In a sense, this chapter follows out the logic underlying my analysis of the paradox of paralepsis in the two Hemingway narratives. It starts with a look at an instance of paralepsis. If that paradoxical situation is rhetorically effective, then perhaps an author may also create an effective homodiegetic narrator who fluctuates between being unreliable and being (apparently) omniscient. The key to recognizing such possibilities is to recognize that although any homodiegetic utterance simultaneously brings into existence both a narrator and a character, the narrator functions and the character functions need not coincide or even be complementary. Nick Carraway is a very instructive case in point. The general point in these two chapters about the conventional nature of mimesis is also a feature of my analysis of the simultaneous present-tense narration in J. M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians in Understanding Narrative, edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994).

In chapter 8 of The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald has Nick narrate the events that occur in George Wilson’s garage the night after Myrtle Wilson is killed by the driver of Gatsby’s automobile. Here is the first sentence of this five-page section and a short excerpt from the middle:
Now I want to go back a little and tell what happened at the garage after we left there the night before.

The effort of answering broke the rhythm of [Wilson’s] rocking—for a moment he was silent. Then the same half knowing, half bewildered look came back into his faded eyes.

"Look in the drawer there," he said, pointing at the desk.

"Which drawer?"

"That drawer—that one."

Michaelis opened the drawer nearest his hand. There was nothing in it but a small expensive dog leash made of leather and braided silver. It was apparently new.

"This?" he inquired, holding it up.

Wilson stared and nodded.

"I found it yesterday afternoon. She tried to tell me about it but I knew it was something funny."

"You mean your wife bought it?"

"She had it wrapped in tissue paper on her bureau."

Michaelis didn’t see anything odd in that and he gave Wilson a dozen reasons why his wife might have bought the dog leash. But conceivably Wilson had heard some of these same explanations before, from Myrtle, because he began saying "Oh, my God!" again in a whisper—his comforter left several explanations in the air.

(165–66)

This section of the narrative is striking for several reasons. First, although Nick announces that he is going to "go back a little and tell what happened at the garage" after he, Jordan, and Tom left, Fitzgerald never bothers to have Nick explain how he learned what happened. We might suppose that either Fitzgerald made a mistake or assumed that he did not need to include any such explanation. Second, the narration is not summary but scene: Nick is a New Journalist avant la lettre as he not only gives a verbatim report of a conversation he did not overhear but also includes numerous small dramatic details. Notice, for example, Nick’s careful description of Wilson’s look as "half knowing, half bewildered" and his drawing out the identification of the drawer Wilson wants Michaelis to open—"Look in the drawer there." "Which drawer?" "That drawer—that one" (165). Indeed, at first glance, the only sign in this excerpt that Nick may be
anything other than an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator is the word conceivably in the final sentence: "But conceivably Wilson had heard some of these same explanations before, from Myrtle" (166).

In a sense, Nick's narration represents the flip side of Joe Butler's: where Joe's is marked by the absence of knowledge and opinion that we eventually learn he should have, Nick's is marked by the presence of knowledge that he presumably should not (because he could not) have. Genette, again, has noticed and named this variation of homodiegetic narration, calling it a paralepsis, but he does not address its effects. In attending to these effects in *The Great Gatsby*, I want to focus on three questions: (1) Has Fitzgerald violated the terms of his own novel by introducing this paralepsis, by converting Nick from witness-narrator to nearly omniscient narrator? (2) What bearing, if any, does Nick's function here have on our understanding of his much-debated reliability? If Nick's near omniscience can be shown to be legitimate, then perhaps we have evidence to support the view that he is fundamentally reliable. If, however, Nick's near omniscience suggests some violation of the terms Fitzgerald wants to be working within, then perhaps we should conclude that Nick is not merely unreliable but incoherent. (3) How does answering these questions about Nick's narration illuminate other features of Fitzgerald's narrative?

