

An Interrogation of Dream and Disillusionment in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

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Abstract: This essay aims to demonstrate that F. Scott Fitzgerald is interested in dream and the disillusionment that follows from it in his *The Great Gatsby*. The wealthy gangster, Jay Gatsby, the protagonist, longs for a beautiful, upper-class woman but eventually loses his heart. The tragedy of all dreamers is also exemplified by the story of the gangster, a youngster from the Midwest who is chasing the American dream of success. The rise and fall of a handsome bootlegger who became obsessed with the wealthy and attractive Daisy Buchanan was recounted in this novel. Whether the paradise lost is a Midwestern boyhood, Paris in the 1920s, or Gatsby's platonic ideal of Daisy, it is the quintessential American story of social aspiration and the frequently terrible results of innocence betrayed. The novel explores American themes and presents a portrayal of the new social reality that the moralist tradition in America fears. The world that the story explores is one of strained relationships, one that prioritises wealth and success over societal duty, and one where people have much too much control over their own lives. In this novel, Fitzgerald has combined the American dream with the American disillusionment.

Keywords: Disillusion, Dream, Relationship, Depression, SocietF.

1. Introduction

Scott Fitzgerald is one of the most recognized figures in American literary and cultural history of the twentieth century. His works stand out for faithfully capturing the rhythms of the Jazz Age. His writing is about America, whether he is writing domestically or elsewhere. Despite being an exile, he used metaphors to describe America. The 1920s generation has been referred to as the "lost generation," and it is evident from his works that the era's desperation and delusions, as well as its promise, are reflected. One of the main themes in Fitzgerald's fiction is an awareness of social change and its effects. He paints a clear picture of contemporary social realities in his novels and intimately depicts the nuances and complexity of the psychological makeup of the people selected to symbolise the dominant mood of the day. He attempts to characterise and shed light on the challenges that a crisis presents for a person, keeping in mind the crisis that is currently plaguing modern man.

The magnum opus, *The Great Gatsby*, was started in 1922 while the Fitzgeralds were residing in St. Paul, Minnesota. Fitzgerald was forced to briefly put the novel on hold in 1923 to focus on creating commercial short stories due to mounting financial problems. He started working on the novel again in April 1924, although he threw out a lot of his earlier work. It is one of the most condensed and compressed great novels in any language, and Fitzgerald powerfully portrayed the typical picture of American life in the 20th century.

Jay Gatsby's neighbour Nick Carraway serves as the narrator of the novel; Gatsby meets his former sweetheart Daisy Buchanan during a party he throws for himself. She is married to Tom Buchanan, a wealthy man who has a mistress named Myrtle. Myrtle and her husband reside in the valley of Ashes, and he has a garage. Gatsby's former love affair, which he was unable to pursue because of his financial situation while serving in the military, gets revived after he sees Daisy. Given his current fortune, he wants to own Daisy, who is dissatisfied with her marriage.

Nick, Daisy's distant cousin, sets up a meeting between Gatsby and Daisy at his home. It is unclear where Gatsby got his enormous money. His involvement in bootlegging is suggested by his attachment to Wolfsheim and a few enigmatic phone conversations. Daisy, Gatsby, Nick, and Tom visit New York City one day. Tom drives Gatsby's automobile with Nick, and Gatsby drives Tom's car with Daisy. Daisy now takes the wheel when they return in the middle of the night. Unexpectedly, a figure crosses the Valley of Ashes in front of the car, confusing Daisy, and an accident happens. After that figure is dead, Gatsby immediately takes over and drives away from the horrified Daisy, heading home. Myrtle is the one who was slain because she was envious of Tom's car with a woman and, due to Gatsby's bad luck, she thought of Tom in the middle of the night. Gatsby stops at Wilson's garage for petrol since Tom in his automobile is following him. There, he witnesses the accident and, by removing himself from it, comforts Myrtle's husband Wilson, who is grieving. The following day, a vengeful Wilson shows up at Tom's house and asks about the murderer. And to safeguard Daisy, Tom tells him Gatsby's name as planned. Wilson then kills Gatsby by shooting himself at his home. After the burial in the final chapter, Nick goes back to his hometown and starts his family company.

