

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
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**Presented by:  
Rafik LACEB**

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***The Other in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby****

**Examination Panel:**

**M. BENDJEDDOU Mohamed Yazid; MCA; Université d' Annaba; President  
M. RICHE Bouteldja ; Professeur ; U/Tizi-Ouzou ; Rapporteur.  
M. BOUREGBI Salah; MCA; Université d'Annaba; Examineur.**

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## Abstract

*The Great Gatsby* is a canonical work of literature. It is found in most of the university curricula and high school programs. In sum, it is a classic of the 1920s. *Gatsby* is a reflection of that period of gendered, ethnic, and racial tensions. The main characters of the narrative are all from old white established Anglo-Saxon backgrounds. It is described to be about the suppression of otherness and change required to maintain the illusion of identity. The novel has long been noted for its author's regional obsession with the East and the West. My aim in the present dissertation is to realize a thematic study of the novel, by looking for the way women, Jews, and Blacks and Orientals are placed in the position of "Other (s)" in relation to the identity of the main characters; an identity the author identifies with, barricades, and tries to maintain its supremacy.

As the United States ended the settlement of the West with the closing of the Frontier, the beginning of the twentieth century required Americans to look for a new sense of manifest destiny. The twenties are renowned for their intolerance and broad-scale nativism. *The Great Gatsby* is said to be the perfect novel of the Jazz Age, which mirrors its immediate issues.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first one is an attempt to put the novel in the context of various tensions which reflect the conservative and nativist character of the decade. The chapter also informs the reader about the major literary orientations and current of the time. It ends with the way the novel is liable to be approached from the point of view of looking for the discourse of Orientalism within it.

Chapter II is about the demonstration of Fitzgerald's ideal notion of male identity which is to be a member of Tom Buchanan's group. Tom is the stereotyped masculine character who is even "more of a man than" Nick. Nick refuses identification and/or associations with women. Women for Nick/Fitzgerald are weak, irresponsible, absurd, dishonest, and destroyer.

Chapter III focuses on the overt and oblique expressions of Fitzgerald's anti-Semitism and dislike of ethnic immigrants. Ethnic immigrants were often linked with the organized crime, and constituted-by their half whiteness-a threat to the

purity of Anglo-Saxon identity and the homogeneity of the Nordic element. Nordics for Fitzgerald are responsible for “all the things that go to make civilization”, and are set-that is my argument- in opposition to the Semite or Jewish immigrant who is the anti-thesis of development.

Chapter IV pays attention to the Fitzgeraldian ideal of whiteness and its supremacy, domestic and foreign. The major threat to “civilization going to pieces” is to end by getting “intermarriage of blacks and whites”. This chapter explains the way Fitzgerald associates Gatsby with blackness, and how *Gatsby* reflects the “natural segregation” of the two races. However, the second half of this last chapter is a suggestion of the study of the novel in relation to the global Western myth of the superiority of whiteness. Blackness in the United States of the time was parallel to what the colonial subject meant to imperial powers. The focus is on references to the brotherhood with English imperialism and to the early imagined geographies of the rising imperial States.

N.B: All what is between inverted commas is either a personal translation or someone else’s idea. However the ideas are all referred within the actual study.

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## Introduction

“Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply.” (*The Great Gatsby* 65)

Native status suggests more than legal equality or the assimilation of modes. “Being native” –or being accepted by others as native- is a sign of legitimacy and validity. “Being native” becomes an object of desire in early twentieth century America...Protectionist nativism, of which two incarnations are Anglo-Saxon nativism and anti-immigrant nativism, has a retrospective energy- it seeks to revive a past in order to define and strengthen the contours of the American “national people” in a present moment. Another form of retrogressive protectionist nativism is primitivist nativism; it seeks the ideal aborigine as an American ancestor who will serve as the origin and the root of the American people and culture. These protectionist nativisms are recognizable by their nostalgia for the past, their anxiety about origins, and their preoccupations in the present regarding the constitution of the American national people.

(Julianne Newmark, 2004: 2)

With many artists, writers, and philosophers living in Europe as expatriates and wealthy Americans consuming European culture as tourists and buying their artifacts and “history”, Americans were variously becoming imperial themselves.

(Ymitri Jayasundera, 2001: 4)

For the few recent years we see how news stories have engaged into serious debates to solve or rather to deal with issues related to ethnicity, immigration, national identity (ies) and even society that might evolve in multicultural urban areas. Parallel to these debates are issues about peoples fighting or more accurately fighting back the GIs and NATO forces. As had the European nations before, the United States has “pushed for and acquired an empire... and continues to exert its influence on other nations.” (Jenel Vindel, 2008: 8) According to Edward Said some prejudices and stereotypes may emanate from a will of self-definition through the denigration of the “hostile other”, foreign or domestic. (Said, 1991)

American society of post World War I lived in a period of both transatlantic issues and social tensions. The 1920s in the United States are a decade liable to “image making and

stereotyping of historians, literary or otherwise.” (Frederick J Hoffman, 1962: 11) The decade represents years responsible for a variety of products in literature, which have raised interest of generations. It was during this period that writers, though they claimed religious and economic freedoms, “refused to allow any kind of conduct... [that was] not moral or socially acceptable.” (ibid: 41) Post World War I America was a world with so many “barriers between men and women, Protestants and Catholics and Jews, rich and poor, capital and labor, educated and half-literate.” (Roland Berman, 2006: 79) As Paul L Murphy put it, the national character of the period was affected by “broad-scale intolerance, prejudices, Nativism, and xenophobia...” (Murphy in *The Journal of the American History*, 1964: 60)

Aram Veesser considers that the study of the past may help understand the present and better plan the future. (Veesser, 1989, vii) For this, literature may give “the subject of its time back to us in one or another form.” (Frederick J Hoffman, 1962: 13) Literature may be of importance to history because it serves as a social document for the revelation of the political and intellectual tendencies of its age, but it is of more significant importance, for it is a “culmination, a genuine means of realizing the major issues of its time.” (ibid: 12)

The Twenties in the United States are referred to as the “Jazz Age”. This name was given to the decade by Francis Scott Fitzgerald who is considered as its chronicler. Scott Fitzgerald’s importance in the American literature and cultural history lies not only in his reputation as the “chronicler of the Jazz Age” but lies also in his contribution, among other writers, in “America’s Coming of Age”. (Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, 1991: 248)

Malcolm Cowley, one of the earliest biographers of Scott Fitzgerald, noted in his book *A Second Flowering: Works and Days of the Lost Generation*:

Fitzgerald never lost a quality that very few writers are able to acquire: a sense of living in history. Manners and morals were changing all through his life and he set himself the task of recording the changes. These were revealed to him, not in statistics or new reports, but in terms of living characters.

(Qtd in Sarah B Fryer, 1988: I)

Scott Fitzgerald is regarded as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century American literature and as a member of the Lost Generation.<sup>1</sup> Fitzgerald wrote a number of short stories and novels which depicted the “waste and sterility” of the American society of his time. The excesses of the time are recorded in his famous novels: *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), *Tender Is the Night* (1934) and *The Great Gatsby* (1925).<sup>2</sup> The latter was immediately considered by T S Eliot as the “first step the American fiction had taken since Henry James.” (Qtd in George Mc Michel, 1974: 1337)

*The Great Gatsby* is about a young man’s brief stay in New York and his encounter with the fragmented and tasteless lives of different people from different social backgrounds and ethnic belongings. The novel has received vast and considerable amount of literature and has generated many-fold debates and controversies. Critics of Scott Fitzgerald tend to argue that *The Great Gatsby* is a “commentary on that elusive phrase, the American Dream.” (Marius Bewley in *The Sewanee Review*, 1954: 223)<sup>3</sup> Essentially, the phrase represents the “romantic enlargements of the possibilities of life at which the material and spiritual have become inextricably confused.” (ibid)

From the socio-political point of view *The Great Gatsby* is considered by David Bradshaw as being “about the American issues, among the changes that occurred in the nation from the post-civil war years up to the 1920s.” (Bradshaw, 2006: 343) According to Pearl James *The Great Gatsby* is a post-war narrative that represses the war’s violence “only to reproduce it through homicides within it.” (James, 2003: 6) Pearl suggests that the novel

reflects aspects of post-war American society of the 1920s with its anxieties and trauma, and it also mirrors the veterans' debates over war pensions and other services. (ibid)

To provide an elaborate list of *Gatsby's* readings and approaches is an endless task. However, it is always useful to mention the most prominent criticism, especially when this criticism is relevant to the topic of the project. For Monica Nalyaka Wanambisi *Gatsby* is mainly about urban life. Its major theme is the lives of people in one of the greatest American urban centers. (Wanambisi, 1987: 246)

Roland Berman thinks of *The Great Gatsby* as being a “world of burden and false relationships... in which individuals are all free to determine their destinies.” (Qtd in Ruth Prigozy, 2007: 79) It is the reflection of the *laissez-faire* and business-oriented spirit of the Roaring Twenties.<sup>4</sup>

Moragh Orr Montoya says of *The Great Gatsby* that it is the story of the perfectly-silenced woman, and reproaches Fitzgerald the fact of having meant Daisy as a treacherous bitch. (Orr Montoya, 1992: 150) *Gatsby*, Leslie Fielder argues, is about a woman portrayed as “Dark Destroyer, the prototype of the Fair Goddess as bitch”. (Qtd in Leland S Person Jr in *American literature*, 1978: 250)

*The Great Gatsby* for Susan Marie Marren is Fitzgerald's profoundly and far-reaching conservative social vision. (Marren, 1995: 72) Marren maintains that the novel shows how men, women, children, blacks, whites and immigrants have not got the same opportunities to the commodities and consumerism of the 1920s. The narrative is then read as *Gatsby's* ridiculous passing for a member of the Nordic upper class. (ibid: 74) Robert Forrey claims that Fitzgerald's fiction, particularly *The Great Gatsby* reflects the author's desire to affirm and take security from the “idea of belonging to an **old** and very **white** American family”. (Forrey in *Phylon*, 1967: 293 [my emphasis] )

Among the literature so far investigated and which can be endless, *The Great Gatsby* has not been found approached from the perspective of the “othering” process within the narrative. No study dealing-at the same time- with the gendered, ethnic, racial, and foreign other (s) has been encountered with. There is accordingly no full-length study which would have attempted to deal with the novel from a postcolonial point of view,<sup>5</sup> and that groups the four aspects. The present dissertation aims at looking for the “seemingly linguistic and textual decisions about racial [I shall add gender] grouping which had far-reaching material consequences... resulting in certain groups of people denied human status, and others being used as slave labor, and still others losing their...role in government.” (Sarah Mills, 2004: 96) I shall try to show how women, Jews, and blacks and Orientals are put in one of the above categories or another. I will, I hope, show how post- World War I American society and the different tensions of the 1920s culminated in the prejudices of which *The Great Gatsby* abounds, prejudices and stereotypes about women, Jews, and blacks and Orientals.

I shall try to look for the way the White male Anglo-Saxon majority group of the 1920s tried, in a similar way to the dominant empire as Gayatri Spivak put it, to define itself against those it excluded and marginalized. In order to survive and maintain its supremacy, the majority group enters in a business of creating the enemy either geographical, gender-oriented or racial. (In Edgar Andrew and Peter Sedgwick, 2002: 380-1) The enemy would be the hostile other the circumstances and the fashion of the time bring to the surface, he is not “exclusively an inhabitant of a geographical area” but rather a member of a subject race. (Edward Said, 1991: 92) For Said the Oriental is not only the Arab of the East, but the Orient is often “orientalized” which is a process of “othering” which may be similar to the way “blacks and women” may be orientalized. (ibid: 326)

The “Other” may be designated as a form of cultural projection of concepts. Such projection may construct identities of cultural **Subjects** through a relationship of **power** in which the **Other** is a subjugated element. (Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, 2002: 266) The **Subject** then constructs his own positive identity (rational, civilized...etc) through opposition to and denigration of the **Other**. (ibid) The construction of the other is, within the orientalist discourse, just a matter of asserting self-identity.

The present dissertation will be divided into four chapters. The first one will be devoted to the necessary details relevant to the historical and literary contexts surrounding the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, with particular emphasis on what is in relation to the nativist and conservative expressions. The three other chapters will deal respectively with the analysis and discussion of the novel by focusing on Fitzgerald’s representation of women, Jews, and blacks and Orientals. In his study of Orientalism Edward Said assumes that the geographical boundaries “accompany the social, ethnic and cultural ones in expected ways.” (Said, 1991: 54) The last chapter fuses blacks and Orientals because the myth “white is right” was a global Western consideration.

The choice of *The Great Gatsby* as a reflection of its time may be explained by the fact that the novel is considered to be among the “classics” of the American literature, and belongs to the kind of masterpiece-novels which “focus attention upon their period and the civilization of which they are a special manifestation.” (Frederick J Hoffman, 1962: 441) The Twenties have always been regarded as a decade of social tensions and cultural issues, and New York of 1922 may give a genuine insight to a multicultural urban area. *The Great Gatsby* is viewed as the “most striking fictional analysis of [its] age and [its] social conditions.” (Perkins Bartley and Beatty Long, 1985: 1235) The perspective through which the novel has been approached might have been triggered by the national and historical elements one aligns and identifies with. Both post colonialism – as the general approach- and

Orientalism –as one of its sub-branches- remind us that knowledge is liable to degradation, and that dominant discourse is liable to be put into question.

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## Chapter I: Historical Background

Woodrow Wilson aspired to use American power to bring about a just and lasting peace through the implementation of his famous Fourteen Points.<sup>6</sup> It is argued that the American refusal to join the League of Nations was the result of the “protectionist nativist sentiment” particular to the “old-stock Americans” who advocated 100% Americanism. It was their means to distinguish themselves and their national loyalty from the “dissenting opinions and the (supposed) sympathies of some immigrant groups.”(Julianne Newmark, 2004: 7) By 1919, Wilson’s administration proved to be a complete failure. (Hugh Brogman, 1985: 503) After Congress had rejected the involvement in the League of Nations, then began the period of the “supposed American isolationist policy and return to ‘normalcy’.” (ibid) However the nineteen-twenties were a decade of contradictions. By November 1921 and after the Washington Naval Conference it had become clear that the United States would not abandon its imperial interests or give up its position as one of the major world powers. This ambivalence in the American foreign policy is only a sample of the existing many others in different fields. It is commonly believed that the decade was years of peace, liberalism and prosperity. Nevertheless, the Americans were in a state of cultural panic. This panic expressed itself in assertions of white Anglo-Saxon superiority, dread of foreign infiltration, segregation and racism against African Americans and view of social and moral decadence manifested in fundamental anti-feminism towards the changing habits and the beginning of the emancipation of the American woman.

The atrocities of the Great War convinced a large fringe of Americans to get rid of some forms of the idealism that had been expanding for more than a generation. They refused not only everything related to what is foreign, but the spirit of Progressivism itself.<sup>7</sup> (Thomas Reeves, 2000: 81) Postwar disenchantment and the loss of a moral

structure made change seem inevitable, and could not stop opposing opinions from being voiced. (Walden L Mirrel: 1998: 21)

One of the most serious post war tensions was the demobilization in labor which was hasty and unplanned. As a result of a series of strikes which involved more than four million workers in early 1919, many leaders of industry, government, patriotic societies, and the press blamed labor trouble on foreigners, socialists and communists. (Reeves, 2000: 81) The labor agitation of 1919 affected not only traditional industries such as steel and coal, but it spread to old “tranquil sectors of the labor market such as the police and even the theatre.” (Jenkins, 2007: 205) In some areas labor conflicts resulted in massacre and civil strife. But the nature of these labor struggles was soon transferred from questions of living standards and descent wages to “more poisonous and political battles and a period of violent reaction now set in.” (ibid)

The foreign connections of so many political radicals reinforced the doubt that the origins of the labor trouble were among the foreign-born. In the early 1920s more than half of the white men and a third of the working women were foreign-born. (Tindel and Shi, 2004: 849) Most of the foreign-born workers were from central or eastern Europe. The prevalent circumstances in these regions of the world, especially the success of the Bolshevik Revolution, made immigrants suspicious in the eyes of “old stock” Americans (ibid); and this resulted in what is called Nativism.

Nativism can be defined as efforts of members of a given society to build a “more satisfying way of life by eliminating foreign persons, customs, material objects or ideas.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1970: 96) But the definition may also include sect formation, messianic movement, revolution and religious revival. (ibid) Nativist sentiment dominated

the United States during the 1920s (Jonathan Zimmerman in *Journal of the American History*, 2000: 92)

The “Negro” community had undertaken a massive displacement from the south of the United States towards the urban areas of the north in the movement known as the Great Migration.<sup>8</sup> During WWI there were many signs that if the United States was fighting to “save the world for democracy” in Europe,<sup>9</sup> democracy was dangerously shrinking at home. Tens of blacks perished as a result of lynching, and racial violence did not slow down after the war, neither in the south, nor yet more in the north, especially after the labor conflicts. One child was thrown into a burning house in Tennessee. (J H Franklin, 1984, 400) The racist feeling was publicly manifested; even some officials declared: “we will not deprive the colored people from their rights, but we want them to respect the rights of the Whites who authorized them to live in the United States” (ibid: 406).

1919 knew some of the bloodiest race riots which usually involved “pogroms of black communities by white mobs.” (Paul Jenkins, 2007: 206) Blacks were often accused of strike-breaking and of being the reason of the failure of the labor protest. Tensions heightened the rising fear that the blacks would take the jobs of the white servicemen. When strikes erupted, employers used black strike-breakers in steel and coal mines. (ibid)

The nineteen-twenties were the period of the Harlem Renaissance,<sup>10</sup> as Harlem was exclusively the centre of African-American culture. That Renaissance was an awakening from and a reaction against the nightmare of lasting suffering endured by the “Negro” community in the United States.

The race riots and Red Scare of 1919 signaled the onset of some important ethnic issues of the “New Era”. Business leaders of the time agreed on calling the 1920s the new

era, for the American industrial output nearly doubled between 1922 and 1929. (Thomas Reeves, 2000, 84) The Red Scare introduced a new dimension of intolerance:

This was the aspiring, self-seeking individual or special interest group which sought to exploit the hysteria and intolerance of the moment for personal advantage. Such individuals and groups were not new in the American history. (Murphy in *The Journal of American History*, 1964: 66)

That decade [the 1920s], despite its surface prosperity and supposed gaiety and exuberance, was characterized by waves of public intolerance seldom felt in the American experience. Much of this intolerance was merely an outbreak of familiar subsurface prejudices...towards...radicals, Jews, Negroes, Orientals and other minority groups.

(ibid, 61)

The words “experience seldom felt in the American history”, when put together and when associated with “prejudice” and “minority”, have got a striking sounding of the movement, organization and philosophy of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>11</sup> The latter was revived in 1915. As in the old days of the Reconstruction South, men in white hoods led rituals, held parades and power shows and committed violent acts. However, during the 1920s the Klan level of membership was higher and is supposed to have reached a peak of about 4.5 million Klansmen throughout the country. (Reeves, 2000: 92) The Klan’s program consisted on “gathering white Christians to undertake common actions to ensure the survival of the American institutions and the supremacy of the white race.” (J H Hoffman, 1984: 406) Its cells proliferated into many non-southern states such as the Mid-West and New York. (ibid) Moreover, the Klan’s new targets now began to involve not only violence against blacks or religious phobia against Catholics, but the same negative attitudes towards Jews, immigrants and advocates of the new urban morality (Reeves, 2000: 92) The Klan saw as its mission the “preservation and promotion of patriotic ideology.” (Schaefer in *Phylon*, 1971: 143) WWI brought the Ku Klux Klan back to face changes in the American way, resisting the urban morality, immigration of aliens to the United States and migration of the African-Americans from the rural south to the urban and industrialized north.

Among other interpretations and studies of the Ku Klux Klan's history and development, it is maintained that the Klan has "changed...from its social movement to a mentality." (Zald and Asch in *Social Forces*, 1966: 330) Such a mentality refers to a kind of adopting the Klan ideology "without identifying oneself with the Ku Klux Klan" (Richard T Schaefer in *Phylon*, 1971: 144) The Klan of the twenties represented "mainstream social and political concerns." (Stanley Coben in *The Journal of Social History*, 1994: 155) It was an attempt by the white Protestant population to defend its values by identifying with or joining the Klan. (ibid, 156)

By 1920 the Klan gathered more than 100 000 revealed knights. (John Hope Franklin, 1984: 406) It took the opportunity of the isolationist policy to openly declare its hostility towards different minority groups. Among other targets of the Klan, we find the Southern and Eastern European immigrants who kept registering records in terms of displacement. Tens of millions of them settled in the United States between 1890 and 1920. Among the dominant groups of the immigrants' wave we find the Jews. The latter tended to flee persecution, but met intolerance in America. In an attempt to reinterpret American anti-Semitism, Michael N Dobkowski wrote:

Thus the Jews who crossed the Atlantic to find new hope in the beaoning land of freedom...for the most part, did not find a corresponding appreciation of their religion. Americans brought them as emotional and cultural baggage many of the prejudices and misconceptions prevalent in the Old Country and added a few of their own. A nation built of many nations did not rid itself so easily of the intolerance and suspicion that was the legacy of Europe.