In light of my argument about the paralipsis in Joe Butler's narration, it will come as no surprise that my hypothesis about the first question is that the paralepsis in Nick's narration is no violation. Furthermore, although understanding why the paralepsis fits the logic of the narrative will not directly answer the question about Nick's reliability, it will offer some ways to rethink the reliability/unreliability distinction. These ways, in turn, will then help us recognize the diversity of potential functions a character-narrator such as Nick can be asked to perform within the space of single narrative. Finally, by seeking to understand why Fitzgerald needs Nick to serve multiple functions, we should learn something about the larger workings of Fitzgerald's narrative.

Let us return to the narration of the scene between Michaelis and Wilson. For the most part, Fitzgerald has Nick render the scene in his own voice but through Michaelis's vision. That is, the diction and
syntax of the narration are Nick’s: descriptions such as “The effort of answering broke the rhythm of his rocking—for a moment he was silent. Then the same half knowing, half bewildered look came into his faded eyes” (165) are perfectly consistent with the voice we have been hearing throughout the narrative. The visual perspective of the scene, however, is Michaelis’s. Wilson is always seen from the outside as he would look to Michaelis. Furthermore, Michaelis is occasionally seen from the inside: we are told that “Michaelis didn’t like to go into the garage because the work bench was stained where the body had been lying” (165); that Michaelis “believed that Mrs. Wilson had been running away from her husband” (167); that he had a “forlorn hope” that Wilson had a friend whom Michaelis could telephone (167); and that he “saw with a shock” (167) that Wilson seemed to be equating God and the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg. Fitzgerald’s technique makes Nick function as a kind of invisible witness positioned over Michaelis’s shoulder with the additional privilege of occasionally being able to offer brief inside views of him.

The way Fitzgerald is in violation of the terms of his narrative can be succinctly expressed in the following question: How can a witness-narrator narrate what he didn’t witness? Indeed, even if we supply an explanation that seeks to preserve the mimetic illusion Fitzgerald seems to be working within, for example, that Michaelis related these events at the inquest following Myrtle’s and George’s deaths or that Nick interviewed Michaelis a few days after these events, we still must recognize that the scene gives Nick a kind of privilege that his reporting of someone else’s report could not have. As long as we are operating with the logic of strict mimesis, we would have to acknowledge that Michaelis’s account could not have been as careful, detailed, and precise as Nick’s narration is. Finally, if Fitzgerald were concerned about strict mimesis, he could have easily indicated that Michaelis was the chief source for Nick’s knowledge and that Nick’s imagination supplied the rest.

Obviously, Fitzgerald was not so concerned, and it is my contention that he was right not to be. What matters at this point in the narrative is not how Nick knows what he narrates but that this scene be narrated and that the information it contains come to us as authoritative. After the excerpt I have quoted, the passage continues this way:
“Then he killed her,” said Wilson. His mouth dropped open suddenly.

“Who did?”

“I have a way of finding out.”

“You’re morbid, George,” said his friend. “This has been a strain to you and you don’t know what you’re saying. You’d better try and sit quiet till morning.”

“He murdered her.”

“It was an accident, George.”

Wilson shook his head. His eyes narrowed and his mouth widened slightly with the ghost of a superior “Hm!”

“I know,” he said definitely. “I’m one of these trusting fellas, and I don’t think any harm to nobody, but when I get to know a thing, I know it. It was the man in the car. She ran out to speak to him and he wouldn’t stop.”

Michaelis had seen this too but it hadn’t occurred to him that there was any special significance in it. He believed that Mrs. Wilson was running away from her husband rather than trying to stop any particular car. (166–67)

This information, of course, is crucial to the reader’s inferences about the death of Myrtle Wilson and about the deaths of Gatsby and Wilson himself, which Nick will report very shortly—indeed, within a few pages. If Fitzgerald does not present this information scenically, it will interfere with the reader’s inferential activity in piecing the story together, in coming to our own understanding of how neatly Wilson ends up serving Tom Buchanan’s purposes. If Fitzgerald calls attention to how Nick learned what he tells us, Fitzgerald will also call attention to the limits of Nick’s knowledge, since Nick’s research could never give him the full knowledge that his account presumes. In that way, if Fitzgerald tries to supply the source of Nick’s knowledge, he would very likely weaken the authority of the scene. By having Nick narrate the scene in his own voice as if he were there on Michaelis’s shoulder, Fitzgerald both gives the narration some continuity with Nick’s other reporting and invests the scene with full authority. One small sign of his success is that most readers do not even register the paraplegis as anomalous.

