

“Old Sport” Is Jay Gatsby’s Way of Life: Familiarity, Snobbery, Ridicule, and Failure*

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1. Introduction

F. Scott Fitzgerald gave Jay Gatsby certain characteristics in *The Great Gatsby* (1925). One of them is his “smile,” another is “old sport.”¹ “[In] *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald made the smile a chief part of the character’s makeup. The smile becomes as synonymous with Gatsby as the use of ‘old sport’” (Dubose, 90n). Since Fitzgerald was aware of the importance of the phrase, he increased its usage in the narrative—it appeared only 4 times in the manuscript (Brucoli, Introduction xxix-xxx), 38 times in the galleys, and 45 times in the published edition.² His use of “old sport,” drastically increased through the revisions, contributes to making Gatsby conspicuous—“The ‘old sport’ phrase [. . .] fixes Gatsby as precisely as his gorgeous pink rag of a suit” (Eble 90). Gatsby himself uses “old sport” 42 times out of 45 uses.

“Old sport” is not a mere term of address. It was originally an “early twentieth-century British upper-class slang term” (Randall III 191) and a sophisticated phrase used among students at Oxford in those days.³ Jay Gatsby, however, is neither an alumnus of Oxford nor a member of the upper class. Moreover, the inconsistency of the novel makes “old sport” more difficult to comprehend. In *Gatsby*, a person from a certain class does not necessarily exhibit behaviors, language, or a manner of speech suited to their class. The man whose “parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people” (*Gatsby* 76; henceforth *GG*) in the Middle West does not act in tune with his origin. If class coincided with people, Tom Buchanan would be the right person to use this fancy phrase. The man whose “family were enormously wealthy” (8) is learned and college educated, but does not use “old sport” at all. At Gatsby’s party, before learning his identity, Nick Carraway describes Gatsby as “an elegant young rough-neck” (40), and Jordan Baker says to Nick, “You see he’s a regular tough underneath it all” (62). Jay Gatsby is not a common rich man or a common swindler, but a roughneck nouveau riche. On the one hand, he is a symbol of the American dream or the self-made man, and a hero who arouses readers’ pity or sympathy.

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On the other hand, he is a bootlegger or gangster from the underworld, far from being the American ideal. This is the man who frequently uses “old sport” in the novel.

It is important to note the various implications of “old sport”; however, its various aspects have not been discussed as thoroughly as Gatsby’s other characteristics, such as his smile. “Old sport” in *Gatsby* reflects Jay Gatsby’s way of life. This paper will discuss the meanings of “old sport,” how it works in the narrative, and how it reflects Jay Gatsby.⁴

2. A Familiar Term of Address

“Old sport” is a familiar term of address. The *OED* second edition says that “old sport” is used “freq. as a familiar term of address, more usually of men than women” (“sport” II.8.d), including, as one example, part of Gatsby’s remark in Chapter 3: “Want to go with me, old sport?”⁵ “Old sport” in *Gatsby* is consistent with the definition in the *OED*. Table 1 shows, in the narrative, (1) who says “old sport” (in line X), (2) who receives it (Y), and (3) who exists around its speaker and receiver (Z). As the table shows, its speakers and receivers are all men, its speakers do not use it toward women, and women do not use it. In *Gatsby*, however, the men other than Jay Gatsby never use “old sport.” It is true that Tom Buchanan utters “old sport” twice toward Gatsby, but he does not use it as a favorite phrase. “Old sport” in *Gatsby* is thus peculiar to Jay Gatsby.

The person to whom Gatsby uses it most often (34 times out of 42) is Nick Carraway. Gatsby uses “old sport” as “a familiar term of address” in, for example, Chapter 3. He “actually” invites Nick to his party “with a surprisingly formal note” (*GG* 34, 35), and says “old sport” to Nick five times there. First, Gatsby asks Nick to ride a hydroplane before introducing himself: “Want to go with me, old sport? Just near the shore along the Sound” (39; all underlining is mine unless specifically noted). Second, when Nick makes a blunder by not knowing the host’s face, Gatsby sympathizes with Nick: “I thought you knew, old sport. I’m afraid I’m not a very good host” (40). Third, in leaving Nick to receive a call, Gatsby intends to make him feel comfortable: “If you want anything just ask for it, old sport” (40). Fourth, after returning to Nick, Gatsby shows consideration for Nick, who is still worried about his own blunder from before: “Don’t mention it. [. . .] Don’t give it another thought, old sport” (44). Finally, when Nick leaves the party, Gatsby politely sends him off: “Good night, old sport. . . . Good night” (44). Although Gatsby avoids communicating with his other guests, he is delighted that Nick comes to his party and stays until the end. Those five “old sports” at the party are full of familiarity.

