Modern American Cover Art: The Great Gatsby Through Time

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MODERN AMERICAN COVER ART: *THE GREAT GATSBY* THROUGH TIME

By

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SUMMARY

Book jackets and cover art are, more than anything, an advertising tool used to attract consumers, promote book sales, and establish company identity. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is a staple in the canon of American literature whose cover art has drastically transformed in the ninety years since its original publication. This thesis traces these changes over time, focusing specifically on publishing history, art history, American culture, and thematic interpretations. In doing so, I found that the most substantial influences on these covers were publishing house identity, design trends, and available artistic techniques. Ultimately, *The Great Gatsby*’s cover art is able to shift readers’ expectations and comprehension, enabling it to have its own type of influence in contrast with the novel itself.

Key words: *The Great Gatsby*, cover art, art history, graphic design, publishing houses, publishing history, American culture, modernism
INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2017, I began working in the Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections as the chief researcher, writer, and designer for their new website, Imaging the Modern, which focuses on the cover art and illustrations of major works of American modernism. A few months into my research, I began to notice that these works of cover art not only transformed in accordance with era in which they were published, but also reflected the brand of each publishing house. I soon found myself wanting to learn more about these transformations and their relation to publishing history, art history, American culture, and the themes of each individual novel. To answer my questions, I decided that I would trace one specific work from its initial publication to its most current edition in order to answer my questions and chose to focus on Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, as it is a widely read work of American modernism, making my research accessible to the general public. Additionally, there are many collections of this novel’s cover art but none that analyze why they look as they do. Therefore, in writing this thesis I strove to produce the first comprehensive analysis of the evolution of twenty-one of these covers.

I began my process by performing multidisciplinary research in order to create a thorough examination. First, I chose to study art history, which meant reading articles on and studying specific works of early twentieth century art movements. I then researched aspects of American culture that could possibly have influenced any of these covers, including economics, drinking habits, fashion trends, and film adaptations. The final task of my academic research was to study the history, market, and influence of various publishing companies, such as Penguin Books, Scribner, and Bantam Books. After all of my academic research was complete, I began to thematically interpret the images and scenes depicted on each work of cover art. This proved
more difficult than I initially expected, as I was required to think abstractly and dig deep into themes of the novel in order to dissect each cover. After synthesizing all of my research, I found that the most substantial influences on these covers were not art history or culture, but rather publishing house identity, design trends, and available artistic techniques. Though these results were not what I initially anticipated, they are consistent with the notion that cover art is, first and foremost, a form of advertisement.
CHAPTER I: CELESTIAL EYES

In the summer of 1924, F. Scott Fitzgerald, living in France at the time, wrote a letter to his editor, Maxwell Perkins, in which he insisted, “For Christ’s sake, don’t give anyone that jacket you’re saving for me. I’ve written it into the book” (Fitzgerald and Perkins 76). The jacket that Fitzgerald is referring to is, of course, Francis Cugat’s iconic gauche, or opaque watercolor, painting, Celestial Eyes, the first cover of The Great Gatsby (fig. 1).

Charles Scribner III describes the painting as:

Cugat’s rendition is not illustrative, but symbolic, even iconic: the sad, hypnotic, heavily outlined eyes of a woman beam like headlights through a cobalt night sky. Their irises are transfigured into reclining female nudes. From one of the eyes streams a green luminescent tear; brightly rouged lips complete the sensual triangle. No nose or other discernible facial contours are introduced in this celestial visage; a few dark streaks across the sky (behind the title) suggest

![Image of Celestial Eyes](image-url)
Usually, when publishers commission an artist to create the cover for a new novel, the artist illustrates a common motif or alluring scene. However, *Celestial Eyes* reverses this notion. Cugat does not illustrate any particular scene from the novel; rather, Fitzgerald incorporates this painting into his actual writing. In other words, *Celestial Eyes* precedes *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald’s claim that he “[wrote] it into the book” has sparked an enormous amount of controversy in the realm of Gatsby scholarship. Scholars have yet to agree where Fitzgerald wrote Cugat’s painting into the novel, but there are two predominant hypotheses: the billboard of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg and a passage in the final paragraph of “Chapter IV.”

The most commonly held idea of where Fitzgerald “wrote” Cugat’s *Celestial Eyes* into *The Great Gatsby* is in the billboard of the optometrist, Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. The beginning of “Chapter II” describes the valley of ashes and, consequently, the billboard, as Fitzgerald writes, “The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic – their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose” (23). This description does seem to parallel a few of the features present in *Celestial Eyes*: the “blue and gigantic” eyes and the figure having “no face” and “a non-existent nose.” Andrew Turnbull describes the dust jacket, writing “two huge eyes, intended to be those of Daisy Fay, brooding over New York City, and this had been Fitzgerald’s inspiration for the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg” (166). This is the first published occurrence of anyone positing that the billboard of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg was inspired by *Celestial Eyes*. Turnbull’s conclusion is based on the apparent similarities between the description of the billboard and the cover. However, it is rooted entirely in speculation.
This lack of evidence changed in 1964 with the release of Hemingway’s *A Moveable Feast*, a memoir of his time in Paris in the 1920s. In his narrative, Hemingway recounts the moment Fitzgerald gave him a copy of *The Great Gatsby* for the first time, stating, “It had a garish dust jacket and I remember being embarrassed by the violence, bad taste and slippery look of it. It looked the book jacket for a book of bad science fiction. Scott told me not to be put off by it, that it had to do with a billboard along a highway in Long Island that was important to the story” (176). According to Hemingway, *Celestial Eyes* is, in fact, the inspiration for the billboard of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. However, many scholars have debated the validity of Hemingway’s statement. Hemingway and Fitzgerald’s relationship fluctuated between close friends and bitter rivals throughout the entirety of their lives. The capricious nature of this relationship calls the legitimacy of Hemingway’s claim into question, as it could have been a biased account.

Additionally, if this exchange between Fitzgerald and Hemingway did take place, it would have been in 1924 or 1925, after the first edition of *The Great Gatsby* was initially published and the two were still living in Paris. Conversely, Hemingway did not begin writing *A Moveable Feast* until 1957, thirty-three years later. Many have posited that it is unlikely Hemingway would remember this exchange over three decades after it occurred.

In the same year as the publication of *A Moveable Feast, American Literature* published Kenneth Eble’s “The Craft of Revision: *The Great Gatsby*.” This article, a synthesis of the various drafts and revisions of *The Great Gatsby*, additionally provides possible evidence that Cugat’s *Celestial Eyes* influenced the billboard of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. When discussing “Chapter II,” the chapter that introduces the billboard, Eble writes, “the pencil draft indicates that the chapter – marked Chapter III in the manuscript – was written at a different period of time from that of the earlier chapters” (320). This observation is consistent with the idea that the
billboard was a later addition to the novel, possibly because Fitzgerald had seen *Celestial Eyes* and “written it into the book.” Though Eble’s claim seems credible, Matthew J. Bruccoli, the preeminent expert on F. Scott Fitzgerald, refutes this assertion in his book, *The Great Gatsby: A Facsimile of the Manuscript*. In this synthesis of various drafts and manuscripts of *The Great Gatsby*, he argues, “earlier drafts of ‘Chapter III’ also contain a description of the eyes of Eckleburg that is near the same wording as the published version, making the billboard symbol at least as old as the earliest surviving manuscripts” (73). Essentially, certain drafts of “Chapter II,” written as “Chapter III” in the manuscripts, were written later than other sections of the novel, as Eble claims; however, the earliest drafts of this chapter still contain the billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg. This disproves Eble’s theory that “Chapter II” was written later than other chapters because Fitzgerald wrote *Celestial Eyes* into the novel in the form of the billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg.

