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**The American Dream Revisited: A Critical Examination
of Wealth; Identity; and Disillusionment in F. Scott
Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby**

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Dedication

To my beloved family and dear friends,

With deepest gratitude, I dedicate this work to you.

To my family, your unwavering love, endless support, and constant encouragement have been the foundation of my journey. Your belief in me, even in the toughest times, gave me the strength to keep going.

To my friends, thank you for your understanding, patience, and for always cheering me on. Your companionship and words of motivation have meant more than you know.

This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

With all my heart, thank you.

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Abstract

This dissertation critically examines F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* through the lens of the American Dream, focusing on the intricate interplay between wealth, identity, and disillusionment. By analyzing the novel's portrayal of opulence and its underlying moral decay, the study interrogates how the ostensibly glittering promise of the American Dream conceals the deeper socio-economic inequalities and existential voids of early twentieth-century America. The research applies a multidisciplinary approach that integrates literary criticism with historical and socio-cultural analysis, drawing on theories of social criticism and identity construction to unpack the layered narratives within the text. Central to this examination is the argument that Fitzgerald's narrative transcends a mere depiction of personal aspiration and downfall; it simultaneously offers a profound critique of the capitalist values and social stratifications that define the American experience. Through an exploration of key motifs—such as the symbolism of lavish parties, the transformative yet precarious nature of self-reinvention, and the pervasive sense of disillusionment—the dissertation illuminates the paradox inherent in the American Dream. It reveals that the pursuit of wealth, while promising the allure of freedom and progress, often culminates in isolation, moral ambiguity, and a profound sense of disillusionment. The findings suggest that Fitzgerald's work remains a vital cultural commentary, one that continues to

resonate in contemporary discussions of economic disparity and identity in modern society.

Keywords: American Dream, Wealth, Identity, Disillusionment, The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Literary Criticism, Social Stratification.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

I. Introduction

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* remains one of the most celebrated works in American literature, renowned for its rich symbolism, evocative prose, and incisive social commentary. This dissertation, titled "The American Dream Revisited: A Critical Examination of Wealth, Identity, and Disillusionment in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*," undertakes a multifaceted exploration of how the novel interrogates and deconstructs the myth of the American Dream. The introduction of this study provides an essential foundation by contextualizing the research within both historical and literary frameworks, outlining its objectives, and establishing its significance for contemporary literary and cultural discourse.

II. Background and Rationale

The concept of the American Dream has long been a cornerstone of American cultural and ideological identity, epitomizing the belief that anyone, regardless of background, can achieve success and prosperity through hard work and determination. However, as America evolved into a modern industrial society, the gap between the idealistic promise of the American Dream and the actual lived experiences of its citizens became increasingly apparent. This tension is profoundly captured in *The Great Gatsby*, a novel set against the backdrop of the Roaring Twenties—a period characterized by both economic exuberance and deep-seated social inequalities.

Fitzgerald's work functions not only as a literary exploration but also as a social document, reflecting the complexities of wealth accumulation, the quest for identity, and the ensuing disillusionment experienced by those who chase an ever-elusive dream. In the narrative, characters such as Jay Gatsby embody the dual nature of the American Dream: the allure of reinvention and success, and the

eventual moral and existential crisis that comes with the relentless pursuit of material wealth. This dissertation is grounded in the belief that revisiting this seminal work can yield fresh insights into how historical and socio-economic realities have long influenced—and continue to influence—American cultural ideals.

III. Research Objectives and Questions

The principal aim of this research is to dissect and critically analyze the thematic core of *The Great Gatsby*, with particular emphasis on the following objectives:

A. Examination of Wealth: To explore how Fitzgerald employs the symbolism of wealth as both a means of aspiration and a marker of social division.

B. Identity Construction: To analyze the complex processes of self-reinvention and identity formation as depicted in the character arcs, especially through the transformation of Jay Gatsby.

C. Disillusionment: To assess the narrative's portrayal of disillusionment and how it reflects broader societal failures in realizing the promises of the American Dream.

D. Cultural Critique: To place the novel within the context of its historical moment and to discuss its continued relevance in critiquing contemporary socio-economic structures.

These broad objectives are further distilled into key research questions:

How does *The Great Gatsby* symbolize the contradictions inherent in the American Dream?

In what ways do the characters' pursuits of wealth and identity reflect wider socio-economic disparities in early twentieth-century America?

What role does disillusionment play in shaping the narrative's critique of American society, and how does this resonate with modern interpretations of the American Dream?

IV. Significance of the Study

By focusing on the interplay between wealth, identity, and disillusionment, this study contributes to an enriched understanding of *The Great Gatsby* and its enduring cultural significance. At a time when discussions around wealth inequality, social mobility, and the influence of materialism are prevalent in both academic and public arenas, this research provides a critical lens through which to view historical narratives that continue to inform present-day debates. The investigation transcends traditional literary analysis by integrating socio-cultural theory, thereby illuminating the broader implications of Fitzgerald's work on American cultural identity. This interdisciplinary approach not only enhances the academic discourse surrounding the novel but also opens new avenues for exploring the impact of literary texts on societal values and aspirations.

V. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven major chapters, each addressing a critical aspect of the research inquiry:

A. Chapter 1: Introduction – Establishes the background, rationale, research objectives, and significance of the study.

B. Chapter 2: Literature Review – Surveys the evolution of the American Dream, reviews critical perspectives on *The Great Gatsby*, and examines the cultural and historical context of the 1920s.

C. Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework – Outlines the theories of social criticism and identity construction that provide the basis for the analysis.

D. Chapter 4: Methodology – Details the qualitative research design and methods used to conduct the literary and socio-cultural analysis.

E. Chapter 5: Analysis of *The Great Gatsby* – Presents an in-depth analysis of the novel, focusing on its depiction of wealth, identity transformation, and disillusionment.

F. Chapter 6: Discussion – Integrates the findings with contemporary realities, discussing the broader implications of the study for both literary criticism and cultural studies.

G. Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations – Summarizes the key insights, reflects on the contributions of the research, and offers recommendations for future inquiry.

Each chapter builds upon the previous one to construct a comprehensive argument that situates *The Great Gatsby* as both a product and a critique of its time. This structure ensures that the analysis remains systematic and coherent, providing a clear trajectory from the initial theoretical inquiry to the final critical observations.

VI. Overview of Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this dissertation is predominantly qualitative, incorporating close textual analysis, historical contextualization, and

interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks. By engaging with both primary texts and a range of secondary critical sources, the study triangulates its findings to offer a nuanced perspective on the intersection of wealth, identity, and disillusionment. This methodological approach allows for a deep exploration of the narrative's layered meanings and a robust analysis of its social implications, ensuring that the research is both comprehensive and firmly rooted in scholarly discourse.