The plot is structured around a number of parties that operate as platforms for the ideas - the assessment of materials - that Fitzgerald wanted to convey through human relationships and visuals. The Buchanan dinner party, which is the subject of Chapter One, illustrates the type and amount of the Buchanan money as well as its application. The Valley of Ashes, on the other hand, opens Chapter Two, illustrating the character and impact of the Wilson family's poverty. This chapter centres on a party held in Tom and Myrtle's secret flat, where the grossness of middle-class affectations when affluence is combined with worsening poverty is emphasised. A party that is the result of the first two chapters is examined in Chapter 3. Here, Gatsby's party is the focal point of the story, and the introduction of Gatsby amplifies all the pretentiousness, ostentation, and intensity that were alluded to in Myrtle's party.

After a summary of the attendees at Gatsby's parties, Chapter 4 opens with a luncheon party including Nick, Gatsby, and Wolfsheim. The idea that there is something dubious about Gatsby's wealth and the link between his money and the Buchanan fortune completes the introduction of Gatsby through parties in Chapter Three: "Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay," (90) Jordan tells Nick. For Nick, the rationale for Gatsby's wealth suddenly becomes glaringly obvious, and Gatsby suddenly comes to life for him—a Gatsby born out of the womb of his aimless grandeur. Therefore, Chapter Four creates a strong yet delicate thread of connection between Gatsby and Daisy, tying together all levels of American wealth - or lack thereof - in the same web of aspiration and meretriciousness.

The ten parties in Nick's bungalow in Chapter Five serve as the party's antecedents, and the party-sequence plot quickly follows them to establish that connection. Fitzgerald can discuss the current ramifications of his characters' pasts and prepare the denouement that concludes his assessment of those pasts because the reunion of Daisy and Gatsby at this party brings the flashbacks of the previous four chapters up to date. In Chapter Six, Daisy attends Gatsby's party, which serves as a transitional statement that foreshadows the death of that dream's energies at the hands of the dream's object - in effect, Daisy shuts off Gatsby's house - and suggests that a true and final reunion between Gatsby and his dream is impossible. The chapter sets the stage for the idea that death will be the outcome of the histories and their interactions.

The party that fulfils the novel's prophecies up to this point is introduced in Chapter 7. The impossibility of Gatsby's dream is revealed in the party at the Plaza on that glorious day of sweat and boiling tempers. The action leading up to this final party, which is ironically accompanied by the strains of a wedding march, culminates in death, just as the story has promised. Even though Daisy and Myrtle have never met - neither of them even knows the other's appearance - and that Daisy is unaware of Myrtle's name, identity, or whereabouts, Fitzgerald uses his symbolism to have Daisy murder Myrtle during the drive out of the Plaza. In the web of money and hopes, no one is unattached to everyone else.

Only Gatsby is immune from the moral censure that is the main theme of Fitzgerald's relationships; everyone else is corrupted. There are no longer any parties - just broken promises and lost connections. The non-party "party" that concludes Chapter Seven features Gatsby by himself, "standing there in the moonlight - watching over nothing" (33), and Tom and Daisy sitting alone over a bowl of cold chicken and two bottles of ale, "and neither one of them had touched the chicken or the ale" (12). Gatsby and Nick attend a non-party breakfast party at the beginning of Chapter 8, where Gatsby tells Nick the rest of the tale of his ambitious, idealistic endeavour to win Daisy back.

The Holocaust is finished when Wilson murders Gatsby and then himself, and Nick and Jordan's rendezvous is forever lost. The funeral, which is Chapter Nine's non-party party, is a real party. Owl

Eyes, the lone visitor, emphasises the point when he learns that no one came to Gatsby's home to pay their respects: "Go on!" "Why my God!" he began. "Hundreds of them used to go there" (80). While the carelessness and irresponsibility of American prosperity, the dishonesty and hollowness of its appearances, its jewels, and its parties, continue to exist, the final development of Gatsby's dream's history is fuelled by the appearance of Gatsby's father and the Gatsby juvenilia he delivers. Ironically, Jordan is the one who brings up the reckless driving allegation again, and Tom and Daisy carry on as usual, free of Nick's poor judgement and his provincial squeamishness.

