

JIHOČESKÁ UNIVERZITA V ČESKÝCH BUDĚJOVICÍCH  
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
ÚSTAV ANGLISTIKY

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

THE PARADOXICAL WORLD OF THE GREAT GATSBY

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Mariana Machová, Ph.D.

Autor práce: Milada Šanderová

Studijní obor: Bohemistika – Anglistika

Ročník: 3.

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České Budějovice, 11.5. 2015

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor PhDr. Mariana Machová, Ph.D. for helpful suggestions and guidance she has provided me. Secondly, I would like to thank my friends and family for their patience and support.

## **Anotace**

F. Scott Fitzgerald ve svém románu *Velký Gatsby* vytvořil svět zásadních rozporů. A to ať se jedná o fungování společnosti jako celku, propastné rozdíly mezi jednotlivými společenskými vrstvami, postavami, nebo napětí mezi vlastnostmi v rámci postavy jedné. Cílem této bakalářské práce je tudíž analyzovat svět tohoto románu jako svět vystavěného na paradoxech.

## **Annotation**

In *The Great Gatsby* F. Scott Fitzgerald created a world of fundamental contradictions. Whether talking about the way the whole society works, the immense differences among social classes, the characters, or the tension between attributes of a particular character. Therefore, the goal of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the world of this novel as the world built on paradoxes.

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## Introduction

Francis Scott Fitzgerald's "Jazz Age" novel *The Great Gatsby* has, at first sight, a straightforward storyline based on a love triangle, consisting of Daisy Fay-Buchanan, her husband Tom Buchanan, and her former lover Jay Gatsby. Talking about the main theme, it is obviously the criticism of the American dream. But when we read the novel closely, there is a great amount of fundamental ambiguities, which can make proper understanding of it rather difficult and puzzling. We can find those ambiguities either analysing the society as a whole or individual characters and their natures. The reader often learns some piece of information which is soon negated by something else. Such as the clues about Gatsby – is he a criminal or an innocent dreamer? And what about Daisy – is she a negative or a positive character? Actually, Fitzgerald provides us with evidences proving all of these statements. This bachelor thesis deals with the topic of the paradoxes more or less hidden in the novel. Its purpose is to guide through the contradictory fictional world of *The Great Gatsby* and to reveal that Fitzgerald's characters have complex and debatable personalities.

At first, I will discuss the fictional world of this novel in relation to the contradictions, and try to outline how the whole system of paradoxes works. Initially, I would like to point out the tension in the atmosphere, which is created by the narrative. But mainly, the immense paradoxes of the 1920's society, in which Fitzgerald was inspired, and support it with both, historical sources and the evidences written in the novel.

Then, in the next two chapters, I will analyse the characters of Gatsby and Daisy considering the paradoxical aspects of their natures. I would like to prove that they are not shallow archetypes, which would make them easily predictable. Their personalities are deeply crafted, built up on contradictions and inner tension that creates a dynamism within them and makes them attractive to the reader.

## **1. Insight into the Paradoxical World of *The Great Gatsby***

*The Great Gatsby* is a unique novel in many ways. It is based on a combination of elaborate themes and characters, and it also recreates the lively atmosphere of 1920's. All is highlighted by the use of rich figurative language. However, the crucial aspect presented in *The Great Gatsby*, which participates in the novel's uniqueness, is the use of paradoxes. Every piece of information the reader learns, an opinion, he gets about somebody (or something), or an emotional state he feels is usually soon overshadowed by some contradiction. The system of paradoxes, which the novel is based on, is illustratively summed up in the article "The Great Gatsby's Aesthetics of Non-Identity": "There are the fantastic, lyrical conceits, formally enacting the novel's thematic concern with vast desire . . . [a]nd then there is everything else in the novel, the incessant disappointments, compromises, self-deceptions, and casual bad driving" (Hilgart 77). We can find contradictions in the social issues, in the attributes of single characters and of the backgrounds where they live, or just passing by. Analysing this novel further, it is evident that at first sight, it is full of incompatible contradictions, but they together create a compact world. A world, where things are black-and-white, not strictly divided into black or white, and much more complicated, deeper, debatable.

### **1.1. Atmosphere**

The whole mood which *The Great Gatsby* creates is a breathtaking whirl of colours, but mainly music, whether talking about the tender, intimate lyrical parts or opposed to that, the splendid overcrowded dances in the Roaring Twenties style. Initially, we have to mention the iconic moment when we notice the lyrical features of the novel for the first time. It is the scene in the Buchanans' house when Nick is invited for a dinner. He witnesses a beautiful, lyrical scenery filled with light, colours like bright rose and white, and completed by "[a] breeze" which "blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-coloured rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea". Subsequently, he notices Daisy and Jordan, both dressed in white, "their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house". Nick is fascinated by this mystical gentle apparition until the rough Tom Buchanan, whose nature is in contradiction with everything fragile, closes the windows and "the caught wind died out about the room, and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor" (14). It proves how easily everything in the novel can be changed from the ground.



We can feel another unique mood, or more properly moods, at Gatsby's parties. On the one hand, they ought to be vivid, opulent, and splendid occasions. They are always visited by "the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same profusion of champagne, the same many-coloured, many-keyed commotion" (108). What is typical for these parties is 1920's popular music like jazz, dances like the modern fox-trot, or "a neat, sad little waltz Three O'Clock in the Morning" (112), which is for Daisy, by the way, the promise of the possible romantic future. On the other hand, they are depressing events full of empty, superficial, or miserable souls. At the first party Nick is invited to he meets a singer who was singing while sobbing (or sobbing while singing) and therefore a thick layer of mascara is making a smudge on her face. Someone adds that "she sing[s] the notes on her face" (56). This character can be interpreted as the key one representing both kinds of atmosphere at the parties in general. Another example illustrating the fact that the parties gather miserable souls, is Miss Beadaker, the guest, who "always starts screaming" after several cocktails. Everyone advises her to give up alcohol, but she never does. The consequences are humiliating for her since someone usually pushes her to the swimming pool to calm her down and her party gown is all wet. Therefore, we can say that she arrives like a lady, but does not depart so.

### **1.1.1. Music**

The music is an essential part of the novel and it completes the whole exclusive atmosphere of the Jazz Age, as "Fitzgerald himself permanently named" (Bloom 9) this era. The first actual song of the 1920's we are introduced to is "The Sheik of Araby":

'I'm the Sheik of Araby.  
Your love belongs to me.  
At night when you're asleep,  
Into your tent I'll creep -' (82)

Nick hears it on his way through Central Park with Jordan Baker after he gets to know about Gatsby's intentions with Daisy, about their past relationship, and his love for her. This song highlights all the information. Gatsby is metaphorically the Sheik, both of them are rich and both love a lady with whom they are not yet in a romantic relationship. Another important song, which Klipspringer plays while Gatsby is showing Daisy his house, is "The Love Nest" (98) followed by "Ain't We Got Fun" (both authentic 1920's songs as well). The first one reflects the purity of Gatsby's feelings for Daisy, and the fact that she is the only treasure he would like to gain, nothing else matters, neither his mansion, nor his money. It suggests that his house will become their "love nest" in a while. The second song definitely shows the

paradoxes in the society. The immense differences between the rich and the poor, which is one of the crucial themes of the novel. It touches the fact that although Gatsby is now rich, he used to be without any financial means when he was young.

In the morning,  
In the evening,  
    Ain't we got fun –  
One thing's sure and nothing surer  
The rich get richer and the poor get – children.  
In the meantime,  
In between time – (99)

Another important piece of music deserving our attention is Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" (130), commonly symbolizing a new marriage, but here, it is played in the New York hotel where Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby have an open argument about Gatsby and Daisy's love affair. The song almost at the end of the novel is "Beale Street Blues", and it mirrors Daisy's desperation of the endless waiting for Gatsby in Louisville. It is "summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life" (153). Finally, the last song of *The Great Gatsby* is the generally popular song in 1920's with a Christian theme called "The Rosary" (172) whistled paradoxically by Meyer Wolfsheim, who is a Jew.