In conclusion, the introduction sets the stage for a detailed and critical examination of *The Great Gatsby*, emphasizing its role as a narrative that encapsulates the paradoxes of the American Dream. As this dissertation unfolds, it will continuously engage with the complexities of wealth, identity, and disillusionment, offering fresh insights into how these themes interact to shape not only literary expression but also the cultural consciousness.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I. Introduction

This chapter delves into the multifaceted interpretations of *The Great Gatsby*, focusing on the evolution of the American Dream, critical analyses of the novel, and the socio-cultural backdrop of the 1920s. By exploring these dimensions, we aim to understand how themes of wealth, identity, and disillusionment intertwine within the narrative and reflect broader American societal dynamics.

II. The Evolution of the American Dream

A. Origins and Ideals

The concept of the American Dream, popularized by James Truslow Adams in *The Epic of America* (1931), encapsulates the belief in a land offering opportunities for prosperity and success through hard work. However, its roots trace back to the nation's founding ideals, emphasizing liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness. Over time, especially during the late 19th century, this dream became increasingly associated with material wealth and capitalist success.

B. The Dream Corrupted

By the 1920s, the American Dream had shifted towards a focus on materialism and consumerism. This era, marked by economic prosperity, saw success measured by the accumulation of wealth and possessions. Sarah Churchwell notes that the dream transformed into a "dream of things," highlighting a departure from its original ideals. Fitzgerald critiques this transformation in *The Great Gatsby*, portraying the dream as a hollow pursuit of status and opulence.

III. Critical Perspectives on *The Great Gatsby*

A. Wealth and Class Stratification

Scholars have examined the novel's depiction of wealth as both aspirational and corrupting. The clear divide between "old money" (Tom and Daisy Buchanan) and "new money" (Jay Gatsby) underscores the rigid class structures of the time. Gatsby's wealth, acquired through dubious means, challenges the notion that hard work alone leads to success, suggesting that social mobility is limited and often illusory.

B. Identity and Self-Invention

Gatsby's transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby embodies the American ideal of self-made success. However, this reinvention is portrayed as fragile and ultimately unsuccessful. Despite his wealth, Gatsby remains an outsider to the elite society he aspires to join, indicating that identity in a class-conscious society is deeply tied to one's origins.

C. Disillusionment and Moral Decay

The novel is often interpreted as a narrative of disillusionment. Gatsby's dream, symbolized by the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, represents an unattainable ideal. His demise reflects the moral decay underlying the pursuit of the American Dream. Feminist critiques also highlight the constrained identities of female characters like Daisy and Myrtle, shaped by societal expectations and gender roles.

IV. The Cultural and Historical Context of the 1920s

A. The Roaring Twenties and Economic Boom

Set in 1922, the novel captures the essence of the Roaring Twenties—a period of economic prosperity, industrial growth, and cultural change. The era's emphasis on consumerism and extravagance is mirrored in Gatsby's lavish parties and opulent lifestyle. However, Fitzgerald's portrayal is ambivalent, revealing the emptiness behind the era's glittering façade .

B. Prohibition and Crime

The Prohibition era (1920–1933) serves as a critical backdrop to the novel. The ban on alcohol led to the rise of illegal activities, with Gatsby's wealth implied to stem from bootlegging. This context blurs the lines between legality and morality, questioning the ethical foundations of the American Dream .

C. Social Stratification and Racial Hierarchies

Fitzgerald's narrative reflects the deep social and racial divides of 1920s America. Tom Buchanan's overt racism and the stark contrasts between East Egg, West Egg, and the "valley of ashes" highlight the entrenched hierarchies and the limitations of social mobility. These elements challenge the notion of the American Dream as universally attainable.

V. Conclusion

This literature review has explored the ideological shifts, critical interpretations, and historical contexts surrounding *The Great Gatsby*. The novel serves as a poignant critique of the American Dream, exposing the contradictions

between its ideals and the realities of wealth, identity, and societal structures. Fitzgerald's work remains a timeless reflection on the complexities of aspiration and the human condition.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

I. Introduction

This chapter lays the groundwork for the critical approaches guiding the interpretation of *The Great Gatsby*. To effectively explore the relationship between wealth, identity, and disillusionment in Fitzgerald's novel, this study utilizes a dual theoretical approach. On one hand, social critique—primarily informed by Marxist theory—offers an analytical lens to uncover the economic forces and ideological structures supporting the concept of the American Dream. On the other hand, identity theory sheds light on the ways individuals construct and perform their sense of self, a process deeply intertwined with the characters' ambitions and eventual disenchantment. These combined perspectives create a multidimensional framework for engaging with the text on both structural and personal levels.

II. Social Critique and Marxist Perspectives

A. Capitalism and Class Struggle

Marxist criticism asserts that capitalist societies are fundamentally shaped by conflict, particularly around wealth concentration, class divisions, and systems of exploitation. This critical stance is highly applicable to *The Great Gatsby*, where wealth not only motivates action but also reveals societal contradictions. From a Marxist viewpoint, economic success is not purely the result of individual effort but a reflection of broader social and material conditions shaped by capitalism.

Fitzgerald presents a stark contrast between the extravagance of Gatsby's lifestyle and the entrenched elitism of those with inherited wealth. The novel constructs a hierarchy that favors longstanding privilege over hard-earned success, thereby challenging the myth of equal opportunity. Gatsby's dramatic ascent from poverty to affluence is ultimately undercut by rigid class boundaries that resist true mobility.

B. Ideology, Hegemony, and the Fallacy of Meritocracy

A central concern of Marxist theory is the role of ideology in masking social inequalities. The American Dream, as portrayed in the novel, operates as a dominant narrative promising endless possibility and transformation through individual agency. However, Fitzgerald portrays this ideal as deceptive. Wealth, rather than a neutral reward for effort, becomes a symbol of moral compromise and systemic corruption.

The famous green light symbolizes both hope and unattainable desire, highlighting the tension between aspiration and reality. This contradiction reflects the broader function of capitalist ideology—to promote self-delusion while maintaining socio-economic control. In this light, the American Dream emerges not as an empowering force but as a mechanism that sustains structural imbalance through illusion.

C. Materialism and the Rise of Consumerism

Set in the opulent backdrop of the Jazz Age, *The Great Gatsby* engages directly with themes of materialism and consumer culture. Characters use extravagant displays of wealth as markers of identity and social belonging. Yet, the

pursuit of possessions often substitutes for genuine self-worth, leading to a sense of emotional emptiness and alienation.

Through a Marxist lens, this pattern reflects the commodification of human life under capitalist influence. The characters' fixation on status and recognition mirrors a culture that reduces personal value to market metrics. This critique challenges the ethical and philosophical basis of the American Dream, exposing its dependence on material accumulation and shallow representations of success.