To further his argument that the billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg is not where Fitzgerald wrote *Celestial Eyes* into *The Great Gatsby*, Bruccoli draws readers’ attention towards a simple detail that many scholars have overlooked: the cover does not resemble the billboard at all (xviii). As was previously mentioned, there are certain similarities, such as the “blue and gigantic” eyes and the figure having “no face” and “a non-existent nose” (*The Great Gatsby* 23). However, the cover more closely resembles a sad, feminine figure, such as Daisy, than a brooding, masculine one. These dissimilarities are further evidenced in Cugat’s preparatory sketches for *Celestial Eyes*. In Scribner’s comprehensive synthesis of Cugat’s preliminary sketches, he argues:

> It is entirely conceivable that Fitzgerald had never seen Cugat’s final, finished artwork…

Since there were at most a couple of weeks between the commission and Fitzgerald’s
departure for France, it is likely that what he had seen – and ‘written into the book’ – was one or more of Cugat’s preparatory sketches which were probably shown to him at Scribners for his comments before he set sail. (145-146)

If Fitzgerald was, in fact, shown an earlier sketch, Cugat’s preliminary sketches may be more relevant than the final design in ascertaining where Fitzgerald inserted *Celestial Eyes* into the novel.

The first of Cugat’s preparatory sketches (fig. 2) derives its concept from Fitzgerald’s original title of *The Great Gatsby*, “Among the Ash Heaps and Millionaires.”

![Fig. 2 Scribner, Charles, III. "Celestial Eyes: From Metamorphosis to Masterpiece." Princeton University Library Chronicle, vol. 53, no. 2, 1992, p. 146.](image)

This sketch is comprised of charcoal and pen-and-ink and ultimately washed with watercolor and gouache. It depicts a train passing through a deserted town, and in the far left corner, the image of a face barely emerges from the dark sky. The “crude image of a face” in the far left is an androgynous figure, a stark contrast from the clearly feminine figure in the final version. Additionally, the figure in the sky is not the focal point of the image. Instead, the first sketch is mainly focused on the Valley of Ashes, the home of Myrtle and George Wilson first introduced in “Chapter II,” whereas the final draft has the figure floating above the New York City Skyline.
Cugat’s second sketch (fig. 3), however, shifts upwards.


Unlike the first sketch, here one is able to see the beginnings of what would become the final version of *Celestial Eyes*. In this pencil and crayon sketch, instead of focusing on the terrain of the Valley of Ashes, as he did in the first sketch, Cugat now shifts the viewer’s eye to the sky. Additionally, the faces have changed, as they are now more feminine with weeping eyes, eyebrows, and red lips. However, the second sketch is still vastly different from the final version of *Celestial Eyes*, as there are multiple figures and the landscape is still the Valley of Ashes.

Though Cugat’s second sketch prioritizes the figures in the sky, it is not until the third sketch (fig. 4) that he makes one specific feminine figure the main focal point of the image.
This pencil and crayon sketch depicts the profile of a female with red lips who weeps a single tear into the Long Island Sound with the New York skyline in the background. Each consecutive sketch more closely resembles the final version of *Celestial Eyes*. The main focal point is now a weeping woman’s face floating in the sky, though she is in profile and in the final version the figure faces the viewer, and the foreground no longer contains the Valley of Ashes but instead the Long Island Sound and the New York City skyline.

Cugat’s fourth sketch (fig. 5) is his last known complete draft for the cover of *The Great Gatsby* before the final version of *Celestial Eyes*. 
Cugat uses pencil, crayon, charcoal, and gouache to create the full countenance of a woman in the sky. Two blue eyes and red lips dominate the sky, shedding a single tear onto the New York skyline. Cugat also includes a pattern of dynamic lines throughout the sky, adding the illusion of movement to the cover. There is not much that differentiates this fourth sketch from the final draft of *Celestial Eyes*. The straight on, feminine figure in the sky now has sorrowful, hooded eyes, which emit a tear, the quintessential images of the iconic final painting. Similarly, Scribner writes, “At some point between this sketch and the finished gouache painting, the decision was made to enliven the somber skyline of bricks and mortar by superimposing a dazzling carnival of lights” (151). Additionally, the sketch is accented with abstract lines that appear in the final draft as well, the figure’s headpiece and flashes of light in the night sky.
As Scribner argues, it is entirely possible Fitzgerald never saw the final painting before the book was published and, instead, one of the preliminary sketches was “written into the book.” With this idea in mind, the art that Fitzgerald references in this quote could be one of the first two preliminary sketches, which focus on the Valley of Ashes. However, Scribner disagrees with this notion, as he writes, “The fact that in Cugat’s sketch there is no indication of a billboard, much less the bespectacled eyes of Doctor Eckleburg, suggests that Fitzgerald had yet to conceive his optical symbol or, at least, had yet to share it with either his editor or the artist” (147). Essentially, Scribner is arguing that, since there is an absence of any billboards or bespectacled eyes in the first two sketches, it is unlikely that Fitzgerald drew upon these sketches for his inspiration, as he would have mentioned so to his editor and/or Cugat before the aforementioned “I’ve written it into the book” quote. By this logic, if Fitzgerald did not reference either of the sketches that contain the Valley of Ashes, the cover of the book or its preliminary sketches probably do not appear in the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleberg.

The majority of Cugat’s work for *The Great Gatsby* – the last two preliminary sketches and the final painting – concerns itself with a sorrowful, feminine face floating over the New York City skyline. Many scholars, including Scribner and Mesher, have likened this image to a passage in “Chapter IV” where Nick muses, “Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, I had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs” (80). It is apparent that this quote contains certain similarities with Cugat’s later sketches and final painting. All three contain a “disembodied,” feminine face, and in the final painting, this face is set against a “dark,” navy backdrop above “blinding” city lights. These similarities, alongside Fitzgerald’s careful diction, have caused certain scholars to believe that this passage is where *Celestial Eyes* was “written into the book.” In previous pencil drafts of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald struck out
the word “face,” replaced it with “disembodied face,” and eliminated completely a line that stated the face “looked out of windows into the warm night” (The Great Gatsby: A Facsimile 93). These edits are consistent with the argument that this passage is where Fitzgerald “wrote” Celestial Eyes into the novel. In his article, “Covering a Debt: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Francis Cugat,” Mesher argues, “Not only does this description correspond exactly to Cugat’s illustration, but its brevity and its position in the work, coming in the last paragraph of a chapter, correlate well with the sort of addition to the text that might be inspired by seeing an artist’s illustration, itself based on an earlier draft of the novel” (239).

Though the billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg and the end of “Chapter IV” are the two most common and well-supported arguments for where Fitzgerald incorporated Celestial Eyes into The Great Gatsby, scholar Rick Bowers posits an entirely separate hypothesis. Bowers argues that Celestial Eyes did not influence The Great Gatsby in one particular image or passage but, instead, throughout the novel as a whole. He concludes, “Rather, what Fitzgerald wrote ‘into the book’ involved more of a multi-perspectival sense of modern connectedness and apartness in terms of personal hope, desire, ambition, and disappointment. Such features dominate this remarkable novel and are suggestively indicated by Cugat’s remarkable piece of commercial art” (195). Essentially, Bowers is arguing that Fitzgerald incorporated Celestial Eyes into the novel through his use of particular modern themes. However, it is far more likely that Fitzgerald had already intended on using particular themes and, instead, modernism influences both The Great Gatsby and Celestial Eyes separately and subsequently draws them together through its similar themes and concepts.

Simply defined, modernism is an early twentieth century literary and art movement that strives to break from classical norms and experiment with new forms of expression. Writers and
artists during this time period were giving up previous thought processes of the Enlightenment and instead were embracing a “nonlogical, nonobjective, and essentially causeless mental universe” (Anderson). In Cugat’s *Celestial Eyes*, the disembodied, floating face evokes a sense of mystery, reflecting the modern era’s fascination with the psyche. Additionally, this face is streaked with a lone tear, further emphasizing the feelings of isolation, disillusionment, and cynicism that plagued the nation. However, the most apparent instance of Cugat incorporating themes and consciousness of modernity can be seen in the skyline that frames the bottom of the cover. Its bright, flashing lights elicit feelings of excitement but also anxiety and urgency, sensations that afflicted those living in the early twentieth century due to the sharp increase of urbanization.

As an art movement, modernism encompasses a wide variety of more short-lived periods, such as Post-Impressionism. One of the defining characteristics of this movement is its dynamic use of interrelating color and shape (“Post-Impressionism”). Though the movement technically ends in 1910, Cugat’s *Celestial Eyes* contains Post-Impressionist styles and techniques, such as its stark contrast of colors and variation of lines and texture. Not only do the warm yellows, oranges, and reds stand out against the disparate midnight blue sky, but the skyline’s blurry, out-of-focus form is also contrasted with the dark, sharp lines present in the disembodied face. Post-Impressionism marks the transition between Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism and therefore makes use of a variety of abstract forms and patterns (“Post Impressionism”). The disembodied face in *Celestial Eyes*, lacking both an outline and a nose, recalls this movement towards abstraction, while the single tear and blue-brimmed eyes evokes a sense of sorrow.