(Dobkowski in *American Quarterly*, 1977: 168)

After the war, disillusionment and economic problems gave birth to an ideological anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is defined by the French philosopher and playwright Jean Paul Sartre as being the opinion that "all or part of [a man's] misfortunes or those of his

country [are] due to the presence of Jewish elements in his community.” (Sartre, 1976: 7)

In his newspaper the *Dearborn Independent* Henry Ford blamed the Jews about “every modern problem” in the United States and accused them of a worldwide conspiracy under the Zionist guidance. (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971: 1622) Between 1920 and 1925 the newspaper published dozens of articles naming prominent Jewish Americans as conspirators aiming to overthrow governments all over the world. (Victoria Saker in *The Journal of American History*, 2004, 877) The accusation in the *Dearborn Independent* represented the broadest and most sustained attacks on individual Jews and Jews as a group; and Ford’s campaign against the Jews reflected the renewed racial tribalism that characterized post WWI American society. (ibid) Such anti-Semitism and dislike of Jews were manifested in different forms. Large insurance companies, banks, retail chains, law firms and big companies generally refused to employ Jews with very few exceptions. (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971: 1627-8) Private colleges and universities habitually imposed quotas on Jewish student admissions. Most rigorous were anti-Semitic restrictions in all medical schools which forced many intelligent and capable young Jews to study abroad and it was very hard for Jewish teachers to secure employment in public schools. (ibid)

In his *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* Edward Said discussed the Western division of Indo-European and Semitic races; he showed how Westerners have insisted to make people “remember that both Arabs and Jews...are Semites” and the Semitic people were viewed as the “anti-thesis of development.” (Said, 1991: 293) Said explained that, within the western mind and especially before WWII, “the Arabs [are] only Jews on horseback and they are Orientals at heart.” (ibid: 102) <sup>12</sup> As stated above, the twenties in the United States were a decade of contradictions. Though the decade is renowned for its isolationist foreign policy and though the American government was not directly involved in the world affairs of the time, especially after the rejection of the

covenant of the League of Nations and the assault on President Wilson's foreign policy,<sup>13</sup> the United States "proved adept internationally in economic and cultural realms", especially in the search of markets in different parts of the world including the Middle East. (André Maurois, 1962: 73 [translation mine]) The picture of the Middle East was brought to the American public with the spread of the desert-romance movies. As a cultural symbol, the Middle East became accessible to the American public through a range of new mediums. (Kareem Habib Captan, 2008: 99) During the early twentieth century, the Orient became a marketable symbol that exemplified sex, exoticism and seduction. (ibid, 100) During the Twenties Hollywood produced more than 150 films with major Arab themes and settings. (Saleh Alaswad, 2000: 2) Alaswad maintains that the image of the Arab has not changed in the American mind since the advent of the cinema (ibid: 4); and he refers mainly to the Twenties. For instance, Rudolph Valentino's *The Sheikh* (1921), one of the most popular films of the period, is about a white European love relationship amid Bedouin Arabs. The twenties were the period of the appearance of T E Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and the English best seller novel for 1920 which was entitled *The Sheikh*, published in 1919 and written by a Derbyshire lady who never traveled beyond London. The English novel (*The Sheikh*) knew an American cinematographic adaptation (Valentino's), a thing which if it has something to mean, it would be that Americans were consuming Oriental settings and themes provided to them by the so-popular empire literature. The plot/scenario of the novel/film is/are about some European expatriates in the south east of Algeria. The American public was then getting acquainted with the "oriental" settings and images, with all they bore as prejudices.

In his discussion of the Jewish question in France in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Jean Paul Sartre stated that Jews, like women, were in a state of tutelage; thus their contribution to political life, like that of women, is of a recent date. (Sartre, 1976: 84) The twenties in the

United States were the era of the new morality and especially the new woman. The changing habits of women were due to the effects of the Great War and the amendment of the Constitution which, up to that time, prevented them from the right to vote. After gaining the right to vote, women in America were dabbling with smoking, drinking and experimenting with sex. (Sarah Beebe Fryer, 1988: 6) The nature of women's advance changed radically with the coming of Jazz. (ibid: 3) Malcolm Cowley recalled wartime influences:

All standards were relaxed in the storm-sultry wartime atmosphere. It was not only boys of my age, those serving in the army, who were changed by events: their sisters and younger brothers were affected in a different fashion...It was possible for boys and girls to do what they pleased. For the first time they could go to dances unchaperoned, drive the family car and park it on the roadside while they made love, and come home after midnight, a little tipsy, with no body to reproach them in the hallway.

(Qtd in Mirell L Walden, 1998: 19)

Some of the adherents of the old time religion saw in modern life and flappers-the name attributed to the emancipated women- a threat to the Christian established religious order. (Tindel and Shi, 2004: 256-7) Women's changing images, both in the media and American imagination ,provided evidence that radical social change had occurred, and the feminine moral revolution generated discussion. (Walden L Mirell 1998, 20) The University of Florida's president warned that short skirts were born by the Devil and would take the younger generations to "social chaos and destruction". (ibid: 22) After the war and with the rising employment of women, one legislator warned about "who will do the cooking, the washing...and will rear the children." (Qtd in ibid, 972-3) The most serious reactions against the emancipation of women were generally accompanied by an assault on urban morality, speakeasies and bootlegging.

One of the major Ku Klux Klan objectives was to reinforce the Prohibition laws, for white Anglo-Saxon values were best exemplified by the victory of Prohibition in 1919, a

measure intended to contempt the corrupt cultural and moral values of the urban population. (Jenkins, 2007: 209-10) Most of the alcoholic community and bootleggers were either foreign-born or had eastern European origins.

The fact that Prohibition of the 1920s rested on an amendment of the federal constitution – the most basic and sacred law of the land- stresses the importance of the issue. This indicates the degree of popular and institutional support to be mobilized. (S J Mennell in *Journal of American Studies*, 1969: 160) From January 1920 the “manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States” came to be forbidden. (Qtd in *ibid*, 162) The Prohibition is said to have aimed at the “restoration and [bringing] back of a kind of morality and civil purity that was believed to have been lost.” (Richard Hofstadter, 1955: 287) By supporting Prohibition, the middle-class white Anglo-Saxons “sought...to Americanize the immigrants.” (S J Mennell in *Journal of American Studies*, 1969: 166) During the 1920s alcohol was labeled “racial poison” and drink was identified with flappers, the “Negro” and the immigrant population. (*ibid*: 169)

In 1920 the Republican presidential candidate, Warren G Harding, ran a platform of “return to normalcy”. But it was rather a return to an “imagined ‘normalcy’ of social tranquility and ethnic homogeneity set somewhere in the historic past, perhaps before 1850.” (Jenkins, 2007: 209) Such a conservative and nostalgic phrase set the tone for the politics of the 1920s, marked by the ascendancy of rural and suburban conservative values. (*ibid*)

The post-war nativist feeling generated new efforts directed towards aiming at limiting new entries and immigration into the United States. American Congress, anxious at the alarming influx of foreigners after the war, passed the Emergency Immigration Act

of 1921, which restricted European comings each year to 3% of the foreign-born of any nationality, relying on the 1910 census. (Tindel and Shi, 2004: 849) A quota law in 1924 reduced the number to 2% based on the 1890 census. The Johnson Reed Act included fewer of the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. The law set a permanent limitation based on national origins of the American people. When having signed the law President Coolidge declared: “America must be kept American”. (Qtd in W B Michaels in *Critical Inquiry*, 1992: 221) It is thus obvious that the purpose of the quota law was to shape the balance in favor of the old immigrants from northern and western Europe. The law completely excluded people from East Asia. One senator then publicly stated:

It is no wonder, therefore, that the myth of the melting pot has been discredited. It is no wonder that Americans everywhere are insisting that their land no longer shall offer free and unrestricted asylum to the rest of the world... United States is our land. If it was not the land of our fathers, it may be, and it should be the land of our children.

(Qtd in Hugh Brogman, 1985: 512)

The Johnson Reed Act of 1924 demonstrates that the American was unwilling to share his largess or values with non-white Anglo-Saxons. (Dinnerstein and Reimers in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 2004: 4) Prohibition and immigration issues were not the only outstanding postwar tension in the United States, for fundamentalism was another important one. The word is used in America to designate what is generally called a “conservative type of Christian thought as opposed to liberal and or modernist tendencies...influential in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1970[vol9]: 1009) By considering fundamentalism as a reaction against the liberalizing tendencies of modern thought, it becomes nothing “except a reaction to something new.” (ibid)

In 1925 began the Scopes Trial. The charge was that John Thomas Scopes, a teacher of science in a Tennessee high school, had violated a state law declaring:

unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normals or any other public schools of the state ...to teach any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals

(ibid, [vol 20]: 25)

The basis for the sensational nature of the trial was laid by the rise of the Christian movement of Fundamentalism. The trial symbolized the prevailing challenge of science and evolutionary theory against a literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Scopes's defense was assured by a New York liberal association, and New York was the major reference of immigrant and urban population.

The census of 1920 revealed that for the first time in history the nation had become predominantly urban. More than 50% of the population lived in urban areas. (Reeves, 2007: 85) The long established trend from rural to urban life hastened during the 1920s as industry was replacing agriculture. About 20 million moved to the cities during the sole decade. (ibid)

People living in and around cities adopted an urban culture that angered many Americans still in small towns and farms. Life in the city became in the conservative middle class small-towners' eyes the symbol of moral decadence, sexual freedom, speakeasies, bootlegging and the loss of old values. Cities continued to house the influx of blacks and different immigrants in addition to prostitution. For the majority of Americans of the 1920s there was something sinful and unhealthy about the urban areas.

The influx of blacks and new immigrants to the urban areas of the north before and during the twenties triggered a debate over race crossing and eugenics.<sup>14</sup> When President Coolidge declared, while signing the Johnson Reed Act, that America must be kept American; he considered the law as one his major accomplishments. (W B Michaels in *Critical Inquiry*, 1992: 221) Some geneticists warned Americans about the backwardness of

blacks and immigrants. Relying on short and usually unreliable analyses, some maintained that the Nordic<sup>15</sup> element in the United States was threatened by its mingling with other “inferior races” (Lanthrop Stoddard, 1920) As religion was losing ground with the advent of Modernism and science, the advocates of racial threats “inclined to make inferences from science which were either not all there or applicable in a very limited sense.” (Frederick J Hoffman, 1949: 247) There was a prevailing fear of the “menace of the feeble-minded” races contaminating Americans of the twenties. (Patrick J Ryan in *Journal of Social History*, 1997: 669) Some geneticists warned the public that interracial marriages might lead to the reproduction of ill genes and that would result in a “catastrophic genotype”. (Bentley Glass and Curt Stern in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1986: 131)

Francis Scott Fitzgerald is among the most recognized figures of American cultural and literary history. He is one of the major writers of the twentieth century. Public fascination knows him primarily as the author of *The Great Gatsby*. His life and work were intertwined; he was both creator and victim of the most turbulent eras of the twentieth century. (Ruth Prigozy, 2006: 1) Scott Fitzgerald was a Mid-Westerner and was from a relatively solid family tradition, but poor background. Fitzgerald was from Minnesota and his native Saint Paul played a role in his fiction, especially *The Great Gatsby* wherein Saint Paul and thus the Mid-West were to contribute in the characters’ moral outlook. When in 1915 a wealthy businessman disapproved of marrying his daughter to Fitzgerald for the latter’s poor background, young Francis became conscious of his poverty and social inferiority, and this contributed in shaping his view of awe at the rich. Scott Fitzgerald was educated at Princeton which he left in 1917 to enlist in the American army. He wanted to be brave, but the war ended before he could come into contact with action. In 1920, after the publication of *This*

*Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald married Zelda Sayre and his life story would become exciting to a youth for which “he was a kind of king”. (John Berryman in *The Kenyon Review*, 1949: 103) His life with Zelda was lavish and that of spending and traveling to Europe and back to America. In *The Crack Up* Fitzgerald declared that he “was pushed into the position not only of spokesman of the time, but of the typical product of that same moment.” (Qtd in *ibid*: 105) The years of the Great Depression proved to be disastrous to the Fitzgeralds, especially with the mental breakdown of Zelda and the decreasing literary success of Fitzgerald as a writer. John Berryman argued that it would be pleasant to leave Fitzgerald among the fast cars, bloom of youth, Jazz music ruling from Princeton to Long Island. But it is not possible to vow for such a thing, for we have to be critical and “we want something better than lips thrilling ... no doubt [that] in *The Great Gatsby* we have something better...[and] the novel still has readers and there is a widespread idea that it is Fitzgerald’s best novel...it is a masterpiece.” (*ibid*)

*The Great Gatsby* is a novel about a man trying in vain to recover a youthful love. This quest is paralleled into the “longing for the old American Dream”. (Jorge Luis Borges, 1971: 28) A man from the Mid-West, Nick Caraway, travels east to New York. There he meets his cousin Daisy and her husband Tom Buchanan. Nick hears about the mysterious Jay Gatsby who gives parties. He once got invited to one of Gatsby’s parties. Nick is told about the previous relationship of Gatsby and Daisy.

Having despaired of seeing Daisy in one of his parties, Gatsby asks Nick to invite her and Nick accepted. With the renewal of the old relationship, Nick grows more and more curious about Gatsby’s past and background while the climax of Gatsby facing Tom becomes inevitable. Tom reveals Gatsby’s involvement with bootlegging and tries to persuade his wife about Gatsby’s backwardness and social inferiority. This climax reaches its denouement with Daisy ironically killing Tom’s mistress, Myrtle, and Gatsby getting killed by Wilson,

Myrtle's husband who ends by shooting himself. The novel ends with the narrator, Nick, remembering Gatsby as an idealist among the "rotten crowd", who followed a dream amid a materialistic society which led to his tragic end. Gatsby's story is by the last pages paralleled with the first Dutch settlers of New York to whom the New World appeared as the green light at Daisy's dock shines to Gatsby.

*The Great Gatsby* was published during and its setting is about the 1920s which were a period of literary creativity and which witnessed the emergence of what is "still called modern literature." (Ted Buchholdz, 1993: 146) The literature of the period is believed to have rivaled that of the American Renaissance of the mid-nineteenth century. (ibid) Unlike most writers of earlier periods, the American modernists achieved international fame and were influenced by the world's current of the time. The dominant current of the period was Modernism. The latter identifies with "new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts and styles of literature...of the early decades of the [present] century." (ibid: 188-9) Its specific features may vary, but it is widely agreed that they include a break with what is old.

*The Great Gatsby* intervened in the context of the literature of crisis which is "often an urban literature" for cities compress both time and space by multiplying encounters. (David Trotter, 2006: 78) Its setting of 1922 in New York suggests its standing for the "second flowering" and the rise of the American novel. The nineteen-twenties were a "period of contradictions". (Hugh Brogman, 1985: 503) Malcolm Cowley called the period of the twenties "the Second Flowering" in relation to its significance in the American literature. Cowley considered that Francis Scott Fitzgerald and some other important writers of the period embody the historical perspective of their works depicting a "living community in a process of continual change." (ibid) Cowley emphasized that the writers of the Lost Generation, as they were called, regarded art as a "rendering of the historical moment."

(ibid) It was in this period that “America’s coming-of-age occurred and writing in the United States became unmistakably modern.” (Ruland and Bradbury, 1992: 269) By the end of the 1920s it became almost impossible to view American literature as “provincial literature or a sub branch of British literature”. (ibid: 274) *The Great Gatsby* was published in the period when some intellectuals such as Van Wick Brooks called for the construction of a usable past: “[T]he present is a void and the American writer floats in that void because the past that survives in the common mind is a past without living value.” (Qtd in ibid: xiii) It is then clear that the problem of identity and /or lack of identification were not only characteristic to eugenics, politics and other fields, but such issues were also those of literature.

Clara Kaplan says that the title *Our America: Nativism, Modernism and Pluralism* by Walter Ben Michaels is summerizingly symbolizing the 1920s and the association of Modernism with race issues. (Kaplan, 1997: 157) She argues about Modernism’s investment in identity politics and racialism. She stresses on the importance of turning to the twenties because the decade offers possibilities of understanding issues of multiculturalism and inter-racial relationships. (ibid, 159) Walter Ben Michaels explains that most of the modernists of the twenties could not define themselves without recourse to racial identity and oblique reference to biology and eugenics of the time. (Michaels in ibid: 142) For Michaels Modernism was responsible of “a racialized conception of culture”. (ibid, 141)

The literature of the period for him had better to be labeled “nativist modernism”, and the writers of the period were anxious about the “ideal of the ‘melting pot’ and the projects of Americanization developed to produce it” since themselves had “their own nativist version of racism”. (ibid 78) Michaels insists that the increasing modernist skepticism about the biology of race is their form of racism. (ibid, 129) According to Michaels our ideas about identity and race are direct descendents of the modernists’ notions of culture and race crossing. (ibid: 127)

The major aim of the present dissertation is to look for the **orientalist discourse** or the discourse of Orientalism throughout the narrative of *The Great Gatsby*. By discourse is meant what Michel Foucault defined as “sometimes the general domain of all statements, sometimes as the individualizable group of statements, sometimes as *a regulated practice that accounts for a number of structures.*” (Qtd in Sarah Mills, 2004: 6 [italics mine]) The third definition suggests that the interest is less in “actual utterances or texts than in the historical rules and structures that produce them.” (ibid)

According to Aram Veesser scholars are now given new opportunities to cross the boundaries which stand between literature and history, anthropology, art, politics, economics...etc (Veesser, 1989: ix) The new Historicism is a school of thought that developed during the 1980s and 1990s. It aims at understanding a literary work through its historical context, and to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature. Veesser considers that the New Historicism “attempts to find explanation and relevant material in social sciences other than the one which is primarily under investigation.” (ibid, 1994: 10) New historicists usually tend to interrogate the relationship between history and literature, and they are against studies of pure formalism. (*Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 1991: 545-6) It is then an approach interested not in the aesthetic value of literary texts, but rather in researching the contexts of their production.

Veesser says that the New Historicism has put down the doctrine of noninterference which previously set restrictions on humanists to intrude on questions of power, politics and all matters that deeply affect people’s practical lives. (Veesser, 1989, ix) The major supporters of this new approach are generally women and ethnic groups, and the approach is “driven by fierce debate and protest”. (ibid, xi) It suggests that literary and nonliterary texts circulate unseparately and that “no discourse gives access to unchanging truths [nor] expresses inalterable human nature.” (ibid) The New Historicism pulls the historical

considerations to the center of literary analysis and “describes culture in action” and claims that selves and texts when analyzed are found to be generally “defined in relation to hostile others (Jews, radicals, blacks, women...etc)”. (ibid: xiii)

The New Historicism is the general approach which may justify the thematic study intended to be realized. For the theoretical method of analysis, appeal shall be made to the theory of Orientalism developed by Edward Said. Orientalism can be given a variety of definitions, and the one to be used in this dissertation is that which deals with Orientalism primarily as discourse. In his *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978) Edward Said defines Orientalism as:

a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Orientalism ...is... a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into the Western Consciousness, just as the same investment multiplied indeed, made truly productive the statements proliferating from Orientalism to the general culture.

(Said, 1991: 6)

Thus Orientalism as a tradition and particularly as discourse compelled Western writers such as Francis Scott Fitzgerald to write with prejudices and misconceptions towards Orientals, with the general meaning of the latter word, but also towards other minority groups. Norman Mailer argued that a “member of a minority ...is not a man of category.” (Qtd in Cunliff, 1975: 288) For Mailer that man is rather someone forced to feel and live his existence in a special way. (ibid) This suggestion by Norman Mailer may well apply to women, Jews, and blacks and Orientals in the United States during the 1920s.

