



Material Impulses and the American Cultural Values in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

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I have learned this, at least, from my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. (Henry David Thoreau, Walden, 1854. Cited in Jim Cullen, 2003 – p.3.)

Abstract - The American Dream that excludes inequality among people through individual endeavor and merit has faced varied human flaws after World War I. Equal opportunity, egalitarianism, inclusiveness and social mass progress have been replaced by cynicism, selfishness, sexism, racism, disappointment, and easy money. Should the principles of the Dream incite the use of corruption and fraudulent ways to reach a successful goal? Or should the upper class members prevent the other class from emerging in freedom and abide by the dream's principles? This article observes F. Scott Fitzgerald's depiction of the American characters in his novel *The Great Gatsby*. The partition of the characters of that novel into aristocrats and workers reveals the variation of the disruption of the American moral values due to increase in material. If the gap between the working class and the upper class keeps widening, the American Dream would keep fading.

Key Words: American Dream, social class, success, self-reliance, upward mobility, corruption, selfishness, materialism, moral value

Résumé - Le rêve américain qui exclut l'inégalité entre les peuples par le biais d'efforts et de mérites individuels s'est heurté à diverses failles humaines après la Première Guerre mondiale. L'égalité des chances, l'inclusion et le progrès social ont été remplacés par le cynisme, l'égoïsme, le sexisme, le racisme, la déception et l'argent facile. Les principes du rêve doivent-ils inciter à recourir à la corruption et à des moyens frauduleux pour atteindre un objectif réussi? Ou bien les membres de la classe supérieure devraient-ils empêcher l'autre classe d'émerger dans la liberté et se conformer aux principes du rêve? Cet article observe F. Scott Fitzgerald décrire les personnages américains dans son roman *The Great Gatsby*. La partition des personnages de ce roman entre aristocrates et ouvriers révèle la variation de la perturbation des valeurs morales américaines due à la croissance des biens matériels. Si le fossé entre la classe ouvrière et la classe supérieure ne cesse de s'élargir, le rêve américain continuerait de s'estomper.

Mots-clés: rêve américain, classe sociale, succès, autonomie, mobilité ascendante, corruption, égoïsme, matérialisme, valeur morale

Introduction

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The United States of America opted, from the start, for a classless society, where each individual has the merit of their effort. However the natural stratification of human beings into class and race still reveals the inherent social differences among the people of the United States. In this perspective, should we use illegal ways and means to become materially well-off? Or should the gathered material instigate in us sexist and racist compartments? Considering Benjamin Szumskyj's "Are there echoes of Bloch and Fitzgerald in Ellis's *American Psycho*?", Heather Beth Johnson's *The American Dream and the Power of Wealth: Choosing Schools and Inheriting Inequality in the Land of Opportunity*, Mark Robert Rank et al's *Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes*, George Monteiro's "Carraway's Complaint," this article perceives the fracture in the moral values of the American Dream. In the light of the discourse analysis of Fitzgerald's partition of his characters into aristocrats and workers in his novel *The Great Gatsby*, we notice that not only does the American Dream instigate American citizens into non legal ways of pursuit of wealth and happiness, but also into cynicism from one class towards another. Paradoxically, this American human value is not meant to see the valid dehumanization of a citizen abiding by its principles as it is the case with the main character Jay Gatsby of this novel; nor is it to open fraudulent ways in the pursuit of accomplishment.

As an American national identity, the Dream shows individual upward mobility and the common sense of "we reap what we sow" which means the more one produces effort the more successful s/he becomes. Moreover the U.S has always based its fortune on the practice of this human value. Mark Robert Rank et al explain that:

The American Dream has served as a road map for the way we often envision the course of our lives. The rules of the game are well-known, as is the bargain that is struck. For those willing to work hard and take advantage of their opportunities, there is the expectation of a prosperous and fulfilling life. The United States has long been epitomized as a land of equal opportunity, where hard work and skill can result in personal success and fulfillment, regardless of one's station in life. While the specifics of each dream vary from person to person, the overall vitality of the American Dream has been fundamental to the nation's identity. (Mark Robert Rank et al, 2014 - p. 1.)