If this analysis is correct, it suggests two other important conclu-
sions: (1) as with the paralipsis in Joe Butler’s narration, the paralepsis is not violating the conventions of mimesis; those conventions are somewhat elastic and the criterion “what is probable or possible in life” can sometimes give way, even in otherwise realistic narrative, to the criterion “what is needed by the narrative at this point.” In other words, mimesis is not a matter of faithfully imitating the real (whatever that is) but is rather a set of conventions for representing what we provisionally and temporarily agree to be the real. In this larger view, Joe’s paralipsis and Nick’s paralepsis violate a narrow standard of mimesis, one based only on imitation-of-the-real (“knowledge alters perception”; “you can’t narrate authoritatively what you haven’t witnessed”); but Joe’s paralipsis and Nick’s paralepsis are consistent with a broader standard of mimesis, one that looks both to the real and to conventions for imitating it. Judgments about whether violations of the narrow standard of mimesis are problematic or not depend in part on what they make possible: both “My Old Man” and The Great Gatsby are more rhetorically effective as a result of their violations of the narrow mimetic logic. (2) Although a character-narrator’s functions as character and as narrator typically influence each other, sometimes these functions operate independently. Both of these conclusions have a significant bearing on the debate about Nick’s reliability.

Though Wayne C. Booth was not the first to comment upon the phenomenon of an untrustworthy narrator, his treatment of reliable and unreliable narration in The Rhetoric of Fiction remains the chief source of the distinction. Booth defines a reliable narrator as one who shares the norms of the implied author and perceives the facts of the narrative as the implied author does; Booth defines an unreliable narrator as one who deviates from the implied author’s norms and/or from the implied author’s perceptions of the narrative’s facts. The widespread adoption of Booth’s distinction has led to two important interpretive habits. First, the distinction is seen as most often relevant to homodiegetic narration. George Eliot’s narrator in Middlemarch can be distinguished from the implied author by regarding the narrator as a wise, ironic, and gender-neutral persona that the implied Eliot adopts, but almost no one questions whether this narrator shares Eliot’s norms. However, any time we have a character-narrator, whether that
character is protagonist, witness, or reporter at several removes from the action, the question of reliability is inevitable.

Second, Booth’s distinction assumes an equivalence, or perhaps better, a continuity between narrator and character, and so critics look at the character function to shed light on the narrator function and vice versa. That is, the narrator’s discourse is assumed to be relevant to our understanding of his or her character, and the character’s actions are assumed to be relevant to our understanding of his or her discourse. Thus, interpreters will examine the homodiegetic narrator’s character—including such aspects of character as motives, values, beliefs, interests, psychology, race, class, and gender (to the extent these matters can be inferred from events and descriptions)—for clues to the narration and the character’s narration for clues to the character. Kent Cartwright’s complaint about Nick’s narration in the final chapter shows how this assumption operates in practical criticism: “In the novel’s final chapter, a peculiar dislocation or reorientation of the story’s direction takes place which again connects Nick’s personal limitations with his blurred narrative judgment” (227).

The assumption is significant because it means that once we have evidence of some unreliability it is possible (though not necessary) to argue for unreliability all the way down. The debate about Nick provides a wonderful example of this reasoning in Ernest Lockridge’s tour de force 1987 essay, “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Trompe l’Oeil and The Great Gatsby’s Buried Plot.” Lockridge uses a small amount of evidence of Nick’s unreliability as a warrant for finding in Fitzgerald’s novel a plot in which the following events occur: (1) Daisy uses Gatsby to win back Tom; (2) Daisy finishes off her artful scheme by deliberately running over Myrtle Wilson; (3) Wolfsheim, worried about what Tom’s investigation of Gatsby will turn up, has his men murder Gatsby; and (4) these men, seeing Wilson arrive on the scene, kill him, too, and make it look like a murder-suicide.3

