

Hearing Daisy's Voice in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*: A Powerful "Beautiful Little Fool"

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Abstract

Even with the changing ideas of women's roles in the 1920s, women were still subject to patriarchal power. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy seems to be subject to Tom's power. Daisy admits that the best thing a girl can be is a "beautiful little fool," and she fulfills that role. In the scholarly conversation about Daisy, most scholars agree that Daisy's choice or lack of choice of Tom over Gatsby makes her a "beautiful little fool." Yet, is this the right way to read and understand Daisy's actions as a result of foolishness? Isn't this scholarship, much like the patriarchal narration, continuing the tradition of not seeing Daisy's power? Even the scholars with critiques of the patriarchy do not assert Daisy with power. In my paper, I will enter the scholarly conversation and assert that Daisy's role as a fool is constructed, not innate, and that she does indeed have power through using her voice as a tool of manipulation against Tom and Gatsby. While some scholars might believe that her manipulation is an act of survival or merely limited by her selfishness or beauty, it is more than that—Daisy is messing with the patriarchal power, thus redefining women and gender roles. My research methodology consists of close textual analysis, the current scholarly conversation, and scholarly works outside of *The Great Gatsby*. I will also compare Daisy with another fool, Kismine, from Fitzgerald's "Diamond as Big as the Ritz" to show Daisy's success through her performative role as a "fool" and that Kismine's true foolishness leads to failure. This research is significant because it shows that when Daisy is not seen through a patriarchal lens she is powerful. This gives a new understanding to literary characters who have already been defined a certain way by scholarship.

Keywords: Daisy Buchanan, fool, *The Great Gatsby*

1. Introduction

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, there are many voices of characters that whisper, demand and compel the reader to acknowledge his or her presence. Nick Carraway's narration serves as the mediator between these voices and the reader. While Nick insists that "he reserves all judgment," Nick scatters his own views and biases throughout the narrative, such as his celebration of Gatsby's "infinite hope" and condemnation of Daisy and Tom Buchanan's "vast carelessness" (Fitzgerald 1, 179). Nick's unreliable and patriarchal framing of the narration is evident by the way he views Daisy, as well as Jordan Baker.

Nick's patriarchal bias is evident by the way that he reacts to Daisy and Jordan. When Nick first encounters Jordan he is surprised by her independent persona. Jordan's "exhibition of complete self-sufficiency draws a stunned tribute" from Nick (Fitzgerald 9). His bias shows that he has an unclear view of women because the act of "self-sufficiency" or having the autonomy to make decisions without the dependence of others "stunned" him. Similarly, he reacts to Daisy as a commodity or Romantic ideal because of the alluring quality of her voice that "ceased to compel him" after she stopped talking (17). In other words, this reaction to Daisy signifies Nick's ability to only give her attention when

she is giving something pleasing to him.

When specifically looking at Daisy's confession to Nick after a dinner party at the Buchanan's, it is evident that this patriarchal bias has specifically altered how readers understand Daisy. After a dinner party at the Buchanan's house, Daisy admits to Nick the difficulties she is having with Tom and his affairs. Daisy states that she hopes her daughter will grow up to be a fool "because that is the best thing a girl can be—a beautiful little fool" (Fitzgerald 17). Daisy's actions and irrelevant banter fulfill the "beautiful little fool" role. Scholars of *The Great Gatsby* have so often signified Daisy Buchanan's "beautiful little fool" actions as three things: a result of weakness through victimization from Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby, the necessity of survival in a 1920s patriarchal dominated world, or acting out of pure selfishness or foolishness.

However, these understandings of Daisy just continue the tradition of masking Daisy's power, much like Nick Carraway's patriarchal narration. Instead, Daisy is a woman of empowerment. Indeed, Daisy may not be very likable but she is empowering because she asserts her power over Tom and Gatsby by working within their narratives. Daisy's changing description—especially patterns in her dialogue and voice—prove that instead of being a "fool" she is messing with the patriarchy and thus redefining women and gender roles in literature. In other words, by messing with the patriarchy, Daisy is subverting the patriarchy. She acknowledges the power structure by taunting and mocking the patriarchy to ultimately achieve her own power of control.

