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BA DIPLOMA THESIS

Main Themes and Symbols in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby"

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Declaration

I, Hana Jaka, declare that I worked on my thesis on my own – pursuing the Academic Honesty Statement’s principles in word and spirit – and used the sources mentioned in the Bibliography.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

F. Scott Fitzgerald was a fiction writer who portrayed the Jazz Age in his works. During his lifetime he wrote novels, short stories and is considered as one of the most important writers of the 20th century. He is also known as a member of the “Lost Generation” of the 1920s. The Great Gatsby is his most famous novel. The novel has maintained its importance over the years and is still considered a masterpiece.

As Bloom (2006, p.7), states “Even after many decades, the relevance of The Great Gatsby increases, because it is the definitive romance of the American dream, a concept or vision that haunts our society”.

Nowadays, the novel is taught with the same interest and there are different analysis and interpretations made by the new readers.

The reason why I chose to analyze this novel for my diploma thesis is that it’s interesting how the social and cultural condition of the 1920s is not very different from the one we live in nowadays. Different from other novels with a happy ending, this novel shows another side of the reality, that sometimes your dreams do not come true. I was impressed by the fact that despite the failure of the dreams, Fitzgerald portrays the fierce heart of the human spirit and shows our tireless capacity to dream and to hope. I was moved by the way how the author portrayed the characters by relating each of them with their dreams and their journey to achieve them.

The method used in this diploma thesis is the deductive method, by providing general information about the novel first, and then narrowing down into the main parts which are the themes and symbols of the novel.

This diploma paper consists of four main sections. The first section will include the author’s biography, where I will divide it into two parts the author’s life and the author’s works. I will provide a short description of the author’s life focusing on the most important highlights of his life. Whereas regarding his work, I will include all of the author’s novels, short stories, and plays, that were published during his life and those published after his death.

The second section will be related to the background information about the novel, which will also include a short summary of the story. In the main part of the diploma thesis, I will analyze the main themes and the main symbols of the novel. There will be three main themes analyzed: American Dream, Social Classes, and Reality vs. Illusion; whereas regarding the symbols, there

will be three main symbols analyzed: Colors, The Valley of Ashes, and The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. In the American Dream theme, I will explain what the American dream is really about, how its concept changed over the time and the relation that it has to the protagonist's dream in the novel. In this theme, I will explore Jay Gatsby's dream, his quest to achieve the dream and his failure at the end. A part of this theme will also include Daisy's version of the American Dream. In the Social Classes theme, I will develop the differences between the two most important classes in the novel, the upper social class, and the working or lower social class. The Social Classes theme will be elaborated through the characters' relationships with each other, and the impact that social class has upon them.

Whereas, in the Reality vs. Illusion theme I will discuss the contrast between what is considered a reality and what is an illusion throughout the novel, and the way how the first impression or the outside appearance can often mislead you.

Further on for the symbols, in the Colors part, I will explain the six colors mentioned in the novel, their meaning, and how they are related to the characters, objects, and places in the novel.

In the second symbol, The Valley of Ashes, I will discuss the location of this place, why it is called so, and its comparison to the other two parts of the city, the East Egg and the West Egg.

For the third symbol, the eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, I will analyze the various meanings of this symbol throughout the novel. There will be an explanation of how these eyes provide different concepts for the characters in the novel. For the final section, there will be the conclusion that will provide an overview of the whole work.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to my mentor, Dr. Lirak Karjagdiu, for his time and guidance throughout the time of writing and completing this diploma thesis. I would also like to thank the university academic staff for their tireless and encouraging work throughout these four years of study. And last but not least, I want to give a special thank to my family and close friends for always supporting and encouraging me.

CHAPTER 2: AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

2.1. Life

The life of F. Scott Fitzgerald is a tragic example related to the American Dream, the youth and success, and the misfortunes related to the failure.

The author, who wrote *The Great Gatsby*, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, was born on September 24, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota. His parents both were Catholics, his father Edward was a salesman from Maryland, and his mother Mary McQuillan was the daughter of an Irish immigrant, she was the inheritor of a successful Minnesota grocery store.

According to Tate (2007), Fitzgerald started writing at an early age. He attended the St. Paul Academy and at the age of thirteen published his first writing, a detective story in the school newspaper. Afterward, he attended the Newman School, a Catholic school in New Jersey. After graduating from the Newman School, Fitzgerald decided to enter the Princeton University in order to develop himself artistically. While in Princeton he started to write scripts for the Princeton Triangle Club's musicals. F. Scott Fitzgerald also printed short stories in two different magazines such as the Princeton Tiger and the Nassau Literary Magazine, and during his stay in Princeton, he met friends such as John Peale Bishop and Edmund Wilson.

However, Fitzgerald struggled academically and in 1917 dropped out of Princeton to join the army. He was placed to Camp Sheridan, near Montgomery, Alabama. There he met Zelda Sayre, the daughter of a judge, with whom he fell in love. After the war ended, Fitzgerald moved overseas to New York City to seek success and fortune in order to be able to marry Zelda. Throughout this time he wrote his first novel "*The Romantic Egoist*", which was rejected by Charles Scribner, but after Fitzgerald revised it three times they published it as "*This Side of Paradise*" (Tate, 2007).