Nick’s narration of the events in Wilson’s garage suggests that the assumption of continuity between character and narrator may not always be warranted: regardless of the biases and flaws Nick as character has previously revealed, in this segment of the narrative his character is all but irrelevant. Recognizing the possibility of divergence between
the character's functions and the narrator's functions also entails recognizing that sometimes the reliability of a homodiegetic narrator can fluctuate wildly throughout the progression of a narrative. Fluctuations that depend on the variable distance between the narratorial and the character functions are different from the gradual movement toward reliability we have seen in Frederic Henry because in Frederic's case the change in narratorial function is directly tied to alterations in his character. These fluctuations are also different from anything that we have seen in Joe Butler, a character-narrator where the effect of the whole narrative depends on the continuity between the two functions.

When the narratorial functions are operating independently of the character functions, then the narration will be reliable and authoritative. Indeed, at such junctures, the narration will be so authoritative that the question of reliability is no more likely to arise than it does in relation to the narrator of Middlemarch. When the character and narratorial functions are operating interdependently, the narration may be either reliable or unreliable and the degree of the narrator's privilege will vary depending on his or her relation to the action being reported. Because a particular narrative may require a homodiegetic narrator's functions to vary over the course of a particular narrative, the narrator may, without violating the conventions of mimesis, fluctuate between being highly unreliable, being reliable with a limited privilege, and being fully reliable and authoritative.

Furthermore, recognizing the varying relations between the character and narratorial functions of a homodiegetic narrator facilitates our recognizing two other important relations: (1) the homodiegetic narrator's retrospective perspective may drop out and the character's action may be presented for the reader's judgment in much the way that a dramatic scene works in heterodiegetic narration. That is, the implied author leaves the reader to infer the appropriate conclusions from the scene, regardless of whether the narrator makes the same inferences. Such moments can occur even when the homodiegetic narrator is, like Nick, fairly self-conscious. (2) The character may function as a mask through which the implied author speaks. That is, a narrator's character may be functional to the extent that it provides a persona through which the implied author can express his or her beliefs about the world. In some cases, the persona may actually be less important than the character's experiences, but again the same effect is
achieved: the implied author’s beliefs take on a particular significance because they are expressed through this particular consciousness at this particular point in the narrative.

These conclusions suggest that it would be helpful to subsume the question about Nick’s reliability within a larger account of the relationships between his narratorial and his character functions. All five of the relationships I’ve just described occur in Fitzgerald’s novel: authoritative narration with character backrounded, limited privilege based on location relative to the scene, effaced narration with character foregrounded, unreliable narration, and mask narration. Before I demonstrate this point by analyzing specific instances of Nick’s narration, it will be helpful to consider the rhetorical task Fitzgerald has set for himself in *The Great Gatsby*.

Consider some of the novel’s distinctive features. The story is about a self-made man, not long on scruples, who tries to recapture the love of a woman from a higher class, seems to be on the verge of success, but then fails. His effort entangles him in the lives of the woman’s husband, his mistress, and the mistress’s husband. This entanglement leads to the self-made man’s murder at the hands of the mistress’s husband through the betrayal of the woman he loves. The narration is by a young Midwesterner, distantly related to the woman, living, for much of the story, next door to the self-made man and trying to find his own way in the world. The narrative begins with a short, though somewhat cryptic, summary of the narrator’s conclusions about the events he is to narrate: “No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded relations of men” (6–7). But then this Gatsby remains a shadowy presence until the narrative is almost one-third complete, and our perceptions of him are almost always filtered through the narrator’s consciousness. The events surrounding Gatsby’s death are not rendered directly but are rather pieced together after the fact by the narrator—or simply presented as speculation. The narrative closes with the narrator’s philosophical meditation linking Gatsby’s quest and the dream underlying it to the quests and dreams fueling the exploration of the New World.