Picasso, a twentieth century Spanish artist, is said to have influenced much of Cugat’s art and *Celestial Eyes* in particular (Hennig 148). Art historian Erica Hennig has particularly linked
the eyes in *Celestial Eyes* to various instances of eyes in Picasso’s art as they share heavy, black outlines and eyebrows and brightly colored irises (Hennig 148). Picasso is well known for pioneering the collage and Cubism movement; however, he has also made major contributions to the Symbolism movement (“Pablo Picasso”). Symbolism is defined by its emphasis on emotions, feelings, ideas, and subjectivity; a fascination with dreams and the melancholy; and ambiguous, symbolic references (“Symbolism”). Through his use of watery eyes and a single tear, Cugat emphasizes emotions of sadness and sorrow and employs ambiguous, symbolic references that are often found in other works of Symbolism. Not only are the eyes a symbol in and of themselves, but they contain yet another: reclining bare women. This imagery could be embodying themes that are also inherent in the novel, such as vanity, as the women are nude; excess, as they are lounging; and deception, as the image of the eyes contains more than just eyes.

With Fitzgerald’s statement that he “wrote [*Celestial Eyes*] into the book,” comes a variety of differing opinions on exactly where it is located. Though the prominent belief is that it is in the billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg; however, this has been almost entirely disproven by a variety of sources, including Cugat’s preliminary sketches. Another, perhaps more likely, belief is that it is is a passage at the end of “Chapter IV,” which is supported by Fitzgerald’s diction and edits of the original manuscript. Additionally, though the painting influences the novel, *Celestial Eyes* itself is impacted by the time period in which it was created, such as modernism, Post-Impressionism, and Symbolism. However, though it does take influences from outside sources, this particular edition is a unique case, as this reciprocal relationship of influence between cover art and content cannot be found in any subsequent editions of the novel.
CHAPTER II: EARLY GRAPHIC ART

Though Cugat’s *Celestial Eyes* has been popular, it is more dynamic and colorful than most other book covers in the early twentieth century, which resemble monochromatic woodblock prints. Colorful cover art was a rarity, as full-color printing was deemed to be a luxury (Powers 16). Because of this, the customary printing medium was the line block, also known as woodcut, where the artist carves an image into the surface of a block, covers the raised sections in ink, and presses it onto the surface of the paper (Powers 16). This design works best with simple shapes without gradient, which is why many book covers produced in the 1920s and 1930s have very flat designs. The 1934 Modern Library edition of *The Great Gatsby* (fig. 6) uses line block printing for its cover design, focusing on a couple in front of an urban backdrop. Though this cover uses a total of three colors, the technique is still the same.

Fig. 6 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Vol. 117, Modern Library, 1934.

This monochromatic, stark style of cover art takes influences from a variety of art movements, including nineteenth-century Japanese woodblock prints. Woodblock prints can be
traced back to the early sixteenth century in Japan; however, it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that new technology enabled artists to produce single-sheet prints in a variety of colors (Department of Asian Art). According to Alan Powers, an expert on the history of cover art, “Japanese prints were influential in creating a monochrome graphic style, since they were usually composed with blocks of colour, simplifying the complexity of observed phenomena” (16). Therefore, since multi-color printing was such an extravagance in the early nineteenth century, monochromatic line color blocks were an easy, inexpensive way to produce cover art to attract potential customers.

Additionally, Cubism, a modern artistic movement that flourished in the 1920s, provides further inspiration for these flat designs. Though certain aspects of Cubism, such as the use of various colors and the blending of background into foreground (“Cubism”), cannot be found in these monochromatic covers, Powers argues that the “broadest popular sense” of Cubism influenced much of the cover art in the early twentieth century (16). This “popular sense” that Powers discusses includes the abandonment of perspective, which was traditionally used to depict space, and the surrender of the realistic modeling of figures (“Cubism”). Both of these characteristics of Cubism can be found in the 1934 Modern Library cover. All realistic perspective is cast aside in favor of an explicitly two-dimensional depiction of the urban landscape. The artist is no longer replying on shadows to depict space but is instead showing this space through his restrained use of solid shapes and lines. Similarly, the two figures in front of this urban landscape are not depicted in a realistic fashion. Instead, they are reduced to a variety of simple yet dynamic shapes that are still able to give an impression of modernity and sophistication through their two-dimensionality.
Though Japanese prints and Cubism both guide the artistic style of the 1934 Modern Library cover, Art Deco is the most obvious design influence on this cover. Art Deco, also known as Style Moderne, is an artistic movement that was developed in France in the early twentieth century but flourished in the United States in the 1930s as a celebration of industrial advancement (“Art Deco”). Due to its emphasis on modern technology, Art Deco’s main characteristics include the use of geometric shapes, parallel lines, and tapering forms to suggest symmetry and streamlining (“Art Deco”). In the 1934 Modern Library cover, these features are readily apparent. First, the inclusion of skyscrapers alone suggests an influence of Art Deco, as the best-known examples of this art movement in the United States are buildings such as the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building (“Art Deco”). Additionally, the skyscrapers in the background consist entirely of various parallel lines and rectangles, and the image itself is nearly vertically symmetrical. Similarly, in Art Deco, natural figures, such as people, are often distorted and “defamiliarized” (Marchand 145-146). Essentially, the natural forms of figures are disrupted, and they were reduced into smaller parts (Marchand 145). This facet is present in the 1934 Modern Library cover, as the natural bodies of the man and woman are abandoned and replaced with various solid, geometric shapes.

However, the elements from these various art movements were not included solely for aesthetic purposes, but for profit as well. In 1917, Boni and Liveright founded the Modern Library in order to provide American readers with inexpensive, contemporary European novels (Modern Library). Though they began to publish novels from American authors in 1925, they kept striving to publish inexpensive books (Modern Library). In order to achieve their ideal market price, they used line block techniques to produce monochromatic, geometric covers, due to the high costs associated with using a variety of colors. Additionally, the Modern Library’s
target consumers did not only consist of American readers but young American readers (Modern Library). Because Art Deco is concerned with fashion and beauty, it appeals to adolescents and young adults who strive to be on trend. Therefore, through using elements from the Art Deco movement in their 1934 cover, the Modern Library was effectively targeting their intended consumers in an attempt to sell more books. Utilizing the fashionable style of Art Deco additionally shapes the way the novel is received. The use of geometric shapes and defined lines, combined with the formal dress of the man and woman, provide the viewers with an atmosphere of modernity and sophistication.

Art Deco was also used frequently in advertising and branding, and one of the most prominent mid-century cover artists is Alvin Lustig, the chief illustrator for the publishing house New Directions from 1945-1952 (52). The simplicity of his covers “[brought] the latest findings in visual communication derived from abstract art directly into the marketplace” and ultimately became the distinctive style for New Directions for decades (52). European modernism, specifically artists such as Domela and Miró, was the main influence on much of Lustig’s work, including the 1945 New Directions cover for The Great Gatsby (52) (fig. 7).
Similar to the 1934 Modern Library cover, the 1945 New Directions cover is reminiscent of both Japanese woodblock prints and Art Deco. Not only is it monochromatic, but the entire cover consists of parallel lines and geometric shapes. For example, the dollar sign could have been portrayed as a solid, bold-faced dollar sign; however, Lustig uses a variety of geometric shapes and streamlined lines to emphasize the symbol even more.