As Tate (2007) noted, Fitzgerald's voice became popular and he gained much respect and admiration from his fellow authors such as Ring Lardner and Ernest Hemingway. After the publication of his first novel, Fitzgerald became rich and famous and he proposed to Zelda. They got married on April 3, 1920, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Together they had a daughter named Frances Scott "Scottie", who was born on 1921. As a family they settled at home in Westport, Connecticut and continued their luxury life, constantly organizing parties and entertaining.

As Tate (2007) indicates, four years after their daughter was born, Fitzgerald completed his best work "*The Great Gatsby*" (1925). One year later, he published a collection of short stories "*All the Sad Young Men*" (1926). With the publication of this book, Fitzgerald's most productive period ends, turning into a period of chaos and problems. He began to drink excessively and suffered from writer's block. After this, the Fitzgerald family moved to America to escape their struggles in France. After a period of being lost in alcohol and depression, Fitzgerald tried to rescue his career as a screenwriter in Hollywood, but with no success. Shortly after this, they rented a mansion near Wilmington, Delaware.

In the spring of 1927, the family moved to France again. Throughout this time Zelda wanted to achieve her dream of becoming a professional dancer in ballet and started taking dancing lessons from a famous dancer in Paris. Her intense ballet work affected her health and marriage. In April 1930 Zelda suffered her first psychological breakdown. She spent the rest of her years in and out of clinics. While she was at Johns Hopkins Hospital, she wrote her first novel "*Save Me the Waltz*" (1932), and also during her lifetime, she wrote some short stories. Zelda wasn't only a good writer, but she was also a talented painter (Tate, 2007).

As mentioned in Tate (2007), in 1937, Fitzgerald went to Hollywood alone while his wife Zelda was placed in a North Carolina hospital. In Hollywood, Scott got a six-month screenwriting contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. In California, he met with Sheilah Graham, with whom he fell in love. During 1938, he continued to write freelance scripts and short stories. Fitzgerald died from a heart attack on December 21, 1940, in Graham's apartment. He died considering himself as a failure, and it was only after his death that he was considered as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century.

2.2. Work

F. Scott Fitzgerald was a well-known writer and made a great impact on the American literature during the 20th century. During his lifetime he wrote short stories, novels, and plays.

According to Tate (2007), the first novel that he wrote is *"This Side of Paradise"* (1920). It is basically a semi-autobiographical of the author's own life, which was inspired from the Jazz Age and its generation. The publication of this novel made Fitzgerald famous and wealthy and gave him the opportunity to create a professional career as a writer. The second novels that he wrote was *"The Beautiful and Damned"* (1922). This novel tells the story of a couple Anthony and Gloria Patch, where the husband Anthony is waiting for his inheritance after his grandfather's death. The novel pictures the life of rich people, the corrupt society of the 1920s in New York. It is believed that this novel is partly influenced by Fitzgerald's troubled relationship with his wife Zelda.

The third novel that Fitzgerald wrote is *"The Great Gatsby"* (1925). This novel is considered as his masterpiece, it describes a time of shock for America after moving from isolationism and experiencing World War I. Also, the Eighteenth Amendment to the American Constitution passed in 1919 and prohibited the consumption of alcohol. After this many people became self-made millionaires from bootlegging. The fourth novel that the author wrote is *"Tender is the Night"* (1934). The novel shows the story of a psychologist that gets married to one of his patients, but later on, they find that they are not a match for each other. The time when Fitzgerald published this novel, America was going through great economic depression and the people were not interested in reading his novel. The author's final novel is *"The Love of the Last Tycoon"* (1940). Fitzgerald died from a heart attack at 44 years old and left this novel as an unfinished script. The novel reveals the story of a producer called Monroe Stahr which was based on the producer Irving Thalberg.

Fitzgerald also wrote short stories, about 160 short stories. The main reason why he chose to write short stories is that he earned more income from them than from his novels.

The author published his first collection of short stories after the success of his novel *"This Side of Paradise"*. The collection is titled *"Flappers and Philosophers"* (1922), and it includes stories as *"The Off-Shore Pirate"*, *"The Cut-Glass Bowl"*, *"The Four Fists"*, *"The Ice Palace"*, *"Benediction"*, *"Bernice Bobs Her Hair"*, *"Head and Shoulders"*, and *"Dalyrimple Goes Wrong"*. His second short story is *"The Cruise of the Rolling Junk"* (1920). This story describes

the journey that he experienced with his wife, traveling from Connecticut to Alabama with an automobile. Fitzgerald's third short story is "*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*" (1922). It tells the story of Benjamin, how he was born as a grown man and then he got younger until the end when he died as an infant (Tate, 2007).

