nature is needlessly destroyed, and oddly cathartic. The destruction of the mountain is described in a tone of eerie peace, with the explosion described as follows:

The whole surface of the mountain had changed suddenly to a dazzling burning yellow, which showed up through the jacket of turf as light shows through a human hand. For a moment the intolerable glow continued, and then like an extinguished filament it disappeared, revealing a black waste from which blue

smoke arose slowly, carrying off with it what remained of vegetation and of human flesh. Of the aviators there was left neither blood nor bone— they were consumed as completely as the five souls who had gone inside. (25)

This description's images are arresting. The mountain "change[s]" to a translucent beam of yellow, which lingers momentarily, then "disappear[s]"; all that remains is a desolate valley, void of any human or nonhuman remains. As literary critic Barbara Tapa Lupak states, "'Diamond' conveys the image of a wasteland" (341). Indeed, that wasteland is conveyed in this moment of explosion. Fitzgerald's other wasteland is *Gatsby's* valley of ashes, which seems to articulate the haunting, often quiet, tragedy of loss; however, the wasteland image in "Diamond" is dynamic, a bomb that is colorful and simultaneously finite and ongoing (the light of the explosion "disappears" but leaves "blue smoke [arising] slowly." The damage is both immediate and long-lasting, which parallels the conditions of most of today's environmental crises (to name a few: climate change, deforestation, issues of clean water). This image of the moment of ecotastrophe suggests that the story might be aware of the problems that occur in human-nonhuman ecologies.

Another aspect of human-nonhuman ecology in "Diamond" is the concept of communication between human and object. John communicates with his bathtub, which communicates with the water that flows through it, which communicates with its source (an above-ground stream). This water communicates with the prisoners held underneath its bank, who communicate with the mountain in which they are trapped, which communicates with the diamond in which it exists. The diamond-mountain communicates with the miners who slowly destroy it, who communicate with Braddock Washington himself. The mini-universe of "Diamond" shows how the impact of human

on object—and of object on human—is inescapable. All are linked in the realm of tangible existence and tangible touch. The mountain is physically altered by the Washingtons' attempt to mine it.

This concept of immense interconnectedness and mutual dependence illustrates an ecological theory subscribed to by a section of ecocritical thinkers: object-oriented ontology (OOO), which believes that “everything exists equally—plumbers, cotton, bonobos, DVD players, and sandstone” (Bogost 2010). In his 2007 *Ecology Without Nature*, philosopher Timothy Morton, who probably best characterizes this group of ecocritics, argues that

[t]he very idea of “nature” which so many hold dear will have to wither away in an “ecological” state of human society [because] the idea of nature is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art. (1)

Morton's belief in the equality of objects possibly legitimizes the claim that the explosion of a mountain, the death of an elephant, the complete eradication of five aviators, and the death of Percy and his mother and his father all hold the same value. If they held equal value *in life*, then the value of—or tragedy of or loss that results from—their deaths are also equal. This reading of “Diamond” reinforces the arbitrariness of the Washington's obsession with “valuable” objects, because it underlines how all objects are of the same value. Further, OOO's notion of absolute equality highlights the tragic farce of the mountain's destruction: destroying the thing you value assists no one. The human object will perish along with the nonhuman object, and all that remains is ghostly blue smoke.

Much of the current discussion revolving around environmental criticism involves—as one would expect of literary criticism in a postmodern era—debate

regarding the ontological statuses of humans, our surroundings, our world, and our universe. These critical debates continue on, as they should. Yet, what every critic and scholar will unanimously acknowledge is this: that eventually, the discussion always reverts to “us”—even if, as OOO advocate Morton states, the “us” proves “uneasily difficult to specify as living, dead, inorganic, organic, undead” (*Prismatic Ecology* 311). Humans, environmentalists argue, must strive to remove themselves as the consistent hierarchal leaders in our ecosystem; however, ecocritics and Fitzgerald alike see both the importance of attaining this environmental ideal and the impossibility of doing so without lapsing back into our usual hierarchies. As a result, Fitzgerald illustrates what this failure looks like. It may be the slow, industrialist-driven chipping away at both spirit and nature, as depicted in “The Ice Palace,” or it may be environmental annihilation, as portrayed in “Diamond.” However the slow eroding of American lands and yeoman ideals occurs, Fitzgerald’s prophetic awareness of ecotastrophe in “Diamond” suggests that the result will be devastating and potentially irreversible.

Conclusion: Extending Fitzgerald’s Ecologies

As the writer of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald produced a novel that, to this day, gets to the heart of American yearning and what American democracy once seemed to promise. Many—scholars and popular readers alike—would agree that Fitzgerald’s novels and stories, including but not limited to *Gatsby*, concern themselves with issues of isolationism, the shifting values of 1920s America, and the politics of class. The three short stories examined in this thesis are indeed enmeshed with these matters. “Winter Dreams” explores issues of class, wealth, and the notion of desire. “The Ice Palace”

questions why people are affected in specific ways by certain things when others are not. “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz” undertakes the morality and consequences of material gain. And all of these stories also appear to have embedded in them questions that, if read through the lens of ecocriticism, may foreshadow the ways that modern-day writers and critics explore the environment. An ecocritical reading of Fitzgerald’s literature illuminates its prescience about the ecotastrophes resulting from the entanglement of the human world and the natural world. It also offers insight into the unsustainability of American cultural practices, as constructed over the past two centuries.

Fitzgerald’s use of the American West suggests his recognition of American hope that used to exist but is now extinguished. It also demonstrates these stories’ intimate intertwining with the natural world, evident in the way the natural world (in the forms of climate, landscapes, and geographical features) supports the many ecologies embedded within Fitzgerald’s stories. As such, his ecologies of land use, regions, and lifestyle bring present-day environmental matters to the fore. With these ecologies in mind, the promise of additional ecologies in Fitzgerald’s other works of literature appears almost certain.

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