At the end of Chapter Nine, Fitzgerald just had those seven amazing concluding paragraphs to convey that this has been a story of the Golden West and, ultimately, a story of America from the start. His society had been put to the test by the tragic destiny of Gatsby, the romantic, and it had failed. The irresponsible reality into which the American dream has degenerated is the money, appearances, and parties that persist; America's history as a continuous party, the "greatest gaudiest spree in history." The history of the dream also goes on, but it is always doomed and always takes place in the past, where the lofty aspirations of youth are relentlessly carried back into the past. Like Gatsby himself, the character operates on two levels: on the naturalistic level, Gatz is a vulgar, ostentatious parvenu for whom money is the touchstone that turns fantasy into reality; on the mythic level, Gatsby is the embodiment of every man's unmet ambition.

Man's drive to translate his most intense emotional desires into universal representations in order to place his unique experience within the broader framework of human social and philosophical patterns is where mythology first emerged. The legendary hero transcends the confines of personal experience because he personifies the human psyche. The pressures that limit human progress are accepted by ordinary men, yet mythic heroes like the Jay Gatsbys believe that nothing is impossible. Gatsby genuinely thinks that he can guarantee the future, reorganise the present, and retrieve the past with his fiat.

Fitzgerald gives Gatsby many of the traits of mythological and romantic heroes, such as his miraculous birth (he was born from his own platonic conception) or transformation (from the unpromising James Gatz to the fabulous Gatsby); his mysterious and vaguely sinister background (he tells Nick he is the son of wealthy Midwesterners who are dead); his acquisition of untold wealth (he had lived in the European capitals like a "young rajah... collecting jewels, chiefly rubies..." (76); and, lastly, his unwavering commitment to his quest - the acquisition of Daisy Fay, the "king's daughter, the golden girl" (34). Fitzgerald objectifies the visionary aspect of his own conflicted consciousness in Gatsby. On the one hand, he is a natural idealist, a pampered priest who is horrified by his hedonistic excesses; on the other, he is the ebullient dreamer who regarded life as solely a romantic subject.

Fitzgerald was raised as a Roman Catholic, and even though he had long since rejected the church's teachings, he had never fully been rid of his attraction to its rituals and his possibly guilt-ridden realisation that he had violated the moral precepts of the church in his own life. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald uses Nick to present a moral perspective based on a sense of the fundamental decencies rather than the narrower doctrinal judgements of a specific religious code. Fitzgerald had intended to give Gatsby a Catholic background, but in the final revision of the novel, he deleted the Catholic elements and published them separately in a short story called "Absolution." In the 1920s, hedonism was used as a religious code.

The Great Gatsby is set in jazz-era New York City and Long Island, its magnificent neighbour. Nick is a restless young man who has travelled to the east in the summer of 1922 to work as a bond salesman. His home Midwest now appears to be the ragged edge of the universe rather than the cosy hub of the planet. Thus, for a while, he is both captivated and repulsed by the endless diversity of life in the east. He is a crucial component of the structural scheme. In addition to recounting the action, he adds to his story a sense of immediacy and authority that only someone who has personally or indirectly witnessed the events he describes can communicate.

Nick merely plays a supporting role in the action proper as a character, which is restricted to the events of a few months in 1922 that inevitably lead to the treachery and death that mark the novel's tragic end. While Nick partially reconstructs the story from what the people involved tell him, Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, and even Jordan is substantially impacted by the important events that took place in the novel's antecedent action. Nick's function as a moral critic is far more significant than that of a spectator. His consciousness evaluates and interprets Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, and Jordan's actions and motivations because they all appeal to him in different ways for help, guidance, or understanding. Fitzgerald can alter his content using this tool without sacrificing his objectivity. Nick acts as a mediator between the

author and his readers as well as between the author and his characters. These Jazz Age figures are shaped for us by Nick.