Tate (2007) mentions another collection of short stories which is "*Tales of the Jazz Age*" (1922). This collection includes seven short stories which are "*The Jelly-Bean*," "*The Camel's Back*," "*May Day*," "*The Diamond as Big as the Ritz*," "*O Russet Witch!*," "*Jemina*," "*Porcelain and Pink*".

A further series of short stories that Fitzgerald wrote is "*The Basil and Josephine Stories*" (1928), which consists of 14 stories, and he also wrote "*The Pat Hobby Stories*" (1940), this collection includes 17 stories which were first published in the *Esquire* magazine.

Besides novels and short stories, Fitzgerald managed to write some plays as well. During his teen years (1911-1914), he wrote four plays "*The Captured Shadow*," "*The Girl from the Lazy J*," "*Coward*," and "*Assorted Spirits*". These plays were produced by a local theatre group in St. Paul. In 1923, Fitzgerald wrote another play called "*The Vegetable*", and he also wrote a script for MGM called "*Three Comrades*" in 1938 (Tate, 2007).

CHAPTER 3: INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOOK

The Great Gatsby was written by F. Scott Fitzgerald during 1923-1924 in America and France, whereas it was first published in 1925. It is a modernist, Jazz Age novel.

The setting time of the novel is in the summer of 1922, and the setting place is in Long Island and New York City. Although the novel didn't gain much success during the author's lifetime, now the novel is considered as a masterpiece which is taught throughout the world and translated into many languages. The novel reveals a tragic love story, a mystery, and the decline of the American Dream. It was written through the eyes of a man named Nick Carraway, who for a summer experienced the glamour of New York. Nick is a Yale graduate; he served in the army during World War I, and after the war moved from Midwest to West Egg on Long Island to become a bond salesman in New York City.

His neighbor is the protagonist of the novel, Jay Gatsby, a wealthy man whose parties are very famous in town. The novel consists of nine chapters that reveal the story about the love between Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby, the disillusionment of the American Dream, and the differences between social classes. The story of the novel begins with the narrator Nick Carraway who moved from Midwest to Long Island to work in the bond business. He settles next-door to the famous and wealthy mansion of Jay Gatsby. At first, Nick becomes very curious about this luxurious mansion and gets invited to one of Jay's famous parties. Nick gets to reconnect with his cousin Daisy Buchanan, her husband Tom Buchanan and her friend Jordan Baker. Daisy's husband, Tom, invites Nick for a day in the city, where he meets with his mistress Myrtle Wilson. Myrtle is a married woman to George Wilson, a poor person who works in a gas station in the Valley of Ashes. Next, after Nick has the chance to meet Jay Gatsby and become close friends with him, he learns that Jay is in love with his cousin Daisy. Gatsby introduces Nick to his lifestyle and with his friends, including a person called Meyer Wolfshiem, with whom Jay does illegal businesses. Through his friend Jordan, Nick learns about the past history between Jay and Daisy. He learns that many years ago, Jimmy Gatz now known as Jay Gatsby had been in love with Daisy. While Jay was in the war, Daisy married Tom Buchanan, because she knew that Jay couldn't offer her wealth. After this, Jay decided to abandon his identity, he became Jay Gatsby and a self-made rich person with the help of Meyer Wolfshiem, a notorious criminal. He chose the current mansion that he owns in Long Island precisely because it is across Daisy's home, from which he can see a green

light at night and dream that one day he can earn back her love. Not long after this, Jay asks Nick to arrange him a meeting with Daisy. Jay and Daisy meet each other after five years, at Nick's house. From this point and on they begin to see each other secretly very often. As Jay and Daisy get closer again, Jay and Nick become closer friends as well, as Nick is the only one who continues to support Jay despite the bad rumors around him.

Furthermore, Tom and Daisy go to one of the Gatsby's parties, and Tom becomes suspicious of Jay's wealth, his lavish parties and lifestyle. He learns that all his wealth comes from bootlegging. Moreover, Nick, Gatsby, Jordan, Daisy, and her husband Tom meet together for lunch, where Daisy and Gatsby plan to tell Tom the truth about their relationship and that Daisy is leaving Tom. But, the meeting turns into a big argument between them. Tom accuses Gatsby about bootlegging, calling him a criminal, whereas Gatsby requires Daisy to tell Tom the truth and say how she never loved him. On the other hand, Daisy claims that this isn't true, that she loves both of them, thus destroying Gatsby's dream and his plans for the future. Furious from the debate, Daisy gets in the car together with Gatsby following her. Driving by the gas station, Myrtle runs to the car thinking that Tom is the one driving. This way Daisy accidentally hits Myrtle, leaving her dead. On the way home, Nick, Jordan, and Tom see the accident. Tom tells George that the car that passed by and killed Myrtle is Gatsby's, and as a consequence, George thinks that he must be Myrtle's lover too. Gatsby spends the night waiting for Daisy to forgive him and change her mind, but instead Daisy, again showing her selfishness, she chooses to not confess the crime and leave from her responsibilities, she and her husband flee out of town.