According to Edward Said the Orient did not exist as very often described, except in the Western mind and imagination. Said explains how, for the orientalist, the Oriental lives in no delimited or particular geographical area. The Oriental is accordingly the one the

circumstances and fashion of any given period bring to the surface. In this sense Edward Said wrote:

but one big division, as between West and Orient, leads to other smaller ones...The Orient therefore alternated in the mind's geography between being an Old World to which one returned, as to Eden or Paradise, there to set up a new version of the old, and being a wholly new place to which one came as Columbus came to America... [It] is their capacity for entertaining and **confusing** the mind

(Said, 1991: 57-8[emphasis mine])

It is hard to miss, after reading the above definition, to recall the moment when- at the very end of *The Great Gatsby* Nick Caraway parallels the story of Jay Gatsby to that of his own nation, present, past, and future. Nick-amid the tasteless and decadent society of New York of 1922- tries to find consolation in a remote past. It is his attempt to “set up a new version of the old” by recalling how the New World must have looked to the Dutch sailors.

It is maintained that Scott Fitzgerald, more than any other modernist writers, “in their lives and their fiction,” seems to have a “wistful longing to return in thought, if not in fact” to a remote and idealized past. (D G Kehl, in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 2001: 311) This is mirrored by Jay Gatsby's longing to repeat the past.

Julianne Newmark observes that the literary expatriates who journeyed into the sparsely populated regions of the United States, as was Nick made by Fitzgerald flee New York to return to his Midwestern small town where their house has been called Caraways' for generations, chose relocation to a new site themselves. (Julianne Newmark, 2004: 80) Nick Caraway in *The Great Gatsby* reflects the conditions experienced by his individual exile in New York- “I was within and without” he says. Such an exile is explained by Edward Said in an essay entitled “Intellectuals and exile”:

familiar world inhabited by natives, so to speak, tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being. Exile for the intellectual in this metaphorical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others.

(Qtd in Newmark, 2004: 81)

Edward Said considers that for the orientalist the Oriental is always a “member of a subject race and not exclusively an inhabitant of a geographical area.” (Said, 1991: 92) The fact that the Oriental is not solely the Arab of East is explained with enough stress when Said says that his subject of discussion and the perspective he followed may lead to raise questions in “such fields as Blacks or Women’s studies” (ibid: 326) Said says that “fields of learning, as well as the works of the most eccentric artist, are constrained and worked upon by society, by cultural traditions, by worldly circumstances..”. (ibid, 201) For Said the discourse of Orientalism is the Westerner’s way of “solidifying [his] anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and general all-purpose race prejudice.” (ibid: 193) If the relationship of Orientalism to other types of discourse, mainly anti-Semitic or Black discriminatory is obvious, the one related to women is less. To prove the striking similarity between Orientalism and anti-feminism, Said claimed that:

Orientalism itself, furthermore, was an exclusively male province; like so many professional guilds of the modern period, it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders...[W]omen are usually the creatures of a male power –fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all willing.

(ibid: 207)

The general aim of this dissertation is to come to demonstrate that American Orientalism goes well before WWII. By attempting a thematic study of *The Great Gatsby* which is a “classic” written by a canonical writer of the nineteen-twenties, the objective is to go in Said’s track as for when he compares European and American Orientalism(s). Attempt

will be made to show how the “European tradition has given rise in the United States to coherent attitudes among scholars, institutions, styles of discourse and orientations, despite contemporary appearance of refinement and, as well as the use of social techniques.” (ibid: 295-6) Said concluded his work by insisting on the point that if the Knowledge of *Orientalism* has any meaning “it is in being a reminder of the seductive degradation of knowledge, of any knowledge, anywhere, at any time.” (ibid: 328)

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## Chapter II: The Woman Other

Estella B Freedman started her study of the changing views about the nineteen twenties woman by raising an important issue: why have historians failed to consider the Women's Movement of the Twenties? Freedman assumes that even students of women's history have concluded their accounts with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.<sup>16</sup> (Estella B Freedman in *The Journal of American History*, 1974: 372) There is a tendency among historians to ignore post-1920 concerns of women, for the latter realized a number of achievements such as the right to vote, a certain economic independence and some new morals and manners. These achievements, Freedman continues, have given birth to the idea that the 1920s were the golden period for the American women. (ibid) It is an idea shared by scholars, not because research and analysis have confirmed its validity, but rather "because no questions have been asked about women in the 1920s since the initial impressionistic observations were made." (ibid: 373) Mary A Beard maintains that women "have been unable to contribute fully to the American society- even after suffrage- because they have remained the oppressed victims of history." (Qtd in ibid)

In this chapter I will show how Francis Scott Fitzgerald made of his female characters of *The Great Gatsby* the reflection of this oppressive nature of American society. Through his portrayal of the main female characters of *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy Fay Buchanan, and Jordan Baker, Scott Fitzgerald falls in the Orientalist tradition of denigrating the Other. I will demonstrate how this process of "othering" the female other operates throughout the narrative. The main focus of the chapter will be an emphasis on Fitzgerald's views and portrayal of women and how this is related to the discourse and tradition of Orientalism which takes masculinity as the primary aspect of identity .

The term “flapper” first appeared in Great Britain after WWI. It was used to describe young girls, still somewhat awkward in movement, who had not yet entered womanhood. Francis Scott Fitzgerald was among the very earliest writers to refer to the American woman as flapper. Although not all American women were flappers, Kenneth Yellis asserts that “what was true of flapper was true of fashionable women fairly generally and somewhat less true of a whole range of women not strictly fashionable, but not totally out of it either.” (Qtd in Walden L Mmirrel, 1998: 95) Scott Fitzgerald defined the typical flapper as “lively expensive” and this is Fitzgerald’s view of the emancipated woman. (ibid) Some biographical elements suggest that Fitzgerald bore completely different and opposed opinions in what concerns women and men. He enjoyed women but liked to dominate them. In an observation made about his own perception, Fitzgerald wrote:

When I like men I want to be like them. I want to lose the outer qualities that give my individuality and be like them. I don’t want the man, I want to absorb into myself all the qualities that make him attractive and live him out... When I like women, I want to own them, to dominate them, to have them admire me.

(Qtd in James R Mellow, 1984: 24)

The dominant group in the United States during the nineteen twenties, the white male Anglo-Saxon, defined itself on the basis of “moral power”, to use Edward Said’s words, as with notions about “‘we’ do [in this sense, men] and they [women] cannot do or understand as we do.” (Edward Said, 1991: 12) When Nick Caraway, the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, condemns Jordan Baker, he says that “dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply” (*Gatsby* 65), and about men Fitzgerald makes Nick say: “Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine. I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.” (66)

It is argued that Scott Fitzgerald had a confused and ambivalent view about women; the views which “inform his characterization of Daisy, which is deeply sympathetic as well as

critical.” (Francis E Kerr, 1991: 245) When Nick Caraway insists at the very beginning of the novel that he is “inclined to reserve all judgments”, (*Gatsby* 7) Fitzgerald seems to emphasize on men’s rationality as opposed to women’s, or Daisy’s, child-like spirit. Nick mockingly tells Daisy that the whole town of Chicago is “desolate” and “all the cars have the left rear wheel painted as a mourning wreath.” After this reply Daisy innocently urges Tom to “go back [tomorrow.]” (16) It is with the line following this scene that Fitzgerald makes Daisy tell Nick that he “ought to see the baby.” Nick not only reveals his sense of social and moral security, but he also insists to share his father’s old ideals of objective and rational masculinity. Frances E Kerr explains that

Being reserved, drawing upon reserves of understood but never stated emotions- these are the characteristics Nick has learned from his father with whom he shares, he implies, a rare bond. Like his father, Nick projects an upper middle class masculinity, taking pride in his patient objectivity, moral discipline, and emotional reserve.

(Qtd in Joakim Ake Nilsson, 2000: 48)

This opposition of “objective rational man” and “child-like woman” is one of the ways the male dominant subject of the nineteen twenties tended to identify itself through the denigration of the female other. According to Edward Said, in the orientalist tradition, “women are usually the creatures of a male power- fantasy” and “they express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid.” (Edward Said, 1991: 207) With the first encounter of Nick with Daisy the latter “laughed, an absurd little laugh...she laughed again as if she said something very witty.” (*Gatsby* 15)

For Alfred Kazin there was a permanent dividing tension between what Scott Fitzgerald knew and what his spirit adhered to, between his disillusionment by and his irrevocable respect of the rich. (Alfred Kazin, 1942: 319) Scott Fitzgerald’s view of masculinity was tied up in that doubleness, for ideals of manhood in the United States during the Roaring

Twenties depended on “financial power and social finesse.” (Francis E Kerr, 1991:247)

Fitzgerald made both Nick and Jay Gatsby agree on the fact that Daisy’s voice was full of money:

“Her voice is full of money” he said suddenly. That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money- that was the charm that rose and fell in it... high in her palace, the king’s daughter, the golden girl.

(*Gatsby* 126)

The plot of the novel is structured around Jay Gatsby’s rejection of his shiftless parents and their poor background. Gatsby concentrated most of his efforts to earn wealth and build a fortune. This strengthens the idea that money constituted an important element in the construction of the identity of the male subject. It is for the sake of this money and its direct relation to masculinity that Gatsby waited five years and then, Nick says

Gatsby] took a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us... he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher-shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids with in coral apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

“They’re such beautiful shirts,’ she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds.

‘It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such- such beautiful shirts before.’

(99)

Fitzgerald’s epigraph to his novel suggests that the whole quest of Gatsby is meant to make Daisy like the masculine side of him

Then wear the golden hat, if that will move her  
If you can bounce high, for her too  
Till she cry “Lover, gold-hatted bouncing lover  
I must have you.

Thomas Park D’Invilliers, III

(Qtd in Orr Montoya, 1992: 158)

The novel can be considered as reflecting the post-WWI anxiety about the changing definition of masculinity. In a thesis entitled *From Trench to Trope: Narrating American*

*Masculinity* (2002), Pearl James explains how the violence done to men during the Great War changed the ways masculinity was fictionally represented. James argues that “[d]espite hope that war experience would bolster American manhood, WWI exacerbated an enduring crisis of masculinity.” (Pearl James, 2002: 1) In this sense Nick completely rejects being identified with women. The rose has always been a symbol of femininity,<sup>17</sup> and when Daisy tells Nick that he reminds her “of- of a rose... an absolute rose”, the narrator immediately reacts, confessing that “this was untrue” and that he is “not even faintly like a rose.” (*Gatsby* 21) This kind of anxiety about masculinity and manhood criteria is set in opposition with signs of womanhood. Within patriarchal society, Barbara Joyce writes, “the female is a recipient of a great deal of male anxiety simply by virtue of not being male.” (Barbara Joyce, 1992: 40)

Within *The Great Gatsby* there is another striking binary opposition between men and women. Even in terms of morphological construction, Scott Fitzgerald created stereotyped characters. On the one hand Tom Buchanan is a “champion polo player” who has got “an enormous powerful body” (12), and on the other Daisy is described as weak and feminine, “a nice girl”. The process of othering, Edward Said says, is that of linking the Oriental/other by the orientalist/subject to “elements in the Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor)”, and this entire framework most of the time “was constructed out of biological determinism.” (Edward Said, 1991: 207) Orientalism for Edward Said is “an exclusively male province” and it encourages a male conception of the world and views the Orient as an “incorporated weak partner” just as it is the case of women. (ibid: 208)

Moragh Orr Montoya claims that *The Great Gatsby* belongs to the fiction that uses the “disobedient woman, a *femme fatale*, a bitch”. (Orr Montoya, 1992: 2) For Mary A Mc Cay “how [Fitzgerald] used women and their experience is the key to what [he] is saying about women.” (Mc Cay, 1982: 312) Mc Cay maintains that Scott Fitzgerald made of women pretexts of failure, “it is the man who has the vision and the woman who would distort

him...weakness masking itself in beauty and drawing before young men to wreck like sirens.” (ibid: 316) Orr Montoya says that Fitzgerald’s whole argument is that “weak women are the principal cause of destruction of strong men.” (Orr Montoya, 1992: 142)

James Gatz of North Dakota, Jeffery Louis Decker assumes, has struggled *à la* Benjamin Franklin and *à la* Horatio Alger to build his fortune, achieve success and then find his sense of belonging in the American society.<sup>18</sup> ( in *A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 52) When James Gatz turns to Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, who gives extravagant and expensively luxurious parties, his downfall is brought about by a woman, Daisy Buchanan, just as the case of all the material success Dan Cody realized and ruined by another woman. *The Great Gatsby* is among the great American novels which focus on male-male relationships (Gatsby and Nick) and ignores women, degrading them to objects, as Daisy is made the embodiment of Gatsby’s dream, romantic readiness, and capacity for wonder. (Miguel Carasquiera, 1996: 158) Leslie Fiedler considers that Fitzgerald’s portrayal of Daisy and Nick’s reactions towards her give the impression that she is a woman men might admire and desire only from distance. (In ibid) Women are then portrayed as objects over which men fight with each other, like any other stores or commodities to be possessed or purchased. Daisy’s voice, whiteness, being “temptress” of men put her among women who “bitchily” make themselves desirable and “destroy male companions who have devoted their lives to get close to them.” (Qtd in ibid: 157) About the disillusionment of Gatsby caused by Daisy, Nick says

[Gatsby] had been full of the idea so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an unconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an over-wounded clock... Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever... Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.

(*Gatsby* 99, 100, 103)

This is how Daisy does not add to Gatsby's count, nor can she substitute the meaning of the green light with her significant presence. Nick notices an "expression of bewilderment" on Gatsby's face and a certain doubt about the veracity of Gatsby's "present happiness." "There must have been moments", Nick continues, "when Daisy trembled short of his dreams...he had thrown himself to it [illusion about Daisy] with a certain passion, adding to it every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart." (102-3) Moragh Orr Montoya attests that Gatsby's tragic fate is made so by Fitzgerald because of Daisy's failure. (Orr Montoya, 1992: 146) This is how Daisy is brought to belong to the kind of careless people who "smash[ed] up things and creatures and retreat back into their vast carelessness...and let other people clean up the mess they made." (*Gatsby* 186) The essential of the great American novels tend to categorize women as other, and place them outside the experience. Terry Eagleton, in an observation about female representation, states woman

is both "inside" and "outside" male society, both romantically idealized member of it and victimized outcast. She is sometimes what stands between man and chaos, and sometimes the embodiment of chaos itself.

(Qtd in Long Kim Martin, 1993: 12)

When Mc Cay discussed Fitzgerald's letters sent to his daughter, she made it clear that she had found that Fitzgerald the father wanted his daughter to "form her own character, not to become like so many women who people his novels- empty, beautiful shells who must be filled up by men." (Mary A Mc Cay, 1982: 313) *Gatsby*, Nick informs, "knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant and others because they were hysterical." (*Gatsby* 105)

For Barbara Joyce, Scott Fitzgerald's fiction is characterized by the old view of women as problematic and connected to the evils which befall the men. Joyce continues that "the

novels of F Scott Fitzgerald reflect a patriarchal attitude toward women in their attitude and tone.” (Barbara Joyce, 1990: iii) According to Joyce, Fitzgerald’s novels view women as fatal destroyer or beautiful angel, but rarely as human beings equal in status to men. (ibid) The author’s first description of women in *The Great Gatsby* tells the reader of two young ladies dressed in white, full of movement and even “buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon.” (*Gatsby* 14) But as soon as the “cruel-bodied” Tom Buchanan shuts the door, their capacity for movement according to Joyce, “is controlled by the presence of man.” (ibid: 37) It is the male subject who decides about the movement or stagnation.

We soon learn in the novel that Tom is the subject and Daisy his object victim. The similarity between the Oriental and the domestic woman, within the orientalist consideration, has been explained above. Edward Said points out that “since the Oriental is a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected.” (Said, 1991: 207) Like the Oriental who is unable to see but is seen through, unable to decide but is decided for, as Said puts it, Daisy waits to know what would happen of her marital life, and she has no power to influence the course of events. The phone rings, Tom talks to his mistress, and Daisy does nothing, except letting others decide for her own life. Instead of attempting to prove her presence as a wife for instance, Daisy, Fitzgerald makes her, talks about the butler’s nose. (*Gatsby* 21)

The nineteen-twenties seem to have intensified threats of the gender system. Since the decade was a period of considerable change, Barbara Joyce argues, “we can only begin to imagine the fear of the loss of the status quo wrought by these changes in women’s behaviour...” (Joyce, 1991: 27) Women went more and more to work outside home, smoked, went to speakeasies, bobbed their hair, wore short skirts, and drank alcohol. Two important amendments to the American constitution occurred during the post-war period. Although there were 30 million women registered in the suffrage list, fewer ran for office or voted

altogether, or when they did, it was most of the time for the same choices as their husbands. (Ingrid Blekys, 2007: 20) Men perceived women to be more assertive than before. The former reacted “with alarm and often unreasonably to the implicit and explicit challenges to their dominant roles as the head of the family, sole bread-winner, and initiator sex.” (Lenchtenburg, 1993: 163)

The Orient in Edward Said’s analysis “existed for the west, or so it seemed to countless orientalist whose attitude was paternalistic.” (Said, 1991: 204) In *The Great Gatsby* Daisy, the female character is pursued by Jay Gatsby, she is the “golden girl... the king’s daughter...high in her white palace” and Daisy is compared to the Holy Grail.<sup>19</sup> Among literary conventions of men assuming control is the use of the woman as a literary device. (Pamela Farley, 1973: 113) According to Farley, the romantic ideal of youth and beauty does not keep its splendor in time, “that is in woman or society.” (ibid) The use of Daisy Buchanan as a device, the embodiment of Gatsby’s dream, goes with the idea that for Scott Fitzgerald, women are not men’s equals, but rather different from and stranger to them, or they are merely objects of wonder.

In a letter to Marx Perkins, Fitzgerald bemoaned that if *The Great Gatsby* failed, that would be because of a title that is only fair, and “second but most important, the book contains no important female character.” (Scott Fitzgerald, 2005: 100) The degree of importance of characters is revealed by the different fates Fitzgerald gave his characters. Francis E Kerr considers that Gatsby, though tragically shot, dies with his “romantic readiness” uncorrupted, and Nick finds relief and escape in his Mid-West and the stable tradition of his ancestral Nordic family. (Frances E Kerr, 1991: 143) However, while we are told of almost every character’s end in the novel, Daisy just vanishes, as if she has no other importance, except providing certain equilibrium to the plot.

In his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) Mathew Arnold made a distinction between the two main forces which affect culture, “Hellenism” and “Hebraism”. The former is for Arnold the adherence to a certain moral code of law and the latter is the adoption of right reason. In any culture or individual there is an “ordinary” self and the “best” self. (Mathew Arnold, 1969: 43) In Fitzgerald’ metaphoric world Gatsby has the authority of a prophet and he “sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He is a son of God”. (*Gatsby* 105) Gatsby then stands for the “best self” while Daisy is the reflection of the “right reason”, or American materialism of the Roaring Twenties. Her identity is in sum constructed through the opposition of her reality in opposition to Gatsby’s dream. Gatsby re-invents his past for the sake of Daisy, the dream and love she embodies. However, Daisy is not so much satisfied by Gatsby’s West Egg, it seems that she asks for more. Nick recalls how she was offended by West Egg:

because it wasn’t a gesture but an emotion. She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented place that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village- appalled by its row vigor that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand.

(*Gatsby* 109)

Nick’s description of Gatsby’s fascination with Daisy reveals Fitzgerald’s own emphasis on making the man marvelous and the woman selfish and guilty. Nick comments:

he took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously...took her because he had no right to touch her hand...He might have despised himself, for he had taken her under false pretences. But he didn’t...now he found that he committed himself to the following of a grail...She vanished into her rich house...leaving Gatsby nothing... When they met again...it was Gatsby who was breathless, who was somehow betrayed.

(*Gatsby* 155)

Moragh Orr Montoya asserts that Fitzgerald meant that Gatsby, without Daisy would leave forever as a “son of God”, but in the same way as Eve corrupted Adam, Daisy’s magical voice and the way she makes “people lean toward her”, end by driving Gatsby to kiss her.

(Orr Montoya, 1992: 155) Nick goes back to the scene:

his heart beat faster and faster as Daisy’s white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never again ramp like a mind of God. So he waited for a moment longer to the tuning fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete.

