



A Study of Daisy Buchanan's influence on Jay Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

En undersökning av Daisy Buchanans inflytande på Jay Gatsby i F. Scott Fitzgeralds *Den store Gatsby*

Hanna Persson

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Supervisor: Åke Bergvall

Examiner: Marinette Grimbeek

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Abstract

This essay will focus on the relationship between Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby in the novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). By examining their relationship, I will show that it is through Daisy's influence that Gatsby evolves into the man we meet in the novel, and that she is a main reason behind Gatsby's untimely death. To Gatsby, the innocent and naive Daisy comes to embody the American dream, in other words wealth and social status, a goal he will have reached by winning her hand. Furthermore, I aim to show that it is this longing for wealth and social status associated with Daisy that results in Gatsby becoming a villain. By doing so, his American dream will make him into a victim, costing him his life. In showing this, I will emphasize the importance of Daisy's voice and how it is used to give her control over the men in her vicinity, Gatsby not the least.

Keywords: *Gatsby, Daisy, voice, wealth, status*

Sammanfattning

Denna uppsats kommer att fokusera på Daisy Buchanan och Jay Gatsbys förhållande i novellen *Den Stora Gatsby* (1925). Genom att undersöka deras förhållande ämnar jag visa att det är genom Daisys inflytande som Gatsby utvecklas till den vi möter i novellen, samt att det är hon som är den bakomliggande orsaken till Gatsbys förtidiga död. Den oskyldiga och naiva Daisy kommer i Gatsbys ögon att representera den amerikanska drömmen, det vill säga rikedom och social status, ett mål som han kommer nå genom att vinna hennes hand. Jag ämnar även visa att det är längtan efter rikedomar och social status i anknytning till Daisy, som kommer göra Gatsby till en brottsling. På så sätt kommer hans amerikanska dröm att göra honom till ett offer, vilket kommer kosta honom hans liv. I samband med detta kommer jag betona betydelsen av Daisys röst, och hur den används för att ge henne kontroll över män i hennes närhet, framförallt Gatsby.

Nyckelord: *Gatsby, Daisy, röst, rikedom, status*

A reappearing theme in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels and short stories is striving to better oneself (Corrigan 32). Behind this recurring theme of achieving everything possible is the belief in the American dream, i.e. the possibility for anyone to become someone during the roaring twenties, when the nation was going through a metamorphosis (Henry 372). Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) takes place shortly after the end of World War I, when Prohibition cast its shadow over America and Jazz was the background sound of the cities. The novel introduces intricate characters who are young and beautiful, rich and untouchable due to their status and wealth, but also less fortunate characters who struggle to attain the American dream, a goal which the main character Jay Gatsby seems to have reached and conquered. As a backdrop to the striving for a better life, the longing for forbidden and unobtainable love will flourish, an obsession that will drive the characters toward their downfall, betraying their loved ones and their own values.

In this essay I will investigate the relationship of Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby with the intent to show how Daisy's influence over Gatsby strengthens his longing for wealth and social status. I also intend to show that it is due to Daisy that Gatsby chooses to abandon his original plan, instead becoming a villain in his pursuit of the American dream. I aim to show that Daisy becomes the main reason why Gatsby loses his life, and that Daisy's influence over Gatsby partly originates from her enchanting voice, a voice that captivates Gatsby and makes him into Daisy's marionette.

Before I analyze the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy, I need to introduce the major players in the novel. Jay Gatsby enters the world under the name of Jason Gatz, the son of a simple farmer without higher social class or financial status. As portrayed by Fitzgerald, Gatsby believes from the beginning that he is something better than the son of a farmer, not willing to accept his mother and father for who they were. The character who introduces Gatsby to the readers is Nick Carrigan, Daisy's cousin but more importantly the novel's narrator. Throughout the novel Nick tells the story of what happened to Gatsby during that fatal summer of love, betrayal and infidelity. He guides the readers through Gatsby's past and his first encounters with Daisy up to the warm summer day that eventually will lead Gatsby to his death. Nick comes from a good family, has served in the war, and becomes Gatsby's confidant. Nick is also the only one who truly sees Gatsby for who he is, not a villain or a homewrecker but a victim of circumstances: "You're worth the whole

damn bunch put together” (Fitzgerald 160).