III. Identity Theory and Self-Construction

A. Identity as Performance and Fluidity

While Marxist theory addresses systemic and economic forces, identity theory focuses on the individual's subjective experience. Contemporary scholars often conceptualize identity as a dynamic, socially constructed process. This idea is especially relevant when analyzing Jay Gatsby, whose reinvention from James Gatz into a wealthy socialite exemplifies identity as a deliberate performance.

In this context, identity is not stable but contingent on societal acceptance. Gatsby's carefully crafted persona is fragile, continuously judged by a society that values lineage and tradition. His inner conflict between his authentic past and his constructed self underscores the limits of self-invention in a stratified social landscape.

B. Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy

To deepen the understanding of identity as performance, this chapter draws on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical model. Goffman suggests that social life resembles theatrical performance, with individuals playing roles that conform to

expected norms. Gatsby's elaborate image—his lavish parties, refined demeanor, and cultivated mystique—is an intentional act meant to gain social validation.

However, Goffman also warns of the inherent instability of such roles. When personal identity clashes with the presented self, internal conflict arises. Gatsby embodies this tension, as his desire for acceptance is constantly undermined by the pull of his past. This inner dissonance leads to personal collapse and serves as a critique of the American Dream's promise of transformation.

C. Social Capital and Identity Shaping

Beyond performance, identity theory considers the influence of social capital—the relationships and cultural competencies that define social status. In *The Great Gatsby*, this is especially visible in the distinction between “old money” and “new money.” Social capital proves just as crucial as financial wealth in determining belonging and legitimacy.

Gatsby's attempt to integrate into elite circles is consistently thwarted, not due to lack of wealth, but because he lacks the cultural authority and recognition that come with established networks. The novel suggests that genuine social mobility is constrained by invisible but powerful cultural gatekeepers. Thus, the American Dream's emphasis on self-made success often fails to account for the social structures that inhibit true inclusion.

IV. Conclusion

By merging social critique and identity theory, this chapter constructs a comprehensive analytical framework for interpreting *The Great Gatsby*. A Marxist lens exposes how capitalist ideology, class divisions, and consumerism shape the

narrative and challenge the legitimacy of the American Dream. At the same time, theories of identity highlight the performative and unstable nature of self-construction within socially restricted environments.

Together, these perspectives offer a nuanced reading of the novel—one that recognizes the allure of wealth and self-transformation but ultimately reveals their entanglement in systems of power, exclusion, and disillusionment. This theoretical synthesis demonstrates that the pursuit of the American Dream, far from liberating, often leads to internal conflict, societal rejection, and inevitable collapse.

Chapter Four: Methodology

I. Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative research design and methodological strategies utilized to investigate F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. It demonstrates how the study integrates literary analysis, historical context, and theoretical frameworks to explore the themes of wealth, identity, and disillusionment. The chosen methodology is structured to ensure a comprehensive and multidimensional interpretation of the text by incorporating diverse analytical lenses and data sources.

II. Research Design and Approach

A. Qualitative Research Paradigm

This research adopts a qualitative paradigm, which is particularly appropriate for analyzing complex literary texts and cultural representations. Emphasizing interpretive understanding, this approach allows for a nuanced examination of symbolic meaning and narrative structure within *The Great Gatsby*. By focusing on subjective interpretation and contextual depth, qualitative research

provides a platform for exploring how the novel interrogates the ideals underpinning the American Dream.

B. Interdisciplinary Literary Analysis

Given the multifaceted nature of the research topic, the study utilizes an interdisciplinary analytical framework that includes:

- **Close textual analysis:** Scrutinizing significant passages, motifs (such as the green light and opulent parties), and narrative techniques.
- **Socio-historical contextualization:** Placing the novel within the economic, cultural, and political landscape of the 1920s, including factors such as the Roaring Twenties, Prohibition, and shifting social values.
- **Theoretical integration:** Applying Marxist literary criticism and identity theory to interrogate representations of class, self-construction, and ideological disillusionment.

This composite methodology deepens the analysis by highlighting the interaction between personal narratives and larger societal forces.

III. Data Sources and Sampling

A. Primary Text

The primary source for this study is Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The novel is examined in full, with particular attention paid to key scenes that encapsulate the central themes. The analysis is supported by reputable academic editions, ensuring textual accuracy and interpretive precision.

B. Secondary Literature

The research draws on an extensive selection of secondary sources, including:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles and essays focused on the evolution and critique of the American Dream.
- Academic texts addressing literary modernism, Marxist literary theory, and identity studies.
- Archival and historical records that provide background on the 1920s socio-economic environment.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to include influential and widely cited works, ensuring the study is grounded in recognized scholarly discourse.

C. Archival and Digital Sources

To enhance the contextual framework, the study also incorporates archival materials and digital databases. These include original reviews, personal correspondence by Fitzgerald, and period documents that illuminate the cultural and ideological backdrop of the novel. This archival engagement supports a more holistic understanding of the novel's socio-political resonance.

IV. Data Analysis Techniques

A. Close Reading

Close reading serves as the foundational analytical method, emphasizing detailed textual examination. This includes:

- Annotating the text to identify recurring imagery and thematic patterns.
- Engaging with existing interpretations to examine the complexities of the American Dream.

- Situating Fitzgerald’s stylistic choices within the conventions of modernist literature

B. Thematic Coding

To structure the analytical process, thematic coding is applied. This involves:

- Identifying overarching themes such as materialism, alienation, and identity reconstruction.
- Developing a codebook to organize textual evidence.
- Utilizing qualitative software tools where necessary to map connections between themes and theoretical concepts.

C. Comparative Framework

The study also employs comparative analysis, which links the primary text with secondary scholarship. This includes:

- Juxtaposing Fitzgerald’s narrative with critiques of the American Dream from contemporary sources.
- Aligning novelistic themes with theoretical insights from Marxism and identity theory.
- Referencing other literary works from the same period to position *The Great Gatsby* within a broader literary tradition.

V. Ensuring Methodological Rigor and Acknowledging Limitations

A. Strategies for Validity and Reliability

Several mechanisms were employed to enhance credibility:

- **Triangulation:** Cross-analyzing data through close reading, thematic coding, and comparative interpretation.
- **Scholarly feedback:** Incorporating insights from academic forums and peer discussions.
- **Researcher reflexivity:** Maintaining awareness of personal biases and their influence on the interpretive process.

B. Limitations of the Study

While qualitative analysis provides depth, certain limitations are acknowledged:

- Subjectivity in interpretation may influence findings due to theoretical orientation.
- The focus on textual and historical analysis limits the empirical generalizability of conclusions.
- Some archival sources may lack representation of evolving critical voices or contemporary cultural perspectives.

