



# EXPLORING BOURGEOISIE VS. PROLETARIAT CONFLICT IN THE GREAT GATSBY

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The main aim of the present paper is to conduct an analysis of the representation of The Marxism Theory and its manifestation and integration in **F. Scott Fitzgerald's** novel *The Great Gatsby*, focusing on the notion through the lens Of Roaring Twenties' circumstances and conception.

Overall, three motivations for having chosen this topic : firstly, the important role played by *The Great Gatsby* in the idea of a Marxist. Secondly, the novel portrays American society's characteristics, economic and cultural essence. And the third reason is the novel's display of criticism of the Marxism Theory.

*When The Great Gatsby was first published, in 1925, reviews were mixed. H.L. Mencken called it "no more than a glorified anecdote". L.P. Hartley, author of The Go-Between, thought Fitzgerald deserved "a good shaking": "his imagination is febrile and his emotion over-strained... The Great Gatsby is evidently not a satire; but one would like to think that Mr Fitzgerald's heart is not in it, that it is a piece of mere naughtiness."*

*Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald* (September 24, 1896 – December 21, 1940) was an American novelist, essayist, and short story writer. He is best known for his novels depicting the flamboyance and excess of the Jazz Age—a term he popularized in his short story collection *Tales of the Jazz Age*.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in 1896 in St Paul, Minnesota, the first surviving child of a wicker-furniture manufacturer. He was named in honour of a distant relative, Francis Scott Key, who wrote the American national anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner. Both Scott's parents were Catholics.

His father was from Maryland, old enough to remember the Civil War of the 1860s. Edward Fitzgerald imbued his son with the genteel values, and exquisite manners, of the "Old South". His mother was second-generation Irish, with "new money" (from the grocery-wholesale business) in her family background.

Born into a middle-class family in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Fitzgerald was raised primarily in New York state. He attended Princeton University where he befriended future literary critic Edmund Wilson. Owing to a failed romantic relationship with Chicago socialite Ginevra King, he dropped out in 1917 to join the United States Army during World War I.

While stationed in Alabama, he met Zelda Sayre, a Southern debutante who belonged to Montgomery's exclusive country-club set. Although she initially rejected Fitzgerald's marriage proposal due to his lack of financial prospects, Zelda agreed to marry him after he published the commercially successful *This Side of Paradise* (1920). The novel became a cultural sensation and cemented his reputation as one of the eminent writers of the decade.

After graduating from Newman in 1913, Fitzgerald enrolled at Princeton University and became one of the few Catholics in the student body. While at Princeton, Fitzgerald shared a room and became long time friends with John Biggs Jr, who later helped the author find a home in Delaware. As the semesters passed, he formed close friendships with classmates Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop, both of whom would later aid his literary career.

Determined to be a successful writer, Fitzgerald wrote stories and poems for the Princeton Triangle Club, the *Princeton Tiger*, and the *Nassau Lit*. Upon his discharge on February 14, 1919, he moved to New York City, where he unsuccessfully begged the editors of various newspapers for a job. He then turned to writing advertising copy to sustain himself while seeking a breakthrough as an author of fiction.

Fitzgerald wrote to Zelda frequently, and by March 1919, he had sent Zelda his mother's ring, and the two became officially engaged. Several of Fitzgerald's friends opposed the match, as they deemed Zelda ill-suited for him.

Likewise, Zelda's Episcopalian family was wary of Scott because of his Catholic background, precarious finances, and excessive drinking.

Seeking his fortune in New York, Fitzgerald worked for the Barron Collier advertising agency and lived in a single room in Manhattan's West Side. Although he received a small raise for creating a catchy slogan, "We keep you clean in Muscatine", for an Iowa laundry, Fitzgerald subsisted in relative poverty.

Still aspiring to a lucrative career in literature, he wrote several short stories and satires in his spare time. Rejected over 120 times, he sold only one story, "Babes in the Woods", and received a pittance of \$30. With dreams of a lucrative career in New York City dashed, Fitzgerald could not convince Zelda that he would be able to support her, and she broke off the engagement in June 1919.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of Fitzgerald's rejection by Ginevra two years prior, his subsequent rejection by Zelda dispirited him.

While Prohibition-era New York City was experiencing the burgeoning Jazz Age, Fitzgerald felt defeated and rudderless: two women had rejected him in succession; he detested his advertising job; his stories failed to sell; he could not afford new clothes, and his future seemed bleak. Unable to earn a successful living, Fitzgerald publicly threatened to jump to his death from a window ledge of the Yale Club, and he carried a revolver daily while contemplating suicide.