Additionally, each letter of “GATSBY” is in its own discrete square, adding more emphasis to the word and creating a more dynamic cover. In the 1930s and 40s, text and lettering were taught to nearly all art students (Powers 42). Because of this emphasis in art education, Lustig is one of the first illustrators to experiment with various forms of lettering. Powers argues, “the letters themselves can suggest the book’s content.” The cut-and-paste look of the word “GATSBY” suggests an air of mystery. The Great Gatsby is typically not categorized as a crime novel, but the plot incorporates elements from this genre, such as Gatsby’s gangster connections, Myrtle Wilson’s violent death, and Wilson’s revenge killing.
Lustig’s use of symbolism and color also provides a glimpse into the novel. Powers writes, “Modernism was often witty, and Lustig succeeded in catching its insouciant, almost throwaway elegance. He proved that a jacket designer needs to have read a text intelligently in order to summarize its mood and content without trivializing it” (52). The 1945 New Directions cover is one of the first covers for The Great Gatsby that reflects its tone and subject matter. The dust jacket announces that money is the novel’s theme through its use of the dollar sign and the color yellow. Yellow or gold is one of the most frequently occurring colors in the novel; it can be found in both images, such as Gatsby’s tie and car, and in descriptions, such as “the golden girl” (Fitzgerald 120), all of which relate to money. Lustig thus hints at one of the novel’s central conflicts, class struggle.

This emphasis on dollar signs and the gold of prosperity reflects Lustig’s historical moment as much as Fitzgerald’s. Towards the end of the 1930s, the United States finally began to escape the consequences of the Great Depression (U*X*L American Decades). Additionally, after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, many American businesses had begun extensive wartime production (U*X*L American Decades). Because of this sudden increase in production, by 1946, American unemployment rates were low, wages were at a record high, and the economy was booming (U*X*L American Decades). The 1945 New Directions cover connects these two elements of postwar prosperity.

Though it was created in the same year, the 1945 Bantam Books cover (fig. 8) provides a stark contrast to Lustig’s cover.
Edgard Cirlin, the illustrator for this cover, was a freelance painter who was commissioned by both Bantam Books and Penguin Books to create various works of cover art, many of which experiment with the interaction between shades and colors. Color was deemed a luxury in book production during the Second World War, as many of the chemicals used for colored inks and dyes were the same as those needed to make explosives (Powers 34). After the war ended, color was more frequently used in cover art. Where Lustig’s cover is minimal and refined, Cirlin’s is colorful and lively.

In the 1940s, cover design drew upon “modernism in the use of simplified form and balanced colour with well-integrated lettering,” a style also common in posters and advertisements (Powers 66). These features are readily apparent in Cirlin’s 1945 Bantam Books cover. The images, such as the champagne glass, the hand, and the car are more realistic than the 1934 Modern Library cover; however, they still feature simple geometric shapes. Cirlin’s cover
moves away from the monochromatic, two-dimensional covers of the Art Deco movement, towards a more dynamic, three-dimensional appearance through the use of colors and shading. Though the cover uses a wide range of colors, Cirlin relies on red, which both attracts and holds attention, to unify them.

Cirlin also incorporates new forms of lettering into the 1945 Bantam Books cover. Though the typeface itself is simple, diagonals and color create movement and attract the eye. During the early years of graphic design, artists would use “the diagonal as a compositional device to achieve a dynamic effect…in the lettering” (Powers 18). In the 1945 Bantam Books cover, the words “The” and “Gatsby” are on one diagonal, whereas “great” is in between them on the opposing diagonal. This opposing diagonal also follows the trail behind the car, creating the illusion that it was knocked out of place by the car. Additionally, the word “great” is in red whereas “the” and “Gatsby” are in grayscale. The color red is striking and immediately focuses the viewer on the word “great.” Second, the red unifies the woman’s nail color, the umbrella, and the shades of red in the champagne. As the car hits the word “great,” the color red also evokes injury or blood, an indirect allusion to Myrtle’s death.

Cirlin’s use of color and dynamic lettering reflects the Bantam Books brand. Though Bantam Books mostly sold reprints of hardcover books in the 1940s, they did print some mass market paperbacks (Andrews). Bantam Books was known for its bright colors, loud fonts, and alluring focal points. Additionally, for the first time this cover features a fun, lively depiction of *The Great Gatsby* with alcohol, parties, and fast cars. The novel is advertised as a jovial quick read-instead of a novel that features deceit, disillusionment, and death.

With the prominent champagne glass, Cirlin evokes the Prohibition era when Gatsby is set and reflects the drinking culture of the late 1940s. During World War II, many distillers quit
producing alcohol for consumption and instead produced industrial alcohol for the war effort (Hanson). Because of this change in production, alcohol was rationed and drinking decreased (Hanson). However, as the war came to an end, consumption levels began to rise again, so much so that in 1946 “the annual average per capita consumption of absolute alcohol in the U.S. reached the pre-Prohibition level of about two gallons” for the first time in nearly 25 years (Lender and Martin 177). Additionally, alcohol was no longer exclusively a public, social act. In the late 1940s, alcohol “began to shift from an occasional, often public, act to one that was incorporated into daily life in the home as a marker and accompaniment of leisure” (Blocker 235). The exaggerated size of the glass and the woman’s hand curled around its stem emphasize alcohol’s new, more prominent role in the lives of many Americans.

George Woodman’s 1948 Grey Walls Press cover (fig. 9) is decidedly more modest than Cirlin’s cover; however, it also reflects later advancements in graphic design.

![Fig. 9 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby. The Grey Walls Press, 1948.](image-url)
One of the main features of graphic design can be found in Woodman’s use of simplified forms. The figure of the woman looks more realistic and detailed than her predecessors; however, she is still composed of geometric shapes and defined lines, as are the outline of the man’s face and the buildings. This cover, like Lustig’s 1945 New Directions cover, draws inspiration from early graphic design and the Art Deco movement, which can be seen in Woodman’s use of tapering forms and parallel lines, not only in the buildings but in the horizontal red lines as well. Similarly, its use of color blocking suggests an influence from early graphic design, whereas its use of multiple colors stems from a later period when color reproduction became less expensive.

Though the cover art is largely abstract, it represents one of the central symbols of the novel: the green light. In the novel, Gatsby and Daisy live directly across the bay from one another West Egg and East Egg respectively. At the end of Daisy’s dock shines a green light that Gatsby is constantly trying to reach. Nick states that this light represents “the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us”; however, the light is also representative of the past, as, it is not only the manifestation of Gatsby’s hope to reach Daisy but also the past to which he so desperately clings. The 1948 Gray Walls cover contains two green women, one of whom is shining in the distance and the other is contained in the man’s profile. These women clearly represent Daisy; however, they are also both embodiments of the significance of the green light. The shining woman in the distance, watched by the profile of the man, embodies Gatsby’s desire to be with Daisy and his hope of reaching her in the future. Conversely, the woman inside the man’s profile personifies the Daisy of the past, who Gatsby refuses to let go, though she only exists in his mind.

Woodman’s cover updates the subjects and themes from the novel in order to reflect the culture of 1940s, rather than the Jazz Age. The dress on the woman, for example, reflects the
fashions of the 1940s with squared shoulders with shoulder pads, a narrow waist, a high neckline with a collar, and a skirt that ends below the knee. This masculine style was popularized during this time period, as dresses were modeled after the utility clothes produced during World War II (The University of Vermont). The dresses from the 1920s, on the other hand, were sleeveless and loose and had low necklines and short skirts. By updating the woman’s clothing, Woodman creates a more contemporary cover, which suggest that the novel is of, or at least relating to, the time.

The period spanning between 1930s and early 1940s was a time of rapid development in graphic design, as can be seen in the cover art that draws influences from a variety of artistic movements such as Japanese woodblock printing, Cubism, and, most importantly, Art Deco. These covers reflect both popular advertising techniques of the time, such as typography, and each edition’s target audience. Similarly, as these works of cover art were created after the novel had been finished (unlike Celestial Eyes), they reveal aspects of the novel’s plot and various thematic interpretations. These combined facets ultimately allow present-day viewers to place each novel in its moment of production and consequently further understand culture of each edition’s respective age. Furthermore, they demonstrate the significance of this era in the evolution of mass-market publishing, as each of these editions was created in order to cut costs while retaining aesthetic allure.
CHAPTER III: PULP FICTION COVERS

The covers from the 1930s and 1940s each experiment with a variety of design styles, including expressionism, woodcuts, and Art Deco. However, the popularization of pulp fiction in the late 1940s and early 1950s led to a greater consistency in cover design. Pulp fiction describes a genre of novels created in the period between wars, known especially for their exciting and dramatic plots (Powers 63). Additionally, the cover art of these novels reflect their sensationalist tendencies, as they usually utilize brightly colored pictures and contain “imagery that is often accidentally archetypal in its portrayal of the emotional crux of each story” (Powers 64). This imagery usually contains what Schick describes as the “Three S’s” of pulp fiction paperbacks: “sadism, sex, and smoking gun[s]” (85). Many publishing houses began to reprint classic novels with these bright, archetypal covers. For example, in 1949 (fig. 10) and 1951 (fig. 11), Bantam Books hired freelance artist Bob Skemp, known for his 1950s pin-up girls, to create two new covers for The Great Gatsby, both of which contain quintessential elements of the pulp fiction cover.
The underlying element found in all pulp fiction covers is their use of bright colors, which can especially be found in these editions’ titles. 1949 cover has the title in yellow to pop
against the dark background; conversely, the 1951 cover has the title in red to pop against the white background. Additionally, Skemp uses the characters’ clothing to insert more color into these covers, as can be seen in Wilson’s blue work attire, Gatsby’s red towel, and Daisy’s purple dress. These articles of clothing not only draw attention to the color but also to the specific characters, which provide the viewer with a glimpse of the novel’s plot and tone.