Thus, the disappearing of this cultural entity is vividly felt in front of love affairs as we can see in our discussion of the novel, and in front of the pursuit of happiness through possessing too much wealth.

It is around the theme of love that these two vices are noticed in *The Great Gatsby*. "The theme of love is of course, perverted, but the rise and fall of the American Dream is equally present." (Benjamin Szumskyj, 2007 -*Literature Resource Center*). Though they loved each other, Jay Gatsby could not marry Daisy because he was poor. Daisy, not being able to continue waiting for Gatsby to come from World War I before marriage, was taken into marriage by



Tom Buchanan an aristocrat. Now Gatsby, feeling that he hasn't been able to marry his lover because of poverty, tries by illegal means to become rich and go back for his former lover. These two vices are due to class differences and not simply the result of differences in individuals' achievements because if this were only due to difference in achievement, Gatsby could have successfully taken back Daisy as his wife since he is now as rich as Tom.

This is to mean that individuals from one class (working class) do not deserve their rights according to a system which is organized against those abiding by the principles of the American Dream, which is according to James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America*:

The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they innately capable and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of fortuitous circumstances of birth and position. (James Truslow Adams, 1931 - P. 214)

Therefore, the paradox of promoting individual upward mobility and his denial from enjoying the fruit of it would seriously jeopardize the functionality of the American way of equal opportunity, egalitarianism and inclusiveness. It is in this perspective that the pursuit of wealth and happiness through illegal means would corrupt the whole American nation. And thus, the traditional values of this Great nation would fade in front of excess of material accumulation.

Through the psychoanalysis theory and the discourse analysis of the above mentioned novel, this article is going to be into two parts. The first part will compare and contrast the characterization of Jay Gatsby the main character and the real biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald the author. Because Jay Gatsby, the main character, wants to attract back the woman he lost in poverty, he has built himself a heavy mansion in the quarters of rich people and throws parties every Saturday with the money he got from bootlegging. On the other hand, in his biography, the author of this novel is said to have thrown parties in order to please his wife Zelda with the money he got from writing. Therefore, in order not to confuse the mind of any amateur reader of this novel, it would be acceptable to distinguish the real position of the author vis-à-vis the main character of his work. Moreover, throwing parties should not be considered a common denominator only regarding the author and the main character. It should rather be regarded as an American cultural feature. The second part will also observe the characterization of those, in this novel, whose behavior distort the American Dream through the rejection of self-made individuals from fulfilling their dreams. Because Tom did not want Daisy to marry Gatsby, even



though Daisy was the one who killed his Mistress Myrtle Wilson, Tom told Mr. Wilson, her husband that his wife was killed by Gatsby, who revengefully killed the latter. On the other hand, Gatsby's moral view of getting rich is not legally accepted by the American society. Bootlegging is forbidden. Consequently Gatsby's dignity is put in question to the point of dismissing him from vying for a woman who really loves him.

1. How Different is Fitzgerald the Author from Jay Gatsby the Main Character?

The objective of this part is to prove that *The Great Gatsby* is not an autobiographical novel.

The character of Jay Gatsby cannot be directly linked to the author, despite the fact that the author declared that, "Sometimes I don't know whether Zelda and I are real or whether we are characters in one of my novels." (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 - p.1). The historical background of Gatsby may look like that of the author, in terms of social class, but the wealth acquisition of one differs from the other in the sense that the author went from party to party of his own out of the money he got from writing. On the other hand, "Jay Gatsby is a self-invented millionaire who lives by the American Dream, whose inevitable fall from grace is meant to both educate and clarify the corruption of mortality by pseudo-morality." (Benjamin Szumskyj, 2007). How is corruption understood from Gatsby's character? Considering his social background, there is nothing to refer to as a source of a potential financial aggregation that would allow the organization of parties now and then.