**Novels - 1920 – *This Side of Paradise* , 1922 – *The Beautiful and Damned* , 1925 – *The Great Gatsby* .**

**Short stories - 1920 – "The Ice Palace" , 1920 – "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" , 1920 – "May Day" .**

*The Great Gatsby* is the *symbol of the modern American novel* is a well-spread consideration. The novel has had the capacity to captivate both, the academic audience and ordinary readers from its publication in 1925 until the present day.

Fitzgerald's greatest creation is the result of *Modernist conventions* being blended together within a literary fiction that contains tragedy, social satire, and realism. A doomed character who is unable to pursue his dreams marks the fate for a tragic ending; behavior; and, lastly, no sweetener is added to Fitzgerald's formula, so the readers can recognize the world depicted in the novel.

Writers whose noteworthy literary creations were generated between 1920 and 1940, had stemmed into the years 1880-1910. Fitzgerald himself was born in 1896 and published *The Great Gatsby* in the year 1925.

As Keller explains , a unique American literary blossoming took place during the years between the wars. ***"Whenever You feels like criticizing anyone" , he told me , "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had". (pg 9).***

On the other hand, **Professor Richard Gray** argued in his publication *A Brief History of American Literature (2011)* that the novel presented in 1925 is an elegiac romance. In fact, the text is Nick Caraway's look back on the past, as he recalls the hero Jay Gatsby who had a dream that never came true.

By adapting his personal life into fiction, Grays asserts that **"he Fitzgerald sustained for his generation the great American romance of the self"**. As a matter of fact, the romance was alive to the discrepancies and disconnection of the modern age, which the writer deviated through his **"own sense of the porous, plural nature of his personality"**.

In May 1924, Fitzgerald and his family moved abroad to Europe. He continued writing his third novel, which would eventually become his **magnum opus** *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald had been planning the novel since 1923, when he told his publisher Maxwell Perkins of his plans to embark upon a work of art that would be beautiful and intricately patterned.

For source material, Fitzgerald drew heavily on his experiences on Long Island and once again on his lifelong obsession with his first love **Ginevra King** **"The whole idea of Gatsby", he later explained, "is the unfairness of a poor young man not being able to marry a girl with money. This theme comes up again and again because I lived it."**

The *Great Gatsby* is a young man's novel – a novel about being young, and about the loss of youthful dreams. **The novelist Jacqueline Susann once observed that "for every woman, forty is Hiroshima". Fitzgerald was even more apocalyptic. In his world, thirty is the "far side of paradise"**. The point is stressed when, late in the novel, driving back with Tom from New York, Nick Carraway, the narrator, suddenly realises that it's his birthday. He has passed, without realising it, what Joseph Conrad called the "shadow line" in his life. Darkness awaits:

**"I was thirty. Before me stretched the portentous, menacing road of a new decade... Thirty – the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning brief-case of enthusiasm, thinning hair... So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight. (7).**

As the critic Matthew Bruccoli has observed, the primary emotion *The Great Gatsby* generates is regret: regret for the loss of youth and of youthful dreams and **"for depleted emotional capacity, a regret as intense as the emotions that inspired it were"**. While writing *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald acknowledged that this was indeed his intention in a letter to a friend: **"That's the whole burden of the novel – the loss of those illusions that give such color to the world that you don't care whether things are true or false as long as they partake of the magical glory."**

The writer Gertrude Stein described young adults after the war as “a lost generation of men and women adrift in a chaotic hell of their own solipsism”. The theme of *The Great Gatsby* was prefigured in a short story Fitzgerald wrote in 1922, not long before he began serious work on the novel. In “Winter Dreams”, the hero is a poor young man who becomes unexpectedly wealthy but loses the girl of his dreams. As a boy he was a caddy and later, when he becomes rich and has caddies of his own, he keeps looking at them, “trying to catch a gleam or gesture that would remind him of himself, that would lessen the gap which lay between his present and his past”.

Green, like Jay Gatsby, is haunted not just by his dreams but by the loss of his younger self. He sees his future as lying in the past – and when, at the end, he learns that the beauty of the girl he loves has faded, he experiences a poignant yearning, like Gatsby, for what he has forever lost: *“The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold colour of her neck’s soft down. And her mouth clamped to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why, these things were no longer in the world! They had existed, and they existed no longer. For the first time the tears were streaming down his face. But they were for himself now. He did not care about mouth and eyes and moving hands. He wanted to care but could not care. For he had gone away and he could never come back any more. The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gay beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusions, of youth, of the richness of life, when his winter dreams had flourished. “Long ago,” he said, “long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more.”*

Before settling on *The Great Gatsby* as the title, Fitzgerald toyed with other possibilities. His original plan had been to call it *Trimalchio* in West Egg, Trimalchio being a vulgar and rich social upstart in Petronius’s *Satyricon*, a man who loves giving banquets as Gatsby loves giving parties. Trimalchio is also, like Gatsby, acutely conscious of time passing and is described by one of his guests as *“a very rich man, who has a clock and a uniformed trumpeter in his dining room, to keep telling him how much of his life is lost and gone”*. But there is one important difference between the two men: Gatsby, unlike Trimalchio, treats his parties as a spectacle and doesn’t participate in them.