Pulp fiction covers normally portray scenes vital to the novel’s plot, which, according to Powers, may come in the form of emotional cruxes. The 1949 cover depicts one of the most powerful scenes in the novel: Gatsby’s death. The scene is dramatic and emotional, of course, because it contains the murder of the novel’s main character and a suicide; however, it also embodies the theme of the hopelessness of dreams, as Gatsby’s life and therefore his pursuit of Daisy have both ended. Though the 1949 cover portrays a scene that is vital to the novel, it depicts details that are never revealed to the readers through Nick Carraway’s narration. The readers know that Wilson murdered Gatsby; however, since Nick did not see the crime firsthand, neither do the readers. Therefore, they are left to imagine what the scene may look like. However, this particular cover and the scene it depicts are not derived from imagination but rather influenced by 1940s cinema.

The 1949 cover reads, “Alan Ladd stars in the Paramount Picture,” alluding to the 1949 film version of *The Great Gatsby*. Not only does the cover advertise for the film, the figures of Gatsby and Wilson are modeled after Alan Ladd and Howard Da Silva, the actors who played these respective roles. Similarly, the image itself is inspired by Gatsby’s murder scene in the film, which differs slightly from that of the novel. In the film, Nick arrives at Gatsby’s pool to discuss Myrtle’s death. As they are speaking, Wilson shoots Gatsby head-on, and Gatsby falls into the pool and swims towards Wilson before he is shot twice more. In this version, Wilson
does not kill himself. There are a few discrepancies between the cover and the film, namely that Wilson is about to shoot Gatsby behind his back on the cover. This change in body positioning may be due to the fact that pulp fiction covers showed “heightened” moments from the text (Earle 169). Also, through having both characters face the same direction, Skemp can showcase the recognizable figures of Alan Ladd and Howard Da Silva, potentially attracting buyers that have seen or would like to see the film.

This cover reveals the novel’s conclusion, which book covers tend to avoid. However, this choice can be explained by the cinematic atmosphere of the late 1940s. During this decade, a genre of film known as film noir was popularized. French critics coined the term “film noir” because of its use of low lighting for dramatic effects; however, the genre encompasses all films that are characterized by their dramatic camera angles and stark lighting and contain an atmosphere of cynicism, paranoia, menace, and fatalism (Dirks). Oftentimes, film noir branches off into subcategories, such as crime and gangster films. These films contain the same theatrical elements and themes of classic film noir, but showcase corrupt characters who lead violent and criminal lives (Dirk). Though *The Great Gatsby* is mainly concerned with the relationships between the characters, the 1949 film especially highlights Gatsby’s crimes, reflecting the crime and gangster films of the era. Because the 1949 Bantam Books cover was inspired by Gatsby’s murder scene in the 1949 film, it also contains certain elements of these films. By portraying Wilson holding a gun behind Gatsby’s back, Skemp condenses corruption, violence, and crime into one image.

This cover not only portrays the “smoking gun” aspect of Schick’s three S’s, but also “sex,” which can be found in both the text and image of the two men. Unlike its predecessors, this cover has a heading, which reads “the great novel of the sinful twenties.” “Sinful” could
allude to a variety of risqué acts in the novel; however, it “leads a reader to expect more sex rather than parties” (Earle 171). Additionally, the “shirtless, muscular Jay Gatsby” holding his belt “as if about to take his pants off” sexualizes the cover further (Earle 170). This depiction of Gatsby may be to attract female readers, as Alan Ladd was a prominent sex symbol in the 1940s. However, though it may not have been Skemp’s intent, this sexualized Gatsby also sheds light on the novel’s “submerged themes of homosexuality,” “homo-eroticism,” and “sexual passing,” especially present in Nick and Gatsby’s relationship (Earle 171-172).

The 1951 cover, on the other hand, portrays a much more lighthearted scene, though it may still be defined as an emotional crux. This cover most likely depicts the scene in “Chapter VI” where Gatsby and Daisy spend half an hour alone on Nick’s porch during one of Gatsby’s parties. Similar to Gatsby’s murder scene, the readers do not know much about this scene besides the fact that it occurs. Despite its lack of description, this scene is narratively important, as it immediately precedes the climactic scene in the Plaza Hotel, and emotionally important, as it is one of the few occasions that the readers know that Gatsby and Daisy are alone together. Where the 1949 cover gives the novel the appearance of a suspenseful crime thriller, the 1951 cover casts it as a glamorous romance novel.

Artists of pulp fiction covers also employ what is now known as Good Girl Art. Richard Lupoff describes Good Girl Art as “A cover illustration depicting an attractive young woman, usually in skimpy or form-fitting clothing, and designed for [mild erotic interest].” These “male-centered fantasy driven caricatures” (Earle 188) were especially popularized in the 1950s, as “the visuality and materiality of modernism as divulged by the paperback evinces or builds of of a strain of misogynistic visual signifiers” (Earle 162). In the 1951 cover, Skemp utilizes Good Girl Art in his depiction of Daisy. Though Skemp’s use of Good Girl Art on this cover is not as
scandalous as many of its contemporaries, many of the key elements are still apparent. Not only is this depiction of Daisy young, attractive, and curvaceous, she is also wearing a form-fitting dress that showcases her breasts. This style of dress is characteristic of the 1950s, as dresses now had “unpadded, rounded shoulders, shapely bust lines, closely-defined waistlines, and fully, billowy skirts” (“1950s Women’s Clothing”). Though this form of illustration may be called “Good Girl Art,” Lupoff states, “the term does not apply to the morality of the ‘good girl’,” as she is instead usually a “temptress.” Opinions may vary on whether or not Daisy is considered a “good girl”; however, it is conceivable that in the scene depicted, Daisy is tempting Gatsby, whether it be sexually or emotionally.

With the rise of pulp fiction came the popularization of its covers, which feature brightly colored pictures, archetypal moments, and sexualized characters. These covers reveal that The Great Gatsby’s popularity was growing amongst the general public, possibly due to its inclusion in the modern canon, as pulp fiction novels were “forms of mass publishing … produced cheaply for quick consumption and disposal” (Earle 11). They also illustrate that modern novels were no longer regarded as exclusively elite or avant-garde, since modernism was now “an available aspect of mass culture” due to the expansive audience of these pulp fiction novels (Earle 6).
CHAPTER IV: PUBLISHING HOUSE IDENTITY

When the popularity of paperback books began to rise in the early 1940s, Allen Lane, director of Penguin Books, refused to use pictorial covers (Powers 30). This continued for years, as one director stated in 1956, “The most familiar feature of the Penguin look is, of course, the avoidance of pictorial covers” (Powers 90). However, since “the lurid cover is considered essential for securing mass sales of paperbacked books” in the United States, in the 1960s, Penguin began to conform to the trend of pictorial covers (Powers 90). Powers attributes this change to the appointment of Germano Facetti as the new Penguin Art Director and the employment of freelance artists, such as John Sewell, who designed the 1961 Penguin Books cover of *The Great Gatsby* (90) (fig. 12).

![Fig. 12 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Penguin Books, 1961.](image)
Sewell also provided the cover art for dozens of other Penguin books and ultimately helped to establish Penguin’s new company identity.

