

# **The Concept of West and East in Fitzgerald's novel *Great Gatsby***

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to highlight the symbolic meaning of east and west in Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. The West Egg is the home of Gatsby and those who are like him, who gain huge wealth but they lack the traditions associated with inherited property and therefore are uncouth, and because they do not have any traditions of their own, they try to copy those of others. The East Eggers, like Tom and Daisy, have the inherited traditions but they have been corrupted by the purposelessness and ease their money has provided. Class and Socioeconomic status is one of the most important themes in the novel. It is clear in almost every character. The East and West represent a symbol of this in their physical structure. The Buchanans live on the East Egg which is far more civilized and "well educated". Nick and Gatsby are from the West Egg who do not have any real status, even though they have money. The green light glows from the East Egg tempting Gatsby for what he wants. Daisy, the woman that Gatsby wants but will never get, lives on the East Egg. The barricade that the water creates between these worlds is symbolic of the limit that separates these people from one another and from what they want.

### ملخص البحث

ان هدف هذا البحث هو لقاء الضوء على المعنى الرمزي للعالمين الشرقي و الغربي في رواية "كاتبسي العظيم " للكاتب فترجيرالد. فان الغرب الذي يطلق عليه "ويست اك" هو موطن "كاتبسي" و الذين على شاكلته الذين يمتلكون ثروة هائلة ولكن تنقصهم التقاليد التي لها علاقة بالاملك الموروثة و لذلك فهم لا يتسمون بالتهذيب و بسبب ذلك ليس لهم اي صلة بالتقاليد الاصيلة بل انهم يحاولون ان يتمثلوا بما لدى الاخرين من تقاليد.

اما "توم و ديزي" و امثالهما من سكنة منطقة "ايست اك" فلديهم التقاليد التي ورثوها عن آبائهم الا ان الفساد قد اصابهم نتيجة غياب الهدف و سهولة الحصول على اموالهم التي جعلتهم في بحبوحة من العيش.

ان الطبقة و المكانة الاقتصادية و الاجتماعية هم السمتان الاكثر اهمية في الرواية و تتضحان في الغالب في كل شخصية من شخصيات الرواية و يمثل الشرق و الغرب رمزاً لكل منهما في تركيبتهما. على الرغم ان "نك" و "كاتبسي" يمتلكان المال لكنهما لا يتمتعان بأي مكانة كما تتمتع بها عائلة "بوكانن"

في منطقة "ايست اك" يتوهج الضوء الاخضر الذي يشد اليه "كاتبسي" مغرياً اياه بما تهفو له نفسه ف "ديزي" -المرأة التي يتلف الى لقائها "كاتبسي" و لا يفوز منها بنصيب- تعيش في منطقة "ايست اك" و إنّ الحاجز الذي خلقته المياه بين هذين العالمين ما هو الا رمز للحد الذي

F. Scott Fitzgerald is a standout amongst the greatest figures in American literature and social history. His books and short stories give a portion of the best experiences into the ways of life of the rich amid America's most prosperous time while in the meantime looking at major literary topics, for example, disappointment and the concept of the American Dream. The life of F. Scott Fitzgerald was indicated by as much sentimentalism and tragedy as could be found in his books and stories. For the duration of his life, he unsuccessfully fought liquor addiction, sorrow and suffering. In many incidents of his novels, Fitzgerald tries to depict his own life.

Fitzgerald initially started writing his third novel in 1922. His underlying arrangement included a story that occurred in Mid-West and New York in 1885. Fitzgerald reported to his friend and also his novels editor Maxwell Perkins that he wants to write something new, strange, simple and beautiful. (Píchová 12). He wanted to depict the difference between the life in West Egg and East Egg.