Daisy Buchanan, born into money and class, is a precious flower of the Midwest. When Daisy meets Gatsby for the first time she is a young girl, but when they meet again she has become a young woman with the refinement of class who enchants men with her movements. A slight touch of hand, a whisper in their ear, a gentle glance to ensure the men in her vicinity of their importance:

Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered ‘Listen,’ a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour. (Fitzgerald 15-16)

Daisy’s life has been filled with the joys of wealth and class, a life which she shares with her husband Tom Buchanan, a man of equal or higher class. Although Daisy appears to be a naive and innocent woman, she is aware of what happens around her. For example, Daisy stands firm at her husband’s side even though she is fully aware of his infidelity. However, she makes no attempt to disguise the revulsion she feels towards his affairs. She taunts him, letting him know that she is aware: “‘Go ahead,’ answered Daisy genially, ‘and if you want to take down any addresses here’s my little gold pencil’” (Fitzgerald 113). As Judith Sanders points out, there is a feeling of distaste which is conveyed through her sarcastic remarks: “The double-edged offer to loan Tom her “little gold pencil,” though superficially pleasant and forthcoming, proclaims aloud her awareness of Tom’s extramarital activities, letting him know that she is not a pitiful dupe” (146). There are moments when Daisy makes herself out to be a bit whimsical in an attempt to disguise Tom’s actions, even though she seems to be reconciled with the knowledge of his extramarital affairs. Daisy hopes to turn everyone’s attention away from Tom and his inappropriate affairs, by playing a fragile and vulnerable being:

‘It couldn’t be helped!’ cried Daisy with tense gaiety. She sat down, glanced searchingly at Miss Baker and then at me, and continued: ‘I looked outdoors for a minute and it’s very romantic outdoors. There’s a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or the White Star Line. He’s singing away –’ Her voice sang: ‘It’s romantic, isn’t it, Tom?’ (Fitzgerald 22)

Daisy hopes to eradicate any questions that concern her husband's phone call, by focusing on the nightingale on the lawn, romanticizing the appearance of the bird.

Tom Buchanan is the major obstacle standing in the way of Gatsby's and Daisy's relationship. Tom is a man of higher class with old money and a good reputation due to his prominent upbringing and accomplishments on the football field (Fitzgerald 12). He is also the man who conquered Daisy's heart and made her his wife during Gatsby's absence, which makes him the one whom Gatsby needs to overthrow to win Daisy back. Due to his overall persona and background Tom finds himself above the ordinary crowd of people, which can be seen through his actions. An example of this behavior is when he acquires a mistress, Myrtle Wilson, who he does not hide but parades around New York (Fitzgerald 35). According to Judith Saunders, "He is convinced, with some justification, that the ability to attract and maintain two women simultaneously provides evidence of his marital resources, social dominance, and masculine appeal" (146). Thereby he finds it within his right to act however he sees fit, disregarding his marriage to Daisy.

Myrtle Wilson, a woman of lower class from the valley of ashes, will have an indirect effect on Gatsby's life. She shares his longing for the American dream. As Sara Churchwell argues, "Myrtle is the mirror image of Gatsby, who want what Tom has. They are both upstarts, trying to foist themselves upon high society, poseurs who lead double lives" (67). She is married to a no-good husband, who according to Myrtle cannot fulfil her dreams of a better life (Fitzgerald 41). When Myrtle meets Tom on the train to New York, she immediately becomes captivated by his persona and his wealthy looks (Fitzgerald 42). Dreaming of a better life she welcomes his advancements, telling herself: "You can't live forever; you can't live forever" (Fitzgerald 42). Myrtle has unknowingly sealed both her own and Gatsby's destiny by taking an interest in Tom.