Part of this new identity was the “individualism of each title” (Powers 90). This meant that the covers attempt to capture the essence of each novel but set themselves apart from their competition by avoiding typical images or conventions. For example, the 1961 Penguin Books cover of *The Great Gatsby* does not depict a generic image, such as the yellow car or the eyes of Dr. TJ Eckleberg, but one Sewell designed with the novel’s contents in mind. Though the identity of the man is ambiguous, it is apparent that he has an air of wealth and sophistication, due to his double-breasted waistcoat, bow tie, and pocket square. Money, particularly wealth, is a prominent motif in the novel, which Sewell is able to invoke through the lone image of the man. However, the man also portrays a sense of suspicion due to his averted eyes and slight smirk. The image of a wealthy yet suspicious man gives this particular edition the appearance of a mysterious crime novel, effectively emphasizing the gangster angle, similar to the 1949 Bantam Books edition. Through focusing on these atypical conventions, the cover attracts a reader who is searching for a compelling thriller, as opposed to one in search of a romantic tragedy.

Though printing in multiple colors was readily available in the 1960s, many of Sewell’s covers, including this 1961 Penguin Books cover, reverted to the monochromatic style of early graphic design. Most had solid-colored backgrounds with either a black drawing or black and white photograph layered on top. In this case, the cover depicts a blue background behind the black outline of the man. However, the outline itself does not reflect this earlier period, as it does not utilize solid, geometric shapes that mimic woodblock prints, cubism, or Art Deco. Instead, the monochromatic, simple design of the cover reflects Penguin’s brand. Many of Penguin Books’ cover artists from the 1960s and 1970s, such as Alvin Aldridge, Germano Facetti, and
Malcolm Carder, also designed covers with monochromatic backgrounds behind various minimalist images. The popularity of paperbacks encouraged such visual uniformity:

The position of the designer in the book trade has changed too. The cover is usually still treated as a special stand-alone item, independent of the typographic design inside the book. The in-house designer will probably be involved in a strategy for the look of all the company’s products, and there may be a freelance art director employed to commission individual artists within a consistent style. (Powers 9-10)

Since Penguin Books was striving to establish a signature look for their brand, the covers of their novels had to remain consistent. The best way to achieve this consistency without compromising the individuality of each novel was to ensure that every cover had a monochromatic background.

Due to both the popularity of its new graphic covers and cheap prices, Penguin Books was soon dominating the paperback industry (Trubek). Additionally, paperback editions of novels sold “almost without exception many, many more times than any earlier publication” (Earle 167). For these reasons, other publishing houses were compelled to produce paperback collections as well. According to Powers, “by the mid 1960s, many publishers launched their own ‘trade paperback’ imprints and, by 1972, 34,566 paperback titles were in print in Britain and over 1114,000 in the US” (92). One of these publishing houses was Charles Scribner’s Sons. In the early 1970s, they began their Contemporary Classics series, where they reprinted classic novels as paperbacks, including the 1975 edition of *The Great Gatsby* (fig. 13).
Similar to Penguin Books, Charles Scribner’s Sons wanted their Contemporary Classics series to have a cohesive appearance in order to establish a company identity. In order to achieve this, they commissioned Hal Siegel, a freelance artist employed by a variety of publishing houses, to illustrate all of Fitzgerald’s novels in the series.

However, unlike Penguin Books, Siegel did not rely on color to unify his illustrations, but technique instead. All of his paintings were originally oil on board and then rendered into book covers, providing a break from the conventions of graphic design (Princeton University). This reversion to a more classic artistic technique may be attributed to the general atmosphere of the 1970s:

Jacket styles tend to go in waves. Like any product in a crowded marketplace, they need to stand out, and this can be achieved by speaking quietly amidst a lot of noise as readily as by shouting in a void. After the raucous clamour of the 1960s, high on the discovery of
heap colour printing, airbrushing, Letraset, and other excitements, the style of the 1970s was often deliberately reticent and supposedly nostalgic. (Powers 10)

After the overstimulation of the 1960s, many longed to return to simpler times. In order to satisfy this nostalgia, some artists also returned to more traditional artistic techniques, such as oil and watercolor painting.

This nostalgia not only accounts for Siegel’s technique but also his color palette. Because color printing was now inexpensive, many covers were bright and flashy. However, since standing out can “be achieved by speaking quietly amidst a lot of noise,” (Powers 10) creating a cover with more muted tones would provide a contrast with its colorful contemporaries. Siegel features neutral warm tones in his cover, with the exception of the bold yellow in the title. Unlike the suspicious man on the cover of the 1961 Penguin Books edition, the man on this cover, perhaps Gatsby, is handsome and sorrowful. This not only casts the novel in a tragic light but also suggests that it is a form of high art like historical oil painting. Essentially, where the 1961 Penguin Books edition portrays the novel as a crime thriller, the 1975 Charles Scribner’s Sons edition depicts it as a classic work of literature. This classification may be due to the fact that Charles Scribner’s Sons was The Great Gatsby’s original publishing house and therefore would want the novel to be seen as a timeless classic.

Due to the success of paperback novels, many publishing houses began mass-producing these cheaper editions. However, with this rise of paperbacks, each house had to establish their own company identity, evidenced in their cover art. Additionally, each house was responsible for maintaining the individuality of each novel, meaning they had to advertise the novel’s contents, whether that be through symbols, tone, or themes. This adherence to identity of both each
company and novel ultimately cause the paperback publishing industry to increase in popularity, bringing about both new ways to establishing identity and a variety of new houses.
CHAPTER V: THE USE OF HISTORICAL ART

In the late 1960s, Penguin Art Director Germano Facetti first introduced the formula of combining historical works of art with simple text in order to attract readers, give their novels the appearance of cultured classics, and further promote the company’s identity (Powers 118). The dates in which each historical work was created vary heavily, as some originated BCE and others only a few decades prior to the novel’s publication. Usually, these works reflect the plot, themes, tone, and/or era of the novel, as is the case with the cover of the 1969 Penguin Books edition of *The Great Gatsby*, which features a detail from Kees van Dongen’s *Montparnos Blues* (fig. 14).

In the painting, the women and men are wearing clothing reminiscent of the late 1910s and early 1920s with straight lines, loose waists, tailored suits, and brimmed hats. This depiction of Jazz Age attire both gives the novel a sophisticated yet vintage appearance and provides the viewer with a glimpse into the setting of the novel. Additionally, of van Dongen’s work is
centered on nightlife, and he eventually gained a reputation for his sensuous portraits of women. The exposed breasts and legs of the women in the foreground suggest that they are more promiscuous than their heavily clothed counterparts. However, because they are associating with the man with a top hat, monocle, and cane, the viewer can assume that these women are affluent. It is because of this capital that the women are not depicted as lewd and risqué but rather playful and glamorous.

_The Great Gatsby_ famously features the sexualized modern woman as a simultaneously desirable and threatening figure. Myrtle Wilson, a lower class woman in an adulterous relationship with Tom, is portrayed almost exclusively as a sensuous body. The first and most prominent instance of this can be seen in Nick’s first time meeting Myrtle:

Then I heard footsteps on the stairs and in a moment the thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her surplus flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face, above a spotted dress of dark blue crepe-de-chine, contained no facet or gleam of beauty but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smouldering. (25)

In this description, Nick mainly focuses on Myrtle’s body, as that is her main asset due to her lack of wealth. However, Daisy, another adulterous woman, is portrayed in an entirely different light due to her affluence. Nick first describes Daisy in “Chapter I”:

I looked back at my cousin who began to ask me questions in her low, thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth--but there was an excitement
in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered "Listen," a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour. (9)

Nick’s description of Daisy focuses on her voice, countenance, and charm. Additionally, he never describes her body and only includes key details, such as hair color, much later in the novel. Because of her wealth, Nick finds Daisy alluring and is able to see past her bodily characteristics, unlike Myrtle.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the idea of using works of historical art as cover art grew in popularity, and eventually, other publishing houses began to adopt this technique as well. For example, the cover of the 1993 Wordsworth Editions edition of the novel contains Delphin Enjolras’ late nineteenth century oil painting, Pause for Thought (fig. 15).
The painting depicts a woman relaxing by a body of water, reminiscent of Daisy and her East Egg mansion, while focusing on her elegance and sophistication. In the novel, Daisy assumes two roles: the glamorous flapper married to Tom and the sophisticated southern debutante in Gatsby’s memories. The former is represented in the cover of the 1969 Penguin Books edition; however, this cover depicts the latter. Similarly, the cloudy, nostalgic atmosphere of the painting contributes to the characterization of a Daisy only present in Gatsby’s memories. Conversely, the low lighting, solitary position, and lowered gaze of the woman cause her to appear sorrowful. Both portrayal of Daisy as an elegant, ephemeral memory and a disheartened, lonely figure cast her, and subsequently the novel, in a tragic light.