Through looking at significant passages in *The Great Gatsby* Daisy's voice actually asserts dominance and the surrounding descriptions support Daisy's power. By looking at Judith Butler's understanding of gender as performative rather than an innate essence, it is evident that Daisy's relationship between being a woman and a "beautiful little fool" is performative, not innate. With Butler's understanding of gender in mind, by comparing Daisy with another fool, Kismine, from Fitzgerald's short story, "Diamond as Big as the Ritz," shows Daisy's successful intake of power through her performative role as a "fool," and how Kismine's innate foolishness leads to failure. Thus, Daisy is subverting the patriarchal power thereby redefining women and gender roles in literature.

2. Performative Gender and Daisy's "Beautiful Little Fool" Role

Scholars and commentators have tried to understand Daisy's role as a "beautiful little fool" with little deviance from portraying Daisy as a survivor, weak, or a selfish fool. This understanding deconstructs itself when Daisy's signification of being a woman and a "beautiful little fool" is put into Judith Butler's framework of performative gender. Butler's view of identity and gender in "From Interiority to Gender Performatives" from Butler's larger work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* can be applied to Daisy's role in *The Great Gatsby*.

Butler argues that identity is not an "essence" or static, rather it is based on performance within social contexts. In other words, gender is only constructed through imitation of others. Butler argues, "acts, gestures, and desire produce an effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveals the organizing principle of identity as a cause" (173). That is to say, actions seem to reveal an inner-identity, but they never come from a fixed inner-identity; they are produced "on the surface of the body" because gender identity is only understood through actions that the body performs. Rather than an identity that purports specific actions, it is actions that purport an identity based on cultural understanding of feminine or masculine actions. This understanding of the relationship between gender and identity can be applied to Daisy's role as a woman and the understanding of her as a "beautiful little fool."

This understanding of gender and identity is significant in regards to Daisy's actions and being a "beautiful little fool" because it supports the notion that Daisy is playing a role. When Daisy states to Nick that the "best thing a girl can be is a beautiful little fool" she realizes the performance of that role and what being a "fool" can do. By stating it, she is *actively* recognizing the performative surface of her actions and that characters like Nick, Tom, and later Gatsby will signify her based on their own understanding of femininity. However, while it might seem like a role of survival or victimization by which Daisy is subject to be a "beautiful little fool," it becomes more distinct that Daisy is using the performance of being a "beautiful little fool" that is linked to her femininity to achieve the power of control.

This connection is clearer when Butler further explains how gendered actions achieve constructions of identity. Butler argues:

such acts, gestures, enactments generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (173).

Butler then shows the role of performative gender in creating reality: “that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute reality” (173). In summation, Butler believes that gender is something that is continually produced and evolving and are *only fabrications* that signify an identity. Specific performances or actions then create an understanding of reality. This is crucial for understanding Daisy’s role as a “beautiful little fool” because Daisy’s actions create a reality for Gatsby and Tom that they can understand. However, Daisy’s actions are mere fabrications and *create* a reality and an *idea* of Daisy’s inner “essence” based on others’ understandings. This is important because Daisy is the only one who does not fall under the illusions that Tom and Gatsby do.

While scholarship, specifically, Linda Pelzer addresses that “in order for people to survive *The Great Gatsby* world, there must be no illusions” she does not assert Daisy with power. Rather, Pelzer believes that women in Fitzgerald’s novel are either “commodities” by which Tom can possess or “embodiments of an ideal” for Gatsby (127). These understandings of women in *The Great Gatsby* take the integrity away from Daisy. Contrary to the understanding that Daisy falls for illusions and fulfills these definitions, Daisy is actually the one constructing reality for Tom and Gatsby because of the performative nature of being a “beautiful little fool.” She is specifically using “various acts” to “constitute reality” that Gatsby and Tom will accept, while asserting power because Daisy understands the harsh reality of the world she lives in while Gatsby still lives in his romanticized past and Tom believes his class and brutish power holds sway over Daisy. It is not survival then because she is the one understanding reality, not Tom or Gatsby, and thereby is able to manipulate Tom and Gatsby.