The next day, Myrtle's husband, George, blames Gatsby for his wife's death and out of anger he decides to kill him, he goes to Gatsby's house where he kills him and himself too.

Nick is the only one who tries to invite people at Gatsby's funeral, but everyone who came to his parties refuses to come. Gatsby's father comes from Minnesota to his son's funeral, he and Nick are the only ones to give the last goodbye to Gatsby.

Nick, disappointed after all of this having happened, decided to return to his home in Midwest.

CHAPTER 4: MAIN THEMES

4.1. American Dream

During the 20s America experienced a lot of changes, especially after the First World War. America was known as a very developed country, and had a strong economy, politics, technology, and was becoming very advanced in other industries as well. With this development and growth, many people considered America as the land of possibilities, freedom, and a place where they could realize their dreams. The American Dream was also related to the immigrants who went to America in hope to achieve success and fortune in their lives.

The idea behind the “American Dream” was that by working hard, everyone no matter their social status can accomplish wealth and prosperity. But this changed over the time, instead of obtaining wealth from working hard with honesty, people were driven by greed and tried to do everything for wealth, which eventually led to the corruption of their dreams.

“For Fitzgerald himself, the dream was quite literally about the quality of greatness. It meant displaying in private life those daring unselfish qualities that had made America possible” (Prigozy, 2002, p.85).

All of this is best demonstrated in *The Great Gatsby*. The American Dream is one of the main themes in this novel. In the novel the author introduces the 1920s as a period where the social and moral values are corrupted by the vulgar pursuit of wealth, thus leading to the corruption of the American Dream. Fitzgerald, by describing the characters he includes their version of the American Dream and their attempts in realizing it. The way how he presents it through the characters is used to criticize the American society.

Beginning with the protagonist of the novel, Jay Gatsby, he is a man who comes from a poor family and spends all of his life to forget his past. He wants to forget it because of the relationship that he had with Daisy when they were younger. Both of them were in love with each other, but their social statuses divided them.

According to Pumphrey (2011), Gatsby had always dreamed of becoming someone better even before he met Daisy. He was going towards the right path of achieving it by working hard until he met Daisy. She became his dream, he was enchanted by her and her wealthy lifestyle. From that moment, Gatsby knew that he lacked the past and family in order to be a right suitor for Daisy.

His dream was changed, and he knew that he couldn't achieve it by hard work and determination. Gatsby transformed himself into a self-made wealthy person. His luxurious mansion, parties, and everything were all for Daisy. From the outside, he is seen as a rich and famous person, but underneath the façade, he is broken by the society's standards. Everything that Gatsby owns is a display of consumerism. Also, many times through the novel his wealth is questionable. He is considered to be a German spy, and Tom also claims that his wealth is illegal "*I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him and I wasn't far wrong*" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p.143).

Despite his fake personality and illegal wealth, Fitzgerald tries to portray Gatsby as a sympathetic person. The only person who can see this side of Gatsby is Nick Carraway, the narrator of the story. Nick is the one who recognizes the greatness of Gatsby's dream. Ironically, society was one of the reasons that Gatsby became a bootlegger because America didn't offer any other possible option. The circumstances during that period of time prevented people from accomplishing a high social status through hard work, therefore, they had to seek other resources. However, Jay Gatsby, it's an interesting character because he shows both features the corrupted wealth and his pure love towards Daisy (Pumphrey, 2011).

Gatsby isn't destroyed by his dream, but by the conditions that corrupted his dream and the society around him. He couldn't achieve his dream because of the destroyed values of the American Dream. Gatsby's dream leads to his fall. His dream and idealism blind him from understanding that happiness and love don't come from wealth.

In the end, Gatsby dies alone, all the people that used to go to his lavish parties don't attend his funeral because he didn't have any friendship with them. Only his father and Nick mourn him, because at the end wealth and possession win over the humanity.

On the other hand, Daisy shows another side of the American Dream. She is a self-centered woman, who wants to enjoy both the feeling of being secure and wealthy with her husband Tom and Gatsby's attention. Although she possesses many materialistic things such as a house, car and expensive clothing, she lacks happiness and spiritual fulfillment. Both Daisy and Tom are careless and reckless people who don't care about the people around them. They hide behind their money, instead of facing their responsibilities.

According to Person (1978), Daisy is not as corrupted as Tom; she's more like a victim of a life shaped by Tom's corrupted money. Her character serves as an example that happiness doesn't

come from materialistic things (as paraphrased in Lindberg, p. 12). Through Daisy, the author states that without personal fulfillment wealth and materialistic things lose their importance.

Fitzgerald was aware of the obsession with consumerism and the rise of it in America. He stands against this phenomenon by letting his characters be consumed by it and warns the readers of the consequences of consumerism. He states that the American Dream is misunderstood, that now it's related only to wealth by corrupting the authentic effort for self-improvement.

4.2. Social Classes

Social class is another main theme of *The Great Gatsby* which is related to money and love.