Despite these constraints, the study remains committed to methodological transparency and interpretive integrity.

VI. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological structure that underpins the exploration of *The Great Gatsby*. By employing a qualitative, multi-method approach—rooted in literary, contextual, and theoretical analysis—the research is well-positioned to investigate the intricate intersections of wealth, identity, and disillusionment. The combination of primary and secondary sources, enriched by historical and archival research, offers a robust foundation for critical interpretation

and contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions about the cultural significance of the American Dream.

Chapter Five: Analysis of The Great Gatsby

Wealth, Identity Transformation, and Disillusionment

I. Introduction

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, first published in 1925, stands as one of the most poignant critiques of the American Dream. Set against the vibrant backdrop of the Jazz Age, the novel vividly portrays a society captivated by wealth and plagued by moral ambiguity and emotional detachment. Through the tragic character of Jay Gatsby and the perspective of narrator Nick Carraway, Fitzgerald reveals a narrative rich with themes of longing, reinvention, and overwhelming disappointment. Rather than a mere romance or tale of ambition, the novel serves as a profound exploration of the illusion of success and the fragility of identity amidst a materialistic landscape.

At the core of *The Great Gatsby* are three interconnected themes: wealth, identity transformation, and disillusionment. Fitzgerald probes how wealth—often celebrated as the ultimate marker of success—operates as a deceptive force that distorts values and alienates people from genuine human connections. Gatsby's metamorphosis from James Gatz into a self-proclaimed millionaire encapsulates the myth of self-creation, while simultaneously highlighting the costs of such reinvention—the erasure of the past and a relentless fixation on an idealized future. Ultimately, the pursuits of love, success, or status culminate in disillusionment,

transforming the American Dream into a tantalizing mirage rather than a route to fulfillment.

This chapter offers a detailed analysis of *The Great Gatsby*, investigating how Fitzgerald harnesses these themes as a powerful lens through which to critique 1920s American society—and, by extension, the very fabric of the national ethos. By examining the intricate interplay of class, identity, and moral decay, we will reveal the novel's disassembly of the foundational myths surrounding the American Dream. Employing close reading, thematic analysis, and contextual examination, this chapter seeks to elucidate Fitzgerald's depiction of a world where dreams are simultaneously created and obliterated by the very forces that promise their realization.

II. Wealth and Social Stratification

Wealth in *The Great Gatsby* transcends mere material accumulation; it functions as social currency—symbolic power dictating one's place within the rigid hierarchy of 1920s America. Fitzgerald's portrayal of affluence is both nuanced and critical, exposing the superficiality of prosperity and the moral vacuum that often accompanies it. Through the dichotomy of “old money” and “new money,” the novel reveals the persistent stratification within American society, even during a era ostensibly characterized by opportunity and upward mobility.

A. Old Money vs. New Money: Social Barriers in Disguise

The most pronounced divide in the novel emerges between East Egg and West Egg, geographical embodiments of entrenched social classes. East Egg, the

residence of Tom and Daisy Buchanan, symbolizes inherited wealth, aristocratic privilege, and cultural elitism. Born into luxury, these characters need not justify their status. Their lives are defined by entitlement, emotional detachment, and a sense of moral immunity. Tom's arrogance and infidelity illustrate not only personal flaws but also exemplify the consequences of a societal hierarchy wherein wealth insulates one from accountability.

Conversely, West Egg signifies new wealth—figures like Gatsby who have recently amassed fortunes and strive to emulate the lifestyle of the elite. Gatsby's opulent mansion, extravagant parties, and lavish attire reflect his aspiration to gain acceptance from the East Egg elite. Yet, despite his riches, he remains an outsider. His enigmatic past and the doubts surrounding his fortune render him alien amidst the established class. Fitzgerald critiques the notion that wealth alone can overcome social barriers, demonstrating instead that money, devoid of heritage, fails to imbue one with legitimacy in a society structured by class divisions.

B. Material Excess as a Mask

The novel teems with imagery of opulence—Gatsby's extravagant parties, Daisy's ethereal white dresses, the Buchanans' opulent home, and the ceaseless flow of alcohol and jazz. These aren't mere period details; they serve as critiques of the emptiness obscured by materialism. Fitzgerald employs this excess to suggest that beneath the veneer of wealth lies profound emotional and moral bankruptcy. Gatsby's parties are not celebrations but strategic attempts to attract Daisy. Daisy's voice, resonating with wealth, underscores her allure being inextricably linked to affluence, shaping her identity.

Even the novel's most glamorous elements carry an undertone of hollowness. Characters inhabit a world where appearances overshadow substance,

transforming relationships into transactional exchanges. Myrtle Wilson is not drawn to Tom's character but the lifestyle he embodies. Her desire for escape from poverty propels her to chase an illusion of sophistication, one that ultimately leads to her tragic demise. The spectacle of wealth evolves into a theatrical performance wherein all participants play their roles, yet none achieve genuine fulfillment.

C. The Illusion of Economic Mobility

Fitzgerald tackles the American ideal of economic self-determination directly. Gatsby, often heralded as the quintessential self-made man, appears to embody this promise. However, the murky origins of his wealth—hinted to derive from dubious activities—invite a critical examination of the morality of social ascent in a society that favors the already privileged. Gatsby's immense fortune aims to recreate a lost moment and reclaim Daisy; yet as the narrative shows, the past is irretrievable, rendering the dream perpetually out of reach.

This failure is not merely personal; it illustrates the broader ineffectiveness of the American Dream. The myth promotes the belief that hard work and ambition yield success, yet *The Great Gatsby* unravels the notion that power and prestige hinge more on birthright than on effort. The dream becomes tainted, reduced to a pursuit of wealth devoid of any intrinsic moral or spiritual value.

D. The Valley of Ashes:

A Counterpoint to Wealth In stark contrast to the lavishness of East Egg and West Egg lies the "valley of ashes," an industrial wasteland symbolizing the repercussions of capitalist excess and the human toll of economic disparity. Here reside George and Myrtle Wilson, ensnared in poverty and despair. The valley

transcends mere geography; it serves as a metaphor for the moral decay hidden beneath the surface of affluence.

The ashen landscape epitomizes the death of dreams and the erosion of values. Myrtle's tragic death occurs in this desolate space, just as George's despair culminates in violence against Gatsby. Fitzgerald employs the valley as a reminder that for every individual like Gatsby striving for wealth, countless others are crushed by the very systems that render such aspirations attainable for the privileged few.