The striving for a better life is a theme that reappears throughout the novel. While the country is going through a change, the people and their dreams are evolving. The idea of a better life is not something that appears the moment Gatsby meets Daisy; on the contrary it has been a dream of his since he was a boy. Gatsby, who sees himself as "a son of God" (Fitzgerald 105), had left his home at an early age to reach his goal of a better life. During his younger years he meet Mr. Dan Cody, "a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five" (Fitzgerald 106). It was through his interaction with him that Gatsby

found himself looking in on those more fortunate. Mr. Dan Cody and his yacht come to represent everything that Gatsby dreams of: “To young Gatz, resting on his oars and looking up at the railed deck, that yacht represented all the beauty and glamour in the world” (Fitzgerald 106). Suddenly Gatsby’s dream of a better life seems possible as he hopes to re-invent himself by changing his name and taking employment on Mr. Cody’s yacht (Fitzgerald 107).

However, when Gatsby finally meets Daisy his American dream changes: his idea of social status and wealth becomes associated with his love of her, the embodiment of these qualities (Fitzgerald 156). Throughout their five-year separation Gatsby creates a scrap book, saving newspaper clippings about Daisy and her life with Tom (Fitzgerald 100). By creating a scrap book of Daisy’s movements Gatsby finds himself a part of her life. When Gatsby shows Daisy the album it is with pride, the scrap book becomes a token of love. It also becomes evidence of Gatsby’s never-ending love, showing Daisy that he has never forgotten her. A token which puts all focus on Daisy, who once more finds herself at the center of attention adored by Gatsby. An admiration which brings her back in time to their youth, when they first found each other and fell in love.

The fact that Daisy, a woman of wealth and class, has chosen him makes her even more desirable in Gatsby’s eyes (Fitzgerald 155). Even though he has not reached the social status needed to marry her, Gatsby sees her as his wife: “He felt married to her, that was all” (Fitzgerald 155). It is only with Daisy by his side that Gatsby feels special, and when she leaves she takes all her riches with her, leaving him distraught and lonely: “She vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby – nothing” (Fitzgerald 155). Gatsby can prevent this feeling of emptiness by making Daisy his, as she becomes the social marker that he desires for himself (Fitzgerald 155). Gatsby realizes that he no longer is following his original plan, but his dream has changed: “Well, there I was, ‘way of my ambitions, getting deeper in love every minute, and all of a sudden I didn’t care. What was the use of doing great things if I could have a better time telling her what I was going to do?” (Fitzgerald 156). Gatsby’s American dream seems to no longer consist of the need for wealth and social status; it also contains the longing for love. However, his love interest comes to symbolize both wealth and social status. It is his longing for Daisy, i.e., the need of ownership through a love that seemingly transcends class and wealth, which transforms him into the Jay Gatsby that the readers finally meet. Even when

talking about love it always comes back to the concept of money and social ranking.

So even if it seems that their relationship springs from the emotion of love, the idea of wealth and social status overshadows it all. It is a central part of the American dream that Gatsby longs to fulfil. The idea that Daisy had been loved and worshiped by others before captivated Gatsby: “It excited him, too, that many had already loved Daisy – it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions” (Fitzgerald 154). Her purity and the fact that she came from a wonderful and high classed home made her “excitingly desirable” (Fitzgerald 154). To Gatsby, Daisy comes to represent a way out. As Jolyon Connell and John Sutherland explain, “She represents his passport to a different world, his escape from the struggling poor” (61). Or as argued by Ted Billy, “Gatsby, the romantic idealist, “takes Daisy as the incarnation of what he sees as good in life” (101). In other words, Gatsby is lost from the moment he meets Daisy: “he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail. He knew that Daisy was extraordinary, but he didn’t realize just how extraordinary a ‘nice’ girl could be” (Fitzgerald 155). Once Gatsby had tasted her it was too late to go back; she was now in his blood, a part of him. From that moment Gatsby found himself bound to Daisy and everything she represented, wealth, social status and love.