## 1.2. Social Issues

The crucial theme of *The Great Gatsby*, which deserves a thorough interpretation, is the way the society works. Fitzgerald was inspired by the actual social situation of the 1920's, which was "the time of the reborn Ku Klux Klan, immigration restriction legislation, and the pseudo-scientific racism" (Slater 53). So it was the time of constant tension between the "natives", as Higham calls white protestant Anglo-Saxon Americans and the new immigrants from Italy, Greece, Ireland, races like Afro-Americans, or members of different churches like Jews or Catholics, as the book *Strangers in the Land* suggests. Anglo-Saxon Americans are in the novel represented mainly by the Buchanan's. Because of "Nick's keen sense of socio-economic status" (Slater 55), we tend to divide the society initially according to financial means, to the upper and lower, and after that according to ethnic and racial diversity. For easier orientation, it is useful to analyse these two viewpoints separately, although they are tightly linked. In *The Great Gatsby* a particular ethnic group is usually related to a particular social status, or more properly, we suppose it should. But, in some cases, it can be otherwise as everything in this novel. A noticeable example is the paradoxical case of George Wilson,

who is, talking about his social status almost at the bottom, but despite this fact, he has a Nordic visage appreciated by the upper class members. He is blue-eyed and fair-haired, which means “thoroughly old stock” and “his very name brings to mind the previous president” (Slater 55). Fitzgerald named, ironically, this poor miserable man after the first man of America, whose social prestige just on the opposite side, on the top.

### 1.2.1. Social Order

Reading *The Great Gatsby* we learn from the very beginning about the social order of the 1920's, which is also known under the term “Tribal Twenties”, coined by the historian John Higham. This term expresses the fundamental principle on which is the society of this novel based. It is divided into several groups. Despite the knotty division of them in real life, for the interpretation of the book mainly two<sup>1</sup> are important. They stand just on the opposite sides and show us the enormous differences in the living conditions in America in the 1920's. At the bottom of the social order is the lower class, in the novel represented mostly by immigrants, the inhabitants of the valley of ashes. On the other side, there is the upper class which consists of the white wealthy protestant Americans of Anglo-Saxon origin living in the USA for more than one generation. As John Higham's book *Strangers in the Land* reveals, they are the so-called natives. In *The Great Gatsby* they are represented mainly by the Buchanans and partly by the Carraways, although the latter ones are not so wealthy. Those “nobles” usually look down with total scorn at the ones who became newly rich, “raised . . . up out of nothing, right out of the gutter” (173) just like Gatsby. These rich Anglo-Saxons were born as members of the upper class and inherited all their position, wealth and respect and as a result they think themselves to be better than the others. Paradoxically, they have forgotten how their ancestors had found their fine family lines – usually from nothing, too, thanks to the hard work, which is by definition the self-made man's way. The self-made man is the “myth stress[ing] the notion that the most important goal [is] individual betterment. This could be achieved by a combination of sustained hard work and strength of character, no matter how obscure one's social origins [are]” (Lena 41). It will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, in connection with Jay Gatsby. This kind of society is comparable to the caste system, which means that it is divided into several strictly separated groups, and it is

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<sup>1</sup> Three social groups, upper class, middle class, and lower class with several subtypes. As Peter Gregg Slater adds in his essay *Ethnicity in The Great Gatsby* in connection with George Wilson: “Some critics place Wilson in the lower class, but as a proprietor, even of a modest and struggling enterprise, he should be considered middle class, but lower middle class”(Slater 61).

highly improbable for an individual to cross their boundaries and get from one to another, from the background with worse conditions to the background with better ones. This fact is in contrast with the basic theory of the American dream as an equal opportunity for everyone, which will be also discussed in the next chapter.

We could find a direct reference to the division of the society already in the first lines of the novel, which shows us undoubtedly the importance of the social topics here. Nick tells us the advice his father gave him: “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had” (7). This simple piece of advice unveils how the whole society in *The Great Gatsby* works. It demonstrates the narrator is probably a part of this upper class, one of those with easier life. Nick definitely confirms this piece of information when he introduces his origin directly: “My family have been prominent, well-to-do people”, “The Carraways are something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we’re descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch”. So at first it could be said for sure that the Carraways are a noble family, people with a high social status, the ruling class. Subsequently, however, he adds that their “actual founder” (8) was his great-uncle who, in fact, sent a different guy instead of himself to the Civil War, so that he had a convenient opportunity to start up a new business and get rich, from which Nick’s whole family benefits until nowadays. The fact that this family is “something of a clan” (8), which should signal a good origin of classy people, is highlighted when he talks about his intention to move to the East and all his aunts and uncles must discuss it and then approve like a kind of council of white Anglo-Saxon elders.

On the other side, there stands the lower class which is represented by the inhabitants of the valley of ashes. The valley of ashes is a “grey” (28) and “dismal” (29) universe, which is more a gloomy wasteland than a quarter suitable for living. It is situated “about half way between West Egg and New York” (28), to which it stands in a huge contrast. The significant character living in this depressed land, whose life could generally represent the whole principle of the tension, based on the immense differences between the lower and upper class, and the unsuccessful attempt to escape the bad living conditions is Myrtle Wilson. She is trying very hard to escape her social class, which she naively thinks will be possible thanks to her love affair with Tom Buchanan. Myrtle is just longing to become someone else, someone like Daisy, to be equal to her. This thought could be clearly seen in the remarkable change in her behaviour when she gets to New York. She is trying to act here like a snobbish upper class lady. For instance, her new way of behaviour is obvious in her reaction to the liftboy’s delay in bringing the ordered ice: “Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders” (37). The lower orders to which she basically belongs to. Unfortunately, her

lover has never found her equal to him or his wife, which is revealed from their argument in the New York flat. It deals with the question whether Myrtle is allowed to mention Daisy's name: "Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!" shouted Mrs. Wilson. 'I'll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Daisy!', Making a short deft movement Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand"(42). Myrtle could never cross the boundaries in the social order despite her attempts, which is hyperbolised by her accidental premature death, symbolically caused in the valley of ashes by Tom's wife in a fancy car speeding towards the Buchanans' luxurious dwelling. In the case of Myrtle Wilson it is evident how the whole principle of crossing the boundaries in *The Great Gatsby* works. It is not possible to get to the upper class and become equal to them, which we will discuss later in relation with Gatsby.

### 1.2.2. Ethnicity

Another important social issue of *The Great Gatsby* is ethnicity. It is grounded in the actual social situation of the 1920's when the United States had to face an immense immigrant wave from Europe and many of Americans held rather strict nationalistic views. Specifically, the concept of Nordicism was widespread. It is defined as "a form of racial nativism" (Decker 53). In other words, it is the idea of the superiority and inferiority of races. Some of the white people are seen as whiter, which means better than the others. This attitude was characteristic of many Americans as we have mentioned above, including Fitzgerald's fictional Tom Buchanan. He admires this idea of a pure white race without miscegenation, as we can clearly see in the first chapter when he is recommending the book "*The Rise of the Coloured Empires*" to Nick: "everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be – will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved". And it is followed by his justification of it: "This idea is that we're Nordics" (19). Many critics<sup>2</sup> believe that Fitzgerald's "*The Rise of the Coloured Empires*" written by someone named Goddard is a direct link to *The Rising Tide of Color* by Lothrop Stoddard written in 1920. Stoddard and Madison Grant, who had written the introduction for this book, like Goddard, emphasize the enormous uniqueness of the Nordic race, of the white man "characterized by a fair white skin, wavy hair with a range of color from dark brown to flaxen, light eyes, tall stature, and long skulls" (Grant 14). They look with total scorn at the other races:

Democratic ideals among an homogeneous population of Nordic blood, as in England or America, is one thing, but it is quite another for the white man to

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<sup>2</sup> For example Peter Gregg Slater in his essay *Ethnicity in The Great Gatsby* or Barbara Will in *The Great Gatsby and the Obscene Word*.

share his blood with, or intrust his ideals to, brown, yellow, black, or red men. This is suicide pure and simple, and the first victim of this amazing folly will be the white man himself (Grant 22).