(*Gatsby* 118)

After the kiss scene, Montoya continues, “the son of God becomes a mere man.” (ibid) The God-like figure and Platonic dimension of Gatsby’s perfection is pointed out by Nick gathering that Gatsby “wanted to recover something, some idea of himself, perhaps that had gone into loving Daisy.” (*Gatsby* 156) Most studies on *The Great Gatsby* have often made reference, would it be brief, on Nick Caraway. We see both Gatsby and Daisy through Nick’s eyes, and we are driven to judge them with his moral standards. While Nick admires Gatsby’s behaviour and considers him “worth the whole damn bunch put together” (160), Daisy is perceived in a very limited way. May be, it would sound more likely to think that this was the very meaning of Fitzgerald when he says that the novel is “a man’s book”. (In Turnbull, 1963: 173) In spite of Daisy’s essential role in the equilibrium of the narrative, Nick- the male narrator- directs most of his attention to focus on two men, Jay Gatsby and Tom Buchanan. They are in sum the two subjects, male and active, who engage in a dual fight, and this is best exemplified in the climax of their facing each other in the Plaza Hotel, over an object, Daisy. Except for his short private conversation with Daisy, Nick’s revelations about her personality are restricted to her observable behaviour and what the other characters say about her. It is the same way of

proceeding which is characteristic to the tradition of Orientalism, and which, according to Edward Said, falls in a mission of silencing the Oriental and makes him more or less voiceless.

Edward Said maintains that the Orient is a word which, through time, accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations and connotations, and these did not refer necessarily to the real Orient, but to the discrete associations the word implies. (Said, 1991: 203) Said considers Orientalism as a willed doctrine over the “other”, because the Orient is weak. (ibid: 204) The nature of Daisy’s role in the narrative and the way she is decided for and talked about by other characters are what Edward Said calls the Orient’s- in the orientalist mind- “silent indifference and feminine penetrability” and which are basic characteristics of the tradition and discourse of Orientalism. (ibid: 206) Possibilities of movement, development and any ability to participate in fruitful action have always been denied to the Oriental throughout the orientalist narratives and texts. Said claims that “the Orientalist... after he devote[d] a good deal of time to elucidating and explaining” the oriental, he places himself a “certain pressure to reduce [him] in his work.” (ibid: 209)

The scene Fitzgerald said that he had liked the most is that of the reunion of Gatsby with Daisy. (Turnbul, 1963: 170) In this same scene Daisy does not say anything important, except replying “we haven’t met for many years.” (*Gatsby* 94) The rest of the second half of the fifth chapter completely ignores Daisy and what she must herself say she thinks or feels. Instead, Daisy just reacts in a foolish and money-oriented way to Gatsby’s wardrobe and the luxury of his beautiful mansion. Fitzgerald admitted in his letters that

The worst fault in it (*Gatsby*), I think is a big fault: I gave no account (and had no feeling, or logic of) the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe... There is a tremendous fault in the book... the lack of an emotional presentment of Daisy’s attitude toward Gatsby after their reunion (and the subsequent lack of logic in or importance in her throwing him over).

(Qtd in Sarah Fryer, 1988: 80-1)

Interest is then put more on Gatsby's hovering over Daisy than on Daisy herself as a woman or human being. Fitzgerald does not seem to give much importance, or rather any importance at all, to Daisy's confused state of mind about a complex relationship involving two men. All we get is the consequence this relationship has on Gatsby's long lasting dream. While we are told about the fates of almost every main character of the novel, Daisy is willingly dismissed, and no attention is paid to what would have become of her or, for instance, her reaction to the recent rapid course of events. Nick rather condemns her by categorizing her among the careless without being aware of her interior reality. This idea goes well with the earlier consideration that Fitzgerald had meant *The Great Gatsby* to be a man's book, for the woman on whom the whole narrative is centered fades away with the fading of the dream she is made to embody. Leslie Fiedler charges the great novelists of American literature of this will to dismiss women and their importance; the novelists

though experts on indignity and assault, on loneliness and terror, tend to avoid treating the passionate encounter of a man and woman, which one expects to be at the center of a novel. Indeed they rather shy away from permitting in their fiction the presence of any full-fledged mature women, giving us us monsters of virtue or bitchery.

(Qtd in Long Kim Martin, 1993: 8-9)

While much interest, throughout *The Great Gatsby* and among critics falls on Daisy's voice, though she says almost nothing about her internal reality or her own story, less interest falls on Jordan Baker, though we owe her all important information related to Gatsby and Daisy. Whatever physicality Daisy must have, argues Beth A Mc Coy, "Nick narrates abstractly, in terms of emotions and metaphors rather than corporeal description." (Beth A Mc Coy, 1995: 90) It seems that the most bodiless of Fitzgerald's women becomes the most visible in the narrative, and the most impressing voiced has very little to say. By contrast

Nick is seen giving much more importance to Jordan's body. Nick immediately, after meeting Jordan for the first time, notices that she rests "extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless and with her chin raised a little as if she was balancing something on it which was likely to fall." (*Gatsby* 14, 15) The second time Nick meets Jordan, he keeps the same interest in "[H]er body [that] asserted itself with a restless movement of her knee." (25) By portraying Miss Baker as looking like a man (her small breast, body and her being a sport's woman), Fitzgerald gives her a certain authority which makes her much voiceless than Daisy.

Many critics have suggested that both gender and sexuality fluctuate around Jordan's body. (Mc Coy, 1995: 99) Jordan's breasts are "small", her "carriage", "erect language is not only masculine, but somewhat boyish fraught with pedophilic undertones." (ibid) Jordan's body and her man-like look awaken a certain fear about the changes in women's lives and morals. Even the most "careless" character, Tom Buchanan, worries over Jordan going "around the country". (*Gatsby* 24) Tom is saying nothing except reflecting the anxieties of his era. As a result of the Great War, Americans replaced the Victorian norms and genteel manners with a new era's brash. During this time pleasure and excitement became women's goals. (Walden L Mirrel, 1998: 94) In his *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of Nineteen Twenties* (1931), Frederick Lewis Allen wrote:

The revolution in manners and morals was accelerated... by the growing independence of the American woman. She won the suffrage in 1920. She seemed, it is true, to be little interested in it once she had it; she voted, but mostly as the unregenerate men about her did... Few of the younger women could rouse themselves to even a passing interest in politics: to them it was a sordid and futile business, without flavor and without hope. Nevertheless, the winning of the suffrage had its effects.

(Frederick L Allen, 1931: 95-6)

Nick mockingly recounts Jordan reading a newspaper, and read aloud to him from the *Saturday Evening Post*, "the word murmurous and uninflected, running together in a soothing

tone.” (*Gatsby* 24) Shortly after, Nick sees Jordan “tossing the magazine”. Here we notice Fitzgerald’s general view about the emptiness of women. It goes with the tradition of Orientalism: “we do” and they “cannot do or understand as we do.”

Fitzgerald once told his secretary that women “are so weak, really-emotionally unstable- and their nerves when strained break.” (Turnbull, 1963: 261) Fitzgerald reproduced the avant-garde dichotomy of intellectual manhood and feminine debility.<sup>20</sup> In *The Great Gatsby* Nick is surprised by realizing that Jay Gatsby, the man who generates whispers and gossips around his past and personality, has in fact little to say. (*Gatsby* 73) This kind of fear of finding a man who has got little to say, in Nick’s view, may reflect the modernist avant-garde that chose female images of laziness, ignorance or sentimentality to mean a “lack of either emotional or intellectual vigor.” (Francis E Kerr in *American Literature*, 1996: 405)

According to D G Kehl and Allene Cooper *The Great Gatsby* can be read as a grail quest. (Kehl and Cooper in *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 1993) For Fitzgerald the adequate test for first degree intelligence is “the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.” (Edmund Wilson, 1956: 69) Jay Gatsby has “found himself committed to the following of a grail.” (*Gatsby* 155) Kehl and Cooper think that the grail, personified in Daisy Buchanan, is “paradoxically beautiful and romantic but also, empty and easy to see through.” (Kehl and Cooper in *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 1993: 203) W H Auden specified a set of elements to make a typical grail quest. The first element is the precious object or person to be found and possessed or married.” (W H Auden in *Texas Quarterly*, 1961: 81) The precious person Gatsby is longing for is Daisy Buchanan, *née* Fay. In the tradition of King Arthur’s legends Fay refers to Morgan Fay who is the king’s evil half-sister who looks for the least opportunity to cause him ill, and Fitzgerald, Kehl and Cooper continue, used to read Celtic

legends and medieval quest stories.<sup>21</sup> (Kehl and Cooper in *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 1993: 207)

The fashion and carelessness of the nineteen twenties flapper is said to have obliterated the Gibson Girl of the 1890s<sup>22</sup>. The Gibson Girl was the symbol of stability while the flapper is characterized by motion, intensity and energy. (Ingred Blekys, 2007: 25) Jordan Baker of *The Great Gatsby* is described as a golf player whose constant move throughout the United States causes the awakening of fear and the feeling of threat of even Tom Buchanan, “She is a nice girl...they ought not let her run around the country this way.” (*Gatsby* 25) Miss Baker embodies the typical character of the flapper girl. The latter according to Ingred Blekys is incapable of any deep thought, but is rather capable of sin and she is guilty of it. (ibid) Nick informs the reader how Jordan cheats in sport, how she is dishonest and how she drives very carelessly, “you’re a rotten driver” Nick protests. (*Gatsby* 38) Miss Baker’s dishonesty is shown by the rumor going that she moved a ball during a game in order to win.

During the early decade of the Cold War, American writers and critics tended to emphasize on what may unify novelists and different artists, so that they would be able to contribute to an American tradition. However, the nineteen sixties started to put into question traditional American themes. The Civil Rights Movement resisted the oppression of the minority groups, and the Women’s Movement protested against the ways women were for long denied a voice that could challenge sexist stereotypes and gender inequalities. (Joakim Ake Nilsson, 2000: 14) In order to sustain his argument about the role of the 1960s in the challenge of traditional masculine oppression and othering of women, Nilsson quoted from Nehlen

Racial, class and political conflicts revealed a heterogeneity that pluralism did not always reconcile. The notion of an all-encompassing American identity, in literature as in society, now appeared not only incomplete but, in its denial of non hegemonic difference, actually oppressive. In the way the universal ‘man’ subsumes universal ‘woman’, the universal ‘American’ was now seen to subsume ‘others’ to whom it denied universality. (Qtd in ibid)

Fitzgerald's negative portrayal of Daisy Buchanan as "femme fatale" and destroyer is made clear by having most of the responsibility placed on her carelessness. According to John D Rockefeller V the resolution of the novel's plot is brought about by Daisy. This is relatively fair for the plot is centered on Daisy being the "first nice girl" Gatsby has known; and whose full-of-money voice "makes people lean towards her". (John D Rockefeller V, 2008: 20) Myrtle Wilson dies after being run over by Daisy. The latter was driving Gatsby's car at a very dangerous speed. George Wilson, Myrtle's husband, as a result of a threefold wrong belief: Mr. Wilson thinks Gatsby to be his wife's lover, the one who was driving the car that ran over Daisy, and Wilson thinks that the driver intended to do so. Rockefeller V considers that "Fitzgerald contends that Daisy's accident reveals a trait (her carelessness)" that is even "more constitutive of her character", a thing which may reflect her inner intentions. (ibid, I)

It is widely agreed that the automobile of the nineteen twenties, like the ship of the previous centuries, symbolizes the American Nation.<sup>23</sup> Nick at the beginning of the novel tells Miss Jordan Baker that she should be "more careful". (*Gatsby* 65) Nick at the end of the novel also accuses Daisy of belonging to the category of people who are "careless" and smash things and let other people clean up their wrongs. (186) The link is not directly very obvious, for the narrator does not accuse Daisy of the same thing as Jordan Baker, of being a rotten driver. But Nick's use of the word careless, Rockefeller V continues, may illustrate the fact that when Nick charges Daisy of being careless, it is not only the mere accusation of driving at a mad speed. (Rockefeller V 2008: 27) Nick means rather to compare Daisy to Jordan who was previously driving as carelessly as her. Nick protests at Jordan "you're a rotten driver...either you ought to be more careful or you ought not to drive at all" and "suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself." (*Gatsby* 65) By insisting on the carelessness of both Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker, Scott Fitzgerald can be said to have

reflected nothing except the fears and anxieties of his time. People were worried that the gradual process of women's emancipation threatened to place the American Nation in a position of being driven by its female half. It is not a simple coincidence that the resolution of the novel's plot is brought about by an accident. The latter is caused by the "careless" *femme fatale* Fitzgerald made of Daisy. Furthermore, the accident reflects the basic fears, because if the fate of the nation is placed in the hands of women, -that can be the author's argument- there would be horrible death as that of Myrtle Wilson, homicide as the shooting of Jay Gatsby and suicide as that committed by George Wilson. Nick refers to the automobile as the "death car". (144)

Readers of *The Great Gatsby* are guided by Nick Caraway's view of Daisy. We often judge Daisy on the basis of what Nick says about her superficial qualities and final irresponsibility. (Sarah Beebe Fryer, 1988: 78) The superficial character of Daisy is shown when she talks about "beautiful little fool" she wants her daughter to be. (*Gatsby* 24) Daisy is, in Nick's view at least, incapable of genuine thought because she just does not care. According to Sarah Fryer Daisy is willingly careless and superficial because she tends to protect herself from the terrifying dangers inherent in caring. (Fryer, 1988: 80)

Donaldson and Massa view the American experience as the "sense of a fresh start of gigantic potential and proportions, the chance to create the world over again, an Eden without Eve". (Donaldson and Massa, 1978: 9) Charles Hearn attests that Jay Gatsby is "the American Adam thrown out from the Garden of Eden into a distorted world of materialism and decadence." (Charles Hearn, 1977: 46) For Long Kim Martin, *The Great Gatsby* is one of the best representations of the "male quest for the American dream." (Long Kim Martin, 1993: 137) Martin maintains that, in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald has created a new Garden of Eden. This new garden contains Jay Gatsby as the American Adam and Daisy Buchanan as the American Eve. (ibid: 138) Gatsby, Mathew Bruccoli assumes, is the archetypal figure

betrayed by the promises of America, and these promises are embodied in the character of Daisy. (Brucoli, 1992: 191) The novel is structured in such a way that it makes a contrast between the corruption that surrounds Daisy's stable and conforming world and incorruptibility and idealism that surround Gatsby's underworld involvement. Gatsby's incorruptibility is made his heroic characteristic. (Arthur Mizener in Martin, 1993: 140) Nick considers Gatsby's dream as pure, and his attraction to Daisy is more about the desire to competing with other men who are beyond his wealth and class than about love itself. (Gatsby v tom: 60) What makes Daisy exciting and desirable is not only her being nice, but her value has increased her value in Gatsby's eyes is that many men had already loved her. In *The Great Gatsby* one can notice how Daisy fails to be a real human being. Instead, Daisy turns to become the symbol of the American Eve. (ibid) Judith Fetteley considers that :

Men are legitimate subjects for romantic investment and women are not...Daisy must fail Gatsby but Gatsby need not fail Daisy. This is the double judgment in the book; which makes Daisy's narcissism a reason for damning her...yet makes Gatsby's utter solipsism the occasion for a muted romantic overture.

(Qtd in Long Martin, 1993: 140) ibid: 144)<sup>24</sup>

Daisy is then given significance only as a way of fulfilling this romantic overture, a symbol related to somebody else's dream. Edward Said explains that the Orient, in the tradition of Orientalism, "is the purest form of Romanticism." (Said, 1991: 137) Being the "object of wonder" is the traditional role of the Other. This role of the Other is explained by Joyce Warren. For Warren, the man in the American fiction has usually been encouraged to be the achiever- the subject- while the role of women was to be available to be used by the achiever for his advancement. (Joyce Warren, 1984) At the end of Fitzgerald's novel Nick refers to Gatsby's "capacity for wonder", his "romantic readiness and to his dream being the "greatest of all human dreams." (*Gatsby* 187) By contrast, Daisy is linked to the "golden girl" and "king's daughter" in a "white palace". (126) Daisy is denied genuine humanness and reduced

to symbol and Other. Fitzgerald himself admitted that if the book did not sell well, it would because it contains no real women. . Nick says

Out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalk formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees- he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on to the pump of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder.

(*Gatsby* 118)

The subject of *The Great Gatsby* is Jay Gatsby's dream, the male American dream. Finally, it is not surprising that its main female characters are marginalized. Daisy is the witch-like conspirator and object of romantic fulfillment, Jordan Baker is the cruelly dishonest and snobbish flapper, These women are attributed the typical roles of the female Others. (Long Kim Martin, 1993: 147) They are either the contrast of the male dream's perfection or the scapegoat of its failure.

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### Chapter III: The Ethnic Other

During the nineteen twenties the memorial hegemony of Anglo-Saxonism used blackness and other ethnic minorities in order to define and give arguments about the superiority of whiteness. (Yimitri Jayasundera, 2001: viii) The early twentieth century was a crucial period in the national selfhood of the United States. The latter looked for creating some new ways for articulating the consequences of industrialization and mechanical progress as well as the impacts and disillusionment caused by the devastating Great War. Many modernist works of literature reflect a certain American regret and sense of loss of a “stable past.” (ibid: 2) Within *The Great Gatsby* one can notice -and it shall be demonstrated- how nativist Americans attempted at excluding nonwhite and not-fully-white Americans from what was considered to be as containing elements of Americanness.<sup>25</sup>

While the European powers were expanding their imperial hegemony outside Europe,<sup>26</sup> the United States turned inward, for her people “wrestled with internal race relations problem with the African American minority and new waves of Southern and Eastern European immigrants.” (ibid: 3) The new immigrants were feared for being able to contaminate the white old Anglo-Saxon stock. Jayasundera maintains that “Americanness is a problematic term since it referred to Anglo-Saxon whites rather than ethnic whites” such as Eastern European Jews or minority groups such as African Americans. (ibid: 15)

Wealthy Americans preserved their kinship with Britain and tended to differentiate themselves from the influx of ethnic white immigrants. (ibid: 83) *The Great Gatsby* reflects the prevailing anxieties characteristic of that time which witnessed new and excessive waves of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe as well as the Anglo-Saxon nativist fear of losing their political and cultural control. (Michael Billing, 1995: 79) This kind of anxiety is found in *The Great Gatsby* which is according to Hilary Lotche “very ethnocentric in its

focus”, is a “tribute of whiteness, pure and simple”, and in which “race and ethnicity serve” as major issues. (Hilary Lotche, 2006: 50) Lotche argues that the modernist novel- and *Gatsby* is no exception- abounds with racial and ethnic imagery and most of the minor nonwhite characters serve as “dark contrast to the glimmering whiteness of the foreground.” (ibid: 52) Jeffrey Louis Decker considers that *The Great Gatsby* stages a national anxiety about the loss of white Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the United States, an anxiety which was shared among intellectuals and other fringes of society. (Decker in *A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 52)

Unlike Meyer Wolfshiem who looks for “business gonnegtion” or mispronounces “Oggsford” (*Gatsby* 76-7), Jay Gatsby refutes his ethnic past, supposedly Eastern European Jewish, in order to achieve an upper-class Anglo-Saxon whiteness. (Yimitri Jayasundura, 2001: 35) Tom Buchanan’s paranoia of the Nordic race under threat “Civilization is going to pieces” (*Gatsby* 19) stands for the anxiety of many nativist white Americans in relation to the new excessive entries of immigrants to the United States. In the early decades of the twentieth century the new immigrants were often described as a menacing mass that “could decimate or mongrelize the American stock” through intermarriage and race mixing. (Geoffrey Clymer in *Genre*, 1996: 162) The current ideas of the 1920s speculated that ethnic immigrants, and particularly Jews, infected both culturally and sexually; they were often linked with disease, plague, vermin...etc (Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky in *South Central Review*, 1997: 40) Most severe were the medical and health controls related to the threat of contamination.

Many white Anglo-Saxon writers of the Jazz Age expressed their fear of miscegenation and extinction of the Nordic race as a result of interracial marriages.<sup>27</sup> Tom Buchanan who represents the fervent and even extremist defender of the preservation of the purity of the Nordic element paraphrases Lothrop Stoddard and his book entitled *The Rising Tide of Color*

*Against White World Supremacy* (1920): “[T]he idea is that if we don’t look out, the white race will be- will be submerged...by these other races [who] will have control of things.”

(*Gatsby* 19) Roderick Nash has referred to the broad social and economic changes which were alarming to cultural values:

Many Americans felt uneasy as they experienced the transforming effects of population growth, urbanization, and economic change. On the one hand, these developments were welcome as a step in the direction of progress. Yet they also raised vague fears about... the eclipse of the individual in a mass society...World War I increased the misgivings of and doubts. By the 1920s the sense of change had penetrated to the roots of popular thought.

(Joakim Ake Nilsson, 2000: 38)

Nick Caraway insists on his ancestral Nordic descendance and reveals the American emphasis on the importance of one’s possession of a past and tradition, which were crucial to the “Tribal Twenties”:

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations, and we have a tradition that we are descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grand-father’s brother, who came here in fifty one, sent as a substitute to the Civil War.