While the importance of wealth and status is constantly present in the novel, a related issue is the question of higher education since it is evidence of a character’s refined roots. A good education indicated a good up-bringing, as with Tom who had studied at Yale (Fitzgerald 12). To become someone worthy of Daisy’s hand Gatsby needs to have a good educational background. The fact that no one knows anything about his education leads to much speculation. More than once Gatsby is referred to as “an Oxford man” (Fitzgerald 55), an affiliation which strengthens the belief in his capability to succeed, as well as ensuring his supposed high society roots. There is no doubt that Gatsby’s background comes to play an important role in his search for the American dream. This can be seen by reappearing whispers from his visitors, wondering who he really is. He is surrounded by rumors, but there is never an attempt from Gatsby’s side to put things straight. He too mentions his time at Oxford with gentle ease in different conversations: “‘Here’s another thing I always carry. A souvenir of Oxford days’” (Fitzgerald 73), making it difficult for people to know what is true or false. The only one who questions Gatsby’s alleged schooling and background is Tom Buchanan, who finds it ridiculous that Gatsby would have

attended Oxford (Fitzgerald 128). That Tom dismisses the idea of Gatsby as an Oxford man may be evidence of Tom perceiving him as a threat. Gatsby being an Oxford man gives him the same educational worth as Tom. Gatsby challenges Tom's position as a well-educated man, making it clear that Tom is not the only one worthy of Daisy. When he finally reveals that Gatsby have been lying, he sees himself as superior to Gatsby, calling him a "Mr Nobody" (Fitzgerald 136). Tom takes his declarations to the next level with the purpose to destroy Gatsby's reputation: "I suppose you've got to make your house into a pigsty in order to have any friends – in the modern world" (Fitzgerald 136). Tom knows that he is and always will be of higher social and educational status than Gatsby. In this case it is not only Gatsby who has been influenced by what Daisy represents; also, Tom has the need to own her. Tom is ready to do anything to protect his honor, which he does by keeping and reclaiming his control over Daisy.

When Gatsby thinks of Daisy his thoughts are automatically drawn towards her voice, which sings of a better life. It does not only sing of love, it also carries a promise of wealth and social class, the American dream. Daisy's entire persona becomes alluring and fascinating to Gatsby by the love and wealth that radiates from her voice: "Her voice is full of money", he said suddenly" (Fitzgerald 126). The readers can clearly see how strong Gatsby's fascination with Daisy's voice is when even a cold becomes charming and luring:

She had caught a cold, and it made her voice huskier and more charming than ever, and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of the many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor. (Fitzgerald 155-56)

Daisy's influence over Gatsby due to what her voice expresses cannot be disregarded. Daisy's voice is a crucial part of what makes Gatsby fall in love with her. Driving men to madness and submission with the help of her voice, Daisy comes to control Gatsby with gentle whispers. She is aware of her enchanting way's and what effect it has on men: "She laughed again, as if she said something very witty, and held my hand for a moment, looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see" (Fitzgerald 15). When there is a sense of uncertainty showing in Gatsby's mind, a touch of Daisy's hand and a whisper in his ear removes all uncertainty (Fitzgerald 103).

More than once the importance of Daisy's voice is hinted at throughout the novel, making Daisy into a siren captivating men in her vicinity with her voice. It is not only Gatsby who is enchanted by Daisy and her voice; so is Tom, and even Nick is charmed by his beautiful and innocent cousin: "She laughed again, as if she said something very witty, and held my hand for a moment, looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see" (Fitzgerald 15). He becomes mesmerized by her persona and gives in to her smallest whims. Her manners make him feel like he is the only one in the world. However, it is Gatsby who is affected by it the most. According to Corrigan, "he's a dead man the minute he falls for Daisy the siren" (43). Glenn Settle argues that already when looking at Daisy's maiden name Faye, there are hints telling us that she is a siren. Settle draws a parallel to Middle English where *faie* is another word for enchantress, which Daisy truly is (117). Above all Settle emphasizes the importance of Daisy voice, since her voice is her utmost weapon: "it is the voice of Daisy, more than any of her other qualities, that most noticeably defines her characterization." (119). Furthermore, as Gatsby himself mentions during one episode in the novel: "'Her voice is full of money,' he said suddenly", once more we can see the importance of wealth and status and what really lures Gatsby into Daisy's grasp (Fitzgerald 126).