At the beginning of the book there is a quote from Thomas Parke D'Invilliers which is related to this theme. It indicates the power that money has over love and presents the relationship that will further take place between Gatsby, Daisy, and Tom.

The author represents the class-consciousness in America. The story of the novel is set in New York City, and it depicts the differences between the economic classes of people that live in that area. There are two towns located on an island near New York, East Egg and West Egg, which represent a variety of classes. Fitzgerald portrays the classes through the eyes of Nick Carraway, the narrator of the story.

According to Pumphrey (2011), East Egg is for the members of the upper class those people who are born into wealthy families, also known as the old money, including Daisy and Tom Buchanan. Nick describes the people of East Egg as high-class persons, doctors, and Yale graduates. Whereas West Egg represents the new rich, people who are from this town are self-made millionaires and others that are trying to be so, including Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway. The people who live in West Egg make money from different resources such as movies, gambling and bootlegging. The terrain provides another reason why West Egg is considered as a lower and less desirable class. The West Egg town is next to a desolated place, which is in the middle of these two towns and is called the Valley of Ashes. Fitzgerald criticizes how America is being consumed by consumerism, the Valley of Ashes once used to be a farm, but now it's turned into ash and the people that used to work in it such as farmers are now railroad workers. The people are more interested in material things than to genuine human relationships.

The characters in the novel fit into two different social classes. The Wilson family, which includes Myrtle and her husband George, represent the struggling working class. George works in a gas station that he owns, and adores his wife. However, Myrtle is another character that Fitzgerald criticizes for being driven by consumerism. She complains about her relationship with George by saying "*I married him because I thought he was a gentleman . . .*" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p.38). Their marriage was based upon a lie, and regardless that Myrtle belonged to the working class she still dreamed about living a better life with more privileges.

On the other hand, there is the Buchanan family including Tom, Daisy and their daughter Pammy. They belong to the upper class also known as the old money. They have a lavish lifestyle, don't worry about work and possess a luxurious mansion on Long Island. They are unconcerned for other people around them, and as Nick describes they were careless people, who hurt people and then went back into their money, leaving their responsibilities to others.

As mentioned in Pumphrey (2011), the Buchanans are very sophisticated and specific with the friendships that they have. Particularly, Tom, he supports the separation of races, he thinks that the white race should protect its uniqueness. Of course, these are not his own ideas as he relies on the thoughts of other people whom he has paid or from books as mentioned by Daisy "*Tom's getting very profound . . . He reads deep books with long words on them*" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 16). From the outside, Fitzgerald portrays the East Egg as a beautiful high-class society, but when seen closer an unattractive side of this class is revealed and shows the way how at first this society gives you the impression that it stands above the lower class.

Gatsby is affected by the desire to achieve wealth and become part of the high-class society as well. He relates wealth to love and is unaware that wealth is not the only feature when it comes to social class. He doesn't understand the reality of people like Tom and Daisy although he has become wealthy this is not enough for him to belong to the same social class as the Buchanans.

When Gatsby meets Daisy for the first time, he likes her because of her beauty, her wealth and mystery around it, and for the fact that she is desired by many men. But when he meets Daisy again five years later, he explains to Nick, "*Her voice is full of money*" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p.128). This opinion of Gatsby's is described by Nick as the connection between love and money, that she was the girl that belonged to a higher class and was inaccessible for Gatsby. Although Gatsby becomes wealthy, he fails to understand how the wealthy world of the high-class society works, and that his money gained from bootlegging and other illegal resources are not as good as the Buchanan's money. Gatsby wants to repeat the past, all his fortune is created for the only reason to impress Daisy and regain her. However, his wealth fails to impress Daisy. Gatsby complains to Nick that he feels "*far away from her*" and "*it's hard to make her understand*" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p.117). This again emphasizes the different realities of East and West Egg. The East is the place to corrupted people like Daisy and Tom, whereas the West is the place to innocent people like Gatsby. At the end, Nick describes the East as a distorted and haunted place and decides to go back home to the West after Gatsby's death.

4.3. Reality vs. Illusion

The 20s were a time of development in different fields after the war. Particularly, economics had a great success and many people became rich. But, the wealth and success of these people didn't come from hard work, instead, it was related to illegal resources. In "The Great Gatsby", Fitzgerald reveals that underneath those perfect lives, there lurks false happiness and materialism.

The events in the novel suggest that not everything is what it seems, and often we are fooled by the outside appearance of people, things or places. The characters of Jay and Daisy reveal that certain things in their lives do not match the reality. They get caught up on the appearance of their lives and forget about the reality around them.

Beginning with the protagonist of the novel, according to Lee (1997), Jay Gatsby is a mysterious figure, an illusion of his true self James Gatz. Gatsby acts as a successful person, but his whole world, his lavish life is dependent on illusion. Furthermore, his parties present an illusion of popularity, whereas in reality they are created only for Daisy's approval. He is not interested in the people who come there, only in Daisy. Moreover, people use Gatsby only to go to his parties, because in reality, they do not care for him the same way they did not care to go to Gatsby's funeral.