(*Gatsby* 8)

New York during the early decades of the twentieth century witnessed records in terms of new coming immigrants. By focusing on his genealogy going even before the period of the Civil War- therefore before the 1850s, Nick Caraway parallels the panic of the old Anglo-Saxon Americans. According to Ymitri Jayasundera Nick’s reference to the Caraways to be “something as a clan” is a suggestion that “the linguistic association is intimately connected” to the Ku Klux Klan, a thing which involves Nick at least in the idea of closed and pure Anglo-Saxon American society. (Jayasundera, 2001: 41) The Klan was very popular in the Midwest by the early 1920S. The setting of the novel, New York, has been one of the most important urban centers of the nation. Nick right at the beginning of the narrative sets a

distance between his ancestral Mid-West and the morally-corrupted New York, a city of immigrants from Europe and African American migrants from the south.

M. Gidley suggests that the source of the “decline and decay philosophy of history” in *The Great Gatsby* is Theodore Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color*. (M. Gidley in *Journal of American Studies*, 1973: 172) Similarities in title, Tom’s “The Rise of the Coloured Empires”, and name, Stoddard, suggest a “veiled reference to Stoddard’s book.” (ibid)

The fear of the white Anglo-Saxon Americans was not only with the nonwhite races such as African Americans. The feeling of being under threat was also directed toward “ethnic” whites who were thought to be able to contaminate their purity of whiteness by passing. Passing in American literature is a complex concept related to identity issues and American selfhood. Lisa A. Kirby defines passing, whether racial, cultural, religious, socio-economic or gendered, as a result of marginalized and oppressed identities in the United States. (Lisa Kirby, 2006: 151)

Meredith Goldsmith argues that for both Nick and Tom racial miscegenation and ethnic assimilation “provide models of identity formation and upward mobility more easily comprehensible” than the amalgam of love and ambition underlying Jay Gatsby’s prominence. (Meredith Goldsmith in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2003: 443) Nick Carraway considers that Gatsby could have easily sprung “from the swamps of Louisiana” or “the lower East Side of New York.” (*Gatsby* 55) Gatsby is a mystery since, Nick believes, young men did not “drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound.” (56)

Readers of *The Great Gatsby* are generally driven by Scott Fitzgerald’s making of his characters. It is widely agreed that Nick Carraway stands for Fitzgerald. (Elizabeth Preston in *Narrative*, 1997: 143) The racist Tom Buchanan seems to be disliked by Nick, and even the author once commented that Tom mirrors many things he [Fitzgerald] reproaches the rich.

(ibid: 147) However, the two characters are not very different in their views about race and their fear of miscegenation. Nick links Gatsby to those who could have easily sprung “from nowhere” and Tom aggressively treats him as “Mr. nobody from nowhere.”(*Gatsby* 136)

Lisa Kirby attests that Scott Fitzgerald’s “apprehensions about raced identity become clear in *The Great Gatsby*. (Lisa Kirby, 2006: 153) Fitzgerald situated his novel in the context of racial panic of the early twentieth century; his narrator recalls the scene of Queensborro:

A dead man passed us in hearse with bloom, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of south-eastern Europe, and I was glad the sight of Gatsby’s splendid car was included in their somber holiday. As we crossed the Blackwell’s Island, a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

‘Anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge,’ I thought; ‘anything at all...’

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder.

(*Gatsby* 75)

By reading this scene one cannot miss that Nick is not very different from Tom who openly declares that if something is not done, the Nordic race will be submerged. Nick’s vocabulary of “tragic eyes” and “haughty rivalry” informs about Scott Fitzgerald’s views concerning the superiority of the Nordic element. The opposition of their “tragic” and “modish” reality to “[our] splendid” sight confirms what Fitzgerald once noticed in one of his journeys to France:

God damn the continent of Europe.... The negroid streak creeps northward to defile the Nordic race. Already the Italians have the souls of black moors. Raise the bars of immigration and permit only Scandinavians, Teutons, Anglo-Saxons and Celts to enter.... My reactions were all philistine, antiSocialistic, provincial and racially snobbish. I believe at last in the white man's burden. We are as far above the modern Frenchman as he is above the Negro.

(Qtd in Peter Slater in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1973: 60)

Meredith Goldsmith claims that Jay Gatsby “appears less as a man than an event (something that ‘could happen.’)” (Goldsmith, 2006: 446) When talking about the bridge which is a way of passing from one area to another, Nick Caraway insists in the present tense that “everything can happen”. It is the reflection of Fitzgerald’s “provincial and racially-snobbish” views and his own sense of feeling under threat. (ibid) Sigmund Freud considers the bridge to be “*la signification d’une avance vers la mort, sens [aussi lié] à un passage, d’un changement d’état*” [the significance of a forward movement towards death, (a meaning also related) to “passing”, a change of state] (Sigmund Freud, 1936: 35[translation mine]) The American nation is perceived by Fitzgerald to progress towards death. In the next line Nick uses the past tense: “Even Gatsby could happen”, making him not only an event reflecting the models of racial and ethnic self-invention on the bridge, but also someone who has already crossed the bridge and has passed for a white Anglo-Saxon American. Here, the chronology of the narrative is a bit curious, for Gatsby is immediately linked to the “tragic” and “modish”.

The “modish negroes” and “tragic” immigrants of Queensborro constitute a sample of how racial and ethnic issues operate in *The Great Gatsby*, but they are not alone. Meyer Wolfshiem, the sinister gangster and Jew is the source of Jay Gatsby’s mysterious wealth, since the former not only “started him” but he “made him.” (*Gatsby* 178) Daniel Itzkovitz’s study of the portrayal of Jewish men of the early twentieth-century literature reveals the Jewish male as “American but foreign; white but racially other, consuming but unproductive.” (Itzkovitz, 1998: 177) Edward Said says that the Orientals are “always represented as outsiders having a special role to play” inside the Western culture. (Said, 1991: 71) For Meredith Goldsmith Nick’s very first description of the character of Mr. Wolfshiem is done “in the vocabulary of inauthenticity.” (Goldsmith, 2006: 446) In their earliest meeting Nick asks Gatsby about Wolfshiem: “Who is he anyhow- an actor?” Even

Gatsby admits that he is “a character around New York.” (*Gatsby* 79) In one of the first drafts of *The Great Gatsby* Tom Buchanan comments on the residents of West Egg as “theatrical people like Jews”, Tom worries that “one Jew is all right, but when you get a crowd of them.” (Mathew Brucoli, 1973: 171) Goldsmith assumes that even though Tom never finishes his point, it is very clear that he associates Jews with the masses “challenging the singularity” of the white old Anglo-Saxon Americans. (Meredith Goldsmith *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2006: 447) Such attitudes as Tom’s or Fitzgerald’s are what Edward Said describes as one’s “anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and general all-purpose race prejudice” which are important to the orientalist to define his own self, “character, that is [his] very identity.” (Said, 1991: 193) Said insists that what mattered during the interwar period was a cultural self-definition. (ibid: 267)

According to Peter Gregg Slater Tom Buchanan’s sense of superiority, when still a young man, derived from his physical prowess, but beyond thirty Tom refuses to be introduced as a “champion polo player”. (*Gatsby* 121) He rather realizes his personal worth in his Nordic ancestral descendance and racial purity. (Peter G Slater in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1973: 54) During the climactic confrontation of the Plaza Hotel Tom attempts to exploit his “individuous ethnicity as a weapon, a device to demean his rival, Gatsby. (ibid) After attacking Gatsby on the basis of social class, Tom goes beyond socio-economic distinctions to express the depth of his distaste. He then converts his assault to a racial one: “Nowadays people begin sneering at family life and family institutions, and next thing they’ll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white.” (*Gatsby* 136) Slater explains that this kind of attempt at lowering Gatsby in Daisy’s eyes on the basis of the “venerable American fear of miscegenation” is a striking indicator not only of Tom’s panic, but that of a good deal Americans of the nineteen twenties. (ibid: 55) Slater adds that though they do not seem to agree with Tom’s rhetoric about miscegenation and the superiority of the

Nordic race, both Nick and Daisy are not “unconcerned about ethnic differences.” (ibid) In spite of the fact that Daisy accuses Tom of going “very profound” and being “depressed by books with long words in them” her last comment on Tom’s argument is that “[we] have got to beat them down.” (*Gatsby* 19) Nick tends to point out the ethnic affiliation of every individual he encounters, and more importantly whose ethnicity is not of an old American type as his own. While Tom uses his Nordic sense of belonging to substitute his departed physical prowess, Nick uses this same sense to bridge the gap that separates him from members of upper social classes and to differentiate him from the very low ones. There is the Finnish woman Nick says he owns in addition to his *dog*, who mutters in her strange language, and whose house is amidst “soggy white washed alleys” of West Egg. (*Gatsby* 9-10) In the Valley of Ashes Nick notices a “grey Italian child” (47) in the Fourth of July- a date referring to American pride and glorious lost stable past of the old homogeneous nation. Lothrop Stoddard signaled out in his *The Rising Tide of Color* that the racial and cultural foundations of America are those of the colonial period up to the end of the Civil War. (Walter Ben Michaels in *American Literary History*, 1990: 228) In his Fourth of July 1924 address to the National Education Association, President Calvin Coolidge said that the Johnson Reed Act was one of the major achievements of his administration. As he put it would help “America...remain American.” (ibid) Nick introduces the owner of the coffee joint as the young Greek Michaelis. (*Gatsby* 142)

Scott Fitzgerald is said to have been interested in physical stereotype of Jews. In a passage in his note-book Fitzgerald wrote: “Jews lose clarity. They get to look like old melted candles.” (F S Fitzgerald in Edmund Wilson, 1945: 98) The author’s view of Jews as melted candles is what Edward Said calls the Orientalist comparatism which

sees that in all the things the Semitic race appears to [us] to be an incomplete race...This race- if [I] dare use the analogy- is to the Indo-European [and in this sense Tom’s and Fitzgerald’s Nordic] family what a pencil sketch is to

painting, it lacks that abundance of life which is the condition of perfectability...the Semite...has never been able to achieve true maturity.

(Qtd in Said, 1991: 149)

Fitzgerald may then be said to have proceeded in the same way in stereotyping the character of Meyer Wolfshiem. When Nick is just introduced to Mr. Wolfshiem, the narrator recalls the slightest details of his face and body. Nick describes him as:

A small, flat-nosed Jew [who] raised his large head and regarded [me] with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness.

(*Gatsby* 75)

Peter Gregg Slater suspects that the “discernment of the nasal hair is a remarkable feat since the restaurant is so dimly lit” that Nick finds it hard to locate Meyer Wolfshiem’s eyes. (Peter Slater in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1973: 56) The nasal hair must have projected to Wolfshiem’s face from the mind and stereotype of the narrator, therefore the author, about Jewish physicality. (ibid) In this sense Edward Said maintains that the field of Orientalism is characterized by “*textual attitudes* [which] belong to the world of *idées reçues*.” (Said, 1991: 189 [italics original]) Slater attests that the Wolfshiem Nick sees and that Fitzgerald has produced is both exotic and sinister. (Slater in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1973: 56) The sinister and exotic dimension of Wolfshiem is made obvious by a number of observations Nick makes about him.

Fitzgerald and Nick are obsessed, in their encounter with Mayer Wolfshiem’s “expressive nose” and the way his nostrils become eyes: “Mr. Wolfshiem’s nose flashed at me indignantly...his nostrils turned to me in an interested way.” (*Gatsby* 76) In the same first encounter with Nick, Mr. Wolfshiem draws attention to his buttons, the “finest specimens made of human molars”, which is a Biblical injunction of an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. (Gary Martin Levine, 1999: 159) Even though Wolfshiem some sense of humanity when he talks about the regret of some of his lost friends (*Gatsby* 78), he directly moves to

the “succulent hash” he eats with “ferocious delicacy”. When Nick informs Wolfshiem about Gatsby’s death, the Jew answers “I am tied up in some very important business and cannot get mixed up in this thing now.” (180) Wolfshiem’s behavior after Gatsby’s death reinforces his stereotyped Jewishness of which Karl Marx noted: “money is the jealous God of Israel before whom no other god may exist... the bill of exchange is Jew’s actual god.” (Qtd in *ibid*: 156)

The description of Meyer Wolfshiem goes with the phonological materialization of the written word. There are two distinct ways of spelling the name, and the difference that the pronunciation makes is revealing: Wolfshiem of the first edition and Wolfsheim of the corrected one. (Slater in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1973: 60) [wulfshaim] is a common name of a number of Jewish families, those who emigrated mainly from Germany into the United States. The real-life Wolfshiem, Arnold Rothstein, has a German name<sup>28</sup>. However, by permuting the “i” and “e” in the name we get [wulfji:m] which in English can supposedly make the scheme of a wolf. Wolfshiem of *The Great Gatsby* is both a “smart man” and the one who fixed the World Series of 1919 and played by his own with the fate of millions of American individuals. Smartness and fixing seem enough to perfectly summarize the meaning of the name. Such smartness and scheme found in Fitzgerald’s novel are echoing the campaign of ideological anti-Semitism prevailing in the United States during the nineteen twenties. At the head of this campaign was one of the most important barons, Henry Ford with his nationally-wide-read newspaper *The Dearborn Independent*. Edward Said signals out that the Semite could be employed “not only as a simple description or designation”, but it could be applied to any “complex of historical and political events.” (Said, 1991: 232) The twenties in the United States reached an unprecedented degree of anti-Semitism. (Beverly S Williams in *Louisiana History*, 1980: 387) By 1920 Ford began publishing a series of articles

in *The Independent* in which he asserted that Judaism went hand in hand with Bolshevism,<sup>29</sup> and that there was a Jewish conspiracy to establish a worldwide dictatorship. (ibid: 388) Reflecting the accusations of the period, the Jewish Wolfshiem is guilty of exploiting Jay Gatsby's poor cultural background. Without any sense of remorse Wolfshiem is made to say: "when he told me he was an Ogsford man I knew I could use him good." (*Gatsby* 79) Having fixed the World Series, Wolfshiem becomes the "kind of one man-international-conspiracy, perfect effigy to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*".<sup>30</sup> (Robert Cantwell in *New England Review*, 1990: 52) Nick trustfully reports the way Wolfshiem pronounces "Ogsford", "gonnegtion" and a number of other utterances. Edward Said points out that in the tradition of Orientalism "if languages are distinct from each other...then the language users are, their minds, cultures, potentials and even their bodies, were different in similar ways. (Said, 1991: 233)

The discourse of Orientalism and the notion of the other are built on the basis of binary oppositions, and given credit on the name of science. Tom's arguments about the "idea that we're Nordics...we've made the things that go to make civilization- oh science and art and all that" (*Gatsby* 20) are characteristic to the discourse of Orientalism. Edward Said claims that Orientalism "establishes the figure of the orientalist as central authority for the Orient." (ibid: 121) The orientalist "celebrates his position, his method" and claims power on the name of science and technological advancement. (ibid: 122) Murray Baumgarten assumes that Meyer Wolfshiem is Tom Buchanan's opposed double. (Baumgarten, 2008: 44) While Tom gets the wealth he enjoys through inheritance and his established rich Anglo-Saxon family, Wolfshiem acquires his fortune through involvement in the underworld organized crime, bootlegging, and fraud as it was the case with 1919 World Series. The latter activities are those Gatsby is "gonnegted" with. The Jew in *The Great Gatsby* is an initiator to evil and

corruption, he is no producer but a fraudulent consumer and gambler. Levine Gary Martin, 1999: 159) On the one hand Tom is described as having a “cruel body” (*Gatsby* 12), and on the other hand Wolfshiem is portrayed as a “small, flat-nosed Jew”. (75) Homi Bhabha has observed that

[t]he stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation through the other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in signification of psychic and social relations...what is denied is that possibility of difference and circulation which would liberate the signifier of skin/culture from the signifieds of racial typology, the analytics of blood, ideologies of racial and cultural dominance or degeneration.

(Homi Bhabha, 1986: 162)

Wolfshiem the gangster is made the figure of evil. He provides Fitzgerald with the perfect figure of deception which is associated the booming markets the twenties. The real-life Wolfshiem, Rothstein of whom a photograph appeared in *The New York Daily*, has got rather a normal head, eyes, and nose. He is in fact very different from Fitzgerald’s description on Wolfshiem, he is seven years seven years younger than the said fifty years old Mayer. (Levine Gary Martin, 1999: 158) It is supposedly the myth of Oriental quick degeneration and what Fitzgerald called “Jews... like melted candles” which are at the origin of the difference.

Susan Marie Marren points out that the adherents of the white supremacist culture feel threatened by the other’s technique of passing, because if the latter succeeds, it exposes the notion of identity (in the adherents’ minds) to an inadequacy of its logic. (Susan Marren, 1995: 74) Even for the supposed-“reserved-to-judgment” Nick Gatsby “represented everything for which [I] have an unaffected scorn.” (*Gatsby* 8) Jay Gatsby represents cultural and racial transgression in Tom’s mind, for he charges him of throwing away family institutions and plotting at an interracial marriage. Nick insists that “personality [cannot be but] an unbroken series of successful gestures”, because if that was the case, there would be

“something gorgeous about [Gatsby]. (ibid) Personality during the early decades of the twentieth century in the United States, Susan Marren continues required more than successful gestures and romantic readiness. It was above all descendance from the old Anglo-Saxon Americans-Tom’s Nordic race-, and wealth, but Gatsby seems to be lacking the former aspect, or does not clearly have it. (ibid: 74-5)

Jeffrey Louis Decker argues that Jay Gatsby stages “a national anxiety about the loss of white Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the Twenties.” (Jeffrey Decker in *A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 52) Decker is astonished by the fact that it is only in death that Gatsby is freed from his “venal partnership with immigrant gangsters.” (ibid: 53) When Wolfshiem informs Nick “we were so thick in everything...always together. [with Gatsby], the narrator suspects the lying dead protagonist: “I wondered if this partnernrship had included the World’s Series transaction of 1919.” (*Gatsby* 178) It is only after having Gatsby buried that Nick remembers him with “the lineage of explorers of northern European” origins, the Dutch sailors. (ibid) It is in death that Gatsby “turned out all right at the end”. (*Gatsby* 8)

There is another source of Scott Fitzgerald when having been composing *The Great Gatsby*, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). Written by Grant, it was a best seller. The book’s major argument was that the white peoples of Western Europe are a race superior to the whites of southern and eastern Europe and elsewhere and the non-white peoples of the rest of the world. (M Gidley in *Journal of American Studies*, 1973: 175) The Nordic element is the white man *par excellence*, possesses the “mental and spiritual qualities” that constitute the “backbone of western civilization”, and he is considered to be the “native American.” (ibid)

Tom Buchanan appears to hold faith in science when he says that his rhetoric “is all scientific”. (*Gatsby* 19) Edward Said signals that “classifications of mankind” are characteristic of the Orientalist. (Said, 1991: 120) Orientalist ideas, Said argues, could “enter

with general theories (such as the history of mankind and civilization), orientalist are anxious to relate their ideas to “scientific contemporary observations. Such orientalist ideas about oriental “backwardness, degeneracy and inequality with the west” associated themselves with ideas about the “biological bases of racial inequality. (ibid: 205-6) Said attests that the old geographical designation of the Orient “are imaginative” and “implied no necessary connection” to the East as such. (ibid: 110) It occurs to Tom that Gatsby’s attempt at passing is going in the opposite direction of science. It is Gatsby’s passing which, according to Susan Marie Marren, threatens Tom’s social and identical order of which he wants to maintain Nordics at the top of the hierarchy. (Susan Marren, 1995: 82) Edward Said assumes that the response of Orientalism is “on the whole conservative and defensive.” (Said, 1991: 59) For Nick Caraway Gatsby’s imagination has never really accepted his parents, they were poor and shiftless people. Passing as explained earlier is the result of oppressed and marginalized identities. In Said’s observation the more dominant cultures “have rarely offered the individual anything but imperialism, racism and ethnocentrism” for dealing with the “other”. (ibid: 204) Gatsby provides Nick a fictional narrative concerning his own background:

‘I’ll tell you God’s truth.’ His right hand suddenly ordered divine retribution to stand by. ‘I am the son of some wealthy people in the middle west- all dead now. I was brought up in America and educated at Oxford because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.’

He looked at me sideways- and I knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying. He hurried the phrase ‘educated at Oxford’, or swallowed it, or chocked on it, as though it had bothered him before. And with doubt, his whole statement fell to pieces, and I wondered if there wasn’t something a little sinister about him, after all.

