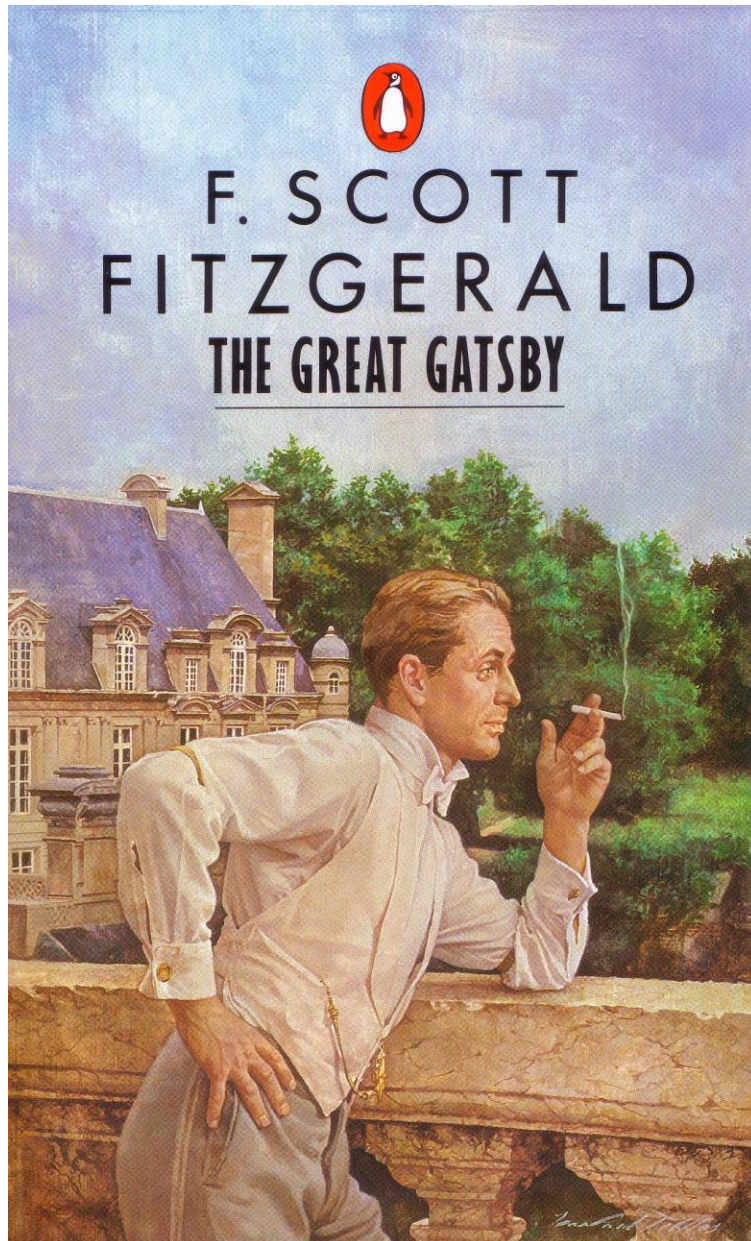


Love and Money:
An Analysis of *The Great Gatsby*

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Abstract

Although some may classify *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald as a love story, there is doubt as to whether or not Gatsby was actually in love. As a man obsessed with wealth and social standing, Gatsby had little space in his mind, let alone his heart, for anything else. The paper focuses on issues of wealth and social standing as presented in *The Great Gatsby*. Identity crisis faced Gatsby is pointed out. The question of love between Daisy and Gatsby is discussed. Even though Gatsby had struggle with false identity, he was goal-oriented and hope-oriented, an idealist.

Key words: *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy, Gatsby, identity crisis, poor boy and rich girl, wealth and social standing.

Obsessed with Wealth and Social Standing

Although some may classify *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald as a love story, there is doubt as to whether or not Gatsby was actually in love. As a man obsessed with wealth and social standing, Gatsby had little space in his mind, let alone his heart, for anything else. As one reads this novel, it is easy to see everything Gatsby does to obtain his classic 1920's golden girl, Daisy. However, his motives must be questioned. In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby's obsession with becoming upper class, alongside his twisted sense of self worth, bring to question whether or not Gatsby really does love Daisy.