When Gatsby uses “old sport,” he gives wholehearted hospitality to Nick. After the party, Gatsby allows him to use his private beach and asks him to go for a drive, using “old sport” with hospitality—“Good morning, old sport. You’re having lunch with me today and I thought we’d ride up together” (*GG* 51) and “Let’s go to Coney Island, old sport. In my car” (64). Moreover, Gatsby offers Nick a side business: “Why, I thought—why, look here, old sport, you don’t make much money, do you? [. . .] I thought you didn’t, if you’ll pardon my—you see, I carry on a little business on the side, a sort of a sideline, you understand. And I thought that if you don’t

make very much—"You're selling bonds, aren't you, old sport?"(65). Furthermore, Gatsby willingly acts as a mediator between Nick and Meyer Wolfsheimer. Wolfsheimer has brought Gatsby jobs and fortune and would also give Nick a "gonnection" (56, 65). Gatsby hopes that the side business and Wolfsheimer's "gonnection" will help Nick in some way, though Nick declines his offer: "I've got my hands full [. . .] I'm much obliged but I couldn't take on any more work" (65). The business Gatsby is introducing Nick to sounds suspiciously like a get-rich-quick scheme, and Nick himself realizes the danger—"I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life" (65). However, the offer comes from his goodwill, and "old sport" is used with a sense of hospitality.

Gatsby's favors to Nick seem to be a compensation for a certain arrangement. It is true that Gatsby intends to ask Nick to arrange a reunion with his ex-girlfriend, but it is impossible to conclude that Gatsby tries to exploit Nick solely for the sake of this arrangement. Gatsby certainly values his friendship with Nick. When Gatsby's failure at the Plaza is pretty much of a foregone conclusion and Daisy leaves him again, Gatsby does not need Nick's help any longer. Gatsby, nevertheless, continues his friendship with Nick. Gatsby stays up all night with Nick after the Plaza case, and starts to confess the truth. "Old sports" are inserted into his confession—"I can't describe to you how surprised I was to find out I loved her, old sport" (*GG* 117) and "I don't think she ever loved him. [. . .] You must remember, old sport, she was very excited this afternoon" (118). In the morning of the following day, Nick promises to call Gatsby later, and Gatsby responds, "Do, old sport" (120). After describing the scene, Nick remembers Gatsby's hospitality: "I thought of the night when I first came to his ancestral home three months before. [. . .] I thanked him for his hospitality. We were always thanking him for that—I and the others"(120). After his death, Nick holds Gatsby's funeral to repay him for his act of kindness, hearing Gatsby's heart crying out for Nick: "Look here, old sport, you've got to get somebody for me. You've got to try hard. I can't go through this alone"(128). Nick returns to his hometown and starts to write his memoirs about Gatsby. He thanks Gatsby throughout for his kindness and hospitality.

It is not only to Nick that Gatsby uses "old sport" as a familiar term of address. Gatsby also says "old sport" to three other people: a police officer (once), his business partner (once), and Klipspringer (twice). First, in Chapter 4, while driving to New York with Nick, Gatsby says to an officer who stops him for speeding, "All right, old sport" (*GG* 54). The officer recognizes Gatsby and apologizes for hailing him. In front of Nick, Gatsby does not force the officer to hush up the traffic violation, but just expects him to do so. Gatsby tells Nick later that he sends a Christmas card to the chief every year. He therefore considers his relationship with the police important and always treats them kindly. Second, in Chapter 5, when Daisy and Nick are at Gatsby's mansion, Gatsby receives a phone call and says to his business partner, "Yes. . . . Well, I can't talk now. . . . I can't talk now, old sport" (73). Gatsby suggests to the partner over the phone that they should abandon a man who bungled his business: "I said a small town. . . . He must know what a small town is. . . . Well, he's no use to us if Detroit is his idea of a small town. . . ." (73). Gatsby and his partner are close enough to have such a confidential

talk. Third, in the same chapter, Gatsby asks Klipspringer, a “boarder” at his house (50), to play the piano for Daisy: “Klipspringer plays the piano. [. . .] Don’t you, Ewing, old sport?” and “Don’t talk so much, old sport [. . .] Play!” (74). Daisy and Nick are there; therefore, Gatsby’s remark is not a strong order, but a request. Gatsby only encourages Klipspringer, who is afraid that he cannot play well. Gatsby’s “old sport” is thus a “familiar term of address,” and its number varies according to how close Gatsby is to his friend. Since Gatsby feels the most familiar with Nick, he says “old sport” most often to Nick.

Some of Gatsby’s “old sports” do not have familiarity. He says “old sport” to Tom five times (*GG* 99, 101, 102, 104, 105) during the confrontation scene in Chapter 7. Soon after Gatsby goes to a room at the Plaza with his friends, he accuses Tom of blaming his wife: “Why not let her alone, old sport. [. . .] You’re the one that wanted to come to town” (99). Tom hears “old sport” then for the first time and openly expresses his feelings of discomfort: “All this ‘old sport’ business. Where’d you pick that up?” (99). Gatsby ignores the question, and later says again, “I’ve got something to tell *you*, old sport,—” (101) before he readily confesses his own feelings toward his wife: “Not seeing. [. . .] No, we couldn’t meet. But both of us loved each other all that time, old sport, and you didn’t know. I used to laugh sometimes— [. . .] to think that you didn’t know” (102). Tom denies that, and then threatens to inquire into his business further. Gatsby disregards his declaration: “You can suit yourself about that, old sport” (104). Tom talks about his business and the truth that Gatsby made Walter Chase, their mutual acquaintance, go to jail. Gatsby justifies himself: “He came to us dead broke. He was very glad to pick up some money, old sport” (105).