It is not entirely clear who is the seducer and who the seduced in Daisy's and Gatsby's relationship, or who is in control. Naturally Gatsby does everything possible to entice Daisy, and the readers can clearly see how amazed Daisy is: "With enchanting murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky, admired the gardens" (Fitzgerald 97). At the same time we can also see joy and admiration in Gatsby as he experiences Daisy's emotions:

He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way, as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. (Fitzgerald 98)

Settle proposes that it is in fact Daisy who is the seducer since we more than once find Gatsby adoring her, and almost worshipping her being (117). By masterly using her voice to spread a sense of vulnerability and innocence around her, Daisy manages to put a spell on men. While it could be argued that it is Gatsby who is in pursuit of Daisy, and that he takes the first step by asking Nick to introduce them to one

another again, it is only through Daisy's approval or willingness that anything occurs. Gatsby's dream of Daisy is strengthened by her actions and her gentle whispers.

As my analysis has made clear, it is the striving for wealth and social status that characterize the relationships portrayed in the novel. It will lead both Gatsby and Myrtle Wilson towards a dark future and an untimely death. To Myrtle, Tom comes to represent wealth and social status, while Daisy fills the same need for Gatsby. Myrtle believes that Tom wants nothing more than to become her husband, and that Daisy the one who stands in their way (Fitzgerald 40-41), while Gatsby believes that it is Tom who stands in his way. They both share the same goals, the dream of a better life that they associate with someone of social status and wealth, i.e., Tom and Daisy.

The significance of wealth and social status is not only important to those of a lower-class society, such as Gatsby and Myrtle, but also to Tom. This becomes clear through his reaction when he risks losing Daisy to Gatsby: "‘Self-control!’ Repeated Tom incredulously. ‘I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that’s the idea you can count me out ...’" (Fitzgerald 136). His interest in Daisy overtrumps all his mistresses, since she is the only one worthy of the title wife due to her social standing (Saunders 139). The possibility of losing Daisy creates turmoil inside him, which makes him react in the most outrageous way possible by diminishing Gatsby. The fact that Tom has had several mistresses is of no importance, since he is the man in the relationship. According to Connell and Sutherland, all of Tom's mistresses can be discounted since they are of lower social class: "Poor people – chambermaids and garage-owners' wives – don't count. He doesn't love them, he uses them for his body's needs and, once used, discards them" (69). Losing Daisy would be a sign of weakness, which could result in Tom losing some of his prestige in society (Tyson 90). The risk of losing some of his status in the higher-levels of society would not be an acceptable result for a man with Tom's social standing. By showing Daisy who Gatsby really is Tom wants to prove where she belongs, making their love affair Gatsby's fault (Saunders 158). When Tom exposes the truth about Gatsby, according to himself, he sets the wheels in motion for what will become Gatsby's downfall.

The dream of a possible future with Daisy is what had motivated Gatsby to do whatever it took to become a man of wealth and social status. When reached by the news of her marriage he had first been distraught, but it had also inspired him to become Tom's equal, to recapture the past through her love for him. And as Saunders

explains, “Gatsby assumes that to win her attention he must flaunt his prosperity, proving to Daisy and to the world that he has outdone all possible rivals” (153). In his search for power and wealth Gatsby had become a bootlegger, which made it possible for him to climb the social ladder, and to buy a house across the lake from Daisy. Through his choices Gatsby had evolved into a man worthy of the young and innocent Daisy, whom he remembered from his youth.