The majority of Fitzgerald's composition depends on his own life and experiences. He also tries to depict people and events in his own life. In this manner it is nothing unexpected that his wife Zelda is the model for Daisy, and Fitzgerald himself could be recognized halfway in Nick, yet additionally in Gatsby. On the last he remarked: "He started out as someone I know but at the end he turned into me". (Burnam 9)

There was another noteworthy occasion that impacted the story of *The Great Gatsby*. At the point when his family moved from New York to the French Riviera keeping in mind the end goal to discover peace so Scott would complete his novel, Zelda feeling somewhat disregarded engaged in an affair with a French pilot, Edouard Jozan. She finished this affair after Fitzgerald discovered it. A few critics contend that this occasion intensely affected Fitzgerald and that all his disappointment and the loss of sureness of Zelda's adoration was depicted to Gatsby's disappointment with Daisy and the shattering of his fantasy. (Stolarek 51)

*The Great Gatsby* was distributed in 1925 by Charles Scribner's Sons, a publishing house situated in New York. Set in Long Island, the novel recounts an account of a man whose mission to recover the past and the lady he loves turn out to be eventually his ruin. The novel starts with the introduction to the narrator. Nick Carraway is a young fellow from Minnesota who in his return home after the war moves to New York keeping in mind the end goal to be noticeably a bond business person. Rather than living in the city he leases a house in the West Egg, unfashionable territory where all the recently rich people live. The West

Egg is situated inverse the more fashionable East Egg. One of Nick's neighbours is an exceptionally strange man who gave his name to the novel – Jay Gatsby. Each Saturday he tosses luxurious party in his immense house that even has a private shoreline. As Nick later discovers that most of those who attend the parties do not know Gatsby.

The substantial utilization of comparison and allegory additionally fills in as a reflection on the life of the 1920s. On the one hand, there is the East Egg, the image of the high society with its prosperous and fashionable life, on the another hand, there is the Valley of Ashes which represents an image of the lower (George Wilson) or middle class and the dull life its residents are living. (Johansson 28)

Fitzgerald utilizes the different methods of expression to stress the complexities inside the novel. *The Great Gatsby* is rich in variance. There is the ethical decay of Tom and Daisy against the honourable and sentimental dream of Gatsby. There are the old traditional family estimations of the West and the advanced lifestyle of the East. Nick fills in as a somewhat included narrator and he is plainly torn between these differences. He is a member in the story but at the same time ready to keep distance in any event till Gatsby's demise when he understands that he needs to choose whether to be within or without in the story or out. Regardless of the amount he may differ with Gatsby and his mission to rehash the past, despite everything he regards him. Nick feels that it is his commitment to say that Gatsby does not need to go alone through his dream. He gives himself a chance to admit that what Gatsby believes and feels we should sympathize with him.

Motifs, themes, and images have an essential impact in the story. They refer to something more profound which exists in the plot. Since Fitzgerald's style is full of images that hold second or even third concealed meaning it is particularly essential that the reader comprehends them.

The way the American East and West are displayed in *The Great Gatsby* likewise fortifies the legendary dimension of the novel. Indeed, the differentiation between the American East and West turns out to be extremely huge in clarifying the fundamental theme of the novel, which is the sentimental journey of Gatsby.

Its importance is that of an allegorical portrayal of two places of ethical values. At the point when the early explorers (the Dutch sailors) first came to America, to escape from moral decay of their old world to establish a new ideal, they travelled from east to west. Presently, America itself is corrupted, so the characters in *The Great Gatsby* fly out from west to east - looking for riches and complexity - leaving the ethical values and steadiness of the West behind. Fitzgerald utilizes this adjustment to present an image for the collapse of American standards and the American Dream,

demonstrating that our journey for riches and complexity is tainting our way of life, and making us live in a wasteland of ethics or an ash heap of society. (Smiljanić 3)

The famous picture of the Valley of Ashes is not just an image for the degenerated society of the East Egg. It also symbolizes the wasteland of mankind in an impious age. This is clear from the image of the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which is in a way an analogy for God who observes human who have descended from his grace. The Wilsons illustrate the fate of the common man in the waste land. They represent the working class who tries to climb the social ladder. They live in the Valley of Ashes which represents the modern world. This valley poisons the landscape and people.