Alberto Lena claims that the Nordic race, according to Grant and Stoddard, represents the embodiment of “vigour as well as mental and spiritual energies” but in the nature of Tom Buchanan there is a lack of these features. It is a great “irony which serves only to lampoon his apparent power” (Lena 50). The problem of ethnicity is deeply rooted in the whole novel and apart from Tom Buchanan, who keeps his racially intense stands until the end, there are also characters like Nick Carraway, who is not so effortlessly readable, maybe sometimes even problematical to interpret, and we can recognise a development in his views.

Thanks to Nick’s viewpoint, we have the opportunity to witness the whole kaleidoscope of ethnically heterogeneous society in the world of *The Great Gatsby* from the Finnish housekeeper, “a grey, scrawny Italian child” (31) in the valley of ashes, Gatsby’s Jewish business partner Meyer Wolfsheim, the South-Eastern Europeans on the Queensborough Bridge, the Afro-Americans, to the guests at Gatsby’s spectacular parties. Interestingly, we do not get to know the guests of the dazzling parties closely till the beginning of chapter four, despite the fact that Nick has already been at one party, where every new encounter was totally anonymous to us, except one girl named Lucille. In the fourth chapter Nick claims: “I wrote down on the empty spaces of a time-table the names of those who came to Gatsby’s house that summer. It is an old time-table now, disintegrating at its folds” (65). The particular names written on the time-table purposely suggest a possible ethnic origin of Gatsby’s guests– there are people of Irish origin, such as “O’Donavan” or “Fitz-Peters”, Italians like “Da Fontano” or, last but not least, probably Germans (or Jewish-Germans) like “Schwartz” (66). Talking about the prejudices and stereotypes about characters outside the ‘white race’, it is necessary to add that it is definitely not only Tom Buchanan, who holds them. Obviously, Nick has them too, although not nearly so radical, but we could still find them in his narration. According to “Ethnicity in *The Great Gatsby*”, some of Nick’s stereotypes projected towards ethnically different characters are probably identical with Fitzgerald’s own personal attitudes. And here is apparent the blending of the two different narrations – the first one is Nick’s and the second one is the implicit author’s. A significant racist views of Nick’s are the descriptions of Gatsby’s business partner, a Jew, Meyer Wolfsheim. It is mostly negative, since he is presented as “a small, flat-nosed Jew”, “with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril“, with “tiny eyes” (73), he has rather strange cuff buttons made of human molars, and a weird accent (for example, he

pronounces “gonnegtion” (75) instead of connection, “Oggsford” (76) instead of Oxford). The fact that Fitzgerald, apart from the other distinct features, stresses out the slightly different language of Wolfsheim’s is crucial: language is an inseparable part of an ethnic membership and the way of expressing one’s identity. Another key ethnic group stereotyped by Nick, although it appears only twice in the entire novel, are the Afro-Americans. The first scene with them is when “modish Negroes” (73) in a limousine driven by a white chauffeur passing Gatsby and Nick on their way to New York, concretely on the Blackwell Island. Secondly, Nick meets “[a] pale, well-dressed Negro” (143), who saw a yellow car driving away from the crime scene. In both cases, they were paradoxically well-situated. Nick’s reaction to them while they are passing in the limousine can be for the contemporary reader at least strange: “I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry. ‘Anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge,’ I thought; ‘anything at all’ ” (73). However, this first encounter with Afro-Americans is followed by a stereotypical reaction – he bursts out laughing because they are rich. It is explained in the essay “Negroes in the Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald”: “[r]ich Negroes are almost by definition ludicrous” (Forrey 293). Opposed to that, the Afro-American man on the crime scene was not a target of any ridicule at all. It means that Nick looks at him with seriousness as at any other member of the society. Considering that Nick is an eyewitness of the decadence of Anglo-Saxon xenophobic society, which he judges, the fact that he gets rid of his racial prejudices is a logical outcome. He is not longing to be the same as the people who he finds immoral.

## 2. Jay Gatsby

Nick Carraway informs us already at the very beginning of *The Great Gatsby*, which serves as a kind of prologue, about his disappointment with the unfortunate events that happened in the summer of 1922. Despite this fact, he adds promptly that “Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from [his] reaction”, although he firstly declares that he looks at him with total scorn, because he “represented everything” which he treats with disdain. Subsequently, we got to know that Gatsby was, at least for Nick, an exceptional human being and “turned out all right at the end” (Fitzgerald 8). When Nick starts to narrate the main story, we witness several unclear hints, or more properly rumours, about Gatsby. This veils him into a mysterious mist of uncertainty. During the first evening Nick catches a glimpse of him, he says: “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” (27). The obscurity that surrounded Gatsby from the beginning of the story is apparent in this extract. He is a figure hidden in a shadow, hardly perceptible. Relatively long afterwards we become aware of his luxurious property and splendid parties, we know nothing about his personality for sure, his true nature is still hidden in a shadow of whispers. So who is Jay Gatsby? Is he “a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm’s” (37)? A guy who “killed a man” once? “A German spy” (49)? “An Oxford man” (125)? As we get to know later, Jay Gatsby is mainly a naive dreamer, a man pushed by his pure dream. These pieces of information we get cause the tension between the real nature of Gatsby’s, which lies beneath the earthbound exterior called ‘Jay Gatsby’, built mainly upon the spectacular material wealth which should allure his beloved Daisy.

### 2.1. James Gatz

The figure of Jay Gatsby causes in the text a great tension and he is linked with many contradictions. It is crucial to mention his youth since his future development is a result of it. James Gatz was born as the son of “shiftless and unsuccessful farm people” in North Dakota, and was desperately unsatisfied with his origin and social position from his early youth. As a result, he was trying very hard and was focused to reach his dreamed goal. It is all noted in his precise “[s]chedule” and the list of “[g]eneral resolves”. As his father says “Jimmy was bound to get ahead” (Fitzgerald 175). Thanks to his good manners and ambitions, he charmed Dan Cody, at the age of 17, which was the turning point of his life:

It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby, who



borrowed a row-boat, pulled out to the *Tuolomee* and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour. (Fitzgerald 104)

The main point which motivated him here to become a companion of Dan Cody – “the pioneer debauchee” (104), as Nick calls him, is a vision of economic success. We can see it clearly when he saw the Cody’s yacht, a typical symbol of luxury, and became fascinated by it: “[t]o the young Gatz . . . the yacht represented all the beauty and glamour in the world” (103). Therefore, before he meets Daisy, his goal is at first to gain a more prestigious social status that his parents have. James Gatz from North Dakota wants to be as rich and respectable as the people from the upper class. “The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself” (102). It “means [from the awareness] that he deserves to be what he is not, and he needs a fierce determination to become that new self” (Kenner 18). According to an “Introduction to Bloom’s *Modern Critical Interpretations of The Great Gatsby*”, the word “Platonic” should, in American point of view, be replaced by the term “Emersonian” which is the synonym for any “American Platonism” (Bloom 5)<sup>3</sup>. He created, or at least he was trying to create, an ideal successful man. Jay Gatsby became a vision which was born in the fantasy of an immature naive boy. There are particular moments which influenced the way Jay Gatsby was shaped. The first important moment occurred when Cody died: “He was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man” (Fitzgerald 104). The second one, when Gatsby met Daisy in her house in Louisville. He lost his previous ambitions and to be with her became the only goal of his life. Last but not least, Gatsby’s character was immensely influenced by Meyer Wolfsheim, who steps into his life and starts of Gatsby’s fruitful career.