III: Identity Transformation and the Myth of Self-Making

In *The Great Gatsby*, identity is fluid, performative, and deeply entangled with the myths surrounding the American Dream. Jay Gatsby embodies the dream's allure—the belief that one can transcend background, class, and limitations through sheer resolve and ambition. However, Fitzgerald complicates this narrative, revealing that transformation rooted in illusion often leads not to freedom or fulfillment but to isolation and despair.

A. James Gatz: The Ghost Beneath Gatsby

Jay Gatsby is not born but rather constructed. Readers discover that his true name is James Gatz, the son of impoverished farmers from North Dakota. Disillusioned with his roots, he sheds them early on, reconstructing himself into a figure of grandeur. His break with the past is absolute; he adopts his new identity at seventeen—a symbolic pivot marking the dawn of his idealized self.

This transformation, while admirable for its ambition and visionary intent, is portrayed by Fitzgerald as tragically flawed. Gatsby does not embark on this reinvention for personal growth or authentic self-discovery; instead, he does it for Daisy. Every facet of his persona—his opulent mansion, attire, and even manner of

speech—is meticulously designed to impress her and reclaim a fleeting moment in time. Thus, Gatsby’s identity reflects not who he truly is but rather a performance for others, rendering him a man seeking validation rather than meaning.

B. Performance, Spectacle, and the Fragile Self

Fitzgerald employs theatrical motifs throughout the narrative to underscore Gatsby’s performative identity. His famed parties serve not as genuine celebrations but as elaborate exhibitions intended to attract Daisy. Few guests grasp his true essence—rumors swirl about his past, and Gatsby does little to demystify himself. Instead, he becomes a legend in his own lifetime, passionately devoted to a dream that compels him to shadow behind its illusion. Nick remarks that Gatsby harbored an “extraordinary gift for hope,” an unwavering belief in the possibility of reinvention and reuniting. However, this hope also masks self-deception. Gatsby fails to perceive Daisy’s true nature and the reality that the past he yearns for has irrevocably slipped away. His transformation is sustained not by authenticity but by an untouched fantasy. The climax occurs when Daisy, weeping over Gatsby’s luxurious shirts, signifies the peak of this illusion—after which it begins to disintegrate.

Identity in the novel isn’t solely confined to Gatsby; nearly every character engages in a form of self-creation. Myrtle Wilson, attempting to escape her working-class background, enters an affair with Tom and mimics the behavior of the upper class. She alters her attire, speech, and demeanor while in the city, yet her transformation remains superficial and fleeting. Myrtle’s tragic fate emphasizes the constraints of identity performance unchecked by genuine societal power.

C. The Limits of Reinvention

Fitzgerald paints identity reinvention with ambivalence. On one hand, it encapsulates the aspirational core of the American Dream—the belief that birth or background need not confine one’s potential. Conversely, the narrative unveils the hollowness of transformation predicated on surface-level change and societal validation. Gatsby’s reconstruction is radical yet ultimately incomplete. Despite his wealth and allure, he never fully integrates into the world he so desperately desires to join. His romantic pursuit of Daisy transcends love—it intertwines with a quest for validation and belonging, aimed at erasing the stigma of his humble origins.

In this light, Gatsby’s downfall is deeply tied not only to the dissolution of love but to the fragility of identity as a stable construct. His life crumbles the moment the illusion falters—when Daisy’s hesitance surfaces, when Tom unveils Gatsby’s illicit ties, and when Nick finally pierces through the glamorous façade. The tragedy here is that Gatsby does not merely fail to win Daisy; his entire identity, painstakingly built over years, proves delicate and unsustainable.

D. Nick’s Shifting Identity and Moral Awakening

While Gatsby’s identity undergoes a radical transformation, Nick experiences a more nuanced yet significant evolution throughout the narrative. Initially, Nick perceives himself as an impartial observer, someone who refrains from judgment while witnessing events unfold. However, his entanglement in Gatsby’s story catalyzes a moral awakening, propelling him to reassess his values amid disillusionment with the East, Daisy and Tom, and the social elite.

By the novel’s conclusion, Nick’s return to the Midwest resonates beyond geographic relocation; it signifies a symbolic retreat from moral decay—a yearning for authenticity and stability. His disillusionment mirrors Gatsby’s tragic fate,

further painting a complex picture of identity shaped by desire, disillusionment, and the quest for meaning in an unpredictable world.

IV: Disillusionment and the Collapse of the Dream

Wealth serves as the mechanism, identity transformation embodies the process, and disillusionment represents the inevitable conclusion of *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald crafts a world wherein the pursuits of success, love, and personal reinvention yield not fulfillment but ruination. The dream that once promised self-actualization and joy reveals itself as fundamentally hollow. The narrative's conclusion—marked by Gatsby's death, Nick's disenchantment, and Daisy and Tom's retreat into their opulence—signals the comprehensive collapse of the American Dream. Through this disintegration, Fitzgerald critiques not only a specific historical moment but poses significant questions about the very foundation of this dream.

A. Gatsby's Dream Shattered

At the core of Gatsby's aspirations lies Daisy Buchanan—a woman he idealizes as the epitome of perfection, purity, and social acceptance. Yet Daisy proves to be marred by her flaws, ultimately indifferent to Gatsby's fate. Gatsby's fatal error encompasses not merely his love for Daisy but his belief that she stands for something grander than herself. His desire intertwines with a yearning for success and legitimacy; she represents both a person and a symbol—a pathway to the upper-class world he yearns to enter.

Gatsby's assertion to Nick that he can "repeat the past" reveals that he is, in fact, pursuing not merely a woman but an ephemeral feeling of wholeness that has long since evaporated. His refusal to acknowledge the passage of time acts as a defining flaw. The green light at the end of Daisy's dock, once imbued with hope, morphs into a haunting symbol of unattainable dreams. Gatsby reaches for this illusion relentlessly until the end, even as the façade around him crumbles.

Following the confrontation at the Plaza Hotel, when Daisy falters and ultimately reverts to Tom, Gatsby's aspirations are irrevocably dismantled. Yet he persists in waiting for her call, clinging stubbornly to his fantasies. His death—alone in his pool—becomes a quiet testament to the emptiness of his dream. This fate is not merely a romantic loss; it signifies the obliteration of identity, ambition, and unfulfilled hope.

B. Nick's Moral Reckoning

Nick Carraway's journey mirrors Gatsby's disillusionment. Initially enthralled by Gatsby's charisma, Daisy's allure, and the dazzling veneer of East Coast privilege, Nick prides himself on maintaining a stance of "reserved judgment." Yet as events unfold, he becomes increasingly appalled by the moral decay surrounding him. Figures he once admired reveal themselves to be selfish, hypocritical, and careless.