Those five “old sports” to Tom are radically different from the other “old sports” Gatsby says to his friends. Gatsby pays close attention to Nick’s feelings. For example, he regrets having made Nick feel bad when driving to New York: “Look here, old sport. [. . .] I’m afraid I made you a little angry this morning in the car” (*GG* 57). Gatsby does not show such regard for Tom. While Tom hears “old sport” and openly feels unpleasant toward it, Gatsby disregards his feelings and continues to use “old sport” toward him. Therefore, Gatsby uses “old sport” to Tom as the complete opposite of “a familiar term of address”— that is to say, as an unpleasant and insulting word.

3. A Token of an Oxford man

Jay Gatsby is too ambitious to accept his own origin as “James Gatz of North Dakota” “in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants” (*GG* 76). “So he [Gatz] invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end” (77). “Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island” (77) is “the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West” “educated at Oxford,” and “came into a good deal of money” (52) because he is the last member of the family. Gatz uses every means to become his ideal, and “old sport” is one of them.

The son of poor farmers pretends to be a British gentleman. He declares that he graduated from a prestig-

ious university in England (Oxford), rides an English luxury custom car (Rolls-Royce), and has clothes sent from England in early Spring and Fall. Gatsby tries to use "elegant sentences" (*GG* 52) and watches his manners. He often uses "old sport" when he wants to embellish his own remarks. For example, when Gatsby drives to New York with Nick for the first time, he boasts about his own car—"It's pretty, isn't it, old sport.' He jumped off to give me a better view. 'Haven't you ever seen it before?'" (51), and during the drive, Gatsby asks Nick about how Nick judges him: "Look here, old sport. [. . .] What's your opinion of me anyhow?" (51). His pet phrase and manner of speech are British-like—"Gatsby uses the Anglophile term 'old sport,' which he affects throughout" (Cowley, Ch. 3); "He calls Nick 'Old Sport' in a sort of English way" (Salinsky, 283); and "He repeatedly interjects into his conversation 'old sport,' which is a British upper-class expression" (Dilworth, 90). It is persuasive that he assimilated part of English culture and picked up "old sport" during his stay at Oxford after the First World War—his "old sport" is "the incongruous slang phrase [. . .] perhaps a souvenir of his Oxford days" (Tynan, 294); "He often calls others 'Old Sport,' a phrase he perhaps picked up while studying briefly at Oxford" (Dillard, Ch. 4). Gatsby, therefore, might have heard "old sport" and made it his pet phrase during his stay at Oxford.⁶

Gatsby uses "old sport," which is associated with Oxford, and behaves like a British gentleman. After the war, Gatsby did not return to his country, but went to Oxford and left his girlfriend back home, though he tells Nick later that this was against his will. For whatever reason, he certainly utilized the stay. Gatsby knew that even if he returned directly to his country, he could not marry Daisy. Gatsby, therefore, staked his life on staying at Oxford. He took a photo there, and later shows it to Nick:

"Here's another thing I always carry. A souvenir of Oxford days. It was taken in Trinity Quad—the man on my left is now the Earl of Doncaster."

It was a photograph of half a dozen young men in blazers loafing in an archway through which were visible a host of spires. There was Gatsby, looking a little, not much, younger—with a cricket bat in his hand" (*GG* 53).

The "souvenir of Oxford days" shows that Gatsby used to be a student "in a blazer," not "in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants," and live such a privileged life at Oxford that he could enjoy cricket with an aristocrat. His "old sport" has the same function as the photograph does. "His affected Oxbridge vocabulary, notably 'old sport,' signifies the social transformation, as does the photograph he carries of himself in Trinity Quad holding a cricket bat" (Moreland 97). Noma argues that Gatsby deliberately uses "old sport" to hide his own origin—a son of poor farmers in the Middle West—and regards both the use of "old sport" and the reference to "Trinity Quad" as ways to pretend that he graduated from Oxford (*Yomikata* 248-9). After returning to his country, Gatsby always carries the photo with him and repeatedly calls people around him "old sport" as something

like a souvenir from Oxford. He regards “old sport” and the “photo” as important elements in faking his origin, not mere by-products of his stay at Oxford, and thinks that they flatter him.