If we still compare the author's real stand and that of the character Gatsby, there is enough to understand that Gatsby does not fit in the position of someone who inherited much money from his ascendance. Thus, the author was "born into a fairly well-to-do family in St Paul, Minnesota, in 1896, Fitzgerald attended but never graduated from Princeton University. Here he mingled with the monied [sic] classes from the Eastern seaboard who so obsessed him for the rest of his life." (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926). This is to say that the author was not from the moneyed class and thus got the life style of very rich people from his stay in their neighborhood while a University student. Meanwhile, he abided by the principles of the American Dream in the sense that he endeavored in writing to the extent of earning a rich living style - of frequent parties - and attract Zelda to marriage.

Even if the issue of woman's attraction is the same with both the author and the character, Gatsby the character was not even from a fairly well-to-do family. He was rather from a family described by his father after Gatsby's death that "Of course we was [sic] broke up when he run off from home, but I see now



there was a reason for it. He knew he had a big future in front of him. And ever since he made a success he was very generous with me" (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 – p. 179). This implies that Gatsby is not of the upper class but has to abide by the American Dream in order to reach the road of success. In his case the traditional values are not respected. In order to attract Daisy who is now married to Buchanan, Gatsby uses illegal means – bootlegging – to gain money that he uses to attract the woman.

The vivid illustration that distinguishes the author from the main character is the difference in Universities attended. Fitzgerald attended but not graduated from Princeton University, which is the truth found about the author in his biography. But in the narrative of Nick Carraway – the narrator of the novel – Jay Gatsby promised to tell him "God's truth" about his own past. Doubtful was what he said. He says:

'I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West – all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.'
He looked at me sideways – and I knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 – p. 71).

As it is obvious that this statement is untrue by its shape and through the progression of the novel – his father attended his funeral, though he says here that they are all dead; and according to his real educational background, he dropped out because he had to work as a janitor to be able to afford the tuition fees and consequently, did not reach the University level.

This section of our work has proved that this novel is not autobiographical. Fitzgerald is rather exhibiting the corruption that has held sway of the American tradition of upward mobility after World War I. This corruption is illustrated by Jay Gatsby, the main character's way of wealth accumulation and his will to live an aristocratic life through illegal ways and lies.

The following part is going to address the characterization of Gatsby around the main objective of his intermittent parties and the corrupted manners of the members of the upper class represented by Tom Buchanan, the husband of Gatsby's lover.

2. Varied Corruption in the Variation of Human Class and Tom Buchanan as a Bad Role Model

In its effort to nullify the existing differences among people of different classes, the American tradition of freedom to follow one's passion encounters sullied manners in its bosom. One aspect of these tarnished behaviors is found in the working class, the members of which struggle to reach the road of success through illegal ways. The other aspect is from the upper class. The members of this class are naturally comfortable and use this situation to ill-treat the other



human beings by sexist and racist manners. The two misconducts are illustrated in *The Great Gatsby* by the main character who wants to get wealthy in order to get married to the woman of his dream on the one hand, and Tom Buchanan another character who, in spite of being wealthy, treats his mistress Mrs. Wilson like an object and also looks down upon Jay Gatsby because he is of a lower class. Therefore, the difference in human classes is still tangible in their unequal treatment of one another. Heather Beth Johnson remarks that:

I know it is hard to believe. My students have been told their whole lives that everything is getting better, not worse, where race and class inequality is concerned. They have learned that the civil right battle was won years before they were born. They know the story of Martin Luther King, Jr., and many can recite sentences of his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech. They have grown up believing that the general principles of equal opportunity, egalitarianism, and inclusiveness are the basis for how our system operates (Heather Beth Johnson, 2006 – p. 1).

In his further remarks, Johnson says:

To know that certain individuals own less or have achieved more than others is one thing, but to know that whole groups of people are increasingly privileged or constrained by their families' wealth histories suggests that inequalities are somehow happening systematically. That is contrary to what my students have been taught - that inequity among us is simply the result of differences in individuals' achievements, that it is not patterned, organized, or structural. (Heather Beth Johnson, 2006 – p.2).