Daisy’s understanding of reality is evident when Daisy tells Nick that she is “pretty cynical about everything,” and has “seen everything and done everything” (Fitzgerald 16). While this may seem like a foolish comment for Daisy to say, she shows her performative power when her “eyes flashed rather like Tom’s” (17). To be described in the likeness of Tom who is the epitome of power and dominance with his “arrogant eyes” and a “body of enormous leverage that always leaned aggressively forward” shows power for Daisy (7). Nick realizes that “when her voice broke off it ceased to compel his attention” and made him feel that “this whole evening has been a trick” as she seemed to assert “membership to a distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged” (17). Rather than seeing this scene as a continuation of Nick’s appreciation only for the beauty of her voice and continuing patriarchal and class scholarship, this asserts a power that Daisy holds: in her voice. By recognizing her role as a “beautiful little fool” she is not doing it as a result of victimization or societal constraint. Rather, she recognizes the freedoms of gender roles and how connecting the performative actions of being a “woman” with being “a beautiful little fool” will continue the tradition of men seeing her without power so in turn she can have control and use power.

While Daisy and Tom are still “careless people who smashed up things and creatures and then retreat into their money,” it does not mean that Daisy does not understand the reality of her actions (Fitzgerald 178). For Daisy, she can control Tom to an extent, where for Gatsby, she realizes that his vision of her has surpassed reality. Since she understands reality and her performative role, she can assure her power—but anything that transcends that she realizes she would not be able to control. While at one point she may have really loved Gatsby, and wanted him, she realizes that with Gatsby everything would fall apart because time changes the reality of things. Thus, retreating into their money, means freedom for Daisy, because her voice and role functions—it works within Tom’s voice just as Tom’s works within hers, and through her performative role as a “fool,” she is able to mess with Tom’s power.

3. Daisy’s Voice

While Nick physically has to move to hear Daisy’s “quiet murmur,” contrasting Tom’s authoritative forward position and “gruff husky tenor voice,” Daisy actually uses her voice to her advantage rather than continuing the tradition of weak woman characters under the hierarchy of strong men (Fitzgerald 7, 9). Alberto Lena comments that since Tom is a man of “physical accomplishments” rather than a “man of the mind,” Tom’s strength intensifies to a “brutish power” (27). This is evident by the way Tom is described with “his body capable of enormous leverage” and the way he ushers Nick to see the house’s different possessions, showcasing his authority. Yet, it is exactly because Tom is not a “man of the mind” that Daisy recognizes his physical strength and lack of knowledge. Therefore, she uses her words and two distinct voices to assert her power.

Throughout the novel, her voice is described in two ways: 1) a voice that is dark and thrilling: the kind of voice that “men found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered ‘Listen’” and 2) a voice that is high and often described as “murmuring” and “musical” with a certain “glow” and “promise” that had “an inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it the jingle of it, the cymbal’s song of it” (Fitzgerald 9, 120). While there has been much debate on what her voice does, Daisy’s power is never completely recognized by scholars. David Coleman, uses this “promising”

voice to show that “Daisy becomes the screen onto which her admirers can project desires that she can always refuse to take seriously” (61). This look at her “promising” voice leads to a more autonomous and powerful Daisy because she has the power to decide whether she wants to take her admirers seriously or not.