4. A Great Expression

Gatsby’s “old sport” also prevents him from being his ideal man. His repeated “old sports” sometimes appear artificial to people around him, including Nick. At the party in Chapter 3, when Gatsby says “old sport” with his hand on Nick’s shoulder, Nick feels that “The familiar expression held no more familiarity than the hand which reassuringly brushed my shoulder” (*GG* 44). Gatsby’s “old sport” does not always reflect his real feelings because it is one of the ways he fakes his origin— “Gatsby’s ‘old sport’ is a verbal mannerism that stands in much the same relation to his underlying emotions as the pristine shirt he wears does to the beating of his heart” (Cowley, Extended Commentary 3). Furthermore, Gatsby believes that he will look decent if he uses “old sport”—“He wants to behave properly and uses the locution ‘old sport,’ as he often does when he wants to appear casual and confident” (West III, “Composition” 24). Emi Nagase claims that, with his smile and words, including “old sport,” Gatsby always wants to pretend to be the ideal character that he wants to show people (73). Against his expectation, his “old sport” is artificial, and sometimes rather ridiculous— “Gatsby’s speech, as Nick himself notes, struggles awkwardly to mimic the ‘old euphemisms’ of East Egg; his ‘old sport’ and ‘Oxford man’ represent a painstakingly studied insouciance that, according to Nick, ‘just missed being absurd’” (Will, 140).

Gatsby’s “old sport” is as pretentious and ridiculous to people’s ears as a woman’s “my dear.” Another person’s pet phrase in the narrative makes it clearer how ridiculous Gatsby’s is. Myrtle Wilson, whose husband is a poor worker, longs for the upper-class life. Ronald Berman identifies Gatsby’s “old sport” with her “my dear”— “That self-classifying phrase, ‘My dear,’ means as much to her as ‘old sport’ does to Gatsby. [. . .] Myrtle’s pet phrase is meant to be seen alongside Gatsby’s” (64). Kigen Okamoto argues that Myrtle’s “my dear” shows her orientation to the upper class, like Gatsby’s “old sport” (53). When she is with Tom, Myrtle behaves as if she lived an upper-class life, and her term of address reflects this orientation. Staying at their secret apartment with Tom, Myrtle utters “my dear” like a lady— “‘My dear,’ she told her sister in a high mincing shout” (*GG* 27) and “She turned to Mrs. McKee and the room rang full of her artificial laughter. ‘My dear,’ she cried, ‘I’m going to give you this dress as soon as I’m through with it. I’ve got to get another one tomorrow’” (31). Myrtle, who utters “my dear” and poses as a lady, is similar to Gatsby, who says “old sport” like an upper-class man.

Gatsby’s behavior oriented toward the upper class is ridiculous, and, what is more, it is offensive to traditionally privileged people.⁷ Tom criticizes Gatsby’s “old sport” twice at the Plaza:

“That’s a great expression of yours, isn’t it?” said Tom sharply.

“What is?”

“All this ‘old sport’ business. Where’d you pick that up?” (*GG* 99)

“Don’t you call me ‘old sport’!” cried Tom. (105)

“Old sport” is a “familiar term of address,” but at the Plaza, an unfamiliar person frankly and repeatedly uses it. Tom, therefore, gets angry and tries to stop Gatsby from using it. The reason for his anger, however, is not quite so simple.

The difference between old money and new money has been described in many works. In Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* (1925), published in the same year as *Gatsby*, new families increase in power more and more than traditional families:

For the Cranstons, and the Finchleys, despite a certain amount of local success in connection with this newer and faster set, were, much more than any of the others, the subject of considerable unfavorable comment. They were the people who [. . .] to say nothing of new and grandiose houses in Wykeagy Avenue and summer cottages at Greenwood, some twenty miles northwest, were setting a rather showy, and hence disagreeable, pace to all of the wealthy residents of this region. They were given to wearing the smartest clothes, to the latest novelties in cars and entertainments, and constituted a problem to those who with less means considered their position and their equipment about as fixed and interesting and attractive as such things might well be. The Cranstons and the Finchleys were in the main a thorn in the flesh of the remainder of the élite of Lycurgus—too showy and too aggressive. (Dreiser 150)

In *Gatsby*, the new rich are also gaining influence, and the peace of the old money is being threatened. Tom Buchanan watches out for the expansion of their power. Gatsby’s “old sport” is a symbol of new money for Tom.

Tom’s anger does not result from a mere problem of language, but from his own sense of crisis. Tom knows that Gatsby is not the right person to use “old sport,” a term for members of the upper class. For a better understanding of Tom’s anger, it is important to note the situation Tom is in. In Chapter 1, when Nick visits the Buchanans, Tom suddenly says to his guests, “Civilization’s going to pieces” (*GG* 14), and starts to talk about Goddard’s *The Rise of the Coloured Empires*:

“Well, it’s a fine book and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don’t look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It’s all scientific stuff; it’s been proved. [. . .] Well, these books are all scientific. [. . .] This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It’s up to us who are the dominant race to watch out or these other races will have control of things. [. . .] This idea is that we’re Nordics. I am and you are and you are and— [. . .] —and we’ve produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh, science

and art and all that. Do you see?" (*GG* 14)

Tom is proud to belong to the white dominant race of "Nordics." In confronting Gatsby at the Plaza, he continues to talk about his theory:

"Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white."