In the aftermath of Gatsby's death, only Nick remains. Tom and Daisy flee, Meyer Wolfsheim disengages, and the partygoers vanish. This abandonment forces Nick to confront the façade behind the spectacle—those whom Gatsby endeavored to impress were indifferent to his existence. Nick's transition from passive observer to disillusioned witness highlights the disintegration of the very ideals that once drew him East. He concludes that Gatsby was "worth the whole damn

bunch put together,” not in moral perfection but because he yearned for something beyond himself, despite the misguided nature of that belief.

Nick's return to the Midwest encapsulates more than surface relocation; it symbolizes a retreat from the moral corruption he has witnessed, driven by a quest for stability and authenticity. His disillusionment resonates profoundly with the reader, as Fitzgerald strips away the glamour to reveal sobering truths beneath.

C. The Buchanans and the Shield of Privilege

The most scathing condemnation of disillusionment crystallizes through characters like Daisy and Tom Buchanan. Unlike Gatsby—who suffers for his dreams—the Buchanans remain unscathed. Tom's aggression, racism, infidelity, and Daisy's emotional vacuity and cowardice escape any form of punishment. After Myrtle's tragic death and Gatsby's subsequent demise, they retreat into their wealth, untouched by consequence. Nick observes that they “smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness.”

This impunity delineates a deeper layer of Fitzgerald's critique. The American Dream, as experienced by Gatsby, may promise transformation, but in reality, it shields those already in power. Disillusionment, therefore, is not universal; it is most profoundly felt by those who dare to believe in dreams unencumbered by privilege. The tragedy of *The Great Gatsby* extends beyond Gatsby's demise; it unveils the truth that societal structures are rigged against those like him.

D. The American Dream Unmasked

In its concluding pages, the novel delivers one of its most iconic phrases: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

This metaphor encapsulates the essence of disillusionment. The American Dream is depicted not as a forward motion toward progress but as a relentless struggle against currents that inexorably pull one backward—into memory, loss, and disillusionment.

Fitzgerald offers no solutions to this collapse; instead, he invites readers to contemplate the enduring human longing amid inevitable failure. Gatsby's dream may be doomed, but it is rooted in a fundamental yearning for meaning, beauty, and belonging. His tragedy lies not just within the collapse of this dream but in the realization that the world he sought has never genuinely existed.

V. Conclusion

In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald crafts a haunting, multifaceted portrayal of the American Dream—not as an attainable ideal but as an illusion underpinned by fragile desires, social inequality, and moral ambiguity. Through vivid depictions of 1920s America, Fitzgerald portrays wealth not as a liberating force but as a mechanism amplifying social stratification and emotional disconnection. The novel's glamorous exterior—symbolized by the luminous gatherings of West Egg and the elegant facades of East Egg—conceals a pervasive sense of moral decline and human emptiness.

Jay Gatsby's existence encapsulates the tragic potential inherent in the American myth of self-reinvention. His journey from James Gatz to Gatsby embodies the seductive belief that identity is malleable and that success is attainable for all who endeavor to reach it. Yet his story simultaneously reveals the steep costs of such transformation: the loss of authenticity, the commodification of love, and the ultimate inability to bridge entrenched social divides. Gatsby fails not for lack of ambition, but because the society he aspires to join decisively rejects him, regardless of his wealth or fervent belief in his dreams.

This overarching failure epitomizes the broad disillusionment that permeates the narrative. Fitzgerald repeatedly illustrates how those who pursue dreams anchored in materialism or nostalgic yearning are condemned to disappointment. Whether through Myrtle's aspirations for status, Nick's journey toward moral clarity, or Gatsby's endeavor to revive the past, all roads lead inexorably toward disillusionment. The American Dream, once an emblem of possibility and progress, is unveiled as a hollow pursuit, marred by inequality, corruption, and the inescapable weight of history.

Yet, amidst this cynicism, Fitzgerald subtly recognizes the resilience of the human spirit. The closing line— "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" encapsulates the eternal tension between hope and futility. It implies that despite failures, there remains something profoundly human in the act of striving. Gatsby's dream, while naïve and flawed, stems from a deep yearning for meaning, beauty, and connection. His tragedy lies not only in his dream's collapse but in the painful awareness that the world he envisioned never truly existed.

Ultimately, *The Great Gatsby* serves as a cautionary tale regarding the perils of pursuing illusions and conflating wealth with worth. It acts as a mirror, reflecting a society that promises opportunity while safeguarding its privileges—a nation that celebrates ambition while punishing those daring enough to dream beyond their predetermined boundaries. Almost a century after its publication, Fitzgerald's critique remains glaringly relevant, reminding us that beneath the dazzling allure of success and reinvention lies a fragile truth: the American Dream, as lived by Gatsby, may always remain tantalizingly out of reach.

Chapter Six: Discussion

I. Introduction

This chapter integrates the major findings of this study with contemporary social, cultural, and literary contexts. By analyzing *The Great Gatsby*, the research uncovered deep insights into how wealth, identity, and disillusionment shape American society. These issues, though rooted in the 1920s, continue to echo in modern times. Therefore, the implications of this research reach beyond Fitzgerald's novel, offering meaningful contributions to current literary criticism and cultural studies.

II. The Enduring Nature of the American Dream and Its Failures

The study shows that Fitzgerald presents the American Dream as a paradox: it inspires ambition but often ends in inevitable disappointment. Even today, the dream of upward mobility remains deeply ingrained in societal narratives. Nevertheless, systemic barriers—particularly those related to class, race, and access to economic resources—continue to block true mobility.

Gatsby's pursuit of an unreachable ideal mirrors today's gig economy, where workers are encouraged to constantly strive yet often remain trapped in unstable, low-paying jobs. Hochschild (1995) observes that while the American Dream promotes hope, it masks the underlying social and economic inequalities that inhibit its fulfillment.

The sense of betrayal that follows reflects Gatsby's downfall, revealing the American Dream as both a motivating force and a deceptive myth. Thus, Fitzgerald's novel remains a vital critique of American ideals, questioning the myths of meritocracy and self-made success that persist into the present day.

III. Constructing Identity in a Capitalist Society

Another key finding of this research is that identity in *The Great Gatsby* is heavily influenced by material wealth and social image. Characters like Gatsby, Tom, and Daisy carefully perform identities that meet societal expectations. This phenomenon is even more intensified in today's digital world, where platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn become stages for continuous self-presentation.

Bauman (2000) argues that in contemporary culture, personal identity is less a discovery and more a project that individuals must constantly create and publicly display. Gatsby's reinvention of himself as an elite figure parallels today's trend of self-branding, where individuals are valued according to their public image, status, and material symbols.

This commodification of identity suggests that Fitzgerald's concerns remain highly relevant. Moreover, it highlights the importance for cultural studies to investigate how capitalist societies encourage individuals to align their self-worth with market-driven values.