## **2.2. Jay Gatsby – Reality and Illusion**

The character of Jay Gatsby fits perfectly to the whole concept of the novel based on contradictions. He is a man standing constantly on the boarder between the real and unreal world. We can identify these opposites with the tension between the real world and the world of ideas since Fitzgerald provides us with a direct link to Plato. Gatsby is actually unable to live truly in the real material world because he is a product, an idea, of young James’ boyish mind. It means Gatsby is predisposed “to dream instead of to have . . . to rely on the imagination instead of the material world” (Kerr 421). It is an irony indeed that a man surrounded by such an enormous material wealth has no actual connection with it. He does

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<sup>3</sup> Stuart Gerry Brown in his essay “Emerson’s Platonism” provides thorough analysis of this issue

not enter his own “lavish Long Island parties”, since they “seem[ing] to him significant or relevant only insofar as they related to his regaining [of Daisy’s] love” (Steinbrink 163), or does not use his own possessions like the swimming pool, for example, which can be interpreted as one of the symbols of luxury. He does not even drink alcohol, although his business is built on it.

Young Jimmy dreamed every night before he fell asleep, he “added to the pattern of his fancies” and “[f]or a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy’s wing” (103). Fitzgerald, using a rich figurative language, provides us with a masterful description of Jimmy’s conception of the world which is in fact as fragile as a “fairy’s wing” (103). Unfortunately, it is also proved by Nick’s commentary after the tragic night when Gatsby is humiliated by Daisy’s rejection and unconcern and still he is faithfully waiting in front of her house: “Jay Gatsby’ had broken up like glass” (150). This extract suggests how the exterior conception “‘Jay Gatsby’” (150) can be easily damaged. Moreover, Fitzgerald used quotation marks to highlight the unreliability of Jay Gatsby because he has always been a living image of the 17-year-old James Gatz. The information about James’ dreaming awake creates another irony (although a minor one), due to the fact that most of the people dream while sleeping.

Another crucial moment that gives us a clear evidence of the tension between the real, the unreal, and of the fragility of Gatsby’s imagined world happens in his Gothic oak library during the first one of Gatsby’s parties Nick is invited to. Here Nick and Jordan Baker meet a man “with enormous owl-eyed spectacles” sitting, drinking, and pondering about their host’s collection of books:

‘What do you think?’ he demanded impetuously.

‘About what?’

He waved his hand toward the bookshelves.

‘About that. As a matter of fact you needn’t bother to ascertain. I ascertained.

They’re real.’

‘The books?’

He nodded.

‘Absolutely real have pages and everything. I thought they’d be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they’re absolutely real’ (50).

It shows the Owl Eyes’ astonishment of the real books, he expected the opposite. As we know, the splendid parties are thrown just to allure and amaze Daisy, they are a kind of

artificial amusement, made only for the effect, not because Gatsby is really keen on them. This extract hints that the Owl Eyes is aware of the artificiality of the parties, and of the illusion known under the name Jay Gatsby. He also points out the instability of his host's reality: "He snatched the book from me and replaced it hastily on its shelf muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse" (51). Although this guest is one of the minor characters, we do not even know his name, he is the key person who comments on the tension between reality and illusions in *The Great Gatsby*. He appears only three times in the story – firstly, in the library at the party, as it has been just mentioned. Secondly, after this party outside Gatsby's house when he and his companion have a car crash, which is undoubtedly a reference to the fatal future events. And finally, at Gatsby's funeral. He is the only one from all those hundreds or thousands of people using and abusing Gatsby's generous hospitality who comes to say a final farewell to him.

Another aspect creating the tension between what is real and what is not is the fact that Gatsby lives in a myth of "renewal" (Steinbrink 157), more properly in a misinterpretation of it, as Steinbrink's article reveals. This myth is rooted in the American history. Concretely, in the Puritan settler's vision of a better New World which was often meant to be the New Jerusalem, a blessed place where they could give up their past, no matter how it had been, and start their life again in a better way. But "the possibilities of spiritual regeneration in a boundless New World were fatally diminished by the closing of the frontier" (Steinbrink 158) in 1890. Although living after the closing, Gatsby is one of those who still believe in it. But, as Steinbrinck suggests, he partly twisted the whole conception of starting anew and moving forward, due to the fact, he is stuck in the past and unable to move on:

'You can't repeat the past.'

'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously.

'Why of course you can!'

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand (Fitzgerald 114).

Steinbrinck also proclaims that Fitzgerald provides us with a great contradiction – on the one hand, we can find in *Gatsby* the idea that to accomplish our goals in the myth of renewal is unachievable and leads inevitably to the tragic consequences. But on the other hand, we should never give up the hope since the possible better future could be ahead – "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (183).

### 2.3. American Dream

The conception of the American dream is rooted deeply in American history, although the term itself was not coined until 1931 by the American historian James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America*. We find the source of this idea in the first Puritan settlers' vision of a better New World, better than the "sinful Europe" (Stiuliuc 365). Basically, America used to be considered "an embodiment of a paradise on earth" (Stiuliuc 363). The American dream is a complex and ambiguous concept which can be seen from many points of view and therefore interpreted in a wide range of different ways. The book *The American Dream* written by Jim Cullen points out some of those ways, or more precisely, types of the American dream. But to avoid misunderstandings, it is necessary to add that more than separate types (as it is perceived in this book), it is appropriate to consider them in a broader context since all of them sprang from the one Puritan legacy. Although, they are sometimes more or less transformed, maybe even twisted. We can consider them as kinds of subtypes or "versions" indisputably linked to the one original idea. Cullen distinguishes the first one as the Pilgrim's American dream based on a religious vision of New Jerusalem, City upon a Hill, the place of new fresh beginning, land of opportunity. The second subtype is identified with the thoughts of the Declaration of Independence, with its essential notion of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which should guarantee the equality among people, although they are "terms no less ambiguous and no less mythic than the phrase "American dream" itself" (Schudson 566). In the following chapter he talks about the "upward mobility" of a man, which is the concept of the self-made man. Other chapters deal with the American dream as the longing for social equality, ownership or gold rush, and West coast immigration sprung from it. For the character of Jay Gatsby are crucial three of these subtypes of the American Dream– Puritan legacy, equality, and the myth of the self-made man. But we should not omit the connection of the above mentioned West coast immigration, which means the moving of the Frontier westward, since Gatsby lives on the West Egg and claims that his family is from San Francisco.

*The Great Gatsby* is inseparably linked with the American dream and especially with the criticism of the "corruption of that dream in industrial America" (Fussell 291). The unique concept of the American dream splits in the novel into two different understandings. The first one is the original one, the hope for something better, which corresponds to Gatsby's own understanding. Fitzgerald shows us "his appreciation for what is inherently beautiful in the American dream – hope and vision" (Hearne 191). Both are represented by the "green light at the end of Daisy's dock" (Fitzgerald 182). And the second concept twists this fundamental

idea to nothing more but pure chase for economic prosperity. Nick compares Gatsby's wonder when he first saw the green light with the wonder of Dutch sailors when they had seen the New World. Fitzgerald shows us the demoralisation of such an essentially good and major idea of the true American dream, by a spoilt and superficial high society. Additionally, he highlights it by Gatsby's death. It is an irony that the only innocent (in the context of the Dream) character in novel has to die to show us directly, however brutally, the "futility and emptiness" (Davies 188) of the major interpretation of the Dream. Gatsby stands in the novel as "personifications of America and the American dream" (Watkins 250). America was built upon the same principle as James Gatz created the figure of 'Jay Gatsby', both have risen from ideas, images. But Gatsby in his nature unites what is pure and innocent in the idea of America and the Dream but also shows us the ambiguity of these thoughts. Fitzgerald does not leave out here that he is, on the other hand, a mysterious man, linked to the underworld. His illegal activities are proved by the "business connection" (Fitzgerald 75) with Meyer Wolfsheim. He also bribes the police, which he in fact confesses to Nick on their way to New York: "I was able to do the commissioner a favour once, and he sends me a Christmas card every year" (72). Thanks to this 'favour' he is not stopped and fined for speeding even if he drives really fast, and furthermore, the "frantic policeman" finally makes an apology to him. Gatsby is a man who is, at first sight, not sufficient enough for such a significant quest as standing for the American dream, he takes on the role, nevertheless.