Flushed with his impassioned gibberish he saw himself standing alone on the last barrier of civilization. (*GG* 101)

Tom Buchanan, "standing alone on the last barrier of civilization," does not just have a strong sense of duty to "watch out" for other races, but he also fears that "civilization" will "go to pieces" or be "submerged"—"other races will have control of things" and his own race will lose its "dominance."

Tom does not analyze the social situation systematically. No matter how eloquent his speech is, his knowledge of "science" "that goes to make civilization" is poor—"I read somewhere that the sun's getting hotter every year. [. . .] It seems that pretty soon the earth's going to fall into the sun—or wait a minute—it's just the opposite—the sun's getting colder every year" (*GG* 92). Furthermore, Tom suddenly starts to talk about "intermarriage between black and white," but as Jordan Baker mummurs, "We're all white here" (101), none of the white people—Gatsby, Nick, Tom, Daisy, and Jordan—in the room will get married to a black man or woman. Therefore, Tom's theory of civilization or race is not coherent or persuasive at all.

Tom does not intend to raise issues of civilization or race in his speech. When confronting Gatsby, Tom gets emotional and expresses dissatisfaction with the situation. He unconsciously confesses in a series of speeches that his own situation is in crisis. Tom, a regular member of the upper and privileged class, is afraid that new money is invading their stable world, and is also angry that the nouveau riche proudly use the slang of the upper class. What is worse, Tom feels anxious that "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" or "some nobody" is about to steal his wife (*GG* 54). It is Gatsby's "old sport" that causes Tom to "make personal remarks" to Gatsby (99). The brunt of his criticism is directed at Gatsby's illegal business that enables the nouveau riche to use "old sport" and to behave as if he were from the upper class. Finally, Tom reveals how vulgar his real origin is and how illegitimate Gatsby's business is. "Enraged by the double prospect of losing wife and mistress at the same time, [. . .] Tom is ruthless in his attack. With the physical strength of an athlete and hardened by his lifelong habit of command, Tom succeeds in striking Gatsby's weakest points until he makes him incapable of further resistance" (Perosa 65).

Tom's revelation makes Daisy get too nervous to run away with Gatsby. She recognizes at the Plaza how different her world is from Gatsby's after she had already felt "something awful" (*GG* 84) in West Egg at

Gatsby's party. Both Gatsby and the Buchanans are rich, but their worlds are fundamentally different. Gatsby cannot recognize the difference between old money and new money—"To him [Gatsby] money is money, and he never understands the difference between East Egg and West Egg—the former the home of the established wealth, the latter of the new rich or, like himself, the ersatz and criminally rich" (Lehan 57). Gatsby believes that he only has to have money to be a member of the upper class; therefore, he repeatedly says "old sport" as a token of his membership.

Tom and Daisy are birds of a feather. In Chapter 1, just after Tom says, "It's up to us who are the dominant race to watch out or these other races will have control of things," she agrees with him—"We've got to beat them down" whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun" (*GG* 14). After Daisy's car accident kills Myrtle, Nick peeps the Buchanans at the kitchen table through a rift in the sill of their mansion—"There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together" (113). Jay Gatsby's world is completely separate from Daisy's:

The social tone of Tom, Daisy, and Jordan is sophisticated and blasé, and they have no sympathy for Gatsby, with his childish and impulsive sentimentality. Gatsby is outside their world from the very beginning, and his attempt to separate Daisy from her "aristocratic" background and surroundings is doomed to fail. The disparity of social levels from which they spring makes it impossible for him to satisfy her deeply rooted need for gentility and social distinction. (Perosa 70)

"Old sport" has something to do with the unlawful business. As Tom says, "I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him and I wasn't far wrong" (104), Jay Gatsby certainly has an aspect of a black-market profiteer—"Gatsby is a boor, a roughneck, a fraud, a criminal. His taste is vulgar, his behavior ostentatious, his love adolescent, his business dealings ruthless and dishonest" (Scrimgeour 73).⁸ An actual person relates Gatsby's "old sport" with his shady business. His "old sport" originates from one of Fitzgerald's acquaintances during his life in Great Neck, whom Fitzgerald met in the summer of 1923. This man was Max Gerlach. Gerlach sent Fitzgerald a newspaper clipping with the Fitzgeralds' photo in it. He scribbled a message on the photo: "En-route from the coast—Here for a few days on business—How are you and the family old sport? Gerlach" (Brucoli, *Volume* 21). The clipping was dated July 20, 1923, which means that before the publication of *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald met a person who resembled Gatsby and used "old sport."⁹