This quotation illustrates the behavior of the main characters of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The notable immoral treatment is felt from Tom Buchanan the naturally wealthy character who uses his material power to not only take Mr. Wilson's wife, but also uses Mrs. Wilson as an object without any freedom of speech and action. On the other hand, Jay Gatsby, in spite of illegally amassing wealth, uses the position of being wealthy to run unsuccessfully after a married woman. Let's view the individual characterization of Gatsby and Buchanan.

The above mentioned quotation from page 71 of the novel reveals the lies told by Gatsby to the narrator of this novel. These lies are around his educational background, the social class of his parents and even the current situation of the latter. This kind of behavior is fully sufficient to defer that the whole mansion of Gatsby's life is built on a wrong foundation. However, the route and the transcending evolvment that this character exposes is the implementation of the American cultural values - individualism, self-reliance, and upward mobility. Without having been totally convinced of his doubtful richness, the narrator discovered one of Gatsby's acquaintances which confirmed that he was of a criminal organization. This acquaintance by the name of Wolfshiem was discovered when the narrator was introduced to him by Gatsby after the three had lunch in New York. Nick says:

'He becomes very sentimental sometimes,' explained Gatsby. 'this is one of his sentimental days. He is quite a character around New York - a denizen of Broadway.'
'Who is he, anyhow, an actor?'



'No.'
'A dentist?'
'Meyer Wolfshiem? No, he is a gambler.' Gatsby hastened, then added coolly: 'he is the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919.'
'Fixed the World's Series?' I repeated.
The idea staggered me. I remembered – of course – that the World's Series had been fixed in 1919, but if I had thought of it at all I would have thought of it as a thing that merely happened, the end of some inevitable chain. It never occurred to me that one man could start to play the faith fifty million people – with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe.
'How did he happen to do that?' I asked after a minute.
'He just saw the opportunity.'
'Why isn't he in jail?'
'They cannot get him, old sport. He is a smart man.' (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 – pp. 79 -80).

This macabre discovery adds to Nick's understanding of who Gatsby was and the type of wealth he owns. Now, the nature of Gatsby's fortune should not be compatible with any good use. He uses it in parties.

The parties that Gatsby organized did not involve people known to him. And only one reason was behind those entertainments, to attract Daisy his former lover, Tom Buchanan's wife. George Monteiro emphasizes that, "It does not seem to be far-fetched to think here of Gatsby's grand entertainments designed to attract Daisy, weekend parties that have no other meaning for Gatsby beyond that one purpose. Of course, they too fail ultimately." (George Monteiro, 2005 –*Literature Resource Center*). Can we interpret this failure as due to the nature of his fortune? No because the woman was already married. That is not all. She couldn't insist on being courted by Gatsby since her husband has revealed the secret of the latter. In addition, even if Gatsby passed through legal ways to get his wealth, the revelation of his secret bore it that he was not of the upper class. Consequently, Daisy could not refuse an aristocrat in favor of a self-made man like Gatsby.

Jay Gatsby's sullied ways of amassing wealth do not alone stand in the way to bettering the principles of the American Dream. The way he uses it, that is, wasting that money in the pursuit of someone's wife is damaging the ideology embedded in the tradition of the Dream. Roland Marchand has it that: "The American Dream, they promised was a thoroughly modern dream, adaptable to a modern scale. It offered new and satisfying forms of individualism, equality, personal interaction, and cost-free progress within the emerging mass society." (Roland Marchand, 1986 – p.xxii). However, the form of individualism adopted by this character is neither satisfying his social environment nor the common moral value pursued by the American Dream.