The significance of wealth and the effect that it has on Daisy becomes apparent as Gatsby makes his re-entry into Daisy’s life. At their first meeting, she is brought to Gatsby’s mansion together with Nick. Gatsby wants to mesmerize Daisy with his riches and seems to succeed, just the pure size of Gatsby’s home amazes her: “‘That huge place there?’ She cried pointing” (Fitzgerald 97). The richness and the wealth that Gatsby surrounds himself with captivates her:

His bedroom was the simplest room of all – except where the dresser was garnished with a toilet set of pure dull gold. Daisy took the brush with delight, and smoothed her hair, whereupon Gatsby sat down and shaded his eyes and began to laugh. (Fitzgerald 98)

As Saunders explains, “Showing of the splendid things his money has bought, Gatsby overwhelms Daisy with the resources he has acquired: he has acquired them, indeed, with the intention of creating precisely this reaction” (154). She finds herself in another world where she is the center of attention in contrast to her relationship with Tom, whose affections and attention are divided between Daisy and Myrtle Wilson. Gatsby on the other hand is enchanted by Daisy, by the joy and childish amazement that she expresses. The woman he had been waiting for is finally within his reach, binding him to her once more with her innocence and alluring voice: “I think that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn’t be over-dreamed – that voice was a deathless song” (Fitzgerald 103). From that moment they become involved in an extramarital romance. Barry Gross argues that the affair between Daisy and Gatsby becomes: “an affirmation of those romantic yearnings which Nick detects in her voice,” a feeling that Daisy has not felt since before Tom and his extramarital romances (6). As Gatsby pursues his past, Gross argues that Daisy is similarly looking for her own past. Gatsby revives memories from Daisy’s youth from when she still dreamt of a life with Gatsby, filled with fidelity and hope (Gross 7).

The significance of being able to impress people with social power and

financial strength in order to win a position in the higher ranks of the community shines through in Gatsby's actions. Hoping to win a place in society equal to Tom's, he tries to win fame and approval through the lavish parties that he throws at his home. To impress Daisy, Gatsby invites her to one of his parties where he hopes to demonstrate that he knows the young, famous and influential in the upper levels of society (Fitzgerald 111). Again, it is the feeling of excitement in Daisy's voice that entices him: "'These things excite me so,' she whispered" (Fitzgerald 111). However, as the night moves on her feelings change: "At least they are more interesting than the people we know,' she said with an effort" (Fitzgerald 115). Even Nick, who has enjoyed himself at Gatsby's parties' before senses that something is different. According to Sarah Churchwell, Nick's experience changes since he now is experiencing the party through Daisy's eyes, and not Gatsby's (206). And the reason for her change, making Gatsby's plan to impress through his connections among the rich and famous falter, is that his acquaintances, in Tom's words, are "newly rich people", while Tom and Daisy come from old money (Fitzgerald 115).

Gatsby's failure to impress shows that the importance of wealth, does not only concern the size of one's fortune but when and how the fortune has been attained. It becomes evident that the crowd attending Gatsby's parties are not the kind of people that neither Tom nor Daisy find appropriate. As Connell and Sutherland argue, this is a difference that affects Gatsby's possibility of acceptance among those with old money: "In Daisy's world, and in Tom's, *making* money, as Gatsby has, is very different to having been *made* by money over generations, as they have" (59). Lois Tyson also discusses the concept of being born into social class: "the higher one's social class, the better one is assumed to be because quality is "in the blood," that is, inborn" (59), which immediately gives Gatsby a disadvantage. Even though Gatsby has worked himself up to a higher social class, he will not be accepted by those born to a higher social standing.

The idea that love might conquer and overshadow the importance of financial status is hinted at in the novel when Daisy seems to disregard the inappropriateness of the crowd attending Gatsby's party. She tries to convince herself that Gatsby would not choose to invite this group of people: "'Lots of people come who haven't been invited,' [...] 'They simply force their way in and he's too polite to object'" (Fitzgerald 115). However, her attempt seems to be made without enthusiasm, since Gatsby clearly notices that she is not amused, neither by the party or the crowd: "'She didn't

like it,' he said immediately" (Fitzgerald 116). Even though their love for each other seems to be strong, it is not strong enough for Daisy to disregard the simplicity in the crowd that attends Gatsby's party:

She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented 'place' that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village – appalled by its raw vigour that chafed under the cold euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand. (Fitzgerald 114)

The vulgarity and lower-class behavior among women who drink themselves silly disgust her: "“Oh, she's all right now. When she's had five or six cocktails she always starts screaming like that. I tell her she ought to leave it alone”" (Fitzgerald 113). It is obvious that America is going through a change by which lower-class society is making its way into the upper-class, yet that does not impress Daisy. It is her disgust towards those of a lower social standing that will prevent her from accepting Gatsby.