### **2.3.1. Jay Gatsby as the Self-made Man**

As it has been said, the self-made man is the "myth stress[ing] the notion that the most important goal [is] individual betterment. This could be achieved by a combination of sustained hard work and strength of character, no matter how obscure one's social origins [are]" (Lena 41). According to this definition, Jay Gatsby is undoubtedly a self-made man. His hard working on himself and also in his business, no matter if it is legal or not, has surpassed to the greatness and it is indisputably rooted in this concept. Floyd C. Watkins in his essay "Fitzgerald's Jay Gatz and Young Ben Franklin", and many other literary critics, compare Gatsby to Benjamin Franklin, which is understandable, due to the fact that Franklin is generally regarded as the first American self-made man. The man who was able to gain everything (economic success, fame, political power) from the very low conditions thanks to his best endeavour. Jay's peculiarity and discipline, clear from his youth, can be easily compared with Franklin's because he had also been writing a list of "moral virtues" and daily schedule for the self-improvement. Gatsby was trying to improve mainly his personality

(“Read one improving book or magazine per week”), his manners (“Be better to parents”, “No more smoking or chewing”, his knowledge (“Study electricity, etc”, “Study needed inventions”), his abilities (“Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it”), but also his physical condition (“Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling”, “Baseball and sports”), and, last but not least, his appearance (“Bath every other day”). It shows the exceptionality of this character for some of his features are based on such an important figure of the American history as Benjamin Franklin. It is proved not only by the form of the schedule itself but also by the concrete lines, for example the one about “Study electricity, etc”(175) gives us a direct link to Franklin. Jay Gatsby is on the one hand a typical American self-made man based on the virtues of the honourable Benjamin Franklin, but on the other, he is probably “a bootlegger” as some “young ladies”(65) claim in chapter four. This is also addressed by Tom Buchanan in his first party at Gatsby’s in the sixth chapter, when he speaks with Nick:

‘Who is this Gatsby anyhow?’ demanded Tom suddenly. ‘Some big bootlegger?’

‘Where’d you hear that?’ I inquired.

‘I didn’t hear it. I imagined it. A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know.’

‘Not Gatsby,’ I said shortly (111).

He also goes back to this topic of conversation in hotel Plaza, before his and Gatsby’s argument. Moreover, as it is clear from the conversation above, Nick is persuaded about the opposite. Nevertheless, it is certain that Gatsby got rich from some illegal stuff and alcohol business, which looks probable in the years of prohibition. It must be some criminal affairs because he never wants to talk about them openly. It is proved by the conversation between Nick and Jay after Jay’s first appointment with Daisy at Nick’s house. Gatsby proudly enjoys a view to his mansion from Nick’s garden and confesses unthinkingly that it has taken him only three years to earn enough money for it. This piece of information denies the information he provides to Nick during their first trip to New York. He says there that he has inherited lots of money, not earned. This tension between what is true and what is nothing more than a pure lie, makes Nick note immediately: “I think he hardly knew what he was saying, for when I asked him what business he was in he answered: That’s my affair,’ before he realized that it wasn’t appropriate reply.” And in a while he adds: “Oh, I’ve been in several things . . . I was in the drug business and then I was in the oil business” (94). We can see here his regained strict self-control and effort to remain the ideal ‘Jay Gatsby’ in Daisy’s eyes. Last, but not least, his illegal affairs are proved by his tight links to his business associate, Meyer

Wolfsheim (a commonly known criminal), who, according to his own words, “made him”, “[r]aised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter” (173) after the war. After Gatsby’s death, Fitzgerald reveals that Wolfsheim “is the creator of Gatsby’s wealth, the puppet master”(Davies 188). As Wolfsheim adds: “I saw right away that he was a fine-appearing, gentlemanly young man, and when he told me he was an Oggsford I knew I could use him good”(173). It might seem paradoxical that Gatsby as a self-made man can be seen only as a product of Meyer Wolfsheim. Frankly said, he helped him to become a wealthy man, yes. But indeed, it will be never possible without his great manners, neat look, and mainly, his “extraordinary gift for hope” (Fitzgerald 8) pushing him onwards.

#### **2.4. Jay Gatsby’s Social Status**

*The Great Gatsby* is mainly a social novel and so its fundamental issue is the incongruity of the American 1920’s society, mirrored in this novel. As it has been already stressed in the previous chapter of this bachelor thesis, the society is strictly divided into several groups and there is no chance for an individual to get to the group with higher living standard that someone else was born into, and become its equal member. In fact, this social system is generally based on immobility, although it should work on equality, considering the idea of the American dream. Jay Gatsby is the self-made man who crosses these boundaries between the lower and the upper class, or more precisely is trying to do so with his newly earned money. But ironically, most of the posh visitors of Gatsby’s breathtaking parties who are fascinated by his mysterious personality, would never fully accept someone as different as Gatsby. He is fatally different due to his original social class and his very nature. We can see it in comparison of his “extraordinary gift for hope” (8) with empty lives “absent[t] of all desire” (Fitzgerald 18) of the upper class members, represented in this case by Daisy and Jordan.

As a young soldier, Gatsby is aware that for gaining Daisy’s love, he desperately needs to upgrade his old self and become a person with a high social status. This is the reason why he made up an appealing (as he thinks) profile of his life. Although Nick has already met Gatsby several times, we are more informed about his outlandish neighbour during their trip to New York in chapter four, when Gatsby introduces himself more thoroughly: “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” (69) Obviously, he tries to astonish Nick since he emphasizes the legacy of his noble ancestors. It signals his alleged fine family line which is a piece of information so

important for the upper class members, such as the Buchanans or the Caraways, as Nick directly mentions at the very beginning of the novel. He also mentions his inheritance consisted of “a good deal of money”, his travels around the whole Europe, and his war decorations. Purposely, he is not concrete about his family, he only says that he is the son of “some wealthy people”. But who exactly? He also claims that his family line comes from Middle West, but from where exactly? This is the question which Nick also finds appropriate: “What part of the Middle West? I inquired casually. ‘San Francisco’ ”. (69)

Except that San Francisco is not part of the Middle West, it is definitely the West Coast. It shows a piece of evidence of Gatsby’s unreliability. The unreliability of which Nick is also aware since he has a suspicion Gatsby “was pulling [his] leg”. But Gatsby could be sometimes very persuasive, thanks to “a glance at him” so he “convinced [Nick] otherwise” (69). On the other hand, Gatsby does not forget to provide the concrete place where he was educated and it is not accidentally one of the most prestigious universities in the world – Oxford. As he confesses to Tom and to the others (Daisy, Jordan, and Nick) during their stay in the New York Plaza hotel: “We could go to any of the universities in England or France” (132), after the First World War, but without any doubt he, certainly on purpose, chooses England for it is a homeland of the Anglo-Saxons, privileged in America by the upper class members. To understand his choice, it is necessary to mention again the idea of superiority and inferiority of races, which is discussed in the first chapter of this bachelor thesis. Anglo-Saxonism is mentioned by Tom Buchanan in the first chapter of *The Great Gatsby* in connection with the book “*The Rise of the Coloured Empires*” (19) and with the Nordic race. According to Tom Buchanan, Gatsby is nothing more than “Mr Nobody from Nowhere” (133). This puts a stress on Gatsby’s, for Tom inadequate, social class. Thus, this statement is followed by the graduation of his anger, he “quickly converts his assault into a racial one by associating Gatsby with miscegenation” (Slater 54) “between black and white” (Fitzgerald 133). Here is a great divergence between Tom’s and Nick’s viewpoint on Gatsby. Since Nick at the end of the novel compares “Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock” (182) with the wonder of the Dutch sailors when they firstly landed on the shores of the New World. To make it clear, he relates Gatsby and the Dutchmen, one of the ancestors of modern Americans who are regarded due to their Nordic origin with an immense respect by the upper class, so it means also by the racially, socially and religiously xenophobic Tom Buchanan.