While Coleman gives some authority to Daisy, Joan Korenman notices Daisy’s voice change and her change in hair color from light to dark signifies a duality in Daisy’s character. On one hand, Korenman recognizes that Daisy’s fair hair and high voice supports the Romantic tradition of heroines because Daisy is “passive, security minded and pragmatic” (577). On the other hand, Korenman also argues that Fitzgerald shows a more “jaded and cynical” side of Daisy with her dark hair and dark thrilling voice (577). This makes Daisy a prototype for the “Dark Woman” also known as a sensual *femme fatale* that shares “an unsheltered exposure to life” which can be further supported by Daisy stating cynically that she has “seen everything and done everything” (Korenman 577; Fitzgerald 17). This dissonance also continues the support of Butler’s performative gender and how gender is through performance and not innate.

Other scholars like Mary McKay, look at Daisy’s carelessness and argue that women in *The Great Gatsby* have a “misdirected energy” (316). McKay states that women characters “mask their weakness” with beauty to draw “brave young men to wreck like Sirens” (316). However, to assert woman characters, like Daisy, with the signifier of a Siren is indeed powerful because Sirens are known to lure unsuspecting men to their demise. Thus, through her voice, Daisy is able to assert power over both Tom and Gatsby. This is shown through specific scenes in *The Great Gatsby*. These scenes show how Daisy’s voice works within the narrative and reveals her power.

4. Daisy’s Power in Specific Scenes *The Great Gatsby*

4.1 Daisy and Tom

Though there are many scenes that Daisy uses her voice in manipulative and powerful ways, by focusing on some of the larger scenes, we can see how Daisy’s dialogue and voice works. When Daisy talks about planning and “hulking” her voice manipulates Tom. It shows that her voice is not only irresistible, but also powerful. This conversation begins when Nick, Jordan Daisy, and Tom are having dinner together at the Buchanan’s house:

She looked at us all radiantly. “Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it.”
“We out to plan something,” yawned Jordan Baker, sitting down at the tables as if she were going to bed...
“What do people plan?” Daisy turned to me helplessly.
Before I could answer, her eyes fastened with an awed expression on her little finger.
“Look!” she complained. “I hurt it.”...
“You did it Tom,” she said accusingly. “I know you didn’t mean to, but you *did* do it. That’s what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great big, hulking physical specimen of a—”
“I hate the word hulking,” objected Tom crossly, “even in kidding.”
“Hulking,” insisted Daisy. (12)

Here, Daisy seems to be the fool by blaming Tom for her hurt finger. David Coleman states that “Daisy refuses to let the present give way to the future...Daisy is committed to no particular outcome” with the constant change in topic from the longest day of the year, to planning, to Tom hurting her finger, the conversation never seems to connect (62). According to Coleman, Daisy sustains herself as a state “in which there is no inquiry beyond the moment of existence” (62). Thus, she seems to not have the capacity to think ahead. Yet, this just continues the tradition of seeing Daisy as a fool and under the hierarchy of patriarchal power. Tom’s objection to her iteration of the word “hulking” was an attempt for Tom to assert power. However, Daisy was not deterred by his objection and continued speaking.^{1,2}

As the conversation continues, and Tom “breaks out violently,” trying to make a scientifically intellectual comment about the Nordic race, from Nick’s casual remark about crops, Daisy realizes what Tom is doing (Fitzgerald 13). Daisy knows that Tom is trying to show his power through intellect, and condescendingly states, “Tom’s getting very profound” and that “we’ve got to beat them down” (13). Daisy’s comment shows that she realizes the foolishness of Tom’s comment and his lack of true intellect. Therefore, Daisy knows when people, like Tom for instance, put on an act. For Daisy to realize this shows that she is not foolish because she is able to recognize the reality of the situation.

Nick even notices that Tom had something “pathetic” in his “concentration” (13). This adds to Daisy’s power because she is able to recognize things that a man can, such as Nick noticing Tom’s attempt to make an intelligent comment.