The *Jazz Age* is one of the most significant cultural movements in American history. Coinciding with the Roaring Twenties, the Prohibition Era, and women being granted the right to vote, the era that spanned from the First World War up to the Wall Street Crash in 1929 was a period of considerable social reform.

It allowed the young people to rebel against the traditional ideals that came before, exploring new artistic endeavours that helped shape a new glittering and prosperous society. Eventually becoming known as the Lost Generation, this wave of young people helped form the Jazz Age of 1920s post-war America.

*The swinging genre of jazz began in New Orleans, Louisiana, in the late nineteenth century, with its roots in ragtime and blues.* The expressive, rhythmic music originated in the pain and oppression of slavery in the United States.

Jazz came to represent a sense of freedom for the people of a country devastated by oppression, war, and loss and formed the soundtrack for the hedonistic culture of the Roaring Twenties.

A term first coined by *American writer Gertrude Stein* and *popularised by Hemingway* in his 1926 novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, the definition of the *Lost Generation* applies to those born between 1883 and 1900 who came of age during World War I.

As America moved away from its post-war sorrow, the country entered into a period of ecstasy and celebration. Technology was developing faster than ever, and America's economy rapidly expanded.

Likewise, Fitzgerald's own novel *The Great Gatsby* encompasses the excessive drinking and spending that was a crucial part of the Lost Generation's Jazz Age experience. Set on Long Island, New York, *Gatsby* features the confusing romance, corrupt morals, and glamorous partying of the city's most wealthy socialites.

## CHAPTER 2

### CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GREAT GATSBY

Gatsby's story is narrated by Nick Carraway, a Midwesterner in his mid-twenties who has "come East". The story covers the summer of 1922 and is set mainly on the two spits of land off Long Island: East Egg and West Egg. West Egg, which is nearer New York, is populated by "new money", the more exclusive East Egg, by "old money". Nick has taken a job as a bond salesman in Wall Street, where he commutes daily by train. He lives in a ramshackle "cardboard" house on West Egg adjoining "an elaborate road house", owned by the mysterious and very rich Mr Gatsby, who throws parties which, even for the Jazz Age, are extravagant.

Rumours swirl around Gatsby: he is a gangster, a war hero, an aristocratic foreigner. In another mansion – on more fashionable East Egg – lives Daisy Buchanan, a cousin of Nick's. Daisy is married to Tom, whose main interests in life are his polo ponies and his mistresses. Nick was a classmate of Tom's at Yale where he (Tom) was a star footballer. Now he is a bully, a snob, a racist and an inveterate adulterer.

He and Daisy have come East after an ugly business involving a car accident and one of his "sweeties". Tom has more recently found another sweetie in Myrtle, the coarse but sexually alluring wife of a local garage owner, George Wilson. Tom has set up a love-nest for her in Manhattan. Myrtle's husband suspects nothing.

Daisy, however, knows about her husband's infidelities. Before Tom married Daisy, we learn, she had been engaged to Jay Gatsby, then a young army officer. But Gatsby, after being sent to France, was delayed in Europe for several months after the war had ended – and during the delay, Daisy married Tom.

Now Gatsby, who has felt spiritually "married" to Daisy ever since, has returned to New York to win her back. Keeping Daisy company over the summer is her girlhood friend Jordan Baker – a champion golfer. She and Nick start an affair, which gives him an insight into the unfolding Buchanan-Gatsby drama as it moves towards its climax.

It is never really clear where Gatsby's immense riches come from, but gradually we learn more of his history. He was born Jimmy Gatz, the son of an unsuccessful farmer in the Midwest. Scraping a living on the shores of Lake Superior, young Gatz caught sight of a yacht in danger of being wrecked on a sandbar. He rowed out to warn the owner, Dan Cody. Cody, a "debauched" magnate enriched by his investments in metal mining, took to "Gatsby", as the young man promptly renamed himself.

Over the next few years, he became Cody's right-hand man. More importantly, he learned how to look and act rich. On Cody's death, Gatsby was left almost penniless, having inherited nothing from his former mentor, but contrived to get himself on an officer's training course, when America joined the war against Germany. It was as Lieutenant Gatsby that he won the heart of the southern belle, Daisy Fay.

After the war, having lost Daisy to Tom, Gatsby was taken up by another patron, the Jewish gangster, Meyer Wolfshiem, and became involved in the racketeering that boomed in the Prohibition era (1919-33): fixing sports events, rum-running, running illicit casinos, speakeasies and brothels, dealing in stolen bonds, even – it is rumoured – murder.