Gatsby is surely aware of the fact that the noble family, war achievements, and prestigious education would not be enough if he lacks a noticeable material wealth, which Daisy, an



upper class girl, could admire. Like his European education, most of his property implicates somehow European tradition and noble history, it serves again for improving his status. So he has bought a mansion at West Egg which was, according to Nick, built ten years before he met Gatsby by a “[b]rewer” who tried to “Found a Family” there. Fitzgerald surely uses the capitalization to highlight that it was not suppose to be an ordinary family but nothing less than a noble clan, an aristocratic-like. Unfortunately, it is an irony that his children sold the mansion immediately after his death, as it is written in the novel: “with the black wreath still on the door” (92). The enormous house is “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”. The expression “Hôtel de Ville” (11) means in French literally a city hall, so Gatsby has probably intended this dwelling will be a suitable manifestation of his ‘noble ancestral roots’, his wealth, and assure him more respect. Nick regards it as “a colossal affair by any standards” (11). But unfortunately it “represents a naive effort to transplant European architectural and decorative tastes into an American setting, where they look hopelessly artificial and out of context” (Chandler 218). We can see these efforts in “Marie Antoinette music-rooms and Restoration salons” (Fitzgerald 94) as well as in his “high Gothic library, panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported completely from some ruin overseas” (50). The term “Gothic” must be here a reminder of an old and European library, due to the fact, that America definitely did not pass through the Gothic era. Nick has the same opinion as we can see in the last clause quoted. Crucial information is that the library is made from “English oak” which is one of the tokens of Gatsby’s deliberate Anglo-Saxon origin. Paradoxically, Jay Gatsby, the owner of this luxury has “the simplest room of all” which shows that he himself is detached from all this around him.

### **3. Daisy Buchanan**

Literary critics have different views of who the character of Daisy Buchanan, the main female character of *The Great Gatsby*, is based on. Some of them claim that Fitzgerald was inspired by the personality his first love, Ginevra King, as Scott Donaldson states in the essay “Possessions and Character in *The Great Gatsby*”. On the other hand, David Stuart Davies in the “Afterword” to *The Great Gatsby* holds probably the most common opinion that her character is inspired by Fitzgerald’s ‘femme fatale’, his wife Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald. “She broke off her engagement to him when he was a struggling writer, but after his first novel . . . was a runaway success, she came back to him and they were married.” Fitzgerald just “had to earn her love” (Davies, 187). This is exactly the same case with Gatsby – he tries to “earn [Daisy’s] love”, to astonish her with every accessible material wealth he can gain. Finally, the third viewpoint considers that the model for Daisy were both Ginevra and Zelda. For instance, Richard Lenah holds this opinion in his essay “*The Great Gatsby* – The Text as Construct: Narrative Knots and Narrative Unfolding”. Both were upper class and they refused Fitzgerald for his lower order and insufficient financial means. This experience surely helped Fitzgerald to create Daisy Fay Buchanan just the way she is – representing two different spheres or worlds, the romantic one created by generally positive features and the negative, mainly the material one. The romantic part of her nature springs probably from Fitzgerald’s love to Ginevra and Zelda, and the material world is based on his unfortunate experiences with unrequited love in these relationships. Daisy can be identified with “the flower she is named for”. She is also “white on the outside (her clothing, her white roadster, her ‘white girlhood’) but yellow within” (Settle 117). The white colour is in the European American culture symbol of innocence, purity, and positive features in general. On the other hand, the yellow colour is for sure the symbol of wealth since it is the colour of gold. In consideration of her personality, it symbolises greed, selfishness, an overwhelming materialistic approach to the world, and corruption. Apparently, she is both either positive or negative character. Therefore, Daisy is another character who is built upon the tension. She is stuck between the two worlds and so she is ambiguous.

#### **3.1. An Innocent Golden Girl**

Nick firstly meets Daisy in the novel while she and Jordan Baker are lying on the sofa in the Buchana’s living room. Here they give an impression of ethereal beings, dresses up in white and swaying in the summer breeze like curtains till Tom destroys everything by a merciless closing of the window. We can see that Daisy is from the beginning a romantic and

tender character associated with the white colour of daisy's petals. Another proof of her romantic nature that Nick witnesses is set up the same evening during the dinner when she comments eagerly on the "very romantic outdoors" with the singing nightingale. Actually, she can be compared to the nightingale here because her voice also sings as the bird's: "It's romantic, isn't it Tom?" (21). Although when he answers her, it is clear that he is keen on something totally different than the singing bird outside. It shows the contrast between these two characters. Daisy can be proclaimed an innocent victim in their relationship since Tom substantially hurts her either emotionally or physically. Already very soon after their wedding, he had cheated on her with some chambermaid and then with Myrtle Wilson, who calls him home even in Daisy's presence. When talking about the physical pain he causes Daisy, it should be mentioned that in the first chapter he hurts her finger, probably unconsciously, nevertheless, he still does and she accuses him of being a bully.

There are other traces symbolizing her purity and tender nature, such as her white Roadster she used to have as an unmarried girl, and the white dresses she used to wear and still wears in 1922. Daisy as a gentle being is also linked with the flowers since they have similar attributes, which is pointed out by her name. Reading the novel, there are several different kinds of flowers holding its own symbolic meaning. We can find there roses, which surrounds her house, lavenders, hawthorns and many others. But the most interesting ones are the less common flower kiss-me-at-the-gate, which Daisy sees in Gatsby's garden and it symbolizes his desire to kiss her, to renew their previous relationship. And secondly, it is necessary to mention the orchids, which symbolise her nature since they are as beautiful and precious as she is, affordable only for the upper class. Flowers are present not only in her company, but they are also used as metaphors explaining her frame of mind. Nick states that she: "open[s] up . . . in a flower-like way" (26) or that "she blossomed for [Gatsby] like a flower" (115). It is obvious why Gatsby has lavender shirts and other flower-like colours and decorates Nick's house and his mansion with a breathtaking amount of flowers before her arrival. He longs to amaze Daisy by remembering her their happy time in Louisville full of orchids, and therefore to be closer to the romantic part of her nature.

There is a huge contrast between all the white colour, on the one hand, and vivid flower-like colours, on the other, associated to Daisy since she probably has a dark hair. It is necessary to use the word 'probably' because Fitzgerald provides us puzzling facts about it. When he first mentions her hair colour, she has "blue" (89) hair. It means a dark black hair since only this colour can have a blue shade in a certain light. But then Daisy herself states about her baby girl having "old yellowy hair" (120) and that they have the same hair. Last but

not least, we get to know that Gatsby “kissed her dark shining hair” (Fitzgerald, 152). These confusing descriptions emphasize the inner tension in the character of Daisy.

We can consider the Buchanans as the main antagonists of *The Great Gatsby*. As we know, Fitzgerald introduces Daisy and her family already in the first chapter, when Nick Carraway visits them in their mansion on the “fashionable East Egg”. Then he says: “the history of the summer really begins on [that] evening” (Fitzgerald 11), which is a claim of a high importance, since the starting point for all of the following events ending with two tragic deaths Nick dates to the dinner at Buchanans’ and not to any other place and time. In the seventh chapter, which means almost at the end of the novel, Nick mentions the dinner at the beginning of the summer again. The place where Nick in sees Daisy for the first time becomes, after three months, also the last. The story line is cyclically built and well-arranged. At the end of the summer, just after the car accident, Nick sees Daisy at the dinner with Tom keenly talking to her, touching her hand, and she obviously agrees with whatever he is talking about, while Gatsby is patiently waiting for her visit or at least a phone call. For Nick, they are the embodiment of “what foul dust floated in the wake of [Gatsby’s] dreams”. Apparently Nick blames them for everything bad. As he discloses at the beginning of the novel “Gatsby turned out all right at the end” (8), he hints the opposite with the Buchanans. He points directly to their rich, selfish world. He speaks about them and their moving after the wedding, he says that they “drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together” (12). It reveals so much about their life and their priority – being rich. One may object that Daisy is not the same as Tom, which is true, but they share the interest in a comfortable wealthy life.