At the center of the novel is the imperative complexity between America's sentimental Western past and the unromantic Eastern present. Both Nick Carraway and Gatsby represent the West, and both think that it is hard to adjust to the lifestyle in the East. They live in the West Egg, which is somewhat the unfashionable area of Long Island. Tom and Daisy live in the East Egg, which is rich, stylish, and materialistic in spirit. Commenting on the Buchanans, Nick says "Why they came East I don't know". (Fitzgerald 3). Tom declares that "I'd be a God damned fool to live anywhere else." (ibid 5). Tom and Daisy represent the East's hard materialism and absence of the romantic spirit.

The thought that the stream of history can be captured, may be even switched, repeats in *The Great Gatsby* as an outcome of all the inclusive human limits with regard to lament and the associative inclination to wish for something better. Nick Carraway has come to the East not just for the bond business, but rather in light of the fact that his wartime encounters made him discontented with his Midwestern main residence, and in light of the fact that he wishes to make a total separation in his relationship with a lady whom he loves but he does not want to marry her. The overwhelming attributes of Nick's character-persistence, trustworthiness, and prudence get from his doubt of history and social position, but then in the sequence of the story he is first to surrender to life is liable to persistent recharging. Of his foundations in time and place, he speaks about his family:

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty one, sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on to-day. (Fitzgerald 4)

The traveled new beginning Nick looks for in the East reflects not so much denial of his legacy as an affirmation of its insufficiency to fulfill the fairly questionable desires of the post-war era stimulated by his contact with the overflowing city and the innovation of his conditions of West Egg, Nick surrender to a most convincing deception.

According to Robert Ornstein, The novel *Great Gatsby* is the story of displaced people who have travelled Eastward looking for the bigger experience of life. Further, he goes ahead to state, that to Fitzgerald the bait of the East is a significant uprooting of the American dream, a turning back to the notable journey towards the frontier which made and supported that dream. In *Gatsby*, the once boundless western skyline is surrounded by the exhausted, sprawling, swollen towns beyond the Ohio. (Ornstein 63)

The East, where *Gatsby* sees the green light, rouses in him a sentimental desire for promised future. In any case, it just smashes his fantasy and prompts his disastrous end. The East Egg seems alluring as "the city seen interestingly first time, in its wild guarantee of all the puzzle and fantasy of the world." It presents for first look as hopeful city but if someone goes deeper he will see a mythical city with its illusion and uncertainty with ash grey people who, it apparently, is an unreal city. (Steinbrink 163)

It is significant to take note that *Gatsby* will not be destroyed by his illegal work or because of his social background but he can not reconcile with the materialistic values of the East. Daisy's selfishness and Tom's greediness prompt the murder of *Gatsby*. *Gatsby*, whose sentimental conviction is solidly attached in the capacity to rehash the past, completely neglects to see through the deception of the present. (Callahan 381) Despite the fact that he is faintly mindful that each progression towards the green light will make the romantic view less splendid, he endures in his endeavors towards achieving his dream, specifically, winning Daisy. Indeed, even as the story achieves its peak and comes to its end with *Gatsby's* death, Fitzgerald, in a fantastic style of writing, suggests *Gatsby's* essential association with the West which represents his simplicity of heart and his romantic dream.

*Gatsby* carries on the soul of a sentimental wonder of those Dutch sailors as Nick Carraway portrays *Gatsby* toward the end of the novel. "As the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes a fresh, green breast of the new world.(Fitzgerald 99). However, the time and place are against him, and they turn the sentimental guarantees without bounds a deceptive impression of the past. But, we cannot state that Fitzgerald completely agreed with the West or completely

attacked the East. Truth be told, *The Great Gatsby* goes beyond the estimations the contemporary corruption of the East or the pure ideals of the West.

As stated by Veronica Makowsky, F. Scott Fitzgerald at first expected for his novel to have the title *Among the Ash-heap and Millionaires* which would recommend that the writer saw the issue of class as a significant subject in the novel. Ash heaps refers to the place of ashes where, for example, the Wilsons live and additionally different individuals from the lower middle class. This place is an extraordinarily different from the fashionable East Egg where the Buchanans and different individuals from the high class live (Makowsky 75).