We are uneasily aware of all this as a “foul dust”, trailing the dazzling Gatsby glamour. By 1922, Gatsby is rich enough to pursue his dream of reclaiming Daisy and the main narrative of Fitzgerald’s novel revolves around a series of summer parties, lavish (in Gatsby’s West Egg mansion) and squalid (in Tom’s New York love nest). There is a final showdown between Gatsby and Daisy’s husband, Tom, in the Manhattan Plaza Hotel.

Gatsby declares his intention to run off with Daisy. She is present, as are Nick and Jordan, and cannot decisively say which man she loves. After this tense encounter, Gatsby and Daisy drive back to Long Island together. She is driving, allegedly “to steady her nerves”. As they pass George Wilson’s garage, Myrtle contrives to break out from the bedroom where her husband (suspicious at last) has locked her.

The unlucky woman assumes Tom is in the speeding car, rushes into the road, and is killed. Daisy, terrified, drives on. The police are later unable to identify the “death car”. Gallantly, Gatsby does not reveal that Daisy was the driver. Tom tells Wilson it was Gatsby, and Wilson, in a fit of homicidal rage, guns down Gatsby in his swimming pool before shooting himself. Nick knows the truth about the hit and run incident but keeps it to himself. The Buchanans “retreat into their money”. Nick returns to his home in the Midwest.

### RESEARCH FINDING OF THE MAIN CHARACTER

The main character is named Jay Gatsby. He is pictured as a mysterious man who keeps his true love until death takes his life. The characterization of Gatsby is a Static character because it was found that there was no certain change of his character from the beginning to the end of the story.

He was in love with Daisy Buchanan, his first love who has already married to Tom Buchanan .The function of the character shown in the novel is a Protagonist character. It is can be seen through his qualities which pictured such as:

The **three dimensional aspects of the main characters** found are :

**A. Physiological :** He is pictured as an elegant person, charming, around thirty, handsome and has a polite manner.

**B. Sociological :** He is pictured as a wealthy yet mysterious person who lives in a big mansion which rather like to be seen as castle. He often threw large parties as a camouflage to hide his sadness for not being able to meet his true love, Daisy Buchanan. He often threw parties with the hope that she would come to the party one day.

**C.Psychological :** Gatsby is depicted to be a pathological narcissist. The sign shown includes his sense of perfection and entitlement, his poor sense of reality and an extreme idealism that he will be able to unite with his true love after returning as a wealthy person.

He believe himself to be the son of God; he thinks he can do everything by having a lot of money, he thinks that he can get Daisy back to his arm with all the wealth and social status that he has. He uses the psychological defense to repress the memories of his past because he is ashamed of the fact that he grew up poor.

Kenneth Bruffee regards *The Great Gatsby* as an elegiac romance – that is, a modern, anti-heroic form of “quest romance”. *“The Great Gatsby belongs, is the phase of what Bruffee calls elegiac romance. In this phase, the quest romance becomes the story “of its own failure”, and here, once again, there is irony. As in Cervantes, it may be unclear at first whose values we are meant to share. The knights of elegiac romance are early 20th century figures like Kurtz in Heart of Darkness and Jim in Lord Jim, Edward Ashburnham in Ford Madox Ford’s The Good Soldier, Vladimir Nabokov’s Sebastian Knight and Gatsby. They are “obsessed by the goal of their quest”, just as Gawain and Parzival were. The squires of elegiac romance – i.e. the narrators like Nick – have in some sense, like Sancho Panza, fallen in love with their master’s madness. But they recognise that it is a kind of madness. In elegiac romance the knight doesn’t change or mellow or develop: the only important change he undergoes is that he dies. Elegiac romance, in short, is an attempt to dispense with conventional heroes and old-fashioned notions of heroism. What matters is “the enlightenment of the squire-narrator”.*

The narrative frame of *The Great Gatsby* clearly derives from another short novel, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Fitzgerald hugely admired Conrad, who died while he was at work on *The Great Gatsby*. He was particularly influenced by the way in which Conrad manipulates time, so that we discover things bit by bit, as we do in life, by his rich and evocative imagery.

The opening paragraphs of *The Great Gatsby* are very brilliant in establishing Nick’s character and interest. His voice recalls Marlow’s and is impressive in some of the same engagingly wry ways. He tells us, for example, that “reserving judgement is a matter of infinite hope”, before coming “to the admission that it has a limit”: “Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes but after a certain point I don’t care what it’s founded on.”(1).

Like Marlow, Nick is concerned with “conduct” in a way that shows his probity, and what he says in these early paragraphs is borne out by events. *Gatsby*, it becomes clear, is involved in selling bonds in some corrupt or criminal way, and when, in Chapter Five, he suddenly offers Nick a way into this easy dirty money, Nick – who is in this important if limited sense genuinely “honest” – recoils.