(*Gatsby* 71)

Gatsby tries to achieve his passing through deleting his previous poor economic and ethnic backgrounds. He gets rid of the history of the “obscure, immigrant Gatzes,” and replaces them by “some wealthy people” from what Nick qualifies as “[my] quiet Mid-

West”, who “belong to the old Anglo-Saxon nobility.” (Susan Marren, 1995: 85) Gatsby secures his passing by making his identity indisputable, since his parents “are all dead now.” From and for what may the young James Gatz have wanted to pass? Nick introduces himself as someone who comes from an established Mid-Western family whose house is still referred to as the Caraways’ for generations in his native small town. However, Gatsby recreates his genealogical descendance, and unlike Nick he buies his “ancestral home” to use the narrator’s ironic words, for a mansion recently purchased cannot be said ancestral.

Walter Ben Michaels explains Gatsby’s tragic failure by the fact that Fitzgerald’s protagonist is conceived in such a way that made him “without a past,” a thing which is his real problem and actual source of his feeling inferior, for “one’s clothes, one’s manners, and one’s friends” are easily obtainable. (Michaels in Shreier *Twentieth Century Literature*, 2007: 156) W.B. Michaels assumes that for Tom Buchanan Jay Gatsby “(né Gatz with his Wolfshiem ‘gonnegtion’) is not quite white; this is why, Michaels continues, Tom amuses himself by mocking Gatsby’s lack of origins. (ibid) According to Michaels Tom is not the only racist character of *The Great Gatsby*, though he is seemingly the one who feels depressingly threatened. Nick is worried by the idea that Gatsby wants to “defile Daisy’s- and nativist America’s- racial purity.”(ibid: 157) Edward Said considers that in such a tradition and discourse as Orientalism, there is in each scholar or intellectual some awareness “partly conscious, partly unconscious, of a national tradition, if not national ideology.”<sup>31</sup> (Said, 1991: 236) Nick describes Gatsby’s longing for Daisy as “the following of a grail”. (*Gatsby* 155) Gatsby knew that Daisy was extraordinary, but he did not just how a “nice girl could be.” For Michaels:

“Nice” here does not exactly mean “white”, but it does not exactly not mean “white” either. It is a term that will serve as a kind of switching point where the progressive novel’s discourse of class will be turned into the postwar novel’s discourse of race.

(Qtd in Shreier in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 2007: 157)

Michaels concludes that there is no degree of class mobility that could make James Gatz of North Dakota into someone he is not: a white Anglo-Saxon American because Gatsby's re-invention of his past and identity can be explained by his strong desire to belong to a different race. (ibid: 157) In the majority culture of the United States of the twenties Gatsby's difference puts him in the position of the "Other".

While composing *The Great Gatsby*, Scott Fitzgerald lived in what will be transformed to "fictive" West Egg, the "less fashionable of the two" Eggs. (*Gatsby* 11) Bryan Washington finds the ethnic names of the people at Gatsby's parties- as recorded by the narrator, Nick to

clearly attest to Fitzgeraldian outrage at the new America, one in which so-called ethnics are ubiquitous, in which the citizens of East Egg, who formed a "dignified homogeneity" in the midst of "many-colored, may-keyed commotion," must contend not only the inhabitants of West Egg, but with all New York.

(Qtd in ibid: 158)

Betsy Nies considers that *The Great Gatsby's* major issue is the "rise and decline of a Nordic civilization." (Betsy Nies, 1998: 183) Nies says that the concern about Jay Gatsby as black or new immigrant is generated by the idea that Gatsby has created an identity of his own, for his previous one in Nick's anxious logic is endangering the nativist privileged white Anglo-Saxon identity. (ibid: 102) When Gatsby shows his Oxford photograph, Nick's doubt about Gatsby's "lying" seems to be appeased, at least for a while. Nies's argument is that Nick's elegy to "my Middle-West...the thrilling, returning trains of my youth" (*Gatsby* 183) parallels the national fear of the loss of a "pure identity". (ibid: 104) By the end of the novel Nick returns to the image of the train tracks, (the first train tracks are along the grey ash heaps). Nick, or rather Fitzgerald, covers them not with the grey of ashes, but with the white of snow. (ibid) The grey stands for the ethnic and urban

admixture of metropolitan New York. While the trains travelling to the Mid-West, on which Nick and his Nordic schoolmates are “unutterably aware of [their] identity in this country”, (*Gatsby* 182) an identity that Benjamin Shreier describes as white as snow in Nick’s mind, Gatsby is often pale and the people of Queensborro grey. (Shreier in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 2007: 161) *The Great Gatsby* is a nostalgic novel that longs for a time of homogeneous identity in the context of urban mixed identities. (Betsy Nies, 1998: 178)

Scott Fitzgerald once wrote: “I am interested in the individual only in relation to society.” (Qtd in Stephany Spaulding, 2007: 100) Fitzgerald’s “interest in the individual only in relation to society” goes with Edward Said’s assumption that orientalist works and Orientalism itself as discourse are “constrained and acted upon by society, cultural traditions, by worldly circumstances and influences.” (Said, 1991: 201) Spaulding certifies that the group Fitzgerald defends and identifies with is “essentially white, exclusive and racially supremacist in consciousness,” for Tom’s allusion to ‘civilization going to pieces’ means for him and for the author “assuming a public role” and attempting at restoring “values of the American past’ by imposing distinctions of race and ethnicity. (Spaulding, 2007: 100) The fact that though those present during the discussion about race and Nordic superiority find Tom “going deep” and his attempt at scientific argument ridiculous, none of them questions his statements; this implicitly suggests that they agree with his rationale. Tom’s hot reaction to the threat menacing the Nordic race and the others’ discrete adherence to his case in point are the product of the author’s pen. One can claim that Edward Said’s argument that “psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind...different from ordinary historical knowledge” (Said, 1991: 72) may apply both to the narrative of *The Great Gatsby* as well as to the author who is the primary responsible of this literary production.

Stephany Spaulding assumes that Fitzgerald had a number of things to say through Tom Buchanan; the latter's radical racism and ethnocentrism are not really necessary for the movement of the plot. Tom's contempt for Gatsby, his rival might have been easily justified by one's own pride when one's wife is *convoitée*, or more importantly by just class difference. (ibid: 101) Spaulding quotes Roland Berman to give more credit to his argument of money which "is the [greatest] problem: the social order is against [Gatsby] and...[Tom] is a rich man's son who understands that when poor boys rise, rich boys have less space to breath in." (Qtd in ibid) Fitzgerald's consideration through Tom may be said to be that people like Gatsby are able to achieve passing on the basis of their light skin and newly and illicitly-acquired wealth, the two major characteristics-in the nativists' minds- of new immigrants, mainly Jews. Fitzgerald's "exclusive society" was a system of racially-based stratification and economic class. This kind of stratification is revealed by the author's own description of the Mid-West:

From a little distance one can perceive an order in what at that time seemed confusion. The case in point is the society of three generation Middle Western city before the war. There were the two or three enormously rich, nationally known families- outside of them rather than below them the hierarchy began. At the top came those whose grandparents had brought something with them from the East, a vestige of money and culture; then came the families of the big self-made-merchants, the 'old Settlers' of the sixties and seventies, American-English, Scotch, or German...After this came certain new people-mysterious, out of a cloudy past, possibly unsound.

(F.S. Fitzgerald in Edmund Wilson, 1993: 233)

James Gatz's permutation to Jay Gatsby is for Spaulding a "whitewashing of language, culture and nationality in an effort to be uniformed with the dominant Anglophone white community." (Stephany Spaulding, 2007: 113) Gatz is an identifier of difference/otherness from the dominant community and majority culture; it reflects "lesser whiteness", likely Jewish immigrant whiteness. (ibid) Nick's description of the moment when he encounters Gatsby and Wolfshiem together is striking. In this scene Fitzgerald

makes Gatsby of the underworld much less attractive: “In a well-fanned Forty Second Street cellar I met Gatsby for lunch. Blinking outside the brightness of the street I picked him out obscurely in the anteroom talking to another man.” (*Gatsby* 75[my emphasis]) The man Gatsby was talking to is none but the Jew Meyer Wolfshiem. Gatsby’s mysterious past, his German Yiddish name and his Wolfshiem “gonnegtion” make of him a Jew who tries to pass for a white Anglo-Saxon American; he wants to live beyond his immediate means. Myrtle Wilson knew a tragic fate for having attempted to live beyond her means. Spaulding links Daisy’s statement “we’ve got to beat them down” to her running over the Myrtle’s body and shading her “dark blood”. (ibid: 114) Like Myrtle Wilson, Gatsby wants to live beyond his “lesser position in the gradation of whiteness”; both deaths are read as Fitzgerald’s will to maintain the status quo. (ibid) Moreover, when Myrtle attempts to go beyond her subordinate status, not only as a “sensual woman”, but as a second-degree white woman compared to the “white” Daisy, Tom reacts by breaking her nose. (*Gatsby* 43)

When he is given the opportunity to avenge Gatsby’s innocence, Nick prefers to try protecting the now-child-like Tom “I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I was talking to a child.” (186) Nick’s leaning towards protecting Tom and his refusal to defend Gatsby’s case even in death align him, according to Spaulding with the dominant culture which has murdered Gatsby for his ethnic and class otherness. (Stephany Spaulding, 2007: 128) The remaining prominent characters gather around the idea of the superior whiteness; Tom’s and their fear of the loss of the Nordic supremacy is laid to rest, for the challenger (s) is among the dead. (ibid)

Scott Fitzgerald’s politics during the time of the composition of *The Great Gatsby* were directed towards the restriction of new entries of immigrants. (Barbara Will in *College Literature*, 2005: 128) Edward Said claims that one does not “really make

discourse at will without, or statements in it, without belonging...to the ideology and institutions that guarantee its existence.” (Said, 1991: 321) Fitzgerald lived suspicious about those who threatened the group he aligned with. (Barbara Will in *College Literature*, 2005: 128) As more and more Southern and Eastern European immigrants began to claim American identities, the supremacy based on whiteness became menaced and not easily distinguishable. Barbara Will maintains that Jay Gatsby represented the “alien, unassimilable to the discourse of political and social Americanism toward which the text is ultimately directed.” (ibid)

In an early draft to the novel Fitzgerald made Nick describe Gatsby in the following words: “he was provokingly elusive and what he was intrinsically like, I’m powerless to say.” (Qtd in ibid) Will assumes that Gatsby represented a “mode of racial indeterminacy” or “vanishing” that threatens “to violate not only the community of Tom’s East Egg” but the “concept of Americanism itself.” (ibid: 132) Americanism is defined as being “actually the racial thought of the Nordic race, evolved after a thousand years of experience.” (John Higham, 1973: 273)

Gatsby’s Wolfshiem “gonnegtion” and the fact that he could have easily sprung “from the swamps of Louisiana or the lower East Side of New York” associates him with “not radical otherness” but with “Jewish difference...assigned to the not-full-white side of the racial spectrum.” (Barbara Will in *College Literature*, 2005: 132) Will continues that for both Tom and Nick whiteness and its privileges of the feeling of being “safe and proud” are to be “preserved, barricaded and safeguarded.” (ibid: 133) Gatsby is associated with the Jewish crime underworld and he is contaminated by Meyer Wolfshiem’s stereotyped Jewishness. According to Will Jay Gatsby is but a fiction adopted by one James Gatz of North Dakota to get access to the old white Anglo-Saxon community, for the name Gatz is “clearly haunted by ethnic, and specifically Jewish, overtones; it is a

Germanized alteration of the Yiddish name- Gets.” (ibid) As stated above, Fitzgerald had already written his friend and ordered: “[R]aise the bars of immigration and permit only Scandinavians, Teutons, Anglo-Saxons and Celts.” Tom Buchanan’s nativist feeling and manifestations and Nick Caraway’s stereotyping of racial and ethnic others stamp from Fitzgerald’s own attitudes. They are the reflection of the ideas of his times. Such widely broadcast ideas speculated:

There seems to be no question that the Nordic is far and away the most valuable type, standing at the head of the whole human genius...the Nordic native American has been crowded by out with amazing rapidity by ... swarming, prolific aliens, and after two short generations he has in many of our urban areas almost extinct.

(Lothrop Stoddard, 1920: 162-65-81)

Stoddard’s distinction of Nordic/ alien was elaborated on the basis of vitality (Barbara Will in *College Literature*, 2005: 134) and Fitzgerald once wrote his daughter: “we are the few remnants of the old American aristocracy...we have the vitality left...and you choose to mix up with cheap lower class.” (Qtd in ibid) Will considers that Fitzgerald’s use of “family vitality” can be explained by the author’s going beyond social class distinctions to reach the point of race. (ibid: 135) It is the fact of not being quite white that makes Gatsby’s trouble, located in the “liminal space” of “tragic Southern-Eastern Europeans”, “modish negroes” and “superior Nordics. Gatsby “eludes both the terms of national and textual belonging based on distinctions between “self and other”, “white and non-white, American and un-American.”(ibid) Being Wolfshiem’s apprentice Gatsby, by his rootless background, smoothly makes his way to wealth through involvement in crime and bootlegging. Gatsby’s hides his Jewish origins and criminal activity, because otherwise he would have been alienated from Daisy. (Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, 1997: 39)

When Nick at the end of the novel thinks about the Dutch sailors, his previous idea was that of an “obscene word” written by some boy on Gatsby’s step. (*Gatsby* 187) The

“obscene word”, Barbara Will assumes, would be more easily “Jew”, “alien”, “colored”, or just simply “other.” (Barbara Will *in College Literature*, 2005: 136) By the end of the narrative we find the explicit analogy between the “fresh green breast of the new world” and Gatsby’s vision of the green light at Daisy’s dock. (*Gatsby* 187) This is how Gatsby, who previously represented everything for which Nick has “unaffected scorn”, “turn[s] out all right at the end”. This metamorphosis occurs only with death. The very last paragraphs of the novel leave the reader with two distinct impressions about Gatsby: that he is the heir of the American capacity for dream, but more importantly, that he is a man whose future is “behind him” and beyond the modern landscape, out of the national spirit, and out of place in the nativist nineteen twenties. (David Nelson, 2005: 145) Nick tries to think about Gatsby but the latter is already too far away.

This kind of doubleness is characteristic of Scott Fitzgerald whose first-degree intelligence is the capacity of holding and defending two opposed views, and yet retain the ability to function. Fitzgerald’s philosophy in life is that “one should be able to see that things are hopeless, and yet be determined to make otherwise. (F. S. Fitzgerald, 1945: 69) One can explain Gatsby’s turning out all right at the end by claiming that Fitzgerald ultimately made him “otherwise”, for the “other” he was throughout the narrative is in opposition with the author’s own Anglo-Saxon self.

There is a striking doubleness in Scott Fitzgerald’s anti-Semitism. He can be both radical and liberal anti-Semite. On the one hand Fitzgerald describes Mr. Meyer Wolfshiem as the typical and stereotyped Jewish Character, with his small stature, flat nose and smartness. We are not told whether Wolfshiem is a newly-arrived immigrant. Wolfshiem’s being an “actor”, a “character” around New York suggests the contrary. In his study of the Jewish question in France Jean Paul Sartre explained that

[the Jew] moves rapidly and brilliantly up through all social levels, but he

remains like a hard kernel in the circles which accept him, and his assimilation is as ephemeral as it is brilliant. He is often reproached for this...the Americans think that their anti-Semitism originates in the fact that Jewish immigrants, in appearance the first to be assimilated, are still Jews in the second and third generations. This is naturally interpreted as meaning that the Jew does not sincerely desire to be assimilated and that, behind a feigned adaptability, there is concealed a deliberate and conscious attachment to the traditions of his race. The truth is exactly the contrary: it is because he is never accepted as a man, but always and everywhere as *the* Jew, that the Jew is unassimilable...[he] is at every moment regarded as a Jew.

(Jean Paul Sartre, 1976: 99-100 [emphasis original])

Fitzgerald's description of Meyer Wolfshiem makes him [the author] a radical anti-Semite, for he insists on the stereotyped stature, accent ("gonnegtion" and "Ogsford") and Diaspora, for Wolfshiem's secretary is Jewess. Sartre pointed out that radical anti-Semites think that "all Jews have certain physical traits in common." (ibid: 62) In this sense Edward Said wrote that in trying to formulate "prototypical...type (linguistic, cultural, psychological, or historical)" there is an "attempt to define" one's self in opposition to and by denigration of the other. (Said, 1991: 233) Nick says "I wouldn't have been surprised to see sinister faces, the faces of 'Wolfshiem's people' behind him in the dark shrubbery." (*Gatsby* 150)

On the other hand, *Gatsby's* probable Jewish origins as suggested earlier make Fitzgerald's ambivalence. He can be a liberal anti-Semite as well. Fitzgerald turns out *Gatsby* all right at the end. This is for J. P. Sartre the most dangerous form of anti-Semitism, for it aims at assimilating the Jew, not by accepting his difference, but rather by taking out his Jewishness, his difference and fusing him in the dominant culture. Fitzgerald seems to hold both types of anti-Semitism Sartre has defined "the former [radical anti-Semite] wishes to destroy him as a man and leave nothing in him but the Jew, the pariah, the untouchable; the latter [liberal or democrat] wishes to destroy him as a Jew and leave nothing in him but the man..." (ibid: 57) By turning out *Gatsby* all right and aligning him

with the northern European explorers, Fitzgerald destroyed Gatsby as a Jew and left nothing in him but the American capacity for wonder and dream.<sup>32</sup> World War II devastated a good deal of the globe, but the curse of the holocaust has proved to be a curse in relation to the Jewish community. The new sympathies toward the Jew were born out of the re-orientation of the old prejudices and stereotypes. The Semite started to cease to be associated most of the time with the Jew, and the Arab (Oriental) provided a perfect recipient to the re-orientations.

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## Chapter IV: The Rising Tide of Worldwide White Supremacy

The American Jews during the period between the two world wars were caught up in a position of struggle over identity definitions: whether Jews, long depicted as a “dark” and distinctly different people, were a colored or white race. (Roberta S Gold in *American Quarterly*, 2003: 180) Some Jewish journalists of the nineteen twenties in the United States reported against the racist practices exercised against the blacks. They explained that African Americans were effectively “America’s Jews” while their African American counterparts “drew on long theological and nationalistic traditions which identified black history with that of the biblical Israelites.” (ibid)<sup>33</sup> Ymitri Jayasundura points out that blackness was used as a guide in defining whiteness, it was also associated with lesser whiteness as “Eastern and Mediterranean Europeans were considered alien and ‘black’ due to their ethnicity.” (Jayasundura, 2001: 24) Ethnic immigrants were in a sense considered black, or just a little above. (ibid: 37) Being the emblematic example of the early twentieth century American city (in the number of population and vertical heights of buildings) New York of the nineteen twenties (the setting of *The Great Gatsby*) was experiencing not only a demographic explosion, but also “racial shifts in relation to the understanding of national identity.” (Julianne Newmark, 2004: 35)

In one of the reports written by some journalist of the *Saturday Evening Post* during the year 1922 was put: “the American nation was founded by the Nordic race”<sup>34</sup> and “races cannot be cross-bred without mongrelization”; the two most important premises of Americanism. (qtd in Jeffrey Louis Decker in *A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 53) *The Evening Post* defended such ideas as those going that if a few more million members of other races mixed with the white American, “the result must inevitably be a hybrid race of people... futile and good for nothing”.(qtd in ibid) After World War I Francis Scott Fitzgerald put a number

of his short stories with *The Post*. The latter was one of his major sources of income while composing *The Great Gatsby*. (John Higham, 1973: 67) *The Saturday Evening Post* from which Jordan Baker reads aloud (*Gatsby* 24) was the most popular magazine in the United States, and by 1920 it began to publish nativist opinions.