Gerlach had much in common with Gatsby. According to previous research, like Gatsby, Gerlach changed his name, became involved in certain occupations, fought in World War I, and held lavish parties. Gerlach seems to have been engaged in illegal business. Arthur Mizener explains that "Gatsby—once again in externals—was based on a Long Island bootlegger whom Fitzgerald knew only slightly" (171), and, quoting Zelda Fitzgerald's talk to Henry Dan Piper, reveals in the same book that the bootlegger is "a Teutonic-featured man

named von Guerlach [*sic*]” (336n9). Matthew J. Bruccoli investigated Gerlach and published “‘How Are You and the Family Old Sport?’: Gerlach and Gatsby” (33-6) in the 1975 *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*. After asking Piper about Gerlach, Bruccoli explains that he was “a neighbor named von Guerlach [*sic*] or something who was said to be General Pershing’s nephew and was in trouble over bootlegging” (33). He was a nouveau riche who made his fortune from illegal business. According to a recent newspaper article, “One story has Gerlach being born in Yonkers, training as a mechanic, going to war and coming home to no money and a divorce from his wife. He became a bootlegger, threw lavish parties and mixed with high society that could have included Fitzgerald. He may have even been Fitzgerald’s liquor source during Prohibition” (Ivey C7). Gatsby’s “old sport” cannot be separated from Gerlach’s; therefore, the word has something of a criminal feeling. Tom’s criticism of Gatsby’s “old sport” during the confrontation scene highlights Gatsby’s shadiness. Gatsby’s “old sport” stimulates Tom and ultimately puts Gatsby himself at a disadvantage.¹⁰

5. Conclusion

Jay Gatsby’s “old sport” has four aspects. First, “old sport” is both a token of familiarity and the opposite of it. Gatsby says “old sport” as a familiar term of address to his friends, and gives Nick the most wholehearted hospitality via the phrase. Gatsby also uses “old sport” to Tom with scorn or hostility, taking a clearly adversarial stand against him. Gatsby’s use of “old sport” shows his different feelings toward those two people. Second, “old sport” shows snobbery. By using the pretentious English phrase, Gatsby emphasizes that he was educated at Oxford and lives an upper-class life. Third, Gatsby’s repetition of “old sport” causes him various problems. Contrary to his expectations, the way he uses “old sport” seems ridiculous. Finally, his “old sports” make Tom get angry. Tom does not only hate Gatsby’s use of the familiar term of address, but also gets angry about a mere parvenu freely using a term for privileged people. To beat Gatsby, Tom reveals both his real origin and unlawful business. Gatsby’s business and pet phrase are suggestive of the bootlegger Max Gerlach. The existence of Gerlach give his “old sport” a criminal feeling. Jay Gatsby and “old sport” are inseparable.

Those four aspects of Gatsby’s “old sport” summarize his way of life. Gatsby respects his friendship with Nick. Nick feels his hospitality; therefore, he starts to write memoirs of his time with Gatsby. Gatsby is ambitious enough to be a great man like “James J. Hill” (*GG* 131), and also behaves like a British gentleman. Unfortunately, he does not notice that he is a source of ridicule, like the nouveau riche Trimalchio. No matter how rich Gatsby becomes or how often he says the fancy phrase, he is not allowed to “[get] within a mile of her unless [he] brought the groceries to the back door” (102). The truth of Jay Gatsby is brought to light, and finally, “‘Jay Gatsby’ had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice” (116). Gatsby, saying “old sport,” pursues his ideal, faces reality, and dies for his lover. Jay Gatsby’s “old sport” reflects his way of life: familiarity, snobbery, ridicule, and failure. His way of life is condensed into his repeated “old sport”; in other words, “old sport” is the essence of Jay Gatsby.

Table 1.

Legend:

X: Person saying “old sport” Y: Person receiving “old sport”

Z: People around the speaker and receiver

D: Daisy Buchanan

G: Jay Gatsby

J: Jordan Baker

K: Klipspringer

N: Nick Carraway

T: Tom Buchanan

W: Meyer Wolfshiem

BP: Gatsby’s business partner

Bu: Butler

Ga: Gardener

H: Housekeeper

P: Police officer

Ch.	No.	X	Y	Z	Page	Ch.	No.	X	Y	Z	Page	
3	First Party (early)					5	24	G	K	N, D	74	
	1	G	N	J	39		25	G	K	N, D	74	
	2	G	N	J	40	6	Second Party					
	3	G	N	J, Bu	40		26	G	N	n/a	85	
	First Party (late)					7	On the Phone					
	4	G	N	n/a	43		27	G	N	n/a	88	
5	G	N	Bu	44	Outside Tom’s House							
4	Drive to New York					7	28	G	N	n/a	93	
	6	G	N	n/a	51		The Plaza					
	7	G	N	n/a	51		29	G	T	N, D, J	99	
	8	G	N	n/a	52		30	T	G	N, D, J	99	
	9	G	N	n/a	53		31	G	T	N, D, J	101	
	10	G	N	n/a	54		32	G	T	N, D, J	102	
	11	G	P	N	54		33	G	T	N, D, J	104	
	Lunch						34	G	T	N, D, J	105	
12	G	N	W	57	35		T	G	N, D, J	105		
13	G	N	n/a	58	Outside Tom’s House							
5	Outside Nick’s House						8	36	G	N	n/a	112
	14	G	N	n/a	64			37	G	N	n/a	113
	15	G	N	n/a	65			38	G	N	n/a	113
	16	G	N	n/a	65	39		G	N	n/a	114	
	Reunion (in Nick’s House)					Gatsby’s House (Outside)						
	17	G	N	H	66	40		G	N	n/a	115	
	18	G	N	D	70	41		G	N	n/a	117	
	19	G	N	D	70	42		G	N	n/a	118	
	20	G	N	n/a	71	43		G	N	Ga	120	
	Reunion (in Gatsby’s House)					44		G	N	n/a	120	
21	G	N	D	72	9	Gatsby’s House (Indoors)						
22	G	N	D	73		45		G*1	N*1	n/a	128	
23	G	BP	N, D	73								