The belief that wealth would look different depending on when and how it has been acquired does not seem to have crossed Gatsby's mind. To him Daisy is still the same woman that he left five years earlier, young, inexperienced and smitten by everything he did. This becomes evident when he voices his disappointment to Nick: "“And she doesn't understand,' he said. 'She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours”" (Fitzgerald 117). In Gatsby's mind the woman he knew five years earlier would not have been put off by the crowd at his party. Daisy, however, cannot see the charm with the crowd attending Gatsby's parties, even though she wishes to feel the same excitement and joy that Gatsby experiences. However, in Gatsby's world it is never too late to turn back time: "“I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before,' he said, nodding determinedly”" (Fitzgerald 117). During their years apart Gatsby has lived with the idea of Daisy, Saunders explains, creating a perfect being who cannot falter: "Gatsby long ago placed Daisy on a pedestal: she is the Madonna like, ever loyal partner" (167). The fact that she does not meet his expectations confuses and disappoints him. However, he is still convinced that everything will be as before, and that Daisy will be his. To ensure himself of her approval Gatsby once more transforms himself into someone else, closing himself and his home off from the public. He tries to live up to the concept of old money, but according to Corrigan this is futile: he "can't comfortably settle into the world he's attained" (50). Gatsby is

not able to find the balance needed in his pursuit of Daisy, and a life that she will find worthy for someone with her social standing.

As I have argued, the concept of the American dream changes when Gatsby becomes infatuated with Daisy, making her a crucial part in his search for wealth and social status. The readers can detect a sense of satisfaction and quiet acknowledgment when Daisy expresses her feelings towards him. During a dinner at Daisy's house it is quite possible that Gatsby consider himself to have reached his American dream. From the moment he enters the house there is evidence of her excitement, once again expressed by her enticing voice: "Daisy watched him and laughed, her sweet, exciting laugh" (Fitzgerald 121). This feeling only gets stronger when she expresses a declaration of love that Gatsby has longed for since she resurfaced in his life: "As he left the room again she got up and went over to Gatsby and pulled his face down, kissing him on the mouth. 'You know I love you,' she murmured" (Fitzgerald 122). Gatsby becomes certain of the honesty behind Daisy's announcement since it is made within her own home in front of Nick and Jordan (Fitzgerald 122). Gatsby seems to have reached everything that he dreamt of as a child – wealth, social status and love, a life worthy a God.

It is indicated to the readers that Daisy has changed through her affair with Gatsby, and that her childish-like appearance from before she married Tom has returned. However, through Tom's influence Daisy soon realizes that the love affair she has cherished with Gatsby means different things to them. This becomes even clearer to her as Gatsby's demands on her increases. He pressures Daisy to declare her love for him, and deny she ever loved Tom: "'Oh, you want too much!' she cried to Gatsby. 'I love you now – isn't that enough? I can't help what's past.' She began to sob helplessly. 'I did love him once – but I loved you too'" (Fitzgerald 139). In the end it is the class divide that becomes decisive. As Sanders argues persuasively, a distance is created between Gatsby and Daisy when she finds out about his past (156). Rather than risking a life without social status Daisy chooses to stay in an unhappy marriage with Tom. According to Adam Meehan, Tom's influence on Daisy stands in the way not only of Gatsby's happiness, but also of Daisy's happiness and her longing for Gatsby (87). Gatsby's demands on Daisy is according to Meehan his way of "symbolically" killing Tom, and thereby diminishing his influence on Daisy (87). The readers can clearly see how Daisy's and Gatsby's relationship starts to dissolve, when she fails to fulfill his expectations. Even if Gatsby still believe in their love and a

future together, the love that Daisy felt for Gatsby is no longer viable.