Daisy is playing a calculated role because the moment the telephone rings, Daisy “seizes” the opportunity to lean forward and make an irrelevant comment about the butler’s nose. Nick states that this glowing voice “compels” him forward. Then she uses her “thrilling” words. As a result of Daisy contributing to the conversation with her own view and making a condescending comment towards Tom (like his “profound” statement), Daisy almost has to remind herself to play an innocent fool, as the action of “seizing” the opportunity shows. Not only that, but she is redirecting the conversation because she is embarrassed about Tom, and therefore seeks to control the situation. Then, like many other instances, she uses her “thrilling” words or voice to exude a more sexual dominance over the situation.³

Dan Coleman argues that Daisy’s speech and inconsequential banter about the butler’s nose shows that Daisy is indeed using language and voice to contribute to the persona of a “beautiful little fool,” thereby using playful language to play with Tom’s mind. Yet, Coleman goes on to argue that Daisy’s use of language does not express her true feelings (Coleman 56). However, that is not the case because Daisy does express her true feelings in a way that Tom does not understand.

While the way Daisy uses her voice and language is indeed more incantatory, Daisy is still using subtle cues to show power and therefore express her true feelings. Her true feelings are certainly addressed when she gives Tom her “little gold pencil” for Tom to write down girl’s numbers at Gatsby’s party (Fitzgerald 105). Because Daisy gives Tom the pencil, she shows her knowledge of his affairs in a mocking way. This knowledge is a form of power since she is not playing the fool to Tom’s actions. This power subverts his authority by shattering his illusion of control and strength.

4.2 Daisy and Gatsby

Daisy’s voice change is evident when Daisy first sees Gatsby after being apart. Daisy said that she is glad to see him again in an “artificial tone” (Fitzgerald 86). While Fitzgerald could have used any word to describe Daisy’s voice when she reunites with Gatsby, it is interesting that her voice is “artificial” and this points to her manipulation. Yet, later Daisy’s burst of full emotion later on when Gatsby reveals his multitude of shirts at his house seems authentic. Daisy cries into them sobbing, “they are such beautiful shirts...it makes me sad because I’ve never seen such—beautiful shirts before” (92). This does seem to be a burst of true emotion from Daisy, as she realizes what she has missed with Gatsby. However, she clings to the material of the shirts to express true emotions is significant. Because her performative role is evident throughout the narrative, it shows that even in this scene Daisy sees the reality of the situation and that Gatsby has surpassed a realistic vision of her. This is revealed when Daisy composes herself. Instead of continuing with sincerity of emotion like she did with Gatsby’s shirts, she performs her role as fool commenting on “those pink clouds” randomly in a conversation (94). Then by the end of the scene her voice asserts her dominance over Gatsby by “whispering something low in his ear that turned him in a rush of emotion.... that voice was a feverish warmth, a deathless song” (96). Gatsby is in the mercy and control of Daisy much like a “feverish warmth” and the inability to escape a song that never ends.

5. Daisy’s Performative Role as a Fool Versus Kismine’s Innate Foolishness

Now that Daisy’s power is established through her performative role as a “beautiful little fool,” Daisy’s power continues to be more evident when she is compared with Kismine, from Fitzgerald’s short story “Diamond as Big as the Ritz.” Both Daisy and Kismine are similar portraits of a “beautiful little fool.” It is difficult not to notice how Daisy’s murmuring voice and flower imagery associated with her is similar to Kismine’s voice and description as well. Similar to Daisy, Kismine is described as wealthy and beautiful with a “soft voice” and a “charming interest” that attracts John, the narrator (“Diamond...Ritz” 90). Kismine is also victimized by her father killing her friends that visit her just as some scholars believe that Daisy is victimized by Tom and Gatsby, making them both victim to patriarchal power. Kismine’s interactions with John are also considered foolish because of her speech and actions towards him. Yet, the distinction between Daisy’s foolishness and Kismine’s foolishness is the difference in Kismine’s dialogue: it does not function, it is simply foolish. In other words, there is no motive for her dialogue and no performing. Daisy gets what she wants while Kismine’s foolishness does not function for an end in her favor. Thus, while both Daisy and Kismine could be considered “beautiful little fools” it is evident that Daisy’s foolish actions are performative while Kismine’s foolishness is innate.