*1 Nick’s imagination

Notes

- ¹ It goes without saying that “old sport” does not derive from Jay Gatsby. The *OED* second edition says that “old sport” first appeared in the magazine *Punch* in 1905: “I shouldn’t mind, Old Sport.” The phrase, nevertheless, is often connected with Gatsby or F. Scott Fitzgerald. For example, in J. D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Holden Caulfield says, “I was crazy about *The Great Gatsby*. Old Gatsby. Old sport. That killed me” (152); in the world-famous comic strip *Peanuts*, Snoopy and his friends, conscious of Jay Gatsby, utter “old sport” in 1991 (Schulz, *Peanuts* vol. 21; 65, 67, 68, 152) and in 1995 (*Peanuts* vol. 23; 77); and in the 2011 film *Midnight in Paris* directed by Woody Allen, Fitzgerald (played by Tom Hiddleston) says “old sport” to Gil Pender (played by Owen Wilson) (00:20:30-33).
- ² “The decision to characterize Gatsby by this slightly absurd expression was made during the revision of the typescript” (Brucoli, Introduction xxx). It was Maxwell Perkins (1884-1947), an editor at Scribner’s, who encouraged Fitzgerald to make this decision. After receiving the typescript from Fitzgerald, Perkins pointed out in a letter dated November 20, 1924 (Fitzgerald, *Life* 86-8), that Jay Gatsby was “somewhat vague” (87), recommending the author use “old sport” more frequently: “Couldn’t he [Gatsby] be physically described as distinctly as the others, and couldn’t you add one or two characteristics like the use of that phrase ‘old sport,’ not verbal, but physical ones, perhaps” (87; underlining original). Fitzgerald, deferring to Perkins’s opinion, increased the usage of the phrase to make Gatsby more distinct.
- ³ Shoji Noma, based on information from an acquaintance who graduated from Oxford in the late 1960s, explains that some snobbish male students at Oxford would often use “old sport.” His acquaintance presumes that “old sport” is similar to “mate,” pronounced with a slight London accent (*Yomikata* 248-9). Noma still argues in a later paper that “old sport” was a term of address, a jargon used among Oxford students (“fon” 24).
- ⁴ Gatsby’s “old sport” is difficult to translate into Japanese. Many Japanese translators have had trouble translating it. For more on problems with translations, see Tomoyuki Asakawa’s “‘Ōrudo Supōto’ wa douyakusu bekika?” 「オールド・スポーツ」はどう訳すべきか? [“How Should ‘Old Sport’ Be Translated into Japanese?]. The paper covers problems with the phrase’s Japanese translations used or mentioned in books, electronic media, and explanatory notes in Japan, and, based on the similarity between Jay Gatsby and a man called Max Gerlach, suggests a new Japanese translation of “old sport.”
- ⁵ Jay Gatsby says to Nick Carraway at the party, “Want to go with me, old sport? Just near the shore along the Sound”(GG 39). This “old sport” is the first one in *Gatsby*, which the *OED* second edition quotes as an example. The newest *OED Online* (as of August 2018) still contains a quotation from *Gatsby*, but it has been changed to the following one: “Don’t give it another thought, old sport.” This “old sport” is the fourth one in the narrative. In addition, the *OED Online* does not give “old sport” an independent explanation but

groups it with slang connected with “old” in “special uses” of “old” instead:

b. In familiar or affectionate forms of address, usually with no connotation of age, as *old bean* (cf. BEAN *n.* 6e), *fruit* (cf. FRUIT *n.* 2e), *horse* (cf. HORSE *n.* 4), *hoss* (cf. HOSS *n.* 2), *lad* (cf. LAD *n.*¹ 2a), *son* (cf. SON *n.*¹ 4), *sport* (cf. SPORT *n.*¹), *top* (cf. TOP *n.*³).

Most of these expressions are now generally considered old-fashioned or upper-class. Modern uses are frequently humorous or intended to characterize upper-class speech. Cf. COOK *n.*¹ 8.

See also OLD BOY *n.*, OLD CHAP *n.*, OLD DEAR *n.*, OLD FELLOW *n.*, OLD GIRL *n.*, OLD LADY *n.*, OLD MAN *n.*, OLD THING *n.* (Underlining added)

⁶ In the 2013 film *The Great Gatsby* directed by Baz Luhrmann and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Dan Cody (played by Steve Bisley) calls Gatsby “old sport” on his boat (01:08:56-09:00), and then Gatsby also says it loudly (01:09:29-09:31). It seems in the movie that Gatsby, before going to Oxford, learns “old sport” from Cody.