For another illustration on Gatsby's moral decay, one has to consider Fitzgerald's creative ability in his intertextual use of simile. The similarity here is about Gatsby's struggle to change his social status which is aching to a



Roman character Trimachlio in Chikako D. Kumamoto's analysis. According to him,

In Petronius's Menippean pen, the egg and fowl dishes coalesce into satiric iconography of Trimachlio's pretensions to social status and his attempts to belong to Roman patrician society. From such egg and fowl lore of antiquity, one can infer Fitzgerald's intertextual ambition to heighten the irreconcilable social gap between West Egg, with a chauffeur clad "in a uniform of robin's egg blue," and East Egg, "with a single green light" (26, 45). Like Trimachlio's, Gatsby's parties attract guests with illegal liquors, rare foods, popular entertainment, and upstart celebrities, in spite of "Tom and Daisy's aversion to them" (West xviii). (Chikako D. Kumamoto, Fall 2001 - *Literature Resource Center*).

Although in Kumamoto's findings there are strong similarities between Trimachlio's pretension and Gatsby's struggle to change status, what we are not certain about is whether the former has used the same means like the latter. Even parties in the case of Trimachlio can be similar to Gatsby's; still the money he uses is from illegal ways. This should at least convince us that the period in which the Roman character exhibited his pretension is different from that of Gatsby, which is after World War I. Moreover, it is not doubtful to imagine that both Trimachlio and Gatsby are pretentious in the conducts; Trimachlio is viewing himself in Roman patrician society while Gatsby among the American aristocrats. It should not be alarming if only the social status change were the main objective of Gatsby. Rather, what is disquieting is the green light that stands in front of Gatsby. Daisy - Tom's wife - is all he dreams for. This is to mean that Gatsby could have navigated in his illegal ways of getting wealthy all his life without being bothered if only he does not venture in someone else's right. Even if Tom Buchanan was informed about the source of Gatsby's fortune, there was no opportunity for him to reveal it until he came face to face with Gatsby having affair with his wife.

Although Trimachlio resembles Gatsby in their pretentious manners, the time setting of Gatsby, the means he uses, and his illegal pursuit of a married woman make him negatively impact the American moral values, which is totally different from the Roman character whose ambition is celebrity. Therefore, Jay Gatsby's life perception gives the impression that in the United States one is free to be the person he/she wants even through illegal ways. It also gives chance to think that wealthy people are free to tread down others' freedom, which is totally the contrary of the American cultural principle. But Barbara Will thinks that:

What matters to Gatsby is what matters to "us"; Gatsby's story is "our" story; his fate and the fate of the nation are intertwined. That Gatsby "turned out all right in the end" is thus essential to the novel's vision of a transcendent and collective Americanism.

Yet this ending is in fact at odds with the characterization of Gatsby in the rest of the novel. For if Gatsby ultimately represents a glorified version of "us," then he



does so only if we forget that he is for most of the novel a force of corruption: a criminal, a bootlegger, and an adulterer. As critics have often noted, the text stakes its ending on the inevitability of our forgetting everything about Gatsby that has proved troublesome about his character up to this point. What critics have generally overlooked, however, is the fact that the text also self-consciously inscribes this process of forgetting into its own narrative. Appearing to offer two discrepant views of its protagonist, *The Great Gatsby* in fact ultimately challenges its readers to question the terms through which "presence" or "visibility" can be signified. (Barbara Will, 2005 - *Literature Resource Center*).

No matter what we observe, the obscene dominates the whole characterization of the protagonist. The use of his fortune can be qualified as a misuse because the parties he throws do not satisfy people known to him. And the woman he traces is also married. But his struggle connotes with the American sense of human hopefulness to reach a goal even when it appears to be impossible.

The same misuse of money and social status is observed in the manners of Tom Buchanan who is the subject of the ongoing argumentation.

Fitzgerald's division of his novel's settings into West Egg and East Egg villages among others insinuates the real categorization of the models and the mimics. The upper class members share their neighborhood in the East Egg and the working class in the West. This separation informs the characterization of the inhabitants of one setting about the type of inhabitants of the other. Though both settings are occupied by dreamers (materially well-off citizens), Tom Buchanan of the East stands for a model and Gatsby of the West for a mimic. Characterized by social connections and refined manners, Tom is of a privileged class who does not need to work with much effort to earn, unlike Gatsby. But as Lawrence R. Samuel thinks: "The dream was about 'self-reliance, self-respect, neighborly cooperation and a vision of a better and richer life, not for a privileged class, but for all.'" (Lawrence R. Samuel, 2012 - p.16). The difference between Gatsby and Tom is that the former is from the newly rich who are successful individuals from the working class and the latter the old rich from the upper class. With totally different manners and without social connections the newly rich individuals have the secret of their fortunes known to the old rich. This is the case of Tom vis-à-vis Gatsby.