Talking about Daisy herself, she is a posh woman, used to a high living standard since her childhood. Before she got married she used to live in the most beautiful mansion with “the largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns” (78) in the whole Louisville. She fell in love with the soldier Jay Gatsby, who, unfortunately, had to go overseas, but it did not last long and she married a wealthy but self-centred and rough Tom Buchanan. Before their wedding, held with “more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before”, he “gave her a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars” (80). We can observe how enormously rich he is, which she appreciates. Jordan Baker says to Nick how much Daisy was in love with her husband, although she at one point wanted to cancel the wedding because of Gatsby. It proves that she genuinely loves Gatsby, or once loved, but a well-being in her rich world means more than their relationship for her. And even Gatsby is aware of this part of her nature, but still he loves her. We can see it when he speaks to Tom:

“She only married you because I was poor” (133). Daisy is just a real “golden girl” (123). For purpose to highlight her greed, Fitzgerald created a great amount of hints and metaphors pointing to the wealth. She is “gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor” (152). Important is also the discussion between Nick and Gatsby on her voice: “Her voice is full of money, he said suddenly. That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money – that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it” (123). Finally, we can mention the small but reliable detail when she provides Tom at the party the “gold pencil” (110) for noting addresses.

### **3.2. Daisy and Gatsby**

Daisy and Gatsby met in Daisy’s native town, Louisville. “[S]he was the first ‘nice girl’ he had ever known”. The term “nice girl” can be here interpreted as a classy girl from a fine family. She was someone unbelievably unreachable for him, far from girls he used to know, and thus attractive. He knew that he was “in Daisy’s house by a colossal accident” (150) because her world was so far from his. Though he never told her that he was a rich man, she probably thought so and “he let her believe” (151). We can assume he felt flattered that such a wealthy girl was interested in him. As it revealed he was not entirely honest with her. On the contrary, she is also dishonest when she holds out his hopes of their love after their reunion in 1922, although, she never has intentions to abandon Tom. Crucially, it is impossible to distinguish if Daisy is an innocent “victim” (Person 250), who is not able to fulfil the immensity of Gatsby’s dreams, or just a kind of a careless woman, as Nick claims, who tricks Gatsby, since she is a combination of both.

Gatsby began his love affair with Daisy in a rather superficial way. Firstly, he did not introduce himself in detail, although he was conscious of the key differences between their social origin and also how were the relationships among the members of different social classes perceived in the 1920’s. He was probably looking for an anonymous entertainment, a distraction as the other soldiers used to do before going to Europe. However, this case was different as opposed to what he had ever presumed before, since he fell in love with her. Secondly, it is interesting that it was not Daisy herself, as a young beautiful girl and a human being, who became the first object of his desire. Jay was tempted by her house, a symbol of the wealth and social status of the Fay family. He was simply astonished by the house which “had always seemed to him more mysterious and gay than other houses so his idea of [Louisville] itself, even though she was gone from it, was pervaded with a melancholy beauty” (154). Later on, is also the same house where he desperately wants to go back lives

there with Daisy happily. Furthermore, he is attracted to Daisy, due to the fact that “many men had already loved her – it increased her value in his eyes” (Fitzgerald 150), as if she was a kind of a challenge, a peak, he had to achieve, not just an ordinary woman deserving love. This interpretation is more convincing if we take into account Gatsby’s over-ambitious nature. After the party in chapter six, he expresses his deep disappointment that Daisy does not have fun. He complains that she does not appreciate him enough as she used to. After this, Nick goes through his narration back into the past and explains that Gatsby have surrendered all his previous ambitions and dreams for Daisy, or more so, aimed them towards her. And Gatsby was aware of the fact that “when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God” but despite his reasonable objections, he kissed her. “[S]he blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete”. It signals that this moment is a significant milestone for both of them. The expression “incarnation” (115) as an embodiment stands for the immense vision of the American dream projected from this moment onto Daisy. His whole being became focused only on her. This information is already hinted in Nick’s narration before, when he says that “the rock of [Gatsby’s] world was founded securely on a fairy’s wing” (Fitzgerald 103). Analysing her family name ‘Fay’, it is more than possible that it means “‘fairy’ (‘faie’ denoting elf or enchantress in Middle English)” (Settle 117). This makes then a clear sense – everything in his life from the moment of “incarnation” (115) onwards is depended on Daisy Fay, on a fragile fairy. In the romantic scene, mentioned above, when they kissed for the first time, we get a strong impression of Daisy as someone fragile and tender, with her “white face”, the metaphor comparing her to a blossoming flower, and with her surname, of course. That night in October, Gatsby had stolen her kisses and her heart. Despite the fact, he knew that he “had no real right to touch her hand” (151). With this commentary, it all looks as a kind of violent act – he did something, knowing it was forbidden for him and Daisy had no idea about a real state of affair. Under these circumstances, she must be proclaimed an innocent victim.

Another problem in *The Great Gatsby* is revealed when “the dream embodied” and the “mortality has set in” (Hochman 31). Before the “incarnation” (Fitzgerald 115) Gatsby’s dream has been just a vision which could not be captured, but after that, it is Daisy who holds the whole weight of his world. Daisy is nothing but a human and this is the key point in the story predestining the future tragedy. Although she is happy about meeting him again she refuses to abandon Tom: “‘Oh you want too much!’ she cried to Gatsby. ‘I love you now – isn’t that enough?’ ” (135). It proves that it is unbearable for one woman to impersonate the

whole dream and so “Daisy’s reputed failure of Gatsby is inevitable; no woman, no human being, could ever approximate the platonic ideal he has invented” (Person 251). The novel provides several proofs for supporting this attitude. But the most convincing one is presented by Nick in chapter five after Daisy’s and Gatsby’s reunion: “Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything” (Fitzgerald 99).

On the other hand, Daisy significantly manipulates with people around and so with Gatsby, mainly by her compelling voice and its “murmurous tricks” (108), as Nick calls them. Her voice is her means of manipulation since she is a “classical Siren” (Settle 115) tempting people, mainly men. Hardly anybody is immune to it which is proved by following quotation: “Daisy’s voice got us to our feet and out onto the blazing gravel drive” (122). Nick states this in chapter seven before all of the Buchanans’ guests, Nick, Gatsby, and Jordan, leave East Egg for going to New York’s Plaza hotel. It means that her voice is powerful enough to influence the plans of everybody invited. She enjoys the time with Gatsby mainly because she is bored and needs some distraction in her rich but empty life. The fact of needing a distraction is proved by her own complaints about how tedious her life is because she has already “been everywhere and seen everything and done everything” (23). Gatsby is capable of doing extraordinary things if he has even the slightest suspicion that she will appreciate it. Firstly, he makes big money, bought a luxury mansion, car, shirts, holds the splendid dances and fires all his servants to avoid rumours after the party Daisy did not enjoy, so “the whole caravanserai had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes.” (117) She abuses Gatsby, which is hyperbolized and definitely proven when he takes her guilt of the Myrtle hit-and-run accident on himself and consequently dies for it. And Daisy, together with Tom, “retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness” (181). After the murder of Gatsby, and despite Nick’s opposite expectations, she never calls to ask what is going on, sends a flower or attends the funeral, which is heartless. As if she did not love Gatsby. That is the important question whether she does or does not love him since she behaves this way. She literally states her feelings in chapter seven: “‘You know I love you’, she murmured”. It is interesting that Fitzgerald uses the verb “murmured” (119) to express the tone of her voice since it probably hints to the “murmurous tricks” (108) of her voice, and so to her manipulative nature. Later, in Plaza hotel when Gatsby is making her to confer to Tom about their affair and the fact she leaves him, “[s]he hesitated. Her eyes fell on Jordan and [Nick] with a sort of appeal, as though she realized at last what she was doing – and as though she

had never, all along, intended doing anything at all” (135). So it is clear that she has never planned to abandon Tom.