Through the story, *Gatsby* is on a quest for a dream. There are many cases for what that dreams stand for many researchers and also the readers, the most widely recognized ones being the love for Daisy Buchanan and the American Dream. The idea of the American Dream is firmly identified with the concept of class and despite the fact that the American dream will not be the main focus of this research there is a close connection between the concept of East and West in this novel and the American Dream. The American Dream is a substantially more extensive theme than class and it is the desire for a better life through hard working for those who migrated to America. Later on, it would incorporate goals towards a superior life for those who already live in America too (Thérèse 2).

*Gatsby* has a sentimental perspective of wealth and is ignorant of the realities of the American society where wealth is, by all accounts, not the only prospect with regards to social class (Bewley 28). There is a link more grounded than wealth between people like Tom and Daisy Buchanan, and despite the fact that *Gatsby* has made an extraordinary fortune it is insufficient to have a place with an indistinguishable social class from Tom and Daisy. Tom and Daisy's scorn against individuals like *Gatsby*, affluent people however with a different socioeconomic status, is shown by Daisy's hating of West Egg, where *Gatsby* lives. This disdain, and additionally the bond amongst Tom and Daisy Buchanan, can be clarified with their same social status and education. That additionally confirms that regardless of how hard *Gatsby* tries, he cannot change his past and he cannot change other people's past. Since status is, more than social class, depending on things from the past, for example, upbringing, it is likewise an impossible thing to change:

"About *Gatsby*! No, I haven't. I said I'd been making a small investigation of his past." "And you found he was an Oxford man," said Jordan helpfully. "An Oxford man!" He was incredulous. "Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit." (Fitzgerald 66)



At first glance, *The Great Gatsby* may appear to be a heartbreaking romantic tale between a brilliant young lady and a poor youthful soldier going to war. The fundamental theme of the novel is that as it may, works on a substantially bigger scale and it would be wrong not to identify it. The novel offers a story of an entire era. It is a story of an entire generation, the Jazz Age. All through American history, the 1920s have dependably been remarked as the brilliant age. It was a period of prosperity and material abundance. Everyone could accomplish the American dream by hard working and by investing sufficient effort. It was likewise a period of a great hope. The American dream was suddenly changed to be something that everyone struggle for. Fitzgerald encountered his American dream likewise when he became very famous after publishing his first novel. To a few, the 1920s appeared to be practically similar to a dream. It was a thoughtless time of living like there will be no tomorrow:

They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. (Fitzgerald 98)

In any case the dream has been ruined. Fitzgerald depicts the 1920s as a period of corrupted social and ethical standards, time of selfishness and pessimism. people were interested just in quest for the material belonging and sexual delight. Furthermore, it was altogether joined by the sound of the wild jazz music. After the war people returned obsessed by the war experiences. They were called the lost generation. As a result there was nothing more important than the enjoyment and happiness. This causes the crash in stock market in 1929.

With the two extravagant neighborhoods, West Egg and East Egg, Fitzgerald depicts the separated society. The two Eggs, despite the fact that they may resemble each other, are diverse in conduct and social standard. East Egg and West Egg symbolize old money and new money. People who live in East Egg are more sophisticated and come from old money they inherited from their parents while people in West Egg comes from new money, and who gained their money from hard working and they have more moral values in comparison to people in East Egg. (Fälth 16). East Eggers are superficial people and look down upon others and they are careless as well. The best example of this is Tom and Daisy.

“Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the country—side\_East Egg condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gayety”.(Fitzgerald 23)

With an attention on their financial and social backgrounds, Fitzgerald clarifies in many cases, the life of both East and West Egg inhabitants.



Tom and Daisy Buchanan are the inhabitants of East Egg as they have great wealth and have prosperous life that accompanies it. They are depicted as shallow persons whose life is purposeless: "Why they came East I don't know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together" (Fitzgerald 3). To them, there is nothing more to life than existing in this perspective (Claudia 70). Gatsby, then again, is the typical inhabitant of West Egg. With his absence of inherited wealth and his self-earned fortune, he is the opposite of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. While the Buchanans appear to live without aim or aspiration, Fitzgerald presents Gatsby's desire with the agenda over his every day exercises (162). Nick depicts in a few lines the geographical atmosphere of the novel

"I see now that this has been the story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life" (Fitzgerald 97).