When Wordsworth Editions was founded in 1992, they made it their mission to produce quality novels at the lowest possible price (Wordsworth Editions). They did so through using lower-quality paper, smaller text to reduce page count, and artwork that is public domain in order to avoid commissioning new artists. When their 1993 edition of *The Great Gatsby* was published, it only cost £1, which is approximately equivalent to $1.41 (Wordsworth Editions). To put this in perspective, $1.41 in 1993 had the same buying power as $2.45 in 2018. Soon, Wordsworth Editions’ following began to rise, as populations such as students and those on limited budgets were able to purchase a variety of novels for a low price. This sudden increase in popularity put them in direct competition with big name publishing houses, which may be why in 1994 Penguin Books published an edition of *The Great Gatsby* that also features a painting by Delphin Enjolras on its cover (fig. 16).
Enjolras’ *Evening on the Terrace* (1924) features flappers with bobbed hair and loose, rhinestone-covered dresses. By choosing a contemporaneous painting, Penguin is able to convey the novel’s setting through one image. This, combined with the painting’s focus on a party, gives the readers a hint of the contents of the novel. The scene also reflects one of the novel’s core themes: inclusion versus exclusion. While attending a party with Tom in New York, Nick states, “I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life” (35). When looking at the cover of the 1994 edition, the viewer is left with a feeling similar to that which plagues Nick. Because the viewer is able to view the party and the point of view makes it appear as if he or she is on the porch with the two women, he or she feels a sense of inclusion, as if he or she is present at this party. However, this feeling of inclusion is muddled by
the fact that the viewer is outside of the party, both figuratively on the porch and, in reality, outside of the painting.

The depiction of flappers outside of a party in a mansion is, of course, reminiscent of many scenes in *The Great Gatsby*; however, the two women outside, one with brunette hair and one with auburn hair, may specifically evoke the characters of Daisy and Jordan. In the novel, Jordan is referred to as having hair “the color of an autumn leaf,” (177) whereas the only time Daisy’s hair color is directly mentioned is when Nick writes that Gatsby kissed her “dark shining hair” (150). From these descriptions, the readers can assume that Jordan has auburn or red hair and Daisy has darker hair, similar to the women depicted in the painting, despite normally being depicted in films as brunette and blonde respectively.

Newly emerging publishing houses quickly adopted this method of using historical works of art in their covers as well. In the late 1990s, Oxford University Press began to publish classic works of literature for their Oxford World Classics series, and similar to Penguin Books, the art directors selected various works of contemporaneous art to reflect the tone and style of the novel. For example, both of the covers of the 1998 (fig. 17) and 2008 (fig. 18) editions of *The Great Gatsby* display Tamara de Lempika’s *Juenne Fille en Vert*, also known as *Young Lady with Gloves*. 

Fig. 18 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
Tempika, a Polish painter, is best known for her portraits of aristocrats and the wealthy, as is apparent in her 1930 painting *Jeune Fille en Vert*. This Art Deco painting breaks each element of the woman’s appearance — face, hair, hat, and body — is broken into small geometric shapes, giving the viewer feeling of disconnect and instability.

With her green dress, matching white hat and gloves, and red lipstick, the young woman portrayed in this painting exudes sophistication and wealth. Since many associate Daisy with blonde hair due to the 1974 film, it is possible that the art directors at Oxford University Press chose this painting to evoke her. However, this characterization of Daisy departs from the 1969 Penguin Books or 1993 Wordsworth Editions editions. Her shadowed face, averted eyes, and harsh lines make her appear mischievous and wicked. After finishing the novel, many readers are convinced that Daisy is nothing but vapid and manipulative due to her treatment of Gatsby and Nick. The inside of the 1948 Grey Walls edition’s jacket even states, “this book tells of the fantastic ambitions of Gatsby, nee Gatz, and the way in which his boundless energy and fanatical drive to success is nullified by this love for the worthless and completely shallow Daisy.” If the woman in *Jeune Fille en Vert* is meant to represent Daisy, she effectively caters to this characterization of Daisy as a villain, making this the first cover to present her in this light.

All things considered, publishing houses adorn the covers of their novels with historical art to promote an air of sophistication, place the novel within its historical moment, and reduce design cost. Additionally, though certain houses may not intend to do so, many of these covers reflect thematic elements of each novel. Ultimately, the use of placing a previously published work on a cover, as opposed to hiring a graphic designer, paves the way for future design trends that begin to change as technology becomes more advanced, such as the use of photography.
CHAPTER VI: THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

While editions of the novel that were released closer to its original publication date strive to make the novel appear current, contemporary covers highlight the historical period of the 1920s. Much like many other covert art trends, this trend began with Penguin Books. Though Penguin still published cover art that featured classic works of art and simple text, in the late 1980s, they introduced photography into this formula as well (Powers 118). Similarly, because the century was coming to an end, it was around this time that Penguin began to publish their Twentieth Century Classics series. The distinguishing features of this series were the use of a black and white photograph for its front cover, a white box that contained the author’s name and the novel’s title, and a turquoise spine and back cover. The 1990 Penguin Books edition of *The Great Gatsby* features Jacques Henri Lartigue’s 1936 black and white photograph *Saint Paul de Vence-Coco dans mon cabriolet Citroën C.6.G* (fig. 19).

![The Great Gatsby cover](image_url)

Lartigue’s photograph shows an antique car, a prominent image in *The Great Gatsby*. Gatsby’s car is a major plot element, thanks to the vehicular manslaughter of Myrtle. It is also a symbol of Gatsby’s wealth and status, as Fitzgerald writes, “It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphantly hatboxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of windshields that mirrored a dozen suns” (64). This theme and its association with automobiles can be further explained by Thorstein Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption, or “specialised consumption of goods as an evidence of pecuniary strength” (Veblen 68). Essentially, this theory posits that the wealthy spend their money on luxury items not to cover their needs but rather to project an image of power. Additionally, the low camera angle places the driver and the car above the viewer, giving an impression of their daunting physical power. This low camera angle sets an ominous mood for the novel.

In 1998, Penguin published another edition of the novel; however, this time it was not part of their Penguin Twentieth Century Classics series and therefore does not retain the same characteristics of the 1990 edition (fig. 20).
Though this cover has a different look than its predecessor, it does retain a similar antique appearance. The woman on the front cover has bobbed hair, pencil thin brows that extend beyond the eye, and a looped strand of pearls, and the man on the back cover has medium-length slicked-back hair, all of which are features characteristic of the 1920s. Additionally, the photographs are taken with a soft focus lens, which reinforces the vintage appearance.

Only parts of the figures’ profiles are visible, which reflects both the characters’ and readers’ impairment of seeing everyone’s true selves. If the figures on the cover represent Gatsby and Daisy, the positioning of the figures illustrates their inability to see the real versions of one another. In the five years that they were apart, both characters mentally created fictional versions of one another due to memories of what was and dreams of what could have been and have therefore never been able to face reality. Furthermore, due to their preoccupation with perceived appearances, none of the other characters in the novel are truly able to understand or see one
another. They are all concerned with promoting distinct images of themselves, whether that be wealthy, intellectual, or carefree, and are therefore unable to form authentic connections. This, combined with Nick’s unreliable narration due to his inherent biases, distorts the readers’ perceptions of the characters as well.

In 2000, Penguin undertook their second most recent large-scale redesign (Powers 118). Similar to their Twentieth Century Classics series, this new design “[adopted] a refreshingly simple and classic formula, using well-chosen images with understated typography, very much in the family tradition” (Powers 118). However, this style employed eye-catching silver as opposed to teal accents and white boxes. For their 2000 edition of *The Great Gatsby* they chose George Hoyningen-Huene’s *Untitled (Bathing Suits by Izod)*, which originally appeared in the July 1930 issue of *Vogue* (fig. 21).