### **3.3. King’s Daughter – Daisy and Society**

It has been stated several times that Daisy is undoubtedly an upper class girl. Taking her status into consideration her social status, she must have a prestigious Anglo-Saxon origin. She is “the king’s daughter” (123) as Nick claims. This quote refers to an aristocratic-like social system in 1920’s America, which opposed the original idea of the first American settlers about the equality among people. Her good origin is known for sure from the beginning of the novel, although, when Tom, in the first chapter, speaks about the superior race, he labels everyone in the room as Nordic but “he included Daisy with a slight nod” only “[a]fter an infinitesimal hesitation” (19). The book *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* provides us with a possible clarification of this scene. He defines what the “whiteness” means for Tom. Tom “operates through a rigid system of inclusion and exclusion, one threatened by ethnic difference and femininity alike; in order for the category to sustain itself, it must exclude anyone who isn't ‘quite’ identifiable” (Will 141). One might object, without any doubts, Tom labelled incongruously Jordan as the Nordic. It is probably linked with the fact that in *The Great Gatsby* Daisy embodies the pure feminine principle, but Jordan has strong boyish features like her body shape. The main irony in connection with Daisy and social issues is the fact that she is, or at least genuinely once was, in love with Jay Gatsby, a man from the lower class, and she was not aware of that because his status was hidden under “the invisible cloak of his uniform” (Fitzgerald 151).

The Buchanans live on the East Egg which serves as the opposite to the West Egg where Gatsby and Nick live. Fitzgerald provides us here –with the contrast between the world of so-called old money of high class living on the East Egg and the world of the new millionaires located on the West Egg. To make a proper impression on the reader about the extreme richness of the East Egg, Nick uses expressions somehow linked with gold, like “[t]he front was . . . glowing now with reflected gold” (12), and its qualities such as the word “glittered” (11). They are two microcosms standing, in the first case, for the East coast of The United States and, in the second, for the West coast. East coast commonly represents a more conservative, traditional way of thinking linked to the early European-American history. Conversely, West coast symbolizes the myth of the crossing of the Frontier, the concept of the self-made man, which have been discussed in the previous chapter in connection with Gatsby, and more freethinking space. Nick comments on the differences among the inhabitants of the



East and the West already in the first chapter during the dinner at Buchnans. He compares the Eastern emotionless and reserved behaviour with the people from the West “where an evening was hurried from phase to phase towards its close” (18). Also Jordan Baker proves the difference between East and West. Concretely by her short commentary on Tom’s speech about the racial superiority. She teases him that he “ought to live [with Daisy] in California” (19), with their conservative and xenophobic statements.

Tom and Daisy’s luxurious mansion is built in “Georgian colonial” (12) “style that dates back to the American Revolution to evoke a long history of American gentility” (Chandler 224) and therefore of the Buchanan’s family. In comparison with Gatsby’s house, according to *Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction*, it does not put stress to French aspects. Here is necessary to slightly disagree with this statement, thus their house, though in Georgian colonial style, also contains European components such as “French windows” and “Italian garden” (Fitzgerald 13) which causes a tension.

In the first chapter, it may seem that Daisy is not really as keen on the idea of superiority and inferiority of races as Tom is, moreover, she ridicules him. But she is firmly aware of her privileged position. We can see it when she tells Nick a story of their butler’s nose disorder. It is a consequence of his previous job in New York, where he had to daily polish a large silver service “from morning till night” presumably with some chemical substance. It shows how the enormous fortune destroys people, either the rich or the poor as the butler. Surprisingly, she narrates a tragedy of the man “enthusiastically” (20), unsympathetically with no regret. Thus Daisy’s views on the lower classes are clear from the beginning of the novel, she really does not care. This information about her is hyperbolised at Nick’s house, when he goes back to the butler’s story and she has no idea what he is talking about as if she had not ever heard about it before. On one occasion, she says to Nick that she was “pretty cynical about everything” (23). Therefore, she has probably experienced some great disappointment which can partially explain her behaviour. Another evidence showing Daisy is a real member of her class with all their prejudices. We can find traces of these prejudices in her reaction to Gatsby’s party she visits with Tom. Although Gatsby is trying to amaze her by interesting famous people like producers, actresses, and directors, she does not enjoy it, “except for the half-hour she’d been alone with Gatsby” (110).

But the rest offended her— and inarguably, because it wasn’t a gesture but an emotion. She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented ‘place’ that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village – appalled by this raw vigour that chafed under the old 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 (111).

We can see that Nick, who judges Daisy for being careless at the end of the novel, sympathizes with her in this case because he is aware of the fact, how strange West Egg must be for her. It is a completely different world and she really does not belong there. Merely to maintain Gatsby's prestige in front of Tom, she pretends to have fun.

## Conclusion

Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* is thought to be one of the greatest American works of fiction. Probably this is not because of its rather ordinary plot, but because of its masterly elaborated means for creating a unique atmosphere, the characters, and the fact that the novel is a deep social psychological insight into the 1920's society. Although this novel tends to be interpreted from lots of different viewpoints, the goal of this bachelor thesis was to deal with *The Great Gatsby* as a novel built up on contradictions. Since Fitzgerald created here a fictional world packed with paradoxes, ironies or at least tensions between the pieces of information which offers to the reader.

In the first chapter of this thesis, there is the world of *The Great Gatsby* introduced as the world of paradoxes in general. Initially, I pointed out how the whole system of paradoxes works. Then I focused on the mood which is created in the novel. On one hand, there are intimate lyrical scenes, like the one with Daisy and Jordan as calm ethereal beings waving in the breeze in the living room at Buchanans, opposed to that, there is the vivid rhythm of Gatsby's dazzling parties. But we had to mention that the first romantic scene does not last long since it is interrupted by the rough Tom Buchanan who closes the window. And the party scenes are not so gay as they seem, since many of the guests feel miserable inside, like the crying singer. We can see that both, calm lyrical scenes or vivid parties created not only contrast themselves, furthermore, they are consisted of several other contradictions. Therefore, it revealed the complex system of contradictions developed within contradictions. Similar aspects can be found also elsewhere.

After that, this thesis discussed all of the pieces of music mentioned in the novel, of course in relation to the story and paradoxes. To introduce the whole universe of *The Great Gatsby* in a sufficient way, we must not forget to mention the topic of the society since it is mainly the social novel. Fitzgerald built up his vision of society on the actual social situation of the 1920's. It was a problematic decade talking mainly about the racism of the protestant Anglo-Saxon Americans towards any minorities, either religious or ethnic. Secondly then, considering the immense socioeconomic differences between social classes, and the social immobility between the particular classes. On the one hand, there were extremely rich people, who got even richer, and on the other the poor inhabitants, mainly the immigrants, struggling for life in big cities. All of these problems are mirrored in *The Great Gatsby*, as this bachelor thesis shows.

The second and the third chapters are much more concrete than the previous one. They deal with the characters of Jay Gatsby and his beloved Daisy Fay-Buchanan. Fitzgerald laid

the character of Gatsby out as a man standing between the reality and unreality since he is born in the mind of a boy James Gatz, who desired a higher socioeconomic status and so created a new self. Fortunately, this period of his life when he longs only for money ends when he met Daisy. From this moment, she has become the whole world for him. It was necessary to analyse him as the dreamer who follows blindly the myth of the American dream, who is faithful to its original version linked to the legacy of the first Puritan settlers, because his hopeless chase for the American dream is the main theme of the novel.

Paradoxically, Gatsby, the bootlegger, stands for this huge American myth as well as for the concept of self made man, which springs from the American dream. It should be added that the Dream is also linked with the 1920's society and its immobility which is just the opposite to the idea of equality among people presented by the Dream. Talking about the social issues, both Gatsby or Daisy has specific status. Gatsby is desperately trying to become someone he cannot be, member of Daisy's class. And Daisy, an upper class girl, is in love with a lower class man, although she usually treats lower class members with disdain. Daisy is another character created on tensions and incongruities, it is even impossible to distinguish whether she is a positive or a negative character since she has attributes proving both statements. She is associated with white colour, which has a positive connotation, the flowers symbolising her fragility and romantic nature and so on. Opposed to that, it is apparent how she values money and well-being, and we know how she is unsympathetic. She does not care about Gatsby when he takes her crime on himself.

Therefore, as this bachelor thesis revealed *The Great Gatsby* is packed with contradictions. After the first reading, they may look minor or as unconscious blunders of the author. But after a thorough analysis, it is apparent how significant they are and how they participate in the uniqueness of this novel. These incongruities make *Gatsby* debatable, open to a wide range of interpretations, and still attractive for the readers.

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