As it is clear that the upper class individuals also have their share of the dream, Tom's position of materially affluent, exposes his unsympathetic attitude towards those of the lower class. "With the watchdogs of the American Dream of liberty nipping at its heels, the American Dream of property has stumbled through a series of increasingly materialistic and often disappointing landscapes, until today, for many, it has finally come to manifest little more than a faint, shallow, selfish, unfocussed longing for celebrity and easy money." (Wilber W. Caldwell, 2006 - p. 1). Such conducts as selfishness,



disappointment and other corrupted and immoral behaviors of Tom's are verified in his relationship with other characters of the novel.

The Wilson couple has been less than instruments in the hands of Tom. Mrs. Wilson has been Tom's mistress that he even takes away in the presence of M. Wilson, who suspected his wife, but never thought that Tom would be the one just because of his social class. On one of his visits to the couple, with Nick Caraway the narrator in his company, Mrs. Wilson ordered her husband: "Get some chairs, why don't you, so somebody can sit down." F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 - p. 32). When M. Wilson went for the chairs, "I want to see you," said Tom intently 'Get on the next train.' 'All right.' 'I'll meet you by the news-stand on the lower level.' She nodded and moved away from him just as George Wilson emerged with two chairs from his office door." (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 - p. 32). The narrator, witnessing this scene reacted:

'Awful.'

'It does her good to get away,'

Doesn't her husband object?'

'Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb he doesn't know he's alive.'

So Tom Buchanan and his girl and I went up together to New York - or not quite together, for Mrs. Wilson sat discreetly in another car. Tom deferred that much to the sensibilities of those East Eggers who might be in the train. (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 - p.32).

After subtly getting away with George Wilson's wife, Tom finds that he is dumb and at the same, he is camouflaging his company with the woman to those who may blame him from his neighborhood. This attitude exposes the arrogant manners that Tom implements in his environment based on his social status. Now let's consider his treatment of the lady. I mean Myrtle Wilson, his mistress.

With the conviction that this woman is aware of the fact that he is legally married to Daisy, Tom does not want Mrs. Wilson to utter a word about that. This woman has no freedom of expression. According to the narrator who has witnessed the previous scene in which Tom has taken M. Wilson wife to New York, that very evening Mrs. Wilson had an altercation with Tom. Nick says:

Sometime toward midnight Tom Buchanan and Mrs. Wilson stood face to face discussing, in impassioned way, whether Mrs. Wilson had any right to mention Daisy's name.

'Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!' shouted Mrs. Wilson. 'I'll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dai -'

Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand. Then there were bloody towels upon the bathroom floor, and women's voices scolding, and high over the confusion a long broken wail of pain. (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 - p. 43).



This poor woman is losing her husband and is at the same time receiving a bad treatment from Tom. Violence preceded by arrogance and lack of respect to others is what Tom Buchanan is teaching us. And we understand what fuels this particular behavior – his social class. That is not all. What is amazing is to understand whether increase in material or belonging to upper class is synonymous to depriving people of their rights.

Worst of all in Tom's conduct is the corrupted way that he used to escape the threat of George Wilson's suspicion about his wife's cheating on him. Just after the fatal car accident that killed Mrs. Wilson,

Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table, with a plate of cold fried chicken between them, and two bottles of ale. He was talking intently across the table at her, and in his earnestness his hand had fallen upon and covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and nodded in agreement. They weren't happy, and neither of them had touched the chicken or the ale – and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together. (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 – p. 152).