Identity Crisis

Since he was a boy, Gatsby had always struggled with his identity, especially his social class. Even as a child, he felt like he deserved more than what he had been allotted. When describing Gatsby's true background, the narrator states "His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people- his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all." (Fitzgerald 98). This innate discomfort within his own family is exactly what makes Gatsby the falsely confident and truly insecure man he becomes.

Focus of Gatsby's Life

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Gatsby's entire life revolved around making more out of himself, in terms of wealth. He would not feel successful until he had accomplished his goals exactly as he pictured them. Daisy, the wealthy girl of his dreams, was simply a necessary part of the picture. Not only was Daisy just a part of Gatsby's plan, but she was also integral to his own self confidence and confirmation. Gatsby's real name was James Gatz. According to Nick, "The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island sprang from his Platonic conception of himself." (Fitzgerald 98).

Daisy, the Golden Girl

With this twisted sense of self and deliberately created identity, Jay Gatsby was destined to be self consumed and insecure. The only thing that could solve this was, of course, someone else to reinforce his homemade identity, and that someone was Daisy, the golden girl.

Daisy exemplified everything Gatsby wanted in life. She was the picture of wealth.

Nick's Bewildered Perspective

When the reader first encounters Daisy it is from Nick's bewildered perspective. As Nick describes seeing Jordan, Daisy's long time friend, and Daisy for the first time he says, "They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house" (Fitzgerald 8).

The reader is immediately given a feeling that these women are somehow other-worldly, and above everyone else without even intending to do so.

Daisy Knows How to Act

Born and raised in old money, Daisy knows how to act. She represents what new money cannot buy. For example, when Nick and Gatsby are discussing Daisy's voice, Gatsby suddenly says, "Her voice is full of money" (Fitzgerald 120). He says this with a seriousness that is not characteristic of a man blinded by love.

Here the reader is shown how painfully aware Gatsby is of Daisy's status. This is shown again when Nick explains the first summer Gatsby and Daisy were together: "Gatsby was

overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor” (Fitzgerald 150).

Gatsby Becomes Rich

Gatsby does eventually become rich, but it is not the wealth Daisy is composed of. The only way to become a part of the magical world of old money was to marry in, and that was Gatsby’s plan. He was drawn to Daisy because she would help him to achieve what he could not do alone.

Struggle with False Identity

To be above the struggles of the poor was all Gatsby ever wanted. Gatsby was a smart young man and he knew where he stood in the world. This is seen as Nick explains what Gatsby was thinking when he first met Daisy. Nick says, “However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penniless young man without a past, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his shoulders.” (Fitzgerald 149). This quote also shows Gatsby’s ongoing struggle with his false identity.

Gatsby knew he could eventually get rich, but he wanted the past he so deeply lacked. He wanted to be respectable. He wanted to be old money. This is evident in how as soon as Tom mentions his underhanded business dealings towards the end of the book Gatsby chokes up and loses his cool. According to Nick, “He began to talk excitedly to Daisy, denying everything, defending his name against accusations that had not been made” (Fitzgerald 134).

If he were the true gangster that his bootlegging profession would suggest, Gatsby would have been able to handle it, maybe even admit to it. All Gatsby wants is to be seen as respectable; he wants to be Tom. Tom is everything Gatsby is not. Tom is a powerful sportsman from old money while Gatsby is a poor army boy with underhanded business dealings. Gatsby believes that having Daisy, and therefore becoming respectable through her old money, will solve all of his problems and put him above those “hot struggles of the poor”.

Poor Boy Cannot Marry the Rich Girl

In the end, the poor boy once again cannot marry the rich girl, and Gatsby is all but forgotten as Tom and Daisy go on to continue their lives enjoying the perks of being born into old money. Acquiring Daisy was Gatsby's main goal throughout his entire adult life, working hand in hand with acquiring wealth. He was goal-oriented and hope-oriented, an idealist.

Makes the Reader Question Gatsby's Motives

In *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby's motivation not only inspires the reader, but makes the reader question Gatsby's motives. Gatsby's struggle with his own identity made it much harder for him to love anyone else. And although many star-struck lovers become blinded by love, Gatsby was in fact blinded by wealth. Gatsby did not love Daisy, but what she represented. He saw the future and knew it was bright, and had everything gone his way, maybe it would have been.

Works Cited

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