The actions that finally lead to Gatsby's doom are all witnessed by Nick, who has been standing on the sidelines, keeping quiet about his experiences. Nick comes to witness the lies that are being told by both Daisy and Tom, and even by Gatsby. He knows who kills Myrtle, but as Mathew Bolton explains, chooses to stay quiet: "he simply watches and listens as Tom tells the lie that will eventually lead to Gatsby's murder" (196). Nick's choice leads Myrtle's husband, Mr. Wilson, to believe that it was Gatsby who killed her, since it was his car that ran her down (Fitzgerald 185-86). In this sense it could be argued that Nick becomes Charon, the mythic ferryman on the river Styx, ushering Gatsby to his last destination by not putting the record straight. Of course, Nick is only retelling what has already happened, but at the same time he had been present during the events and chose not to say anything. As John Fraser argues: "Nick is someone in whom the moralizing process has become largely a matter of observation unrelated to intervention" (559). Nick had had the opportunity to change what happened but chose not to, so in the end he is no better than his cousin Daisy. Gatsby is transformed into a victim of lies and broken promises which ultimately costs him his life. Towards the end of the novel Nick finally realizes who Daisy and Tom are. Daisy slowly loses her grip over Nick as he sees how Gatsby is affected by her actions, leaving him dreaming of a future that will never come: "So I walked away and left him standing there in the moonlight – watching over nothing" (Fitzgerald 152). As Connell and Sutherland writes: "Daisy, in other words, lies outright to save her skin, and her lie condemns Gatsby. Nick realizes she is worthless" (93). Towards the end Nick severs all ties to his cousin and mourns the loss of his friend, Gatsby.

It can be argued that Gatsby's need to achieve his American dream leads him on the path of becoming a criminal. The longing for the American dream personified in Daisy, results in Gatsby doing whatever possible to reach his goal. During a moment in time when Gatsby finds himself without means, Wolfsheim makes his entry into Gatsby's life: "He was so hard up he had to keep wearing his uniform because he couldn't buy some regular clothes" (Fitzgerald 177). Gatsby finds a way out of his misery thanks to Wolfsheim, who can give Gatsby the future he wants and needs (Fitzgerald 178). In that aspect Gatsby becomes a criminal due to Daisy and his dream of her. Thanks to Wolfheim, his fake educational record becomes a useful cover-up for his bootlegger activities. The idea of Gatsby being a well-educated man

results in Wolfsheim believing in his ability to succeed in business, thereby providing him with a job: “when he told me he was an Oggsford I knew I could use him good” (Fitzgerald 178). The belief in Gatsby’s higher education is in fact what creates the opportunity for him to accumulate enough wealth through his criminal activities to enable his American dream. That dream is of course closely connected to Daisy, and it can be argued that if it had not been for Wolfsheim he would not have been able to buy a house across the bay from her.

Through a deeper reading of the novel *The Great Gatsby*, it stands clear that Jay Gatsby does not only go through one transformation, but rather a number of transformations. The analyzes of the novel shows that it is through Daisy Buchanan’s influence that Gatsby is transformed into the man we meet in the novel. It is Gatsby’s longing for the American dream that will lead him into the arms of Daisy Buchanan, who symbolizes both wealth and social standing, a woman beyond Gatsby’s reach. As Daisy shows an interest in Gatsby, his affections for her depends and Gatsby goes through his first transformation, as his American dream comes to evolve into the concept of Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby no longer only dreams of wealth and social standing, but comes to dream of wealth and social statues through the love of a woman born into the higher levels of society. Gatsby’s longing for Daisy and what she symbolizes is what will transform him into a villain in search of the means to impress Daisy, winning her hand and thereby reaching his American dream. Daisy’s influence over Gatsby is strengthened by her voice which is luring, innocent and inviting to those in her vicinity. A voice that eradicates all questions or doubts that may appear in Gatsby’s mind about the sincerity of Daisy’s feelings, or the choices he has made in his search for her approval. It is Daisy’s enchanting voice and the promises of a better life that spurs Gatsby on in his transformation of himself into a man economical wealth and power. His wish to become someone of higher class, someone worthy of Daisy, is what will cause him to fall, making him a victim of his American dream. The one thing that shaped him would eventually come to destroy him, leaving a defenseless and broken man behind.

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