From Nick's eyes, Gatsby is a lonely person, withdrawn from the real world by his illusory life. Gatsby's vision of wanting to repeat the past is considered as an illusion as well. For nearly five years he has dreamed of getting back together with Daisy and was convinced that she was waiting for him with the same desire. Gatsby proves to be blind, he doesn't realize that his dream is far away from becoming a reality because Daisy is married to Tom and he has created an illegal wealth. His dream fails because he is unable to divide the illusion from reality.

Fitzgerald also depicts the illusion of Daisy's character. Throughout the novel, she is believed to be innocent from everything that happened. Her appearance is characterized by the white color, which symbolizes purity and innocence. First she is seen as a victim of her unfaithful husband Tom, but later on, her real personality is discovered as being a materialistic and selfish woman. The reality is that the protection that Tom gives her it's much more important to her than Gatsby's sacrifice. Despite the fact that Daisy understands that her husband has an affair, she again chooses to stay with him, thinking that money will solve their problems. Just as everyone else in that time that was lost in the illusion that money can make everything happen.

The people of the upper class lived a wonderful life all because of their wealth, not because they were really happy. We can see their reality through Nick's eyes when he becomes part of this class due to his connection to his cousin Daisy and to his friendship with Gatsby. He realizes that wealth destroys people, it does more harm than good.

As mentioned in Lee (1997), Gatsby maybe didn't know Daisy very well, because their affair was very short. Gatsby's version of Daisy proves to be very different from Daisy's real actions. Her need to have a secure and wealthy life with her husband conveys a different reality. Nick realizes that Gatsby's illusion was keeping him alive, if he were to admit the truth to himself then the only essential thing that gave meaning to his life would be destroyed. Without his dream, he would be left only with his wealth and materialistic world.

In the end, Gatsby pays a high price for his illusory world and his wish of wanting to repeat the past. His wealth doesn't bring him happiness, but only his death.

CHAPTER 5: SYMBOLS

5.1. Colors

Fitzgerald makes use of the colors to give life to characters, objects and places in the novel. All of the colors help to make the novel more vivid and imaginative. The more prominent ones are green, white, red, yellow, blue, and gray color. All the colors have a strong symbolic meaning which relate to a characteristic in the novel and provide a deeper meaning to it.

The Green Color

The first color is green and is directly connected to Gatsby's dream and hope. According to Haibing (2015), this color is represented as the green light and it takes place three times throughout the novel. The first time it occurs is in the first chapter when Nick saw Gatsby stretching towards the water trying to reach the green light on Daisy's dock, which Nick describes it seemed "*a minute and far away*" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p.24). For Gatsby, the green light personifies Daisy his long-lasting dream. It is a symbol of hope that one day he can realize his dream to gain enough money so that he can win Daisy back. But since the light is "*a minute and far away*" it symbolizes that it is destined to fail. In the second time, the green light takes place in the fifth chapter. Here Gatsby has already introduced his wealth to Daisy, but he is lost daydreaming because of the great difference between the real Daisy and the Daisy he imagined. This also symbolizes the reality and imagination of the American Dream and shows that in imagination the dream is beautiful but in reality, it is corrupted. In the third time, the green light takes place near the end of the novel. After Gatsby's death, the hope that the green light symbolizes fades which shows the failure of the American Dream. Gatsby's dream got corrupted in a society full of materialism and carelessness.

The White Color

The white color is mainly related to Daisy it represents the pure beauty and symbolizes nobleness. Daisy wears a white dress when she first meets Gatsby and when Nick visits her. Daisy's house is described as being full of the white color as well, and her name represents a white flower. When people first meet her, they may get the feeling that she is innocent and noble, just like Gatsby who is obsessed with her and regards her as his American Dream. However, in the novel the white color symbolizes selfishness to a great extent. Under her façade, Daisy is a superficial, selfish and careless person, an example of the upper social class. Despite her luxurious life, she spends her

life in loneliness. Although Gatsby sacrifices almost all his life for her, she shows no sorrow for his death. The white color symbolizes that although the upper class is wealthy, they lack in their morality and soul (Haibing, 2015).

The Red Color

In the novel, the red color is seen in Nick's books on finance, which include the color of red and gold. The gold color represents money, and the association of gold and red symbolizes that the pursuit of money is connected with violence during that period. The Red color is also associated with Myrtle's death in front of the gas station, and Gatsby's death in the swimming pool.

The red color is also seen in Tom and Daisy's mansion, which symbolizes Tom's character as an arrogant and selfish person. He always pushes anyone who comes in front of him and is unfaithful to his marriage with Daisy (Haibing, 2015).

The Yellow Color

In the novel, this color is also related to Gatsby. As Haibing (2015) states, the yellow color is associated with the color of gold, which symbolizes money and the upper social class. In order to win Daisy back, Gatsby decorates his mansion and himself with the yellow color. After gaining wealth, Gatsby makes use of the yellow color such as his yellow tie, yellow car in order to appear as part of the upper social class. The great usage of the yellow color indicates that the Jazz Age was a period where the display of the fortune was considered to be fashionable. Fitzgerald mentions the yellow color in relation to Daisy too. It shows how Daisy is only interested in wealth and enjoys her luxurious lifestyle.