In looking towards the horizon, the figures have set their sights on the unattainable. In the novel, a variety of characters have unachievable goals, but this image of a couple implies that it represents Gatsby and Daisy. First, both characters attempt to recreate the past through reliving a previous romance, when in reality, their efforts are futile. Gatsby especially is trying to pursue a relationship that can never succeed due to the changes that have occurred during the five years they were apart, such as marriages and maturation. Additionally, their faces shrouded in darkness suggest that they unable to see one another not only physically but also emotionally. Similar to the 1998 Penguin Books cover, this cover reflects the themes of superficiality and miscommunication. Though the two figures are physically near one another, they are inhibited in seeing all of each other are therefore left to fill in the gaps. In the novel, this leads to the development of unrealistic expectations and false hope. Ultimately, striving for unattainable goals with unrealistic expectations only leads to anxiety, conflict, and the eventual downfall of Gatsby himself.

Soon, a variety of other publishing houses adopted Penguin’s cover art formula of combining photography with simple text. One of these houses was Broadview Press, a Canadian independent academic publisher that “strive[s] to produce high-quality, pedagogically useful books” that focus on the humanities (Broadview Press). Much of the cover art of their novels are similar to Penguin Books’ Twentieth Century Classics series. For example, their 2000 edition of *The Great Gatsby* features the black and white photograph *George in Winnipeg* alongside a white text box that contains the title and author’s name in turquoise (fig. 22).
The man on the cover wears a “boater hat,” a flat, woven straw hat decorated with a ribbon around the rim that was popularized in the 1920s (Cornwell). His suit reflects the fashion trends of the decade: double breasted with three or four buttons, and a wide lapel (Cornwell). Boater hats were typically worn by members of the middle or upper class; however, lighter colored suits were typically worn exclusively by the wealthy, as lighter colors showed that their wearers could afford to replace stained or ruined fabric (Cornwell). This suit leans towards the boxy style of the later half of the decade, which was most often seen in gangster pictures (Cornwell). This gangster style, combined with the mischievous look on the man’s face, implies that the novel will focus on crime and the underworld.

Using photographs in cover art places each novel within its historical moment and showcases vital symbols. The use of photography rivals the use of historical art, however, in that it looks decidedly more contemporary, as it is a more technologically advanced art form.
Additionally, using photography contributes to the nostalgia of the period, and subsequently advertising, as photographs capture events as they are in reality, rather than capturing their likeness. This authenticity of photographs allows the viewer to become familiar with the era in which the novel occupies and consequently place themselves within this context. Finally, the photographs on the covers of these editions all contain uncanny elements, such as the car looming over the viewer, the couple staring away from one another, the couple in the shadows staring towards the distance, and the gangster’s mischievous smile. It is through these photographs, unlike previous commissioned art or historical works of art, that the reader begins to feel a sense of unease. This sense may intrigue the viewer; however, it also provides a glimpse into the minds of the novel’s characters. As a work of modernism, *The Great Gatsby* concerns itself with the intricacies of the minds of various characters and how these intricacies influence their actions. By evoking feelings and thought processes present in the novel, the use of photography allows for the covers to showcase the psychology of the book, an aspect that is absent in many of its predecessors.
CHAPTER VII: FILM POSTERS

Since its initial publication in 1925, all of the covers for *The Great Gatsby* have featured independent or historical artwork designed to attract readers and promote the book for the publishing house, the exception being the 1949 Bantam Books cover that features Alan Ladd. However, a major contemporary area of paperback production is the movie tie-in cover, of which *The Great Gatsby* has taken many forms in the last few decades.

In 1974, Paramount Pictures released its second *The Great Gatsby* film, starring Robert Redford as Gatsby and Mia Farrow as Daisy. In that same year, various publishers, such as Bantam Books (fig. 23) and Penguin Books (fig. 24) released new editions of *The Great Gatsby* with the film poster on the cover.

This edition marked the first appearance of a *The Great Gatsby* movie poster to be used as cover art. Publishers began to use film posters as cover art to increase sales of both the books and their respective movies (Begley). In early 1974, *The Great Gatsby* was expected to sell 83,000 copies in the United States alone (Severo). By March 3, Bantam Books was already on its third printing of their 1974 movie poster edition with 480,000 copies (Severo).

After the rise in technological advances in the 1960s, those living in the 1970s yearned for simpler times. This desire manifested itself in nostalgia for previous, less complicated decades. The 1974 Bantam Books’ and 1974 Penguin Books’ covers both have muted, neutral-colored backgrounds. Through avoiding bright colors, these covers are directly resisting the mania of the decade and reverting to a more natural appearance. The film poster, on the other hand evokes nostalgia through its focus. The photograph itself appears to be taken with a soft
focus lens, resulting in a slightly cloudy image. This hazy appearance makes the photograph look both antiquated and dreamlike.

Where the 1974 film was rooted in nostalgia, the next major *The Great Gatsby* film, released in 2013, updates the novel through its use of flashy visuals, abrupt cuts, and contemporary music. This adaptation was directed by Baz Luhrmann and stars Leonardo DiCaprio as Gatsby and Carey Mulligan as Daisy. The year it was released, Scribner published a new edition of the novel with the film poster as its cover (fig. 25).

In 2013, chain bookstores, such as Barnes & Noble, sold both Cugat’s cover and the film poster cover; independent bookstores exclusively sold Cugat’s cover; and superstores, such as Walmart, exclusively sold the film poster cover (Bosman). This discrepancy can be attributed to the type of reader, repeat or new, that each store attracts. According to Nan Graham, the publisher of Scribner, "the repeat reader is going to buy the classic cover. A person who is more likely to buy
the movie tie-in is reading it for the first time” (Bosman). Readers of all kinds go to chain
bookstores; therefore, chain bookstores are likely to have both editions in order to appeal to both
repeat and new readers. Similarly, independent bookstores pride themselves on having classic
works of literature, which repeat readers are likely to purchase, and tend to avoid new, flashy
editions (Bosman). Finally, the majority of people that go to superstores are not making the trip
with the intent of buying a book; therefore, the film poster for a movie that has been advertised is
more likely to attract new readers. As has been the trend in the past, the film poster cover helped
sales skyrocket in 2013. Typically, Scribner sells about 500,000 copies of *The Great Gatsby*
anually; however, by April of 2013, they had already shipped 280,000 copies (Bosman). The
new cover also helped e-book copies increase. In 2012, about 80,000 e-book copies of the novel
were sold, and by April of 2013, sales had already surpassed 125,000 (Bosman).

Much unlike the nostalgic 1974 movie tie-in editions, the Scribner’s 2013 edition has a
decidedly modernist appearance. In regards to color palettes, where the 1974 editions have
neutral, muted backgrounds, the 2013 edition contrasts shining metallics against a stark black
background. Both this distinction and the metallic themselves create a sleek, polished
appearance, which evokes a sense of newness and innovation. Additionally, the use of sharp,
streamlined lines, not only catches the viewer’s attention but also grounds them in a mechanical,
contemporary atmosphere through its avoidance of natural forms. This employment of defined
lines is also reminiscent of the Art Deco movement and its ability to reflect an industrial age in
the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the 2013 edition uses a high definition, sharp focus in
its photograph of the characters.

Though, art history and culture may influence the evolution of *The Great Gatsby’s cover
art, as can be found in these movie tie-in covers and those of previous chapters, when all of this
research is synthesized, it becomes apparent that the ultimate influence on these covers are publishing house identity, design trends, and available artistic techniques. When commissioning artists or choosing works of art for their covers, each publishing house strives to stay true to the contents of the novel, but also further establish their company identity so they are easily recognizable to the general public. When one style of cover is well received in the market, it inevitably influences other contemporary novels, as other companies desire to reach this popularity as well. However, all of these designs are fully dependent on the artistic techniques that are available during each individual time period, whether that be painting, block printing, or photography. *The Great Gatsby* is a staple in the modern American literary canon and has become imbedded in the minds of many readers. However, its cover art has the ability to influence readers’ expectations and therefore perceptions of the novel, allowing this art to have an influence that parallels the work itself.
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