IV. Disillusionment as a Persistent Human Experience

Disillusionment stands out as one of the most powerful and lasting themes in Fitzgerald's work and in today's world. The chasm between aspirations and reality generates profound dissatisfaction, not only for Fitzgerald's characters but also for many individuals today.

Given current issues like political unrest, financial instability, and environmental degradation, widespread feelings of betrayal and hopelessness are common. Fisher

(2009) points out that in late capitalist societies, people often struggle even to imagine alternatives to the status quo, leading to a deep sense of resignation.

Thus, *The Great Gatsby* serves not only as a snapshot of the Jazz Age but also as a timeless exploration of the emotional cost of pursuing illusions. This insight strengthens its place within traditions of existential literature and critical theory, demonstrating literature's ongoing power to question and critique the structures that define society.

V. Contributions to Literary Criticism

The findings of this research emphasize several important points for literary criticism. First, they highlight the need for critical approaches that are socially and historically grounded. The use of Marxist theory and identity analysis proved essential for exploring how personal dreams collide with systemic realities.

Additionally, the study encourages critics to view *The Great Gatsby* not just as a historical novel but as a living work that adapts its meaning over time. Issues like neoliberalism, digital capitalism, and the politics of identity make the novel strikingly relevant today. Giroux (2015) stresses that culture is not simply a mirror but a contested arena where ideologies are both reinforced and resisted—an idea that enriches how we read Fitzgerald.

Finally, this research supports interdisciplinary approaches, combining insights from literature, sociology, philosophy, and cultural studies to better understand the complex interactions between individuals and the societies they inhabit.

VI. Contributions to Cultural Studies

The study's implications extend significantly into cultural studies as well. The persistence of themes like wealth, identity, and disillusionment calls for an ongoing critique of the stories societies tell about success, fulfillment, and authenticity.

Today's cultural products—whether literature, film, advertising, or social media—both reinforce and challenge these dominant narratives. Scholars like Turkle (2011) note that technology has reshaped human relationships and self-perception, echoing Fitzgerald's portrayal of self-invention and alienation.

By employing the critical methods outlined in this thesis, cultural studies researchers can better understand how myths are created, maintained, and occasionally resisted. Moreover, the continuing relevance of *The Great Gatsby* proves that classic literature remains a powerful lens for interrogating contemporary ideologies, serving not as relics of the past but as active participants in present cultural debates.

VII. Conclusion

Through its exploration of wealth, identity, and disillusionment, *The Great Gatsby* proves strikingly relevant to contemporary life. This study shows that socially engaged literary criticism and cultural analysis remain essential tools for understanding the forces that shape human experience.

As economic inequality grows, identity becomes increasingly commodified, and collective disillusionment deepens, Fitzgerald's vision continues to resonate. Ultimately, this discussion underscores the necessity of critically engaging with cultural works—both old and new—to illuminate the social structures and

ideological forces that define our world. In doing so, both literary criticism and cultural studies can continue to offer vital insights into the ongoing struggle for meaning, identity, and justice.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

I. Conclusion

This research has offered a critical exploration of *The Great Gatsby*, focusing on the intertwined themes of wealth, identity, and disillusionment through the frameworks of Marxist theory and identity studies. The analysis demonstrated that Fitzgerald's novel acts as a powerful critique of a society increasingly governed by materialism and shallow notions of success.

The findings revealed that wealth, rather than being a tool for personal liberation, often serves as a corrosive force that distorts identity and corrupts human relationships. Jay Gatsby's journey exemplifies the profound gap between aspiration and actual achievement, suggesting that the American Dream, in its popular form, is fundamentally flawed and unattainable for many. Gatsby's metamorphosis from James Gatz into a wealthy persona highlights the existential cost of pursuing external validation at the expense of inner authenticity.

Moreover, the novel lays bare the rigid class hierarchies that persist beneath the surface of American meritocracy. Despite his immense fortune, Gatsby remains excluded from the entrenched aristocracy, underlining the limitations of wealth in achieving true social acceptance.

Ultimately, *The Great Gatsby* emerges not simply as a nostalgic reflection on a bygone era but as an enduring warning about the dangers of equating human worth with material success — a warning that remains strikingly relevant amid today's deepening inequalities and identity crises.

II. Contributions of the Study

This study contributes to literary scholarship by presenting a layered reading of Fitzgerald's novel, integrating Marxist critiques with theories of identity formation. It offers a refreshed understanding of the American Dream as a cultural construct whose inherent contradictions continue to shape personal ambitions and societal norms.

Additionally, by linking the historical context of the 1920s with contemporary socio-economic conditions, this research enriches broader conversations within literary criticism and cultural studies, demonstrating the ongoing relevance of Fitzgerald's insights.

III. Recommendations for Future Research

Building upon the conclusions drawn here, future studies might consider the following directions:

- **Comparative Analyses:** Scholars could compare *The Great Gatsby* with other American literary works, such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* or Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, to examine how the American Dream is represented across different eras, races, and social classes.
- **Interdisciplinary Research:** Integrating insights from economics, psychology, or political science could deepen understandings of how success, wealth, and identity are socially and culturally constructed in literature.
- **Modern Adaptations:** Analyzing contemporary adaptations of *The Great Gatsby*—whether in film, television, or literature—could reveal how today's creators reinterpret or challenge Fitzgerald's themes.

- **Intersectional Approaches:** Future research could explore how issues of race, gender, and sexuality intersect with class and identity in narratives about the American Dream, thus broadening the critical scope beyond Fitzgerald's primarily white, male-centered portrayal.
- **Global Perspectives:** Another promising direction would be to study how non-American authors engage with, critique, or reimagine the concept of the American Dream, thereby revealing its international cultural resonance.

IV. Final Reflections

In conclusion, this thesis reaffirms *The Great Gatsby's* lasting significance as a critical lens through which to view American society. Fitzgerald's portrayal of ambition, wealth, and disillusionment offers profound insights not only into the historical moment of the 1920s but also into enduring human struggles with meaning, belonging, and self-realization in a commodified world.

By critically engaging with the American Dream, this study encourages a reevaluation of the narratives we construct around success and identity—and prompts reflection on the personal and societal costs that may accompany the relentless pursuit of these ideals.

General Conclusion

In this thesis, the exploration of *The Great Gatsby* has offered a critical reassessment of the American Dream, specifically through the themes of wealth, identity, and disillusionment. F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel serves as a sharp critique of the American Dream, highlighting the flaws and contradictions inherent in the ideal of achieving success and fulfillment through material wealth. The narrative reflects the tension between the pursuit of personal ambition and the harsh realities of social inequality and moral decay, ultimately revealing the limitations of the American Dream.