Through this way, Tom rather made M. Wilson believe that Jay Gatsby was his wife's boyfriend. Because George Wilson was convinced that the person who has killed his wife in a car accident must have been her boyfriend, he refused to believe that it was an accident.

'Then he killed her,' said Wilson. His mouth dropped open suddenly.
'Who did it?'
'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.' (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 – p. 165).

Having been convinced that his wife was murdered by her boyfriend, George killed Gatsby, who was neither the driver of the car that killed his wife in accident nor her boyfriend.

Mrs. Wilson's death occurred after Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby had come face to face to argue violently about who was Daisy's real lover in the presence of the latter. Because Gatsby was about to win the debate, Tom revealed all that surrounded Gatsby's life and fortune. This revelation had a negative impact on Daisy's future plan on her relationship with Gatsby. It is clear therefore that Daisy could never come back to a self-made man to the detriment of an aristocrat.

Thus, Tom was able, through corruption and fraudulent ways, to escape M. Wilson threat about the cheating of his wife on him. In the same way, he diverted all M. Wilson's anger on Gatsby by making him believe that Gatsby is the murderer of his wife, who consequently killed Gatsby and committed suicide. Brian Sutton concludes that, "whereas Tom and Daisy and their marriage survive, Gatsby is killed for running over Myrtle--something Daisy



did--and for being Myrtle's lover--something Tom was.” (Brian Sutton, 2005 – *Literature Resource Center*). Moreover, he would have lost his wife Daisy if he had not revealed all the secrets around Gatsby’s way of life and aspirations.

Conclusion

Fitzgerald in his novel *The Great Gatsby* has exhibited the American Dream suffering from human moral threats to it, in the sense of making it lose all its cultural significance. Corruption and moral decay have taken the place of values the USA is proud of.

It is in this perspective that this article has observed the splintering in the American moral values due to increase in material and social class after World War I. The principles of the American Dream which are about satisfying forms of individualism, equality, personal interaction, and cost-free progress within the emerging mass society have been replaced by corrupted and fraudulent ways of life in Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby*.

In the psychoanalysis of the characters of that novel, we have observed firstly the difference between the main character and the author of this novel. The outcome of this analysis has proved that this novel is not an autobiographical novel. This analysis has been worthwhile because an aspect of the contents of the biography of the writer is much like that of the main character: throwing parties to attract a woman and not being able to graduate from University. The main difference therefore lies in the fact that the writer earned his money from writing and the main character from bootlegging.

The second aspect of our observation in this novel has been twofold. The characterizations of both Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby have directed us to the discovery that corruption and fraud vary according to human class. Thus, Tom’s class of aristocracy has engaged him in cynicism, sexism and selfishness. These misconducts do not only constitute a disappointment to the American moral values, but are also disastrous for the social mass progress. The negative result of this behavior has been the death of three characters of the novel, namely: Mrs. Wilson (killed by Mrs. Buchanan driving a car owned by Gatsby), Jay Gatsby (killed by M. Wilson thinking that he was his wife’s lover and murderer), and George Wilson (committed suicide just after killing Gatsby).

On the other hand, Jay Gatsby’s pretension to belong to the higher class through the principles of upward mobility in the American Dream has taken him to illegal amassing of material. In our analysis of this character, we found that he remained in the pathway of the American way of life. Hopefulness and the following of one’s passion for a specific goal have guided Gatsby to reach the material success. Hitting that target confounds his social class with real aristocrats to the extent that pushes him to dare take back the woman he had



lost when he was materially poor. Even if he failed in his attempt to have Tom's wife, Gatsby is hailed by many critics to exhibit a real facet of Americanism.

Gatsby's movement from scratches to riches insinuates his implementation of the principles of self-reliance, individualism, and transcendence. However, the practical aspect of illegal way of making fortune makes the big difference from the moral value embedded in the American Dream. His fruitless efforts to reach the green light that he sees in his front also constitute another appraisal in the American culture. But the fact that this green light symbolizes someone's wife makes it different from what the American moral values recommend.

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