

perhaps, the objective viewer, the reader in the case of the novel. He is linked in the novel's world to the artist's persona, the one who must communicate Charles's immediate obsession with Sarah and the necessity of giving an understanding of the situation universal meaning within time and space.

The figures most in control are, then, the artists, i.e. the painter and the writer. Velazquez depicts himself in an idealized form wearing the Palace Chamberlain's key on his belt and the red cross of the Knights of Santiago rather than as a working painter in a smudged smock, Fowles as a traveler on a train and as stage manager. Velazquez's focus is both on the inner world contained within the frame and on the world beyond the painting. As controlling artist he is ostensibly concerned with verisimilitude but, in reality, with problems of form: he represents himself as an aspect of the perspective, color, tone, balance, and value which comprise the finished painting. Yet he must paint what the King and Queen see, even as they watch him capture their likenesses. His attention to the scene must be completely reversed, however, probably by means of mirrors, for he becomes that which is captured on the canvas as well as the instrument of that capture.

Fowles must as a novelist work with the theme of appearance and reality—he too uses mirrors as an aspect of his imagery—but as creator he must walk one further step: as controlling author he must draw a character who becomes the narrator of the tale as well as a convincing character within the tale. Through this narrator's comments we are, as in Velazquez's painting, directed to the means whereby the meaning of life can be best appreciated through an understanding of how the artist employs his materials to achieve a vision of reality.

A Note on Philip Roth's "Goodbye, Columbus" and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

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In his monograph on the writings of Philip Roth, Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., draws a useful comparison between Roth's first novella, "Goodbye, Columbus,"¹ and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.² Rodgers notes that Neil Klugman's final ruminations, at the end of "Goodbye, Columbus," remind us of Nick Carraway's observation about Jay Gatsby having lost something of himself in loving Daisy. Rodgers goes on to suggest that, given their typological similarity, any links between these novels are best seen as inevitable structural similarities which should not get in the way of more tangible differences.³ Nevertheless, several kinds of intriguing correspondences can be pointed to between these novels, some of them close enough to seem, not typological at all, but a conscious part of the artistic design of the later story.

¹Philip Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*. New York: Bantam Books, 1969.

²F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925.

³Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., *Philip Roth* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), p.44.

Brenda Patimkin, the heroine of "Columbus" is—as Jeffrey Helterman has called her—the "archetypal Jewish American princess."⁴ The fairy-tale title is more than descriptively apt—it is exactly how Neil himself sees Brenda. In what is Roth's most explicit allusion to *The Great Gatsby*, Neil at one point sees the relationship between Brenda and her mother as one where the mother is "some captive beauty, some wild princess, who has been tamed and made the servant to the King's daughter—who was Brenda" ("Columbus," p. 15); Daisy Fay was seen by Nick as being, for Gatsby, "High in a white palace the King's daughter, the golden girl . . ." (*Gatsby*, p. 120).

Certain very specific features of "Columbus" and *Gatsby* march in parallel. Thus, both novels tell of the crowded events of a single summer, the passage of time related in both books to significant conventional or seasonal dates—the Fourth of July, Labor Day, the longest day of the year, Rosh Hashana. In both cases, the heroes are imaginative orphans—Gatsby has abandoned his parents, hinting or letting people believe that they are dead: ". . . his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all" (*Gatsby*, p. 99); Neil too sees himself as something of an orphan, left to be provided for by his aunt and uncle, while his parents—"those penniless deserters" ("Columbus," p. 11)—have retired to Arizona. Both stories start when a major protagonist is introduced to an alien social milieu through a cousin—Neil by his cousin Doris, a member of the same country club as Brenda; and Nick Carraway reminds us, as he drives over to dinner with the Buchanans, that Daisy is his "second cousin once removed" (*Gatsby*, p. 5).

Significant events in both stories involve letters delivered and read while the heroes are briefly in unaccustomed academic surroundings. Gatsby received his "Dear John" letter from Daisy, announcing her betrothal to Tom Buchanan, while he was at Oxford for five months in 1919, an opportunity available after the armistice for Allied officers when they could go to any of the universities in England or France. The letter from Brenda's mother—the event which precipitates the end of Neil's and Brenda's affair—is received by Brenda (and shown by her to Neil) on the very day when Neil arrives at Radcliffe to spend the holiday weekend of Rosh Hashana in Boston with Brenda.

Both Gatsby and Neil contravene a fundamental canon of old-fashioned hospitality. Neither the Fays nor the Patimkins, it seems, were entertaining what they would regard as angels when they each gave hospitality to strangers. Gatsby, who "knew that he was in Daisy's house by a colossal accident . . . made the most of his time. He took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously—eventually he took Daisy one still October night . . ." (*Gatsby*, p. 149). Neil similarly transgresses the old-fashioned houseguest's code, and Brenda's mother's letter, after she has found out, complains with dismissive irony—"Certainly that was a fine way to repay us for the hospitality we were nice enough to show him, a perfect stranger" ("Columbus," p. 92).