The American Dream is traditionally seen as a promise of prosperity and success, attainable through hard work and determination. However, Fitzgerald dismantles this ideal by demonstrating how the pursuit of wealth, rather than serving as a path to fulfillment, often exacerbates feelings of alienation and emptiness. The character of Jay Gatsby is a poignant example of this paradox. While his rags-to-riches story might seem to embody the dream of upward mobility, his tragic end exposes the hollowness of that pursuit. Gatsby's wealth does not lead to happiness or self-actualization, but rather to a destructive obsession with an unattainable ideal. Through Gatsby's life and death, Fitzgerald underscores that the American Dream, as it is commonly understood, is ultimately flawed and out of reach for many.

In *The Great Gatsby*, wealth becomes not just a symbol of success, but also a mechanism that distorts identity and reinforces social divisions. The Buchanans, Daisy and Tom, exemplify how material wealth allows individuals to escape the consequences of their actions, fostering a sense of entitlement and detachment from the lives of others. Their wealth, rather than being a sign of accomplishment, becomes a tool to maintain power and perpetuate the status quo. For Gatsby, wealth represents an opportunity to transform himself into someone worthy of

Daisy's love and societal acceptance. However, this material success fails to provide him with authentic relationships or a meaningful identity. The novel thus critiques the superficial values of a society where success is measured by outward appearances rather than genuine human connections.

The issue of identity is intricately tied to the social pressures and expectations placed on individuals in a materialistic society. Gatsby's transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby reveals the tension between personal reinvention and the reality of one's true self. While Gatsby's pursuit of a new identity reflects the potential for self-determination, it also underscores the emptiness of a life constructed around external validation. In Fitzgerald's world, identity becomes a commodity shaped by wealth and social recognition, often detached from individual authenticity. The characters' struggles to reconcile their true selves with the identities they project reflect a broader societal issue where personal worth is often defined by material success and societal approval.

Moreover, the theme of disillusionment is central to *The Great Gatsby's* critique of the American Dream. The characters' relentless pursuit of success, love, and social acceptance only leads to disappointment and, in Gatsby's case, death. Gatsby's fixation on Daisy and his belief in the possibility of recreating the past symbolize the unattainable nature of the American Dream. His tragic fate illustrates the inevitable collapse of dreams that are based on illusion rather than reality. The novel's ending, marked by Gatsby's death and Nick's disillusionment with the world he once admired, suggests that the American Dream's promises are ultimately hollow, and that the pursuit of material success cannot provide lasting meaning or fulfillment.

In conclusion, *The Great Gatsby* offers a powerful critique of the American Dream, questioning its viability and exposing its inherent contradictions. Through its exploration of wealth, identity, and disillusionment, the novel invites readers to reconsider the value placed on material success and the social expectations that shape personal identities. Fitzgerald's portrayal of the characters' quests for fulfillment serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of pursuing superficial ideals at the expense of personal integrity and authentic relationships. Despite the novel's setting in the 1920s, its themes remain strikingly relevant today, as contemporary society continues to grapple with issues of inequality, identity, and the elusive nature of success. *The Great Gatsby* ultimately serves as a reminder that the pursuit of external validation through wealth and status can lead to personal destruction and social fragmentation, offering a timeless reflection on the costs of ambition in a materialistic world.

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Abstract

This dissertation critically examines the representation of the American Dream in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, focusing on the interconnected themes of wealth, identity, and disillusionment. Employing a qualitative methodology based on close textual analysis and historical contextualization, the study investigates how Fitzgerald exposes the contradictions underlying the American Dream during the Roaring Twenties. Particular attention is given to the character of Jay Gatsby, whose pursuit of wealth and social status reflects both the promise and failure of self-reinvention. The findings reveal that material success in the novel functions not only as a symbol of aspiration but also as a source of moral decay and social division. Furthermore, the research demonstrates how the construction of identity is deeply influenced by class structures and societal expectations, ultimately leading to disappointment and disillusionment. The study concludes that *The Great Gatsby* remains a powerful critique of the American Dream and continues to offer valuable insights into contemporary debates surrounding inequality, social mobility, and materialism.

Keywords: American Dream; Wealth; Identity; Disillusionment; The Great Gatsby.

Résumé

Ce mémoire examine de manière critique la représentation du rêve américain dans *The Great Gatsby* de F. Scott Fitzgerald, en mettant l'accent sur les thèmes interdépendants de la richesse, de l'identité et du désenchantement. En s'appuyant sur une méthodologie qualitative fondée sur

l'analyse textuelle approfondie et la contextualisation historique, l'étude explore la manière dont Fitzgerald met en lumière les contradictions du rêve américain durant les années folles. Une attention particulière est accordée au personnage de Jay Gatsby, dont la quête de richesse et de statut social illustre à la fois les promesses et les limites de la réinvention de soi. Les résultats montrent que la réussite matérielle constitue à la fois un symbole d'aspiration et une source de décadence morale et de division sociale. L'étude conclut que *The Great Gatsby* demeure une critique pertinente du rêve américain et offre des perspectives précieuses sur les débats contemporains relatifs aux inégalités sociales et au matérialisme.

Mots-clés : Rêve américain ; Richesse ; Identité ; Désenchantement ; The Great Gatsby.

الملخص

تتناول هذه المذكرة بالنقد والتحليل تمثيل الحلم الأمريكي في رواية غاتسبي العظيم للكاتب فرانسيس سكوت فيتزجيرالد، مع التركيز على موضوعات الثروة والهوية وخيبة الأمل. واعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً قائماً على التحليل النصي الدقيق والتأطير التاريخي من أجل الكشف عن الكيفية التي فضح بها فيتزجيرالد التناقضات الكامنة في الحلم الأمريكي خلال عشرينيات القرن الماضي. وتركز الدراسة على شخصية جاي غاتسبي بوصفها نموذجاً يجسد في الوقت نفسه إمكانات النجاح وحدود إعادة تشكيل الذات. وتبين النتائج أن الثروة في الرواية تمثل رمزاً للطموح من جهة، ومصدراً للفساد الأخلاقي والانقسام الاجتماعي من جهة أخرى. كما توضح أن بناء الهوية يرتبط ارتباطاً وثيقاً بالبنية الطبقية والتوقعات الاجتماعية، مما يؤدي في النهاية إلى الإحباط وخيبة الأمل. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن رواية غاتسبي العظيم تظل نقداً قوياً للحلم الأمريكي وتحفظ بأهميتها في تفسير قضايا اللامساواة الاجتماعية والنزعة المادية المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحلم الأمريكي؛ الثروة؛ الهوية؛ خيبة الأمل؛ غاتسبي العظيم.