

a little reluctant to make a triple play with *This Side of Paradise*, and the unfinished *Last Tycoon* would be difficult to criticize in the same way as we have *B&D*. It wouldn't help to redirect the center of attention away from *The Great Gatsby*, but a collection of essays on *Gatsby* and literary theory would be a good addition. And the short stories in the original volumes as well as in recently edited ones would be the most welcome critical targets.

DU: *Gatsby* seems a worn path. BUT ... how about this: *No Green Light: Completely New Interpretations of The Great Gatsby for the Twenty-First Century*. OR *Thirteen (however many contributors there are) Ways of Looking at a Gatsby: New Interpretations of The Great Gatsby for Today's World!* ☉



"I am always on the lookout for smart, accessible books about literary artists such as Fitzgerald. In addition to this collection of critical essays covering *The Beautiful and Damned* (forthcoming in October 2022), we have another book on Fitzgerald coming out in spring 2023, a biographical-critical study by Robert Garnett. American literature and modernism remain two major focal points of the literary studies list at LSU Press, so books on Fitzgerald make logical acquisitions for us."

—James Long, acquisitions editor, Louisiana State University Press



NEWS AND NOTES



JACKET REQUIRED:

An Artist Proof of Francis Cugat's Cover Illustration for *The Great Gatsby* Has Surfaced, Giving Insight into the Novel's Production Process

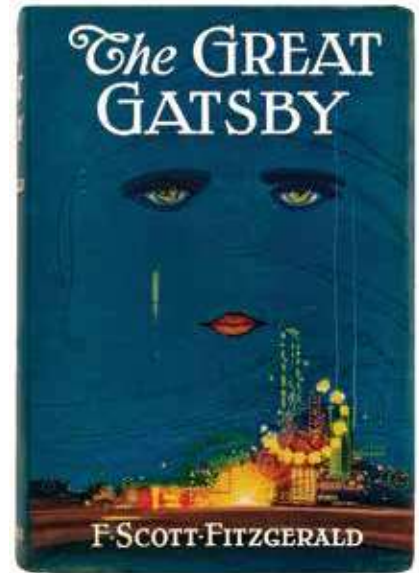
by Jim West

An interesting (and quite beautiful) item from the production history of *The Great Gatsby* was offered by Sotheby's New York at an online auction on July 21, 2022. It didn't sell, which means it still might eventually be acquired by a publicly accessible Fitzgerald collection, such as Princeton's. This item—marked "ARTIST PROOF" and dated "NOV 1924"—is an effort to indicate where the title of the novel and the names of its author and publisher should be placed on the front and spine of the dust jacket.

Readers of this newsletter will be familiar with the history of the title. On October 27, 1924, Fitzgerald (who was living in Saint-Raphaël, France) sent a package containing a complete typescript of his new novel to Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's in New York. In a letter mailed to Perkins on that same day, Fitzgerald wrote: "Under separate

cover I'm sending you my third novel: The Great Gatsby" (*Dear Scott/Dear Max* 80). Fitzgerald was not entirely satisfied with this title. During composition he had suggested "Among the Ash Heaps and Millionaires" to Perkins; other possibilities were "Gold-Hatted Gatsby," "The High-Bouncing Lover," and "On the Road to West Egg."

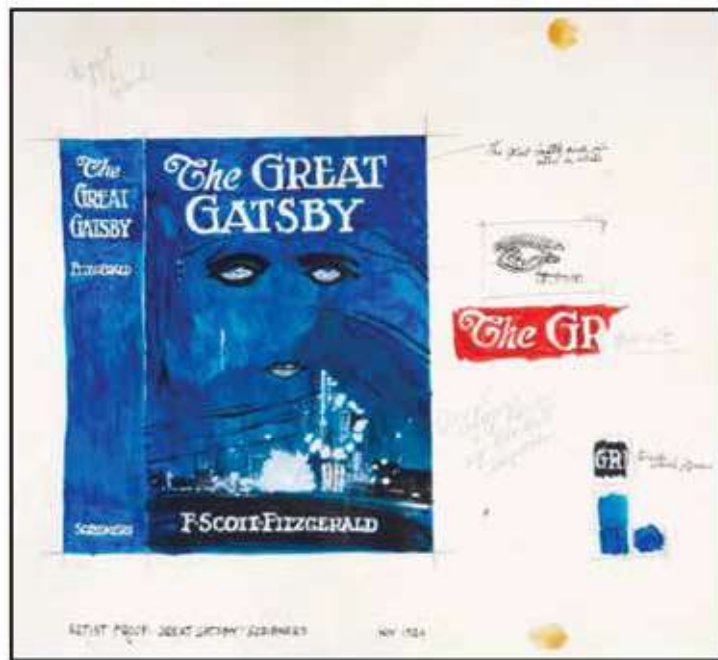
Shortly after mailing the typescript, Fitzgerald seems to have sent a message, probably a cable, to Perkins. In this message he changed the title to "Trimalchio in West Egg." Fitzgerald reinforced the change in a letter to Perkins written ca. November 7, 1924: "I have now decided to stick to the title I put on the book. Trimalchio in West Egg" (81). That title was appropriate: Trimalchio is an ostentatious party-giver in the *Satyricon* of Petronius (ca. AD 27-66). He is a freed slave who has grown wealthy as a wine-merchant; he gives elaborate parties for guests who help themselves to food and drink, behave badly, and leave without bothering to learn his name. Knowledge of Trimalchio and of the *Satyricon* would not have been common among Fitzgerald's readers in 1925. An explanation of the title



The evolution of arguably the most famous cover art in American literary history: Francis Cugat's "Celestial Eyes" in draft (left); the proof for Gatsby's jacket design, the item that recently went up for sale at Sotheby's (below); the final product (right).

would have been required—perhaps a note in the front matter of the book, and on the dust jacket as well. Fitzgerald's friend and fellow writer Ring Lardner did not like the title "Trimalchio." He told Perkins: "No one could pronounce it" (87). Fitzgerald seems to have come to the same conclusion. On December 15, 1924 he cabled Perkins to change the title back to *The Great Gatsby*, the title by which we know the novel today (86).