Kismine’s innate foolishness is supported early in the story. John believes that Kismine is the “incarnation of physical perfection” and states to her “you’re more sophisticated than I thought you were when I first met you”

("Diamond...Ritz" 90-91). Instead of accepting what John said, she quickly dismisses it, stating that sophisticated people are "terribly common" and starts to cry. She goes on to say that "I'm very innocent and girlish" (91). This is very different from Daisy's conversation with Nick about sophistication. Here, Kismine does not assert her own authority while Daisy, gives herself her own authority by stating that she is sophisticated. While Kismine's role is not a performance because her voice and role are static throughout, Daisy is able to change her voice and demeanor to fit a situation.

Furthermore, though it made things more complicated for Daisy, she got pleasure out of her interaction with Gatsby and then left when she realized it would not work. Kismine, on the other hand, does not know how to control her actions and see the logical consequences of actions. This is especially evident when she tells John that she keeps inviting people to stay with her family even though she knows that visitors are murdered before they leave. When John is disgusted and surprised that she admits this, she "shrugs her shoulders" and states, "it's only natural for us to get all the pleasure out of them that we can first" ("Diamond...Ritz" 100). By telling John this, she does not comprehend consequences. Kismine does not understand that John, as a visitor, would take this information badly. This is more evident when Kismine believes that since "the murdering was done very nicely" it would change John's mind on the matter (100-101). During the climax of the story, when the mountain that Kismine lives on is blown up, John asks her to grab some diamonds from her room before they escape so they would be able to survive rich and happy. However, Kismine, grabs rhinestones instead because she is intrigued by them. When John realizes they were not diamonds, she laughs and said "I think I like these better, I'm a little tired of diamonds" and then proceeds to romanticize about being poor (113). Thus, where Daisy and Kismine differ is in their role as a fool: it is evident that Daisy's performative foolishness functions as a controlling power, while Kismine's foolishness is innate, and ultimately leads to failure of control.

6. Daisy's Voice as a Tool in the Literary Canon

Jordan Baker even notices how Daisy's voice plays tricks and influences the men around her, stating that perhaps "Daisy never went in for amour at all—and yet there's something in that voice of hers..." (Fitzgerald 77). Once the reader is able to look past Nick's biased patriarchal narration, the reader can see that Daisy is doing powerful work within the stories of Tom and Gatsby. Daisy's voice enhances her beauty and attraction, but it also points in other directions beyond a "beautiful little fool." Though many scholars see her role as a "beautiful little fool" as a result of three things: a victim to her husband, Tom Buchanan, and lover Jay Gatsby, being a fool out of survival, or simply a selfish fool, they never equate her with any power because she is still signified through the patriarchal narration. By giving her a voice we see a power that transcends the view of Daisy as Tom's "commodity" or as Gatsby's "embodiment of Romantic ideals" (Pelzer 127). This creates a whole new understanding of what is being done in *The Great Gatsby*.

Daisy is not easily defined as the disliked fool because she asserts power over both Tom and Gatsby through her performative role as a fool. The way her voice changes and the patterns in her dialogue show that her voice *works*—it is not foolish banter—it moves and changes to create a desired effect and assert power. This is especially evident when Daisy is compared with Kismine, a similar prototype for a "beautiful little fool." Kismine's foolishness ultimately fails where Daisy's role succeeds because there is a difference in performative qualities and innate qualities. Daisy succeeds because her role of a fool performs with the desire to assert power while Kismine's foolishness leads to her own failure of not understanding the consequences of her actions.