From the beginning, *Gatsby* is wrapped in an aura of mystery and intrigue – an effect cleverly contrived, through the narrator, by Fitzgerald. *Gatsby* is perennially elusive. He flits through the narrative like an image

in a hall of mirrors – brilliantly vivid, but superficial and fleeting. One of the most striking things about Gatsby is his solitariness.

His first appearance, at the end of Chapter One, is appropriately spectral. Nick has wandered on to his lawn, which is next door to Gatsby's, for a minute or two's contemplation before turning in. It is the witching hour:

*“The wind had blown off, leaving a loud, bright night, with wings beating in the trees and a persistent organ sound as the full bellows of the earth blew the frogs full of life. The silhouette of a moving cat wavered across the moonlight, and, turning my head to watch it, I saw that I was not alone – fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbour's mansion and was standing with his hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars. Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr Gatsby himself, come out to determine what share was his of our local heavens. (1)”*

Gatsby has a flamboyant wardrobe which, significantly, is described in much more detail than his physiognomy. When Nick first sets eyes on him he is wearing a “caramel colored suit”. In Chapter Five he enters brilliantly attired in a “white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie”. In the climactic section of the novel he wears “a luminous pink suit”.

He orders new shirts every month from the best British shirtmakers. Their thick silk, sheer linen and fine flannel glory entrance Daisy. Essentially the clothes, like everything else about Gatsby, imply unreality. “I hold that man to be well dressed,” said Anthony Trollope, “whose dress nobody notices”. This is not something which could ever be said about Gatsby, who always dresses for effect.

So when Gatsby says, in explaining to Nick what makes Daisy magical, that “her voice is full of money”, he evokes, above all, her unapproachability by anyone who doesn't have “money in their voice”. What she has, as Nick elsewhere puts it, is “non-olfactory money” – money that doesn't smell of its origins. 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.

Research Through Innovation

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORY OF MARXISM

Marxism is one of the most significant theories and a philosophy that has contributed much to the modern world. German Philosopher Karl Marx helped the working class to question the injustice enforced upon them through their wages, life style and oppression. Marxism, for many, is a beginning of progress and evolution. Marx believed that instilling his ideology in the minds of people like him, would one day make the world an ideal classless society.

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Marxism is a social, economic and political philosophy that analyzes the impact of the ruling class on the laborers, leading to uneven distribution of wealth and privileges in the society. It stimulates the workers to protest the injustice. The theory was formulated by Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels in their work, 'The Communist Manifesto'. it was a pamphlet they created during the age of Imperialism, rooting from their own struggles as members of the proletariat lot. According to Marx, History demonstrates the existence of class struggle centuries earlier. He explains the struggle through five stages.

Primitive Communism, the age of Hunter-gatherers where every human was treated equally hence, there was an absence of class.

The Age of Slavery where there was class distinction between the aristocrats and the slaves.

Feudalism where the struggle was between Landlords, owners and the people who rented or used their lands for agriculture.

Capitalism, where the labor community (Proletariat) worked their lives off only for the ruling class (Bourgeoisie) to profit from them. This is the stage where Mark and Engels compile 'Communist manifesto' from their plight as workers for the British Factory owners.

Socialism is the phase that Marx believed the proletariats would revolt for their justice and eventually form a communist society, free of class distinctions and equal wealth

There are two obvious divisions in the Capitalist society – the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariats.

The exploitation of the latter is the essence of Marxist ideology. The Bourgeoisie enjoyed the power to control the toiling masses' wages and work, leaving them vulnerable to even replacements in the future. The former had access to modern equipment and tools to make work easier and quicker, leaving the laborer with low wages and adding more profits to themselves. The never-ending heavy labor left the workforce with a feeling of alienation from the task (Estranged Labor) and even humanity, focusing only on the yields.

Marxist sociology, as the study of sociology from a Marxist perspective is "a form of conflict theory associated with ... Marxism's objective of developing a positive (empirical) science of capitalist society as part of the mobilization of a revolutionary working class."

The American Sociological Association has a section dedicated to the issues of Marxist sociology that is "interested in examining how insights from Marxist methodology and Marxist analysis can help explain the complex dynamics of modern society."

Influenced by the thought of Karl Marx, Marxist sociology emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. With Marx, Max Weber and Émile Durkheim are considered seminal influences in early sociology. The first Marxist school of sociology was known as Austro-Marxism, of which Carl Grünberg and Antonio Labriola were among its most notable members.

During the 1940s, the Western Marxist school became accepted within Western academia, subsequently fracturing into several different perspectives, such as the Frankfurt School or critical theory. The legacy of Critical Theory as a major offshoot of Marxism is controversial.