All through the novel, places are related with subjects, characters, and thoughts. The East is related with a fashionable lifestyle, luxurious parties, collapsed ethical values, and materialistic world. While the West and the Midwest are related with more traditional ethical values. At this time, Nick acknowledges surprisingly that however his story is determined to the East Coast, the western character of his acquaintances ("some inadequacy in common") is the source of the story's excitement and point of view. He considers each character's conduct and moral value decisions as a response to the reaction to material matters of New York. This viewpoint contributes effectively to Nick's choice to leave the East Coast and come back to Minnesota, as the infeasibility of Nick's Midwestern ethical values in New York society reflects the difficulty of Gatsby's dream. (Reed 58) "A little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name" (Fitzgerald 97)

The Midwest for Nick now represents an image of comfort and moral values that the east lacks. As the story has advanced, in each character Nick observes imperfection and corruption. The Wilsons and the other residents of the Valley of Ashes are stuck on the easy route from nothing to nothing, Tom and Daisy are content to exist with their wealth and indifference, and Gatsby suffers from an unutterable vision for Daisy. In the 1920s, as portrayed in this novel, the easy coming money, leisure time and prosperous society destroy the ideals of the American Dream. Gatsby's dream of gaining Daisy's love meets with obstacles because they

come from different social classes and he cannot give her what she is used to. Later when he finally succeeds to gain wealth, but his dream of gaining Daisy is no longer available because now she is married. That is the tragedy of Gatsby's dream:

"Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter — to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning — So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past". (Fitzgerald 99)

However, Nick says "this has been a story of the West" rather than the set up term "Midwest" that he has utilized through the novel. When Gatsby tells Nick about his birth place he did not mention Midwest, instead he said that he is from San Francisco .this is an example that geographical place is more important than the identity itself. People were judged by their birthplace more than moral values. It shows the shallow standards of social status. (Marren 94).

The presupposition of the American Dream is that if someone works hard to gain something he will succeed but what Gatsby and other characters fail to understand that the dream is only illusion . Gatsby's life represents the American Dream. He did not have anything but now he has everything except the girl he loves. Gatsby did not realize that having money is not enough, he is a West Egger he will not be a member of the east because he is far remote from the way of the world. Fitzgerald is extremely smart with setting his images and themes. He interconnects them successfully thus everything in the novel appears to have a more profound meaning. The green light is not only a light toward the end of the dock. It is an image of the American Dream. While Gatsby symbolizes it with Daisy since she is his definitive dream, Nick can associate it to American past. (Píchová pp.33,34)

### Conclusion

The degradation of the promise of the American Dream is very clear in the historical reversal of east and west.

When the early explorers (the Dutch sailors) escaped the corruption of the old world to establish a new ideal, they travelled from east to west. But now that the ideal has been corrupted, people travel from east to west, attracted by the wealth and complexity that cover the moral decline of their goal

Tom, Gatsby, Daisy, Nick and Jordan were all westerners .but in moving to the east they move from a world of stable values into a moral emptiness symbolized by the Valley of Ashes.They are aliens to the east which Nick believes, is a false ,absurd place.

American idealism has been corrupted by adopting materialism as its means. The substitution of attractive but false goals, represented by

Daisy, has changed the new world (the east) from a fresh, "green breast" to waste land where only the morally irresponsible can hope to survive. Gatsby's destruction shows that those who try to maintain idealism based on materialistic values are doomed by their self-delusion. The word "breast" suggests that for the early explorers the province of America was like that of a woman, just as Gatsby's personal dream is found in a woman. The main theme is elucidated in the final paragraph when the green light is compared to the "green breast" of the new world, which makes a moral Valley of Ashes of the green freshness of America a waste land where only the morally irresponsible can hope to survive. Nick's responsibility is in contrast with the responsibility of Tom and Daisy who have fled East Egg to leave others deal with the destruction they caused. Nick realizes that the carelessness of the Buchanans is the general carelessness of the East Egg. This is why he longs for the moral traditions and ordered society of the Midwest. He proves that he is completely different from the Buchanans and others, the parasites, who used to attend Gatsby parties, when he had something to give them.

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