Now for the jacket. Before he left for France in May 1924, Fitzgerald saw a painting, a gouache on paper, by the artist Francis Cugat at the Scribner offices at 597 Fifth Avenue. The painting, which Charles Scribner III has dubbed "Celestial Eyes," shows a woman's eyes floating above a nighttime amusement-park scene. Fitzgerald was struck by the image and asked that it be reserved for the jacket of his novel. (He had finished three chapters at that point.) On August 25, 1924, a nervous Fitzgerald wrote to Perkins from Saint-Raphaël: "For Christs sake don't give anyone that jacket you're saving for me. I've written it into the book" (76). Critics have speculated that Fitzgerald took his



inspiration for the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, at the beginning of chapter 2, from Cugat's painting. Perkins followed Fitzgerald's wishes; the painting was held for the dust jacket.

Perkins appears to have put Fitzgerald's novel into production shortly after receiving the typescript. Typesetting must have begun shortly after Fitzgerald had changed the

title to "Trimalchio in West Egg." This explains why the compositors at the Scribner Press (at 311 West 43rd Street) began each of the galley sheets with a typeset slug reading: "Fitzgerald's Trimalchio." The art department, however, must have begun work on the jacket earlier, when the title was "The Great Gatsby." The "Artist Proof" looks to be an attempt (a successful one) to situate this title in the empty space



The Barcelona-born artist Francis Cugat (1893-1981) around the time he painted the cover image for Scribner's. Some mostly forgotten trivia: the artist's younger brother was Xavier Cugat (1900-1990), who rose to fame in the early 1930s as a bandleader, eventually marrying the famous singer/guitarist Charo.

above the amusement-park scene in Cugat's painting. Fitzgerald's name has been placed along the bottom of the front panel. The title, Fitzgerald's name, and "SCRIBNERS" all appear on the spine. A rough copy of Cugat's painting has been executed in dark blue.

The marginal annotations by the artist are of interest. The artist has suggested an alternate color, a brownish red, for the background. Attention is called to the "figures in eyes"—i.e., the reclining female forms that appear in the eyes in the Cugat painting. "The great Gatsby and all other in white," notes the artist, meaning that this lettering would (in printing parlance) be "dropped out." The "Artist Proof" is unsigned. Perhaps it was prepared by Cugat; more likely it was done by someone in the Scribner's art department.

Fitzgerald continued to fret about the title. On March 19, 1925, about

a month before publication, he sent this cable to Perkins: "CRAZY ABOUT TITLE UNDER THE RED WHITE AND BLUE STOP WHART [sic] WOULD DELAY BE." By this time the artwork for the jacket must have long since been approved. It is possible that the jackets had already been printed. Perkins cabled back on 20 March: "Advertised and sold for April tenth publication. Change suggested would mean some weeks delay, very great psychological damage. Think irony is far more effective under less leading title. Everyone likes present title. Urge we keep it." Fitzgerald agreed in a 22 March cable: "YOU'RE RIGHT" (*Variorum*: xxiii).

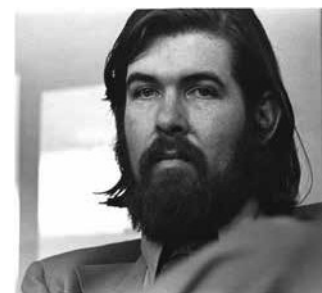
Those of us who read and teach *The Great Gatsby* are so accustomed to the title that we sometimes forget its rather tentative grip on the novel during composition and production. Sales of the novel were a disappointment for Fitzgerald. He had hoped for a sale of 50,000–75,000 copies, but the book moved slowly, with only 14,000 sold by the middle of June, and an eventual sale of around 20,000. Fitzgerald blamed this performance in part on the title, which he believed to be "only fair, rather bad than good" (101). Today, however, the title seems perfect, as does its placement on the jacket. Now that the jacket and Cugat's painting have both entered the public domain, one finds reproductions all over the Internet, and on all sorts of merchandise—book totes, coffee mugs, posters, T-shirts, and even cufflinks. 🌀

Works Cited

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- . *The Great Gatsby: A Variorum Edition*, ed. James L. W. West III. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
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- Scribner, Charles III. "Celestial Eyes: From Metamorphosis to Masterpiece." *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 53 (Winter 1992): 140-55.

IN MEMORIAM

AARON LATHAM
OCTOBER 3, 1943-JULY 23, 2022



Aaron Latham, the author of *Crazy Sundays: F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood (1971)*, passed away this summer after a lengthy battle with Parkinson's disease. (Courtesy: Twitter)