For nearly a century, readers have known the story of Myrtle Wilson, the infamous literary mistress of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald’s Tom Buchanan is married to a woman who is the picture of wealth and elegance, and yet he is drawn to this woman about whom readers know very little, and about whom we hear only in a retrospective vantage of the partial observer Nick Carraway. Mrs. Wilson puts on airs and takes blows, and her death is as graphic as any of literature’s fallen women. And like Myrtle, Fitzgerald casts his fictionalized Flushing as symbolic of a mean, hardscrabble existence whose chief merit seems to be its view of Manhattan.

On the page, Myrtle’s death can be viewed as moral, even tragic: it ushers in a sense of sobriety to a novel steeped in vanity and excess. Her death brings an end to the island’s pulsating parties; her “vivacious” nature, when extinguished, brings down the lights. We can reread such a character’s death if we imagine for her a life, and make her into a fully formed character rather than a mere Mistress and Wife. Set in prohibition-era New York, *On Myrtle* can be described as the author’s creative critique of and reaction to the world described in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. 