The Blue Color

The blue color represents calmness and loneliness. In the novel, the blue color represents the contrary to the yellow color. While the yellow color symbolizes that part of Gatsby that the others see, the blue color symbolizes the hidden part of him that no one sees. From the outside, Gatsby is seen as a wealthy person, who hosts luxurious parties for free, but he never appears in them and no one has actually seen him. Gatsby's garden is described as being blue, and this shows the loneliness and unhappiness in his heart. He holds the parties only to get Daisy's attention, but he fails to do so and this causes him more sadness. The blue color is also used to describe the beauty of Gatsby's dream, Daisy. He always believes that deep inside her heart Daisy loves him and that one day with his wealth and love he will win her back (Haibing, 2015).

The Grey Color

The grey color is the one that dominates mostly in the novel. This color symbolizes death, destruction and disillusionment. This color is first seen in the Valley of Ashes where people are depressed and hopeless.

There are also other scenes in the novel described with this color, such as Myrtle's living room filled with grey smoke and her accident happens in the dusk. All of this symbolizes the emptiness of the souls, the cheerless life and the tragedy that affects the characters. Despite the wealthy life, people's spirit is empty and they wander hopelessly (Haibing, 2015).

5.2. The Valley of Ashes

The Valley of Ashes is a desolate place between West Egg and New York City. In the novel, it symbolizes the corruption of moral values and social classes as a consequence of the uncontrolled attempts to gain wealth, and the failure of dreams.

Compared to the beauty and better life of East Egg and West Egg, the Valley of Ashes represents a place of poverty and hopelessness. The people that live in this place belong to the working or lower class society, they desperately attempt to leave this place but most of them fail to do so.

An example of this are people like George Wilson, a poor person who lives in this depressed place, however hard he works he is not able to fulfill his dreams. The people who live in the Valley of Ashes are treated very badly by the wealthy people. These people pass every day through this place while ignoring and paying no respect to people who live there as if they aren't human beings. An example of this mistreatment happens between George and Tom. They have a confrontation for the issue of a car that George wants Tom to sell it to him, and he is depended on Tom. This shows how the wealthy people look down on the working class because of the difference between their social classes, they consider themselves as the elite social class.

In reality, the people that live in the East and the West Egg represent the decay of moral values. They are people with a meaningless life, such as Daisy, Tom, and Jordan who represent the formless ashes in the valley of ashes. They may be very wealthy and full of material things but their spirits are empty.

According to Bloom (2006), dust floats from the three places, but more than Tom or Gatsby, George sinks in this environment. While Tom and Gatsby both took from others and had the opportunity to choose a better life for themselves, George was born into the Valley of Ashes, he had no choice and didn't attempt to control.

On the other hand, Myrtle is also depended on Tom, she stands out from the Valley of Ashes because of her relationship with him and dreams that through him she will rise from her poverty. She differs from George because she hasn't given up hope yet and hasn't allowed herself to blend with the environment that she lives.

According to Bloom (2006), the Valley of Ashes didn't kill Myrtle, but the fact that she met Tom Buchanan in that valley of death. George too dies for the same reason because he is fooled by Tom. The valley also relates to Gatsby's death, the night before Gatsby is murdered Nick describes how

Gatsby had given up on his house, it was full of dust everywhere and it resembled the Valley of Ashes. After Gatsby's death, Nick goes back to his place. On the way back he passes the Valley of Ashes and turns to the other side of the car so that he can avoid seeing the decay of that place. The Valley of Ashes displays the fact that the American Dream is unachievable. This place symbolizes a lost place, the corruption of human and moral values, and the disillusionment of people's dreams. Nick is the one who invented the name to this place as meaning to the shadow of death. The people in this place it's like they have been damned to live a grey life in this place and die.

5.3. The eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg

Another important symbol of this novel is the eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, which are also featured on the cover of the novel. The eyes are painted on an advertising billboard in Queens, which was built to promote the business of an oculist and has been unused for a long time. The symbolism of eyes has various meanings in the novel.

“The eyes of the Doctor T.J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic They look out on no face but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 26).

They represent God staring upon the American society and judging them for the loss of moral values. The eyes on this billboard symbolize the loss of the most important values in America, criticizing how America has become full of consumerism. Now, everything is about money as portrayed by the Buchanans, who consider someone successful in terms of how wealthy a person is, not based on his character or moral values.

The eyes also symbolize the meaningless life of the society, how people have abandoned their spiritual values towards the quest to achieve material wealth and relate meaning to objects. It symbolizes the hopeless people of the Valley of Ashes, and how God has been replaced by consumerism and corruption. The connection made between the eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg and God comes only from George Wilson as mentioned in chapter eight when George tell his neighbor *“God sees everything”* (Fitzgerald, 1925, p.170), while standing near the window and looking towards the billboard. Since the eyes are located on a billboard in a place where people pass very often on their way to New York City, they observe all the main characters. They stare down at Tom who cheats on Daisy with Myrtle, at Gatsby who introduces Wolfsheim to Nick, and at Daisy when she goes to meet Gatsby.