The story of *Gatsby* is recounted from a distance. First, Nick is seeing the events of the summer of 1922 from his point of view. He is now a young provincial who learns about the nature of his own quest for self-definition through his interactions with Gatsby. He informs Jordan Baker that he is thirty. From the perspective of Nick, who is writing a novel about his relationship with Gatsby two years later, "I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor" (121): Nick has gained the ability to make positive assessments of both the good and bad aspects of life in the two years since Gatsby's passing: "No - Gatsby turned out all right at the end; in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elation of men" (133).

The external factors that exist in the corrupt society are also the source of Gatsby's sorrow; Daisy, who stands for the materialist era of American civilisation, is not a worthy object that can provide Gatsby transcendence. Ironically, Gatsby is the one who remarks about her voice's wealth at the end. The power dynamics behind Tom, another actor in Gatsby's downfall, make him the final link in the chain that connects the reader to the frontiersmen like Cody and the explorers of the newly discovered area. At the novel's end, Nick connects Gatsby's dream to the Dutch sailors' lament. The October month of love that Gatsby and Daisy experienced is a nod to Columbus' October discovery of America. Gatsby is a myth who is incarnated the aspiration and the ordeal of his age. His journey is predicated on a classic American theme, which is split between the desire for purity and the concessions of reality. America is portrayed in the novel as the land of lost illusions and lost innocence. His existence serves as a reminder of what America should be. They are a group of commentators that believe that his dream is a representation of the American dream.

Some reviewers have argued that the novel represents a myth that is far more universal than the one held by those who perceive it as a tale about the American ideal. They see the *Gatsby* tragedy as a universal human dilemma. Fitzgerald went beyond his history to explore metaphysics in his work. Fitzgerald discovered a story that was appropriate for the universal tragedy of man in Gatsby's dream and disillusionment. According to Kenneth Eble, Fitzgerald's goal in *The Great Gatsby* is to "capture the essential truth of the romantic vision" (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 94). According to all these critics, the novel depicts the tragic scenario in which man is constantly yearning for a bygone paradise in the past. He enters the past as a result of his never-ending search for the future.

On a more acceptable level, *The Great Gatsby* captures a certain period amid the years of societal transformation in America. The tragedy of *Gatsby* is set against the backdrop of the 1920s' social transformation. By using unbiased social observation, Fitzgerald has attempted to dramatize the complexity of life after World War I, in contrast to allegorical artists who often reduce social life's complexities to opposites. He has elevated the novel to the level of a great work of art by attempting to infuse all three worlds of meaning.

The story appears to be a masterful dramatization of the social and economic corruptions of the Jazz Age, which was characterised by gangsterism, prohibition, flashy flappers, and extravagant clothing. Commercial success criteria, dubious business ethics, and extreme conservatism in social and political thought are characteristics of American morality. Fitzgerald addressed all these historical elements in one way or another through character and topic, with such sensitivity that it is possible to detect faint foreshadowing of the 1929 stock market crash and the impending Great Depression in the novel.

Beyond these superficial issues, the novel symbolically addresses the American dream of success's failure, which was most famous in Fitzgerald's day due to the Horatio Alger books. The metaphorical usage of the Midwest as a contrast to the East is the novel's second major thematic issue. "I see now that this has been a story of the west, after all - Tom and Gatsby, Daisy, Jordan, and I, are all Westerners and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly inadaptable to Eastern life," (117) Nick writes in his nostalgic backward look at the Midwest near the novel's end.

Through Nick's eyes, Fitzgerald reveals Gatsby's tragedy to us. Through Nick, we learn that pure willpower separated from reason and decency leads to destruction and that a purely selfish idea or dream is insufficient to justify the vast amount of energy and life that Gatsby expended. It is an indication that Fitzgerald's foresight was more forward-looking than the depression years, and it is a lesson that this country would not learn for nearly another half century.

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a masterpiece that appears to improve with age, much like a fine wine. The author has been able to capture and give shape to his impressions of a wide and chaotic universe

inside its rigorous boundaries. The American ideal serves as its theme, and Fitzgerald finally joins the great masters of American prose with this novel, which offers a harsh critique of the American dream.

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