The common thread linking Marxism and Critical theory is an interest in struggles to dismantle structures of oppression, exclusion, and domination. Due to its former state-supported position, there has been a backlash against Marxist thought in post-communist states (see Sociology in Poland). However, it remains dominant in the sociological research sanctioned and supported by communist states (see Sociology in China).

Marx addressed the alienation and exploitation of the working class, the capitalist mode of production and historical materialism. He is famous for analyzing history in terms of class struggle, summarized in the initial line introducing *The Communist Manifesto* (1848): "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

## CHAPTER 4

### MARXISM THEORY THROUGH THE LENS OF GATSBY

The *theory of Marxism* was created by *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels* in the 19th century, who perceived human history to have ‘consisted of a series of struggles between classes – the oppressed and the oppressing.’

The **bourgeois and the proletariat** are the two classes of people in society. According to Marxists, the proletariat are the peasants, the hard working low class with very little to show for their efforts and the bourgeois is the upper class, who according to Marx and Engels reap the benefits of the proletariats labor.

Marxism in literature relates to class differences; economic and otherwise, as well as the implications and complications of the capitalist system. It attempts to reveal the ways in which our socioeconomic system is the ultimate source of our experience.

Frequently, an entire book will revolve around the protagonist’s quest for wealth, and **‘rags to riches’ type stories, like ‘The Great Gatsby,’** are really a reflection of our fascination with classes, and how people can ‘move up’, no matter how lowly their origins.

Fitzgerald’s reading included the work of Karl Marx, which may be why so many of his stories’ wealthy protagonists face unhappy endings, as Marxism believes the excessive wealth of one class at the expense of all others is wrong. However, it doesn’t celebrate the vibrant capitalist culture it portrays, but reveals the darker side of society at the time.

It highlights how the pursuit of money decays personal values, as happened with Gatsby, when he lost everything because of his life’s goal to reach the top of the ‘heap’. The richest characters, like Tom and Daisy, as well as the people who attend Gatsby’s parties are really the most unpleasant and shallow ones, making a mockery of the ‘American Dream’ which was the height of American ambition in the ‘Roaring 20’s’.

The class that ‘The Great Gatsby’ represents in the most positive light is the narrator himself, Nick Carraway, who comes from a middle class family and seems to be the only one content with his lot in life.

*The Great Gatsby* starts out displaying the theme of Marxism almost immediately with the introduction of the narrator, Nick when he describes his socioeconomic status as a ‘bonds man’. He describes his class pretty quick off the bat, saying; **“My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this middle-western city for 3 generations.”**

The extent of the splendour Gatsby lives in is described in great detail by Nick, as is the Buchanans house; **‘The one on my right (Gatsby’s house) was a colossal affair by any standard – it was a factual imitation**

*of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden.'*

Nick represents Fitzgerald's view, as he comes from a well-off family, but he also works long, hard hours as a bonds man, commuting daily to New York.

There is Tom and Daisy who both come from wealthy families who have been 'in the money' for generations. Then you have Myrtle and her husband Wilson, who both represent the lower working class, and finally Gatsby – who started life as low class, and moved up in the world with his questionably acquired wealth.

Jay Gatsby represents all the ambitious poor boys who believed in the land of opportunity, as he followed his dream until the very end. He is unquestionably rich, and the descriptions of his ostentatious house and parties uphold this. He is the archetypal rags to riches story – but with no happy ending. His family were '*unsuccessful farm people*', and he changed his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby in order to disassociate himself from them.

The goal of the main character, Jay Gatsby is to win back Daisy, who he lost the chance to marry back when he was an officer, as a direct result of his inadequate monetary status in Daisy's eyes.

At the beginning of Gatsby's courting of Daisy, when he was just a soldier, the ambitious young man realises that his current status is not going to be enough to maintain her interest.

Gatsby lives in this vast house all by himself, with the single goal of 'winning' Daisy. For 5 years he has held the belief that when she sees his house, and the wealth he has accumulated, she will be his again. This reinforces the Marxist view that the upper class holds all the power, as Gatsby believes that money is the key to gaining Daisy's affections. It seems like he will be successful, as they start seeing each other, and Daisy even tells Tom she will leave him.

In Daisy's world, security and money are everything, and she will not let love get in the way of these things. Classes are in essence the driving force behind Gatsby's goal, and definitely a realistic portrayal of the time frame the book was set in, the 20's. Marxism says that society involves a struggle between the upper and lower class, which is in essence what Gatsby is struggling against, as he fights to be accepted as upper class for once and all, ridding himself of his more humble origins. Such lines from book :

*"Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay."(Ch.3)"He had waited five years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths--so he could 'come over' some afternoon to a stranger's garden."*

Tom is the stereotypical aristocrat of America, who is fearful of white-black integration –He represents the very top of the social hierarchy, who always gets what he wants – which is both the attraction and repulsion of his

status, as he is very arrogant. Throughout the novel, Gatsby is put down, especially by Tom, for being ‘new money’. An example of this is when the truth comes out about Gatsby’s and Daisy’s relationship.