By the beginning of the study of *The Great Gatsby* there appeared a puzzling question about the presence of racial interaction within narrative. However, by pushing the investigation further, it began to appear that Fitzgerald- the young white man who would become a canonical author in the American fiction- would use “the verbal and visual language of racial binarism to construct a fitting metonym for larger anxieties about appearance that have fraught the construct we have come to know as America.” (Beth A McCoy, 1995: 1)

It is known of Fitzgerald that his life was that of permanent envy of the rich. In spite of belonging to a white old American family, which generates a feeling of security, Fitzgerald lacked money. Robert Forrey has observed that the Fitzgeraldian ideal was to be white and wealthy, and to be at the bottom of the American social scale meant to be dark-skinned and poor. (Forrey in *Phylon*, 1967: 293) According to Forrey “darker skinned individuals”, when they appear in Scott Fitzgerald’s fiction, “they are generally relegated to clownish and inferior roles.” (ibid) Nick Caraway’s excursion to New York is revealing about the author’s race views:

As we crossed the Blackwell’s Island, a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

(*Gatsby* 75)

Susan Marie Marren writes that by giving himself as so uniquely unbiased a narrator, Nick “allows himself to shed the particularity and ambivalence that threaten identity, and so cohere

as a unified subject.” (Marren, 1995: 76) Nick is writing his memoir about the summer of 1922, it seems, not so much to memorialize Gatsby “as to consolidate his own identity.” (ibid)

Benjamin Shreier considers *The Great Gatsby* to be a work that “draws attention to dynamics of racialization.” (Shreier in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 2007: 153) Shreier adds that Fitzgerald’s book engages discourses of racial difference; especially if we consider how some of its characters are made in such a way that they hold stereotypical racial marks. (ibid) *The Great Gatsby* offers one of the most straightforward descriptions of America and the major considerations of the American identity during the nineteen twenties. (ibid: 154)

Walter Ben Michaels argues that there is a “structural intimacy between modernism and nativism”, and that “the great American modernist texts of the twenties must be understood as deeply committed to the nativist project of racializing the American.” (Michaels in ibid: 155) Michaels is more interested in the character of Jay Gatsby and how other characters think about him. Michaels’s argument is that Gatsby’s function throughout the narrative is the representation of the figure of racial admixture that threatened most of the nativist Americans. (ibid) Tom Buchanan is the most racist and xenophobic character of the novel. Tom is openly sensitive to the racial threat Jay Gatsby represents. During the climactic confrontation of the Plaza Tom begins by jeering at Gatsby’s lack of past and origin; he accuses him as “Mr. nobody from nowhere”, and he ends by predicting marriage between black and white. (*Gatsby* 136)

Benjamin Shreier considers this as the evidence of the way the “text evinces anxiety about the danger of inherited racial difference.” (ibid: 156) Jeffrey Louis Decker states that Fitzgerald’s novel reveals the degree to which the transgression of black/white difference remains the most profound threat to the preservation of the country’s white Anglo-Saxon identity. (Decker in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 56) It has already been pointed out

that Nick also seems to think that Gatsby wants to “defile Daisy’s and nativist America’s racial purity”. It also has already been stated that the “nice girl” Daisy is stands for American whiteness. For Michaels Gatsby can aspire to win Daisy only if he re-invents his racialized past, a thing Gatsby is not able to do through socio-economic transformation, for the meaning of an American’s past, Michaels continues, “has been rendered genealogical,” has been racialized, and Gatsby’s “desire to belong to a different past should be understood as the desire to belong to another race”, certainly the white Anglo-Saxon dominant one. (Qtd in Benjamin Shreier in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 2007: 157) Carlyle Van Thompson states that the marginalized individuals (African American and immigrant) who attempt to pass for white often deny their family, past and culture more because of “America’s inherently racist society”, than because of self-hatred. (Thompson, 1997: I)

Bryan Washington claims that *The Great Gatsby* is “preoccupied with and intolerant of the racial hybridization of America” and considers Gatsby to represent a threat not only to family and the Mid-West, but to the “white cultural center.” (Qtd in Benjamin Shreier in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 2007: 157) Washington argues that Gatsby represents the figure of the “worst kind of outsider” because he is lacking the right kind of origin in a novel where all origins are racial. (ibid)

Carlyle Van Thompson reads *The Great Gatsby* as a narrative of a “light-skinned African American”. (Thompson, 2004: 79) Thompson cites the repeated description of Jay Gatsby as often pale, a thing which puts a certain ambiguity about his real identity. Betsy Nies pays attention to Nick’s inquiry about Gatsby’s past and writes:

Nick, while not concerned with racial purity *per se*, is still concerned with a type of eugenic logic when he tries to find out Gatsby’s background. He looks desperately for a referent for Gatsby’s sign, something to undergird and back up the image of the man Gatsby proposes to be.

(Qtd in Benjamin Shreier in *Twentieth Century literature*, 2007: 161)

Thompson states Nick's description of his neighbor Jay Gatsby as having "forty acres of lawn and a garden,"<sup>35</sup> a description which, for Thompson, associates the protagonist with the Reconstruction Era and the newly-emancipated slaves. (Thompson, 2004: 85) Thompson says that "although the class and ethnic tensions in the novel are lucid" there is a general failure among critics and scholars to consider "the theme of passing" because the narrative "whispers the presence of blackness." (ibid: 75)

Thompson charges Fitzgerald of being not only xenophobic and against immigration since the author of *The Great Gatsby* belonged to the ideology of white supremacy (ibid: 77), but also of racial exclusion, for he makes "passing a kind of impossible metaphor" for achieving the American Dream. (ibid: 78) Thompson considers *The Great Gatsby* as the product of Fitzgerald's fear and paranoia of the racial other because Gatsby's efforts might have emanated from his "desire for whiteness." His reading of the novel suggests that in addition to his threatening the white central characters' worldview, Gatsby's attempt at passing makes the novel's

subversive subject [is] the paradoxical phenomenon of racial passing, the racial masquerade implicit to many black people's desire for enduring inclusion in the American Dream. By appropriating the symbolism, diction and associations of racial passing, Fitzgerald illuminates the miscegenation core of the American Dream.

(Ibid: 102)

Hilary Lotche assumes that *The Great Gatsby* is "very ethnocentric...and is a work that cannot be accused of being simple in its ethnocentricity." (Lotche, 2006: 5) *The Great Gatsby* for Lotche is a tribute of whiteness, pure and simple because Fitzgerald makes frequent and noticeable mentions of race in stereotypical ways. (ibid: 52-3) Nonwhite characters are used as a "background, a dark contrast for the glimmering whiteness of the foreground." (ibid) Toni Morrison explains that this kind of shorthand use of minor characters, especially racial ones by white authors, "allows the writer a quick and easy image without the responsibility of

specificity, accuracy, or even narratively useful description.” (qtd in *ibid*: 56) It is for Lotche the technique Fitzgerald understands and uses to build raced minor characters. The episode of Myrtle Wilson’s horrific death reveals Fitzgerald’s use of this technique. He gives the first witness a name-Michaelis, though Nick often insists on the fact that he is Greek. The second witness is only referred to as a “pale, well-dressed Negro” (*Gatsby* 146), without being given any name or physical description. Edward Said assumes that authors in the tradition of Orientalism “are not capable of discussing individuals” as they use to provide generalized representations and artificial entities. (Said, 1991: 154) This “shorthand characterization”, Lotche continues, can be explained by the fact that the author and his nativist nineteen twenties audience have identical reactions and associations concerning the races used shorthand. (Lotche, 2006: 56)

To say that Fitzgerald committed himself to the use of racial binarism requires looking at his long description of Tom Buchanan by providing every possible detail:

among various physical accomplishments, he had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Heaven- ...Now he was sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes can hide the enormous power of that body.

(*Gatsby* 12-3)

Fitzgerald uses the slightest details to describe Tom’s powerful body and face. Tom seems the binary opposite of the degenerate others. While Tom is both imposing and impressive physically, his attempts at intellectual argument are not as radiant as his body. His rhetoric about the Nordic race is less attractive, but is revealing of Fitzgerald’s views:

Civilization is going to pieces...I’ve gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read “The Rise of the Coloured Empires” by this man Goddard? ... Well, it’s a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don’t look out the white race will be- will be submerged. It’s all scientific stuff; it’s been proved... Well these books are all scientific... This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It’s up to us, who are the domi-

nant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things... This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and-... And we've produced all the things that go to make civilization- oh, science and art and all that. Do you see?

(*Gatsby* 19-20)

Daisy's mocking comment "Tom is getting very profound" and Nick's and Jordan's neutral opinions momentarily mean that they are unconcerned with the race relations problem but they do not disagree or express any objection. Whether they are concerned or not is not the point, it is rather their passivity which does not put into question Tom's rationale. Though Tom's rhetoric about race seems vague and unnecessary to the development of the plot, the choice of the topic of race is extremely important for the contextualization of *The Great Gatsby* as a novel of the "Tribal Twenties". Edward Said considers that a talented author often has respect for what others have done before him and a respect for what the field and the historical context he writes about already contain. (Said, 1991: 202) By choosing this topic, Fitzgerald- through Tom- reveals the prevailing fear of cultural change. (Lotche, 2003: 61) Fitzgerald's portrayal of Tom as someone who is aggressively leaning forward is paralleled by his forward communication of ideas, which makes him a man expressing outrageously his will to maintain the status quo. Tom cherishes the idea that he belongs to the social elite, which is in the Fitzgeraldian ideal to be male, white and wealthy.

Tom's idea about civilization going to pieces is postponed by Fitzgerald to be carried on during the climactic confrontation of the two rivals. Here we have Tom continue his argument by attacking Gatsby not only on the basis of social inferiority, but also on the basis of racial inferiority and threat of miscegenation. Nick recounts the scene of extreme heat and pick of dual confrontation:

'Imagine marrying anybody in this heat!' cried Jordan dismally...  
'Wait a minute,' snapped Tom, 'I want to ask Mr Gatsby one more question.'  
'Go on' Gatsby said politely.  
'What kind of row are you trying to cause in my house anyhow?'

They were out in the open at last and Gatsby was content. 'He isn't causing a row' Daisy looked desperately from one to the other. 'You are causing a row. Please have a little self-control.' 'Self control!' repeated Tom incredulously. 'I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let *Mr nobody from nowhere make love to your wife*. Well, if that's the idea you can count me out...Nowadays people begin by sneering at family institutions, and next they'll throw everything abroad and have *inter-marriage of black and white*.

(*Gatsby* 136 [italics mine])

If we suppose that Jay Gatsby is “pale light-skinned African American who has got his hair “trimmed regularly” and who owns Reconstruction “forty acres”, Tom’s fear is not so much social climbing as it is more importantly racial passing. Tom’s fear of miscegenation is the reflection of the national obsession with the reproduction of the “right people” during the height of the so-called eugenic age. (Jessica Hays Baldanzi, 2003: 1) Carlyle Van Thompson assumes that Gatsby is “more significantly characterized as a dangerous ‘pale’ individual...designated as black who attempts to pass himself off as a sophisticated and very wealthy individual.” (Thompson, 2004: 77) Some of Fitzgerald’s descriptions of Gatsby are a bit curious and deserve to be commented. These are Nick’s words when he describes Gatsby for the first time: “fifty feet away a *figure had emerged* from the *shadow* of my neighbor’s mansion, and was standing with his *hands in his pockets*.” (*Gatsby* 27 [italics mine]) Nick makes him a figure, which sounds more likely as a stereotype. The setting is that of darkness and shadow, it sheds more symbolic ambiguity about the man who gives his name to the book. Gatsby’s hands in the pocket are a reference to the prevailing myth of black laziness.<sup>36</sup>

In a later comment Nick says: “[H]is *brown* and hardening body lived naturally through the half-fierce *half-lazy* of the bracing days.” (105 [italics mine]) This is the description of James Gatz before transforming to Jay Gatsby of Long Island. What reinforces the idea of Gatsby’s African American origins and associations is the fact that Fitzgerald does not provide a single description of Henry Gatz, Gatsby’s father, just as he does not with the

“negro” witness of Myrtle Wilson’s death. During the funeral ceremony of Gatsby’s burial Henry Gatz is made to ride in a limousine chauffeured by a white man. (181) He is then associated with the “modish negroes” of Blackwell Island. Mr. Gatz narrates to Nick that he had once beaten Gatsby for having said that he “et like a hog.” (180) It is known that many Jewish and African American families express their dislike of hog’s meat.<sup>37</sup> During the nineteen twenties there were some newspaper reports which revealed the “scandalous Black Jewish sects in New York, especially Harlem.”<sup>38</sup> (Roberta S Gold in *American Quarterly*, 2003) Gatsby’s success at passing for a white Anglo-Saxon is pointed out by Nick in these words: “he was balancing himself on the dashboard of his car in that resourcefulness of movement *peculiarly American.*” (*Gatsby* 70 [italics mine]) Just after these comments Gatsby asks for Nick’s opinion about him. But the answer is nothing except that Nick confesses to the reader that he “began the generalized evasions which that question deserves.” (71) During one of Gatsby’s parties Nick notices that his host’s “tanned skin was drawn attractively tight on his face and his short hair looked as though it were regularly trimmed every day.” (56) Gatsby is pretending to be someone he is not because the other he used to be before was surrounded by a multitude of restrictions. For Lotche Fitzgerald’s equation is that racial intermarriage is just as forbidden as the American Dream for an African American, the thing that leads to Gatsby’s tragedy. (Lotche, 2006: 63) None of the central characters present during the confrontation puts into question Tom’s fear and paranoia, which suggests that Tom’s nativist and chauvinistic ideas are shared by the main characters as well as the audience of the majority community of the period.

Gatsby’s transgression of the social order seems to put him in the position of someone who is “as undesirable as the racial indiscretions Tom so vehemently rails against.” (ibid: 64) Lotche attests that the tradition of interpreting Nick’ character among critics as someone

whose behavior towards Gatsby is a sign of his modernity and openness is a little bit misleading and exaggerated, and that he is only less reactionary than the other major characters. (ibid) The point is that the audience of the Jazz Age might have been as reactionary as Tom, rather than as passive as Nick.

The scene that reveals Fitzgerald's real paternalistic attitude towards race is when Nick and Gatsby drive to New York to have lunch. As they crossed Blackwell's Island, they encountered a white man chauffeuring three "modish negroes, two bucks and a girl." (*Gatsby* 75) According to Lotche it is Fitzgerald's use of the adjective white which gives a much more racist dimension to this episode. (ibid: 66) What is offensive in the latter description is not only the bestial and minstrel language of the scene, but the fact of having, in the minds of members of the dominant group, a white person servicing "Negroes", a thing which degrades the chauffeur himself. The effect this has on Nick is striking. Blackwell Island's images convince the narrator of the furthest extent of decadence and social disorder. (ibid) We have Nick say that Queensborro and Blackwell are liable to any event: "anything can happen...anything at all." (*Gatsby* 75)

According to Meredith Goldsmith Blackwell Island's people and their gazing at Nick with "haughty rivalry" are direct references to the so-simultaneous Harlem Renaissance. (Goldsmith in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2003: 443) Beth A Mc Coy claims that Nick strives to make the difference fluid, not static, by having "modish negroes" move in the car, as cultural and identity issues were all moving in agitation throughout the nation and particularly New York. (Mc Coy, 1995: 92) Fitzgerald's racist description of the "modish negroes" and the yolk of their eyeballs would be confirmed by what he wrote one year later to Carl Van Vechten praising *Nigger Heaven*, the novel that outraged William E B Dubois<sup>39</sup>: the novel

seems... to sum up subtly and inclusively all the direction of the northern nigger, or rather, the nigger in New York. Our civilization imposed on such virgin soil takes on a new and more vivid and more poignant horror as if it

had been dug out of its context and set down against an accidental and unrelated background.

(Qtd in Goldsmith in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2003: 447)

Walter Ben Michaels reads *The Great Gatsby*, among other modernist works of the nineteen twenties, as being the arena of the invention of cultural pluralism, making the mark of the undesirable his difference and otherness from the majority community. (Michaels in *American Literature History*, 1990: 224) The idea of maintaining the family intact by depriving sisters from marriage to or intercourse with strangers to the white Anglo-Saxon Americans was, for Michaels, central to the American novel of the nineteen twenties. (Ibid: 223) Fitzgerald's words of "virgin soil [in] horror [and] dug out of its context" echo the current of the time which regarded African Americans, to use Michaels's words, as not eligible to American citizenship. (ibid: 225) If the Wilsonian period and the twenties are remembered for their broadened opportunities, social justice and Progressivism, the African American was at the furthest fringe of that movement. (Nancy Weiss in *Political Science Quarterly*, 1969: 61) World War I was important in the history of African Americans in the United States. The nation signed the declaration of war on the name of "making the world safe for democracy". Many black leaders were disappointed to realize that the belief that their "second emancipation would be the outcome of the war" was wrong. (David T Hellwig in *The Journal of Negro History*, 1981: 110) It happened that the United States turned more nativist and conservative than ever, and many who were involved in the "Great Migration" found no "Promised Land"<sup>40</sup> in their New York like urban destinations. (Ibid) The major assumption of the American nativists for Michaels was that if the Civil War was fought to make the nation not live "half slave and half free", the twenties nativist advocated that the same nation could not endure "half white and half black." (Michaels in *American Literary History*, 1990: 225) The appropriate American citizenship and the privileges it might secure

are attainable through individual effort, except for African Americans. (ibid) Many critics have suggested that *The Great Gatsby* is about America and the corruption and failure of the Americans to maintain splendor and the capacity to dream. By the end of the novel Fitzgerald links the elements of the narrative with the Dutch sailors and their discovery of the New World. It is also about, as Nick puts it, “boats against the current... ceaselessly into the past”, which suggests that the novel is about America’s national past. In assigning the role of the discovery of the New World to northern European explorers, the nativists of the twenties excluded the introduction of the African slaves into North America, an exclusion which shows the way black/white distinction was enforced through racial differentiation. (Jeffrey L Decker in *A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 56) Given that Fitzgerald is praised for his sense of living history, a thing so many other authors lacked made him the reflection of his time which witnessed how writers have “been permitted to sift the truth from error in order to propose an accurate version of the past.” (Ymitri Jayasundera, 2001: 6)

Fitzgerald’s portrayal of black minor characters as clownish and stereotyped and his associations of Gatsby as a light-skinned African American bearing the threat of miscegenation emanate from the prevailing general view that the members of this race are socially and biologically inferior. Edward Said explains that what is circulated by cultural discourse and exchange within a culture is not “truth, but representations.” (Said, 1991: 21) Moreover, culture is often found operating within civil society wherein the influences exercised by ideas, institutions, and others persons works through domination and a sense of superiority. (ibid: 7) This kind of negative representation of blackness serves, according to Toni Morison, to define, shape and strengthen whiteness:

The ideological dependence on racialism is intact, and like its metaphysical existence, offers in historical, political and literary discourse a safe route into meditations on morality and ethics; a way of examining the mind-body dichotomy; a way of thinking about justice; a way of contemplating the

modern world.