This combination of features, I submit, is not a very promising package: the action is tawdry, the central characters neither admirable
nor sympathetic, the narration puzzling, and the ending bordering on the ludicrous. Yet, though the narrative is not without its problems (nor its detractors), Fitzgerald designs *The Great Gatsby* according to a logic that is not evident in my list of its unpromising central elements. This logic is to move the audience’s understanding of Gatsby along two parallel but quite different tracks. The first track is one that asks the audience to recognize the serious limits—indeed, the social and ethical deficiencies—of Gatsby’s actual dreams: to be the self-made man who by force of wealth and personal charm will win back the heart (and body) of Daisy Fay Buchanan. The second track is one that asks the audience to recognize that there is a potential in Gatsby, rooted in the grandness and audacity of his dream and his way of pursuing it, that remains in its way an object of wonder, despite the limits of the actual dream. If the narrative works for us, it works because we feel the pull between these two tracks of our engagement with Gatsby. This narrative logic and the experience it offers readers clearly partakes of the American ideal of individualism that is so bound up with the myth of the American dream and that is therefore subject to serious ideological critique. I share many of the reservations of those who find the novel’s ideology problematic, but my interest here is on how Fitzgerald seeks to make the narrative logic work. The answer, I think, lies in the multiple functions of Nick.

There are two main features of Nick’s functions within the novel that provide the key to the effectiveness of the narrative logic. First, although the beginning establishes him in a fixed position after the events he is about to narrate, the rest of the narrative shows him in a developing relationship to the ongoing events. Consequently, part of the significance of Gatsby’s quest can by seen by Fitzgerald’s audience in how it affects Nick as character. Indeed, some such effect is absolutely necessary if the audience is going to recognize that there is something in Gatsby beyond the particular form of his dreams. For this part of the narrative, it makes sense that occasionally Nick’s function as narrator will be effaced and his function as character will be foregrounded.

Second, as noted above, Nick performs a wide range of narratorial functions. Some facts about Gatsby’s life must be solid and indisputable so that he can be a genuine presence for the audience; for this reason,
Nick needs to be able to offer authoritative narration. At the same time, some parts of Gatsby’s life need to be left in shadow so that he can seem, at times, to be larger than life and so that the audience’s focus can shift from the specific facts (did he help Wolfsheim fix the World Series?) to the larger picture: he has gotten all his money, regardless of the means, in order to win back Daisy. For this reason, Nick’s privilege must frequently be limited. Furthermore, if Nick is to be affected by Gatsby’s life, then one way to show that effect is to show how Nick moves from occasional unreliability, in the sense that he expresses norms that are not in accord with Fitzgerald’s, to reliability. Finally, given the difficulty of making Gatsby seem greater than his particular dreams, Fitzgerald occasionally wants to be able to use Nick as a mask that he can speak through. To flesh out these points, let me turn to specific examples of each of these narrator-character relationships.

As I have argued above, the authoritative narration in the scene in Michaelis’s garage is crucial. Without this scene, we do not have the information necessary to piece together either the events surrounding Myrtle Wilson’s death or those leading to George Wilson’s murder of Gatsby and subsequent suicide. But Fitzgerald’s employment of the paralepsis presents all that information with marvelous efficiency. This process, furthermore, draws us further into the drama of Gatsby’s final hours. But its effect also needs to be seen in combination with Fitzgerald’s shift back not just to Nick’s limited-privilege narration when he tells of Wilson’s movements before Gatsby’s murder but to a passage of paralipsis: “By half past two he was in West Egg where he asked some one the way to Gatsby’s house. So by that time he knew Gatsby’s name” (168). We learn later that Nick is withholding his knowledge that Wilson has learned Gatsby’s name from Tom Buchanan, a delayed revelation that makes Daisy’s betrayal of Gatsby and Tom’s callousness toward Wilson, Myrtle, and Gatsby all the more chilling. This revelation deepens the gulf between Gatsby’s actual dreams and the potential in his capacity for dreaming. And all these effects are a result of Fitzgerald’s realization of the protean possibilities of a witness-narrator such as Nick.

Nick is unreliable—indeed, perhaps most unreliable—in his statement that “I am one of the few honest people I have ever known.” The statement itself seems to invite doubt: what are you trying to hide
by professing your honesty? Nick offers it as a way to explain why he
doesn't move faster in his relationship with Jordan Baker: he cannot,
he says, get seriously involved with Jordan when he still has a "vague
understanding" with a woman back home. Yet in describing his rela-
tionship with that woman, he tells us that he is far from honest with
her: "I'd been writing letters once a week and signing them 'Love,
Nick,' and all I could think of was how, when that certain girl played
tennis, a faint mustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip"
(64). Furthermore, Nick's declaration about his own honesty comes
after his testimony about Jordan's dishonesty not making "any differ-
ence" to him (63). This hardly seems like a logical preliminary to his
own declaration.