From a Marxist point of view, this was to be expected, as someone as rich as Tom would never see Gatsby as a viable candidate for his wife’s love. Gatsby has certainly worked hard in his life, and is more self-invented than any other character in the book. He knew from a young age that he wanted to be rich, and did whatever it took to achieve this.

When he moved up from his ‘despicable’ previous work as a janitor, clam digger and salmon fisher to work for Dan Cody on his yacht, he is taking his first step up the rungs of classes. To Gatsby, Cody’s yacht ***‘represented all the beauty and glamour in the world.’***

No one in ‘*The Great Gatsby*’ is really happy in their class; they either want to become richer and move up a class, or if they are one of the few in the very top order, like Daisy, they see the ‘awfulness’ of everything. Daisy is Gatsby’s ideal woman, who is destined to be forever out of reach for him. Throughout the novel she is held up on a pedestal; described as a ***‘sweet and exciting’*** girl, who can basically do no wrong.

Through Daisy, Fitzgerald glamorises the upper class women as better than all others, and Jordan and Daisy are definitely portrayed as a lot classier than working class women Myrtle and her sister Catherine. Myrtle is described as ‘fairly stout’ with a ‘coarse’ voice, and Catherine’s ‘rakish’ eyebrows are emphasised above all other physical features.

This is quite possibly the manifestation of Fitzgerald’s view of classes, and the women in the ones above him. He engaged in many romances, including with one wealthier woman in particular, Ginevra, who in the end evaded him as a direct result of his lower class. Daisy can have any man she wants, but this would not be the case if she were poor.

From a Marxist perspective, this is symbolic of the fact that people will never be content with what they have, even when they appear to have everything. The theme of materialism and fascination with always ‘possessing’ more things filters through a lot in ‘*The Great Gatsby*,’ and in the end, although people earn, or simply have a lot of things, nobody is truly satisfied.

Daisy is a popular, well-to-do girl, and it appears she is one of the few who sees through her own society for what it really is. She is strangely detached from her daughter, and claims the first thing she said when she was born, was; ***“I’m glad it’s a girl. And I hope she’ll be a fool – that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.”*** It seems that Daisy wishes she was more of a fool, as she resents being ‘sophisticated’, because it makes her think everything’s terrible.

Marxism shares Daisy’s pessimistic view on society, although Daisy doesn’t think of changing the way things are, and just admits that girls should be ‘stupid’ to survive, while Marxism aims to overthrow all forms of hierarchy and achieve equality.

From a Marxist perspective, the portrayal of George and Myrtle Wilson is a flaw in the Great Gatsby. Fitzgerald is clearly critiquing the American dream, and the capitalism which consumes everyone, but by giving this couple such a glum existence, there is no real moral to the story.

If they were happy, it would be a truly Marxist novel, but they are portrayed as negatively as the rich people. With or without money, people are unhappy, according to this book. The lavish lifestyles of the Buchanans and Gatsby are much more glorified than that of the poor, through the lush language that describes their mansions and parties.

We can see that they are unpleasant people, through quotes like; ***“They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money, or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess that they had made.”***

However, the vivid description of their beautiful clothing, houses, friends, and even their physiques, makes them much more alluring to the reader, than the pitiful lives of lower classes, even including Nick Carraway, who seems to be one of the only fully sane people in the novel.

**He notes, that; *“Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor.”***

Throughout the book, it is implied that it is impossible to rise above one’s class. Gatsby tries, and it seems like he may be successful in getting Daisy to love him. But in the end, Daisy stays with her rich husband, disregarding her heart which wants Gatsby, for the security and wealth that Tom offers.

This is a mockery of the American Dream which was conceptualised around this time, and gave hope to everyone that if they worked hard, they would reap the rewards, no matter their surname or beginning in life.



## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMATION

**“Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further... And one fine morning – So we beat on, boats against the current, born back ceaselessly into the past. (9)”**

The Great Gatsby was written by Fitzgerald in a mood of deep pessimism. The novel has an elegiac tone, and it is an elegy not merely for the empty life, the unappreciated generosity (towards his party guests as well as Daisy), wretched death and unattended funeral of its hero, but also for the American Dream itself. If there was anything spiritual and uplifting in this dream, the book implies, it was lost, almost immediately, overpowered by greed and a lust for money and possessions.

What might have been a wonderland has been turned into a wasteland, decadent, rotten to the core, as over the top and doomed as Gatsby. The green light he stares at night after night is like the white light in Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach”, which the hero looks at from across the Channel until it finally goes out, suggesting the light of republicanism in France has also been extinguished.