⁷ Tom and Nick are from old families. While Tom has a great history with his rich family, Nick is proud of his own family—“we’re descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch” (*GG* 6)—and the fact that he comes from such “prominent, well-to-do people in this middle-western city for three generations” (6). Nick also despises Gatsby’s tastes and behaviors oriented to the upper class, such as his repetition of “old sport.” Scott Donaldson argues “Given an opportunity, Gatsby consistently errs in the direction of ostentation. His clothes, his car, his house, his parties—all brand him as newly rich, unschooled in the social graces and sense of superiority ingrained not only in Tom Buchanan but also in Nick Carraway” (“Possessions” 188). Donaldson continues in another paper, “The snob in Nick Carraway finds Gatsby contemptible. [. . .] He can simultaneously praise Gatsby, in other words, and still disapprove of the ‘gorgeous pink rag of a suit’ he’s wearing, scorn his ‘old sport’ affectation, disapprove of his ostentatious Hotel de Ville and extravagant parties, scorn his shady business ‘gonnegtions’—above all, disapprove of Gatsby’s social incompetence” (*Essays* 135).

⁸ Many scholars have studied Gatsby’s business and models. Richard Lehan explains them in detail (42-57).

⁹ The Fitzgeralds lived in Long Island from October 1922 to April 1924, and Gerlach’s note is dated July 20, 1923. Fitzgerald had a fair amount of interaction with Gerlach. Horst Kruse argues “that the general tone of Gerlach’s remarks to Fitzgerald and the salutation ‘old sport’ seem to presuppose a somewhat longer term of acquaintance between the two people, its beginning possibly even antedating the arrival of the Fitzgeralds on Long Island in mid-October 1922” (*Fitzgerald* 18).

¹⁰ Bruccoli, however, writes that “Almost nothing is known about Gerlach” (Explanatory Notes 189) in the Notes of the Cambridge edition of *Gatsby* from 1991; little progress has been made in his investigation into

Gerlach since 1975. After the abolition of the Prohibition, Gerlach is said to have worked as a car dealer. Brucoli's 1975 paper was republished in his *Documentary Volume* in 2000 and only a little new information was added: "In 1939 Max Gerlach, a used-car dealer in Flushing, New York, blinded himself in a suicide attempt. He died in 1958" (20). In Mary Jo Tate's *Critical Companion* in 1998 (revised in 2007), whose foreword is written by Brucoli, what is newly added in the entry of "Max Gerlach" (309-10) after the 1975 article is that "Gerlach was in the used car business in Flushing, New York, when he attempted suicide by shooting himself in 1939; he indicated in his suicide note that he had been an officer in World War I" (310). After Brucoli, scholars such as Horst Kruse ("Gatsby" 45-83) and Thomas H. Pauly (226-9) have studied Gerlach. However, it seems to be getting harder and harder to find any more detailed information about him.

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【Abstract】

ジェイ・ギャツビーの「オールド・スポーツ」とは何か？

浅川 友幸*

ジェイ・ギャツビーの「オールド・スポーツ」は、単なる呼びかけの言葉ではない。ギャツビーは、作品中42回「オールド・スポーツ」を発するが、その言葉はギャツビーの4つの側面を反映している。(1) 友愛、(2) 俗物根性、(3) 嘲笑、(4) 敗北。「オールド・スポーツ」を通じて、ギャツビーのニックとトムに対する感情、その言葉が発するギャツビーの望む姿が伝わってくる。そしてその言葉は周囲の人間にとって嘲笑的であり、そしてトムにとってはニューマニーを象徴するもので、彼が憎み恐れるものである。ギャツビーは夢を追いかけて、現実に直面し、そして元恋人のために死ぬ。そのような彼の生き方が繰り返される彼の「オールド・スポーツ」に凝縮されている。『グレート・ギャツビー』における「オールド・スポーツ」は、ギャツビーを理解する上で重要なフレーズである。

キーワード：「オールド・スポーツ」、ジェイ・ギャツビー、F・スコット・フィッツジェラルド、『グレート・ギャツビー』、マックス・ガーラック

Jay Gatsby says “old sport” 42 times in *The Great Gatsby*. This expression is not a mere term of address; it conveys four aspects of Jay Gatsby: familiarity, snobbery, ridicule, and failure. Gatsby’s use of this expression shows his feelings toward Nick and Tom, as well as the persona he seeks to project. It also causes him various problems. For those around him, it is an object of ridicule, and Tom regards it as a symbol of new money, which he hates and fears. Gatsby pursues his ideal, faces reality, and finally dies for his lover. His way of life can be essentially epitomized by his repeated use of the phrase “old sport.” In *The Great Gatsby*, this phrase is an important key that helps us to better understand the enigmatic central character Jay Gatsby.

Key words: “old sport,” Jay Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Max Gerlach

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