In addition to showing that Nick does not know himself as well as
he thinks, this unreliable narration requires us to puzzle over his rela-
tionship with Jordan, the way that he is both strongly attracted to her
and simultaneously reluctant to get involved. We can see, in a way
that he cannot, that Jordan represents for him the life of the wealthy
Easterner and that he is both attracted to and frightened by what that
life represents. As the narrative develops, Nick gives in more and
more to the attraction—until he sees what happens to Gatsby. By end-
ing his relationship with Jordan, Nick signals the end of his interest in
succeeding in New York, the end of his desire to move in the same
circles with the Buchanans. Gatsby has no effect on anyone except
Nick, and the effect is not exactly heroic. But Nick's admission to
himself of his own problematic values is based largely on his recogni-
tion of the gap between Gatsby's potential and his actual life. This ef-
fect of Gatsby's life is crucial for the audience's acceptance of the view
that he is potentially better than his particular dreams.6

Nick's visit to Wolfsheim provides an excellent example of a scene
where Nick the narrator recedes into the background and Nick the
character becomes all-important.

"Now he's dead," I said after a moment. "You were his closest
friend, so I know you'll want to come to his funeral this afternoon."
"I'd like to come."
"Well, come then."

The hair in his nostrils quivered slightly and as he shook his head
his eyes filled with tears.
“I can’t do it—I can’t get mixed up in it,” he said.
“There’s nothing to get mixed up in. It’s all over now.”
“When a man gets killed, I never like to get mixed up in it in any way. I keep out. When I was a young man, it was different—if a friend of mine died, no matter how, I stuck with them to the end. You may think that’s sentimental but I mean it—to the bitter end.”
I saw that for some reason of his own he was determined not to come, so I stood up. (179–80)

Fitzgerald presents the scene without Nick’s commentary, and it is not at all clear that Nick makes the inferences about himself and Wolfsheim that Fitzgerald invites the audience to make. Nick sees that Wolfsheim is determined not to come, but we see that Wolfsheim cries crocodile tears. Nick acknowledges his investment in doing something for Gatsby after his death, but we see that this investment is deeper than he admits. If Gatsby represents everything for which he has always had unaffected scorn, what does Wolfsheim represent? Yet here he is, trying to convince Wolfsheim to do the decent thing and attend the funeral. Again the scene testifies to Gatsby’s effect on Nick, to Nick’s desire to have someone recognize something important about Gatsby’s life, and in this sense, it points to Nick’s motivation for telling the tale. Paradoxically, then, the semi-erasure of Nick’s narrational filter and the foregrounding of his actions as character in this scene also link up with his larger role as narrator of Gatsby’s story.

Finally, the famous last paragraphs of the novel provide the best example of Nick functioning as Fitzgerald’s mask.

gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat there, brooding on the old unknown world, I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. He had come a long way to this blue
lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (189)

It matters that Nick, who has witnessed the last days of Gatsby’s life and whose own life has been changed in the process, speaks these words. But like Frederic Henry’s “If people bring so much courage to this world” utterance in A Farewell to Arms, this passage is given its shape and point more by the beliefs of the implied author than by the character of the narrator. What is striking about these beliefs is their mixture of romanticism and cynicism. Although the object of the sailors’ dream is far more exalted than Gatsby’s, although it is, indeed, “commensurate” with man’s capacity for wonder, the sailors’ dream has much the same outcome as Gatsby’s: despite its intensity and magnificence, it is doomed to disappointment. In this passage, then, Fitzgerald speaks through Nick in an effort to convey his authorial vision of the strange amalgam of wonder and futility that defines the romantic dreamer. Fitzgerald leaves us to contemplate this mixture as a final reflection on Gatsby, on Nick—and, if we have been caught by the narrative, on ourselves.