Correspondences between both novels involve not only themes and motifs, but also details of style, characterization and setting. Both novels make jokes about noses—concerning their injury, loss, absence, size, shape, or alteration. In both novels there are characters who refer (following the habits of their social strata) to universities by the names of the places where they are situated: Tom Buchanan and Nick talk about "New Haven" (hardly noticing that Jordan Baker talks about "Yale"), and Neil, who pointedly describes his own college as "Newark College of Rutgers University," is irritated by Brenda's and other people's various references

⁴Jeffrey Helterman and Richard Layman, eds., *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Novelists Since World War II* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1978), II, 424.

to "Bennington," "Boston," (not Radcliffe), "New Haven," "Northampton" (not Smith College), and so on. In both novels socially distinct areas exist side by side. Across the bay on Long Island Sound from where "the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water," Nick Carraway lives at West Egg, "the less fashionable of the two" (*Gatsby*, p. 5). Neil and Brenda are similarly separated by the social division between neighboring areas, Neil living in Newark, in the older suburb of Livingston, Brenda in affluent and fashionable Short Hills.

Sometimes a reference in "Columbus" seems an ironic counterpoint to a corresponding feature in *Gatsby*. In his bedroom, Gatsby takes a simple delight in showing Nick and Daisy "his shirts, piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high" (*Gatsby*, p. 93), showing them off by throwing them into careless disarray. Gatsby's flamboyant pleasure in his collection of luxurious shirts contrasts with Neil's impoverished self-consciousness and his strained, insecure gesture of ostentation when he unpacks on arrival at the Patimkin house, watched by Brenda's brother, Ron: "I have one shirt with a Brook Brothers label and I let it linger on the bed a while; the Arrows I heaped in the drawer" ("Columbus," p. 45).

References to the same sports crop up in both *Gatsby* and "Columbus." Each novel has its shadowy champions—Brenda's mother was the best at tennis in her state, Jordan is a golf champion and tournament finalist, Brenda has been a teenage champion horserider. Ron Patimkin and Tom Buchanan have both been university football stars (Ron for Ohio State, Tom for Yale) and both are similar characters—clumsily physical, culturally unsophisticated, mentally commonplace, verbally inarticulate or platitudinous, neither intellectual nor reflective. Ron's and Tom's mature lives are desolate after their youthful sporting *floruit*. Ron, who, like Tom, is "a great, big, hulking physical specimen" (*Gatsby*, p. 12), is someone who—also like Tom—will "drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game" (*Gatsby*, p. 6).

Jordan Baker plays the same games—tennis and golf—as Brenda, and her appearance is one that strongly recalls Brenda: ". . . she was a slender, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage" (*Gatsby*, p. 11). But in her character Jordan Baker is more clearly called to mind by Brenda Patimkin's little ten-year-old sister, Julie. Jordan is hollow and selfish, and a liar—Nick calls her "incurably dishonest." She is interested only in her own satisfaction, and shows a jaunty defiance towards those who cross her or act against her interests. Jordan shares her spoilt, selfish nature with Julie Patimkin—a nature exemplified in each case by the fact that they are bad sports and cheats. Jordan is reputed to have cheated by moving a ball from a bad lie in her first big golf tournament. In Nick's estimate, "She wasn't able to endure being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world . . ." (*Gatsby*, pp. 58-59). These words would apply exactly to the young Julie. Julie is indulged by all her family ("Even Ron lets her win," says Brenda) who allow her to take basketball and golf shots over again when they go astray: ". . . over the years Mr. Patimkin had taught his daughters that free throws were theirs for the asking" ("Columbus," p. 20). Only Neil, playing table tennis with her, fails to comply with Julie's expectations, instead ignoring her constant pleas, supported by got-up excuses, to take points over again.

The story of "Goodbye, Columbus" reminds us of the story of Gatsby's sojourn with Daisy in Louisville. Indeed, "Columbus" is in many ways structured like a "prequel" to *Gatsby*, to use the modish cinematic term for a later, "follow on" production set at an earlier stage than the predecessor. "Goodbye, Columbus" shows us the early stages of the story of Gatsby and Daisy being repeated in the story of Neil and Brenda. Julie and Brenda Patimkin are like younger, still formative versions of Jordan Baker and Daisy: Ron Patimkin is still near that "acute limited

excellence at twenty-one” before everything “savors of anticlimax” as it has done for Tom Buchanan. Neil’s disappointment from which he looks forward to a future after the loss of Brenda where “I knew it would be a long while before I made love to anyone the way I made love to her” (“Columbus,” p. 97) previews exactly the sense of loss which motivates Gatsby’s dream of recovering “the freshest and the best” (*Gatsby*, p. 153).

In “Goodbye, Columbus,” Philip Roth has intercalated allusions to, and recollections of, *The Great Gatsby* in a new, kaleidoscopically shifted pattern. This allusive sub-text appropriately links novels which explore, from different standpoints and in different settings, complementary themes.