The image of the eyes watching over the desolate land is haunting, it shows that the dissolute behavior of the Jazz Age is being judged, but the fact that there is no soul behind the eyes carries a concern that there will be nothing done to change the situation.

Furthermore, the image of these eyes suggests the disillusionment of the American Dream. The initial idea of this dream is that the people who come from poor origins can achieve their dream through hard work determination, as seen in the novel throughout the experiences of Gatsby and Myrtle.

The eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg look down on people of the Valley of Ashes as if wanting to reveal that everything related to the concept of the American Dream is false. Gatsby did achieve wealth, but not everyone can achieve that and become wealthy as the Buchanans. The idea that by working hard everyone can achieve the dream is just an illusion. For most people, especially the ones that live in the Valley of Ashes life is a nightmare, where the eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg stare upon them all the time, and they have little to none opportunities to create a better life for themselves. According to Tredell (2007), the eyes on the billboard can be linked to other eyes in the novel, such as Daisy's eyes. For Gatsby, her eyes represent the eyes of judgment when Daisy comes to his mansion for the first time Gatsby revalues his house according to the measure of response that Daisy gave. On the other hand, there are Nick's eyes who are those of an observer, Nick is conscious that he wants to look squarely at others and yet avoid all eyes.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Fitzgerald was known for the portrayal of the Jazz Age and for his masterpiece *The Great Gatsby*. *The Great Gatsby* is still considered a masterpiece nowadays, and the readers continue to read it generation after generation. The novel deals with materialism and shares the features of 1920s such as the desire to become rich and have freedom. The novel is relevant to these days because it deals with basic things in life, the concern with money, love, dreams, and social classes.

The Great Gatsby explored the American Dream, love story, mystery, and the difference between social classes. The most important features were the themes and symbols. The main themes were the American Dream, Social Class, and Reality vs. Illusion.

The American Dream was based on the idea that through hard work everyone could become wealthy. The author related this theme with the two main characters Gatsby and Daisy. Even though Daisy and Gatsby come from different social classes, they both are on a quest to achieve unrealistic dreams. Through the portrayal of the characters, Fitzgerald concluded that the vulgar pursuit of wealth led to the corruption of the American dream. He showed that money can't make anyone happy because people will always want more. He suggested that instead of dreaming so much about their future, people should live and appreciate their present. The author described the dream of the protagonist of the novel, Jay Gatsby, his journey and struggles to achieve wealth in order to win back Daisy. Gatsby's dream became corrupted just as the American dream. As a conclusion, the core values of the dream vanished and became corrupted.

Another main theme mentioned in the novel was the Social Classes. Fitzgerald depicted the social classes by dividing them into lower social class and upper social class. In the novel, the social classes were also related to geography. The East Egg represented the old rich; people who came from high-class society and had inherited their wealth from their families, the West Egg represented the new rich; people who were self-made millionaires from different resources including illegal ones as well, and lastly the Valley of Ashes represented the lower class; people who work hard but never got the opportunity to improve their lives.

The last main theme analyzed was Reality vs. Illusion. This theme was concerned with the events throughout the novel which brought light to the difference between what was real and what was an illusion. It dealt mostly with Gatsby's dream and his illusion of trying to repeat the past. The way how he failed to distinguish his illusory world from the reality led to the failure of his dream

as well. Illusion was also mentioned in Daisy's character. The way how she appeared to be fooled everyone into thinking that she is very innocent. But, in reality it was the opposite. She proved to be a materialistic and selfish woman. As a conclusion, it was Gatsby the one who paid a high price for his illusion, and found out that money doesn't bring happiness.

Concerning the symbols, the main ones mentioned were colors, the valley of ashes, and the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. There were six different colors described related to the novel, but the most important and permanent one through the novel was the green light. The green light was mostly related to Gatsby's character. It represented his dream and hope; his quest to achieve fortune and get back together with Daisy. The second symbol, the valley of ashes stood for the corruption of moral values because of the growth of materialism. It was seen as a symbol of the hopeless life of the people who lived in this place. It showed that the dream of these people was just an illusion, an unachievable goal.

The third symbol was the eyes of an oculist painted on a billboard. It represented different meanings throughout the novel. George Wilson was the one who made the connection of these eyes with the eyes of God, who watches and judges people for their actions. These eyes criticized the American society for being full of materialism and the corruption of the American dream.

As a conclusion, the book carries an important message. It shows that the American dream is far from reality and unachievable no matter how hard one chases it. Like the character of Gatsby who tried hard to follow his green light, but at the end, he failed. Regarding the social class, Fitzgerald shows that materialism can destroy a person's values and corrupt their dreams, and that money cannot buy happiness.

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