Indeed, Daisy's power might be limited much like the bloom and withering of the flower imagery associated with Daisy. Though she may have "blossomed like a flower" for Gatsby, thereby making the "incarnation complete," it is evident that Daisy's reality has changed from when she first met Gatsby. Daisy's world is "artificial," "redolent of orchids," and she wants her life shaped "now" (Fitzgerald 151). Therefore, Daisy walks through "this twilight universe" (151). This fits with Korenman's prototype—the "Dark Woman"—allowing Daisy to be more sexually aware of the world, and "move with the seasons," as Nick describes. Though, she allows herself to bloom for Gatsby, when he re-enters Daisy's life, she essentially moves with artificial intention. Daisy's admiration of the "gorgeous scarcely human orchid of a woman who sat under a white plum tree" at Gatsby's party is indicative of "her criteria of human conduct and emotion" (Fitzgerald 107-108; Bewley 232). It shows that Daisy is playing a role, not out of foolishness, but recognizes what performance can do. Moreover, Daisy's admiration for the woman shows Daisy's ability to recognize performative roles.

By looking at Daisy's young restless beauty and compelling voice, there is a power that she asserts to make her own decisions about what signifies her life and how she signifies what people mean to her. Daisy has desires that go beyond

“being a beautiful little fool”—Daisy is controlling what she can, while she can—allowing her to assert a power. Though this power will eventually fade and wither like a flower, her voice still beckons readers to notice that she is more than just a fool, but a strong woman that uses her tools to play with the idea of gender roles, mess with hierarchies, and signify power beyond the mask of a fool.

Daisy uses her voice as a tool to assert power that will be a tool for other woman characters within the whole literary canon. Daisy’s voice will give a new voice to the “Romantic pragmatic woman” to the “Dark Woman” and to other characters lurking in the shadows of seemingly stronger characters. Silencing a voice that already seems to be defined with specific characteristics is silencing the conversation to understanding the complexity in human interaction, conversation, and motives. It is silencing the opportunity to see more than just the signifiers of “strong,” “fool,” and “beautiful.” By diminishing this conversation, it is failing to see the complexity in each definition and what those definitions reveals and hides.

To conclude, because of Daisy’s change in voice, she is able to use her performative role as a “beautiful little fool” to manipulate and assert power. No matter how small this might seem it is still significant to examine and question because it will not only cause Daisy’s voice, story, and actions in the text to be questioned, but that of Nick, Gatsby, and Tom as well. Daisy’s ability to blur the male dominated hierarchy, gives a clear voice to a character that has normally been defined as the disliked “fool.” By giving Daisy the authority she deserves, she will no longer be whispering her story, but giving a thrillingly beautiful tale of her power. In Fitzgerald’s world in which “even Gatsby could happen,” there is a place in which Daisy “could happen” too (Fitzgerald 69).

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8. Endnotes

¹ When Daisy is insistent of the word “hulking” Tom does nothing more than interject. On the other hand, when Myrtle is insistent of Daisy’s name, Tom broke her nose (Fitzgerald 37). Though this could be seen as an issue that has to do with class (the fact that Myrtle was of lower status than Tom and Daisy), it is also impossible to ignore the difference. This is also an instance in which Daisy has a power that Myrtle does not assert over Tom.

² With Daisy’s insistence on “hulking,” notice how the white color that initially portrayed innocence moves to a much more sinister interpretation of white with the “bantering inconsequence” of Jordan and Daisy that was “as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here and they accepted Tom and me, making only a polite pleasant effort to entertain or to be entertained” (12). Therefore, white does not only endow Daisy with innocent imagery, but also a more cold and sterile interpretation. Though one could point out that their “bantering inconsequence” proves that both Daisy and Jordan lack substantial contribution, there is a contrast in description as Nick earlier described Daisy with “bright eyes,” yet now they are devoid of “desire.” Both Daisy and Jordan are playing a role because both Tom and Nick are “accepted” by them as they are only trying to entertain or be entertained by them for politeness. This asserts that Daisy is aware of what is happening around her. She makes an “effort” to let Tom entertain her.

³ (Fitzgerald 129-132): Daisy makes a comment towards Tom, “Open the whiskey Tom,” she ordered, “and I’ll make you a mint julep. Then you won’t seem so stupid to yourself...” but then she adds irrelevantly, “look at the mint!” and then further uses her “helpless” voice. Later in this scene however, her voice “drops an octave lower, filling the room with thrilling scorn” asserting a more sexual power.

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