When the moon does rise at the end of The Great Gatsby it prompts one of the book’s most lyrical passages:

***“The inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes – a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (9)”***

American experience is betrayal by a woman. It is true that the women in The Great Gatsby are shown as incapable not just of idealism or artistic interests but of passion too. They are not even sexy: Nick, for example, asserts that Daisy is sexually exciting but nothing she says or does, and none of the descriptions of her, actually bring this quality out. Only lower-class Myrtle is shown to be sensual as she tells the story of her relationship with Tom.

In 1990, Tony Tanner called The Great Gatsby “the most perfectly crafted work of fiction to have come out of America” and it undoubtedly has a power and a fascination which few short novels can match and which was underestimated by some early critics, like H.L. Mencken. While praising the charm and beauty of the writing in the novel, Mencken, whom Fitzgerald much admired, found the characters mere “marionettes” and the story itself “obviously unimportant”.

The endemic weakness Fiedler identifies, however – reflected in *The Great Gatsby*, essentially a buddy-buddy story about two men – is a weakness of the American novel as a whole. Putting it aside, how convincing, in its own terms, is the novel? How much does it really engage our sympathy? In a way, the strength of *The Great Gatsby* is also its weakness. It takes a brutally deterministic view of its characters' lives: trapped in a society without morals, they don't have the capacity to develop as people or show any capacity for self-analysis.

The failure of American Dream Over Marxist Theory and the lost generation in the *Great Gatsby* provide us the idea that how few things influenced individuals economically, rationally, and in every other conceivable ways. In the *Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald portrayed the American Dream as a brutal reality of people's life and shows the condition of the society where people were lost because of the influences of the Great War. Corruption, brutality, and another structure of the society was a riddle for them to cope up.

This paper has analyzed the different challenges that the Dream presents for the characters with regards to their position in time and class in Fitzgerald's best-seller novel. In terms of time, we have been able to identify the two-faced reality of the Dream and the characters: the rising of the automobile has provided both, autonomy and disgrace for them; Parties gave place for Jazz music and alcohol consumption, which seems positive enough if it was not for the establishment of the 18th Amendment, which made it illegal to sell or consume alcohol.

We have been witnesses to the breaking of the Prohibition law and to the activity of bootlegging, and, moreover, we have identified the double morality that alcohol consumption carried regarding the high-class members. In fact, neither bootleggers nor liquor buyer and consumers felt bad for their actions, as they justified them by tagging their behavior as mere survival or whitewashed it by means of their money.

Shortly, East Egg stands for the old riches while West Egg is home to the nouveau riches or aristocratic-but-not-so-rich people. Between these two, stands the home of the working class, the Valley of Ashes. As for mobility, while the first group enjoys total freedom, the second one is not that welcome in East Egg, and the third one needs the help of the old-riches so as to exit the Valley of Ashes. So, outward mobility is absolute for the old-riches, partial for the new-riches and limited for the working-class people.

The Dream is inevitably linked to social class, and being this so, *The Great Gatsby* groups the characters in three different levels: the wealthy people (old-riches and new-riches), the middle-class representative and the workers of the bottom of the line.

These distinctions have established a system of upward mobility in which the old riches stand at the top of the pyramid; the nouveau-riches and self-made men stand below the old riches, since they have amassed a fortune but have not inherited their status through their families; thirdly, the middle-class representative

would take a place, with the anxiety of having an inherited aristocratic privilege but little money; and, finally at the bottom of it all, the working-class people, the real sustainers of the system.

What the book proves is that real equality is not possible for all and that it is not money that gives you height on the social pyramid, but the family background and inheritance. It is by all the aforementioned that Fitzgerald provides the readers with the reality of the shiny and promising Dream: a critique on society's stance towards the over-admired notion of opportunities and possibilities, and a call of attention towards the unrealistic longing for a rags-to-riches transformation.

Finally, we have seen that the novel's narrator Nick Carraway is not that reliable narrator as a good number of previous studies of point of view and narrative technique in *The Great Gatsby* seem to suggest. Rather, Nick makes statements and judgements which he soon contradicts. Consequently it is wrong to accept his views and conclusions at face value.

And instead of relying of one narrator, we are given the opportunity of making use of a multiplicity of narrators, a technique that is now considered more advanced than the traditional omniscient narrator whose generalizations are expected to be true and valid as they form the moral and ethical norms of the work as a whole.

Through this thesis paper, we can observe how ones is rejecting his actual self and considering the social orders to lead as his own particular dream and following the path that the society wants him to follow. By emulating these paths an individual can be extraordinary, but he refuses to understand that for being uncommon he is actually surrendering his satisfaction, joy and bliss.



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