(Qtd in Hilary Lotche, 2006: 67)

Fitzgerald used these symbolic black characters to describe social and racial disorder so much feared during the twenties. But Nick's bestial description of them and his loud laughter at their absurdity make the move more ridiculous than threatening. (Lotche, *ibid*) Lotche attests that Fitzgerald could have described in a similar way animals, dogs or cats, chauffeured in the vehicle of Blackwell Island. (*ibid*: 68) The Blackwell Island scene, according to Lotche, can generate the least reaction of any reader, for the masquerade must be the pointing out of Fitzgerald's use of minor non-white characters as a representation of racial upheaval and decadence. (*ibid*)

Fitzgerald's description of the "modish negro" parvenu seems to align with Carl Van Vechten's thought of exploiting black culture: "[A]re Negro writers going to write about this *exotic* material while it is fresh or will they continue to make free gift to white authors until not a drop of vitality remains?" (Qtd in Phil Shaw, 2009: 50 [*italics mine*]) It may then be considered that Fitzgerald was involved in the "appropriation of 'nigger' and Harlem idiom" to satisfy the "white audience's appetite for scandalous literature about blacks", and to be among the "new crop of Nordics going to spring up" and "will take trouble to become better informed and will exploit this material before the Negro gets around it." (*ibid*) Scott Fitzgerald once observed that he "was pushed into the position not only of spokesman for the time, but of the typical product of the moment," and that he "did not know exactly what New York expected of [him] and found it rather confusing." (qtd in Stephany Spaulding, 2007: 92). Spaulding considers that *The Great Gatsby* provides insights into politics of race and how they operate in the formation of identities in the United States during that time. (*ibid*)

Tom Buchanan's assault on Gatsby as Mr. nobody from nowhere aims not only at maintaining a barrier between himself and his archrival, but at "insinuating that...Gatsby is not just beneath everyone, he is in essence not white, but black." (ibid: 102) Meredith Goldsmith contends that Gatsby's scandalous success lays in his imitation of African American... modes of self-definition." (Goldsmith in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2003: 443) Gatsby's black essence seems to strengthen his desire of the "white" girl Daisy who lives in "white" palace and houses and who dresses in "white". Gatsby's dream has got a specific name: Daisy Fay Buchanan. James Gatz of North Dakota, according to Carlyle Van Thompson, "has tragically sold his birthright for Daisy, an extravagant desire for the American dream paid for in the human strain of 'black blood'." (Thompson, 2004: 103) Spaulding argues that the doctrine of re-created self is essential for minority-groups history, for if someone is able to change his past and its elements, he can and aspires to "change himself instead of being the same self." (Spaulding, 2007: 111) Gatsby's racial passing is motivated by his greater desire for success, freedom and the privileges whiteness might offer. (Lisa A Kirby, 2006: 153)

Gatsby's attempts to pass from the position of a humble lower class swindler to penetrate or be member of Tom's upper class challenges the purity of the privileged identity and provokes hysterical efforts to seal and barricade the borders around it. (Susan M Marren, 1995: 76) Such kind of passing is unconceivable to Tom, because if he thinks of its possibility, he would have to accept the decline of the logical implications of his own social power. (ibid)

As suggested above, a first simplist reading of *The Great Gatsby* would reveal how the novel is far from the issue of racism against African Americans. The latter seldom appear in the protagonist's world. However, it is important to recall that the novel is set in New York of the summer 1922, the time of the Harlem Renaissance and high tide Garveyism.<sup>41</sup> Toni Morison attests that to "enforce its invisibility through silence is to allow the black body a

shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body.” (Qtd in Lisa A Kirby, 2006: 153)

The scandalous and decadent Blackwell Island scene convinces Nick that “anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge...anything at all.” (*Gatsby* 75) Ymitri Jayasundera maintains that African Americans have been an “absent presence” in the American nation and its canonical literature. (Jayasundera, 2001: 17) The novel’s nearly present-absence of African Americans “alongside the novel’s conscious appropriation of black culture” is what makes the novel a “definitive text of the so-called Jazz Age. (Jeffrey L Decker in *A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 56) Edward Said signals out that one of the major characteristics of Othering is placing the Other in a position “passive, non-participating... above all... non-active... alienated”. (Said, 1991: 97) Decker argues that in spite of the conspicuous absence of African Americans from *The Great Gatsby*, the latter provides some exceptions which make it liable to be read as a work reflecting the tension between white and black during the twenties. (ibid: 57) Beyond the racial stereotyping of Blackwell Island’s people, Nick seems to take pleasure in the black face minstrelsy generated by their laughable and rival imitation of whites.<sup>42</sup> The reflection of the blacks in Gatsby’s car instead of their involvement in his world or in Nick’s is a sign of the racial distinction between blacks and whites. (ibid) The American president of the time, Warren Harding was an advocate of the “natural segregation” of blacks and whites. Tom Buchanan says in one of his attempts at intellectualism that “there was no difference between men, in intelligence or in race, so profound as the difference between the sick and the well.” (*Gatsby* 130) Tom’s usual attempts at argument often make reference to science and literature, and this is what Edward Said sees as Orientalism entering in alliance with other disciplines and general unchecked theories. (ibid: 205) Nick’s words of “haughty rivalry” make a striking reference to President Harding’s warning that “the day that Black men love Black men simply because they are black...is the day they will hate the white men... God help us.” (Qtd in ibid) These words of

the American president of the time go with the general consideration of Orientalism, which suggests that the African or African American, like the Oriental, is a member of a subject race. (Edward Said, 1991: 92) The Oriental for Said is not exclusively the inhabitant of a given geographical area, but rather the one immediately needful for the Orientalist to mirror his own superior identity. (ibid) Said maintains that Orientalism is often backed by ideas, in different fields, concerning the traditional division of races into backward and advanced, or European Aryan and Oriental-African. (ibid: 206)

Edward Said's use of the notion of the other and othering is in debt to his study of Orientalism, and mainly the contact of the Westerner with the Oriental. The suggestion is that many critics of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* "have missed" to study the novel in relation to global issues of the time, or to deal not only with the domestic other, but also with the foreign one.<sup>43</sup> Images of the Orient appear daily in American life and the Orient and its people have been stereotyped as violent and backward, a fact which is not necessarily a recent phenomenon, but rather a part of American history and the development of American national identity. (Kareem Habib Captan, 2008: 2)

The Orient is divided into two main regions. The Near Orient comprises Southeastern Europe, Mediterranean regions and regions of Western Asia. The Far East includes the rest of Asian territories.<sup>44</sup> This division may provide a starting point for the study of *The Great Gatsby* in relation to global discourses of whiteness, Oriental backwardness and the construction of the other. The popularization of the Orient during the nineteen twenties led to the success of a number of motion pictures dealing with Oriental life and settings. The American interest in the Orient during the twenties centered on seduction and sexuality. (ibid: 99) Before the movie revolution the Orient was presented to the

American public either in literature or fine arts. The technological advancements of the early decades of the twentieth century dissolved many boundaries, and the “Orient was mass-produced for the purpose of amusement, entertainment and profit.” (ibid: 100) The Orient became a marketable cultural symbol that incarnated themes of sex, exoticism and seduction. (ibid) The exoticism of the Orient included desert adventures and romantic encounters; themes linked to increasing sexual identities and consumerism of the American urban spaces of the time, especially New York. Kareem Captan labels the twenties the American Orientalist Renaissance. (ibid: 104) Edward Said has observed that the Orient has been one of the “deepest and most recurrent images of the Other” for the Orientalists. (Said, 1991: 1) As early as the 1920s famous European newspapermen traveled to the United States to diffuse lectures about the difference between the Orient and the Occident, and to convince young educated Americans that the East was not really as far as they believed.<sup>45</sup> (ibid: 251-2) About 150 films about Oriental themes and settings were realized during the period. (Saleh Alaswad, 2000: 2)

In spite of “sites of memory being in the nostalgic past” Ymitri Jayasundera states, “the empire becomes a stable reference for defining ‘civilized’ identity against the exoticized Other.” (Jayasundera, 2001: viii) The American expatriates (artists, writers and philosophers), among whom Fitzgerald was a member, living or traveling to Europe started consuming European culture, and they were becoming imperial themselves. (ibid: 3-4) In literature, the foreign others are exoticized and sexualized in order to reinforce their otherness and to consolidate the subject’s identity. (ibid: 12) Jayasundera continues that the domestic racial oppression of African Americans or other ethnic groups can be linked to imperialism; it just paralleled the external colonization and domination of “less developed countries.” (ibid: 17) In this sense Edward Said maintains that all texts are “worldly and circumstantial”, and that literary culture and society can only be studied together. (Said, 1991: 23)

Scott Fitzgerald's reference, in *The Great Gatsby*, to Rudolph Valentino<sup>46</sup> and Orientalist movies through a fragment of song by passing children "I'm the Sheikh of Araby/ Your Love belongs to me/ At night when you're asleep/ Into your tent I'll creep" (*Gatsby* 85) connects *Gatsby* with Valentino's "ethnic, dangerous and paradoxically effeminized sexuality." (ibid 37) The emphasis here is rather directed to the way the song links the novel with the so-called American Orientalist Renaissance. James Gatz's transformation to Jay Gatsby of Long Island is read as an attempt at the appropriation of Englishness and its embodiment of a particular lifestyle. (ibid: 38) Gatsby re-creates an Anglicized past as he narrates to Nick: "I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West...I was brought up at in America but educated at Oxford, because all my parents have been educated there for many years." (*Gatsby* 71) Gatsby often imitates an English gentleman's speech by ending by concluding with the phrase "old sport". Gatsby's attempt at the appropriation of Englishness is shown by his having a man for the special purpose of sending him clothes from England for "the beginning of each season, spring and fall. (99) Gatsby's picture of classmates at Oxford where he holds a cricket bat impresses Nick and induces him to believe that Gatsby takes seat with future Earl of Doncaster. (73) It is for Jayasundera a sign of the "Americans' romance with the English aristocracy." (ibid: 39) Nick's immediate reaction to the story is romantic visualization of Gatsby as an adventurer of the British Empire: "I saw the skins of tigers flaying in his palace of Grand Canal; I saw him opening a chest of rubies, with his crimson-lighted depths, the gnawing of his broken heart." (*Gatsby* 73) Having both Gatsby and Nick make references to British imperialism gives evidence to the cultural brotherhood linking the Americans to the British emporium. (ibid)

Edward Said's study of Orientalism, as he puts it, uses the devices called strategic location which is a "way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to Oriental material he writes about", as well as the strategic formation which is a way of analyzing the

“relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large. (Said, 1991: 20) It is usually an involvement in a certain brotherhood based upon a “common discourse, a common praxis, a library, a set of received ideas.” (ibid: 121) One of the probable writers who influenced Fitzgerald while he was composing *The Great Gatsby* is Rudyard Kipling, with his British characters living in the Orient. (James Path in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 2002: 133) Kipling wrote: “East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.” (Qtd in ibid: 132) According to Edward Said Orientalism is a style of thought transmitted among poets, novelist, and imperial administrators who have accepted the basic distinctions between East and West as the starting point for “elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions... concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind’, destiny and so on.. (Said, 1991: 2-3) Nick Caraway comments that East Egg and West Egg are different in every detail, except for size and shape (*Gatsby* 11), which is the reproduction of the parallel train-track-like separation of the British and colonial subjects in *Kim*. (1901) <sup>47</sup> Nick’s conclusion of *The Great Gatsby* suggests that the novel “has been a 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 inadaptable to Eastern life.” (*Gatsby* 183)

The echoes of Western European imperialism and its modes of functioning are frequent in *The Great Gatsby*. Tom’s rhetoric about “civilization going to pieces” situates Fitzgerald’s work with the Western claim of power in the name of civilization and knowledge. One of the effects of the devastating World War I is the widespread of Woodrow Wilson’s “Fourteen Points”, particularly the freedom of nations to self-determination of their respective fates. Many colonized peoples started questioning the colonial domination and rule, and the imperial powers were in a phase of decline. Beginning in the twenties, as Edward Said

suggests, the world map of imperial powers began to change as the United States showed signs of eventual world leadership, which would be just to intensify after World War II. (Said, 1991: 104) With Europe in disarray after the Versailles Treaty, America has suddenly taken, if not all the mission of the traditional colonial giants, their rationale and modes of justification. (Betsy Nies, 1998: 188) The Orient is often made up of a set of characteristics which separate it from the West, but at the same time invites, especially for Americans, the West to control, and otherwise govern the Other. (Edward Said, 1991: 48) The work the United States has been called upon to carry was “civilization- oh science and art, and all that”, to use Fitzgerald’s words. In an article entitled “Undiscovering the Country: Conrad, Fitzgerald, and Meta-National Form” Peter Mallios quotes Fitzgerald who once wrote that “America’s ‘utterly national’ vision would become written with the literary advent of ‘our’ Conrad.” (In Mallios in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2001: 357) Mallios assumes that Joseph Conrad and Scott Fitzgerald shared a preoccupation with modern cultural and geographical problematics of nationality and nationhood. (ibid: 358) Conrad’s first and only visit to the United States in 1923 made the headlines of the time. Conrad is a major reference of British Empire adventure and literature, and the case here is not dealing with his arguments as much as it is with the way they are related to *The Great Gatsby*. Nick’s reference to the New World in the Dutch Sailors’ eyes, by the end of the novel, is an echo of Marlow’s speech, at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, about how London and the Thames must have looked to the Roman explorers and occupants. Moreover, Fitzgerald’s prediction of the American future with “boats against the current” and by having Gatsby a sailor by profession constitute a striking reference to Marlow and the Nelly; one of Gatsby’s guests says the host does not live in a house but in a yacht. Both Kurtz and Gatsby are respective mysteries to the narrators of their stories. Both of them suscite ambivalence: admiration and scorn. Kurtz is the product of all Europe and its imperialism, and Gatsby strives to imitate and appropriate the English

imperial adventurer's life who "lived as a young rajah" in different capitals. (*Gatsby* 71) Gatsby is also the product of Dan Cody who initiated him to travel all around the continent and even to the Barbary Coast. It seems that the United States was said to begin where other traditional imperial powers were about to cease. Like Conrad's Marlow, Fitzgerald's Nick gives himself a high dimension in the narrative: "I was guide, a pathfinder, an original settler." (20) After exhibiting his English-like lifestyle, Gatsby tells Nick that he did not want him to "think that [I] was just some nobody." (73) Having established West Egg as the parallel of the East, Nick confesses that "West Egg especially, still figures in my more fantastic dreams. It is what Edward Said refers to as the orientalist's "day-dream of the Orient", given that "Orientalism is rooted in Romanticism", and is "the purest form of Romanticism." (Said, 1991: 52- 130- 138) The going abroad of Americans is mentioned in the novel as Nick talks about one of Gatsby's last visitors who had been in one of the ends of the earth and did not know the party was over. (*Gatsby* 187) According to Said the justification in the name of the enterprises of civilization provoke such outgoing activities as travel, conquest, and new experiences. (ibid: 57) Just after this mention of American expatriates, Fitzgerald goes to the prophecy of the American future imperialism. Nick says that Gatsby who, for William Trilling comes to stand inevitably for America itself (in Jeffrey L Decker *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 1994: 55)

believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter now, tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther...And one fine morning-... So we beat on boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly in the past.

(*Gatsby* 188[emphasis mine])

Fitzgerald concludes the novel by situating the present "now" of his country amid a prediction of an imperial "future" for stretching out of arms farther and a "past" of

northwestern European explorers and conquistadors. Fitzgerald once wrote that he finally believed in “the white man’s burden.”<sup>48</sup> (in Peter Gregg Slater in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1973: 60) There is a general tendency among Orientalists to emphasize on “the White Man’s difficult civilizing mission”. (Edward Said, 1991: 254)

According to Edward Said the encounter between the Occident and Orient occurs primarily, but not exclusively, in the context of colonialism. Arguing that “Orientalism is a rationalization of colonialism is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule is justified in advance, rather than after the fact.” (ibid: 39) David Robert Jansson points out that imperialism should not exclusively be equated with Orientalism; we should rather try to understand the way the character of their relationship and their modes of operating reinforce mutually the one and the other. (Jansson, 2005: 43) The Orient was first presented to Americans (not in literature and fine arts) during the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, which had driven crowds of as many people as not less than seventy million fairgoers. (Kareem H Captan, 2008: 75) Historian Robert Rydell assumes that the world’s fairs bear an imperialist nature and “offered Americans a powerful and highly visible, modern, evolutionary justification for long standing racial and cultural prejudices.” (Qtd in ibid: 76) Edward Said maintains that Orientalism is characterized by a permanent “will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different”. (Said, 1991: 12) The major ambition of Orientalism, Said continues, is to master all of a world, not only part of it. (ibid: 109)

The depiction of the Orient as highly exotic and its usual associations with feminine penetrability are not the innovation of the “American Orientalist Renaissance” of the nineteen twenties. Orientalism has been a perpetual reconstruction and repetition, it is a set of “structures inherited from the past, secularized, redisposed, and re-formed”. (ibid: 122) Here

are the words written in one of the New York Times reports to describe Arabs who had come to exhibit in the Fair:

The steamship Guildhall arrived from Alexandria, Egypt, yesterday having on board 166 Egyptians, men and women, who are intended for exhibition at the World's Fair at Chicago... The men are wrestlers, acrobats, sword swallowers, fire eaters, and snake charmers, the women are flower and dancing girls, and fortune tellers.

(Qtd in Kareem H Captan, 2008: 80)

The Chicago Tribune wrote:

At 11 o'clock somebody blew a strange kind of horns which included small boys out of hidden corners, caused dancing girls to skip out of the theaters in haste, and called forth a solemn procession of veiled beauties from the harem... Musicians mounted the camels and began grinding music that was out of tympani horns and stringed instruments... It was Cairo all through, an old traveler said, with the exception of 'stifled filth' of the Egyptian city.

(Qtd in *ibid*)

As the American Frontier was declared closed, Americans began to look for a new one, and the Orient provided a perfect imagined geography. (*ibid*: 115) Edward Said explains that the Orient was a European invention, and has been depicted as a place of "romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes". (Said, 1991: 1) The European encounter with the Orient was due to the contacts their imperial involvements suggested. However, the United States, with the exception of some travelers, traders, and missionaries, did not have that "physical familiarity and geographical closeness with the Orient." (Kareem H Captan, 2008: 116) The geographical gap was bridged by the Hollywood movie industry. This is how, for Edward Said, the Orient- from being distant- becomes available. (Edward Said, 1991: 129) Motion pictures establish popular beliefs and shape the perceptions of other cultures; they are a tool of experiencing unknown territories. Edward Said points out that the American interest in the Orient, before being political, military, and economic, was dictated by culture which "acted dynamically" on these aspects. (*ibid*: 12) The American Orientalist Renaissance is called so because of the orientalist films which were highly sexualized and

exoticized. (Kareem H Captan, 2008: 115) Orientalism for Edward Said is a vision of reality whose structure promotes the difference between the familiar (the West “us”) and the strange (the Orient “them”). The fragments of the song some children repeat in *The Great Gatsby* are a reference to one of the earliest and most popular films dealing with Oriental life and settings. *The Sheikh* (1921) was the first Orientalist film to achieve a significant popularity among audiences. It is a cinematographic adaptation of a best-seller novel which has got the same title. It was written by a Derbyshire lady who never traveled beyond London. Nevertheless, the narrative deals with some European and American expatriates and their enjoying leisure and adventure in the Algerian French-occupied small town around the desert of Biskra. Edward Said argues that texts exist in contexts, and that any individual author is under influences and pressures of conventions, predecessors, and rhetorical styles. (Said, 1991: 13) The growing widespread of travel literature, imaginary utopias, and different voyages brought the Orient to the Western audiences. (ibid: 117) This kind of orientalist films was a revolution in the United States during the nineteen twenties, but as far as the Orient is concerned, the films “recycled traditional illustrations... [and] recreated narratives of Orientalism” and preserved and maintained the old depiction of the Orient as backward and erotic. (Kareem H Captan, 2008: 116) The transmission of ideas places *The Great Gatsby* in the context of global discourses of Orientalism and the superiority of whiteness. For Said Orientalism is a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires: English, French, and American. (Said, 1991: 15) *The Sheikh* and its cinematographic adaptation are about Diana Mayo’s “tour alone in the desert” (Edith M Haul, 2004: 1) and later on getting kidnapped by Bedouin Arabs. The narrative focuses on Diana’s days of captivity in the tent of Sheikh Ahmed, the chief of the kidnapping tribe and the one who will be revealed as European as herself. The plot centers on the growing love relationship between Diana and Sheikh Ahmed. *The Sheikh* Fitzgerald

refers to was the embodiment of the “prototypical orientalist film” of the nineteen twenties. It is a presentation of the Oriental life and settings. Edward Said insists on the point that the Orient is Orientalized, which is a process which forces the Western initiated reader to accept Orientalist codifications and representations as the true Orient. (Said, 1991: 67) The actors chosen to play Arab roles, like Valentino, were rather sexual than masculine. (Kareem H Captan, 2008: 118) Fitzgerald’s structure of the fragment of the song goes with this idea “your love belongs to me”. This reinforces the fact that Orientalism is a male province and that the Orient has been linked with feminine penetrability.

The myth of the superiority of the white race and the fear of miscegenation resulting from mixing with “inferior races” have not been local characteristics to the United States. They have rather been global issues. The same fear of Tom and nativist America of miscegenation is found in Haul’s *The Sheikh*. Before Diana knows about Sheikh Ahmed’s real origins, an eventual mixing with him was her major phobia; the Sheikh amuses himself when saying “what do you hate most?- my kisses?”. (Haul, 2004: 138) However, when Diana becomes aware of the Sheikh’s English origins, she begins to admit the compatibility of the love relationship and says: “I am not afraid of anything with your arms round me, my desert lover, Ahmed, Monseigneur.” (ibid: 280) The scenario of the film also ends with the kiss which “satisfied the fear of miscegenation” among the contemporary audiences of Scott Fitzgerald. (Kareem H Captan, 2008: 119)

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## End Notes

- 1- The Lost Generation is a term which began to be used after World War I. The word “lost” refers to the youth who died on battlefield or because of the war. The term also applies to young men who survived the war, but were in a way or another affected by war atrocities. The mood of the writers of the Lost Generation was that of pessimism and disillusionment. Scott Fitzgerald is believed to represent this group of writers.
- 2- All the references to and quotes from *The Great Gatsby* are provided from the Penguin edition of 1994. The way the novel is referred to is generally *Gatsby*. When this reference is immediately followed by another one from the same novel, brackets and the page are just sufficient. Another important point is that this reference does not at all affect the organization and order of other sources.
- 3- The use of the phrase American Dream here goes with the description of a certain attitude of hope that seeks the fulfillment of human wishes. The dream is linked with the history of the American Nation which is interpreted with aspirations of the very first settlers. The aspirations included freedom, toleration, and material success.
- 4- Harding, the American President (1920-1924) is remembered for two important slogans: “return to normalcy” and the “chief business of the American is business”.
- 5- By putting post-colonial, I mean the position in which any given “scholar” has to situate himself”. One is said to be aware of his place in relation to the issues and tensions under study. Therefore I intend to identify with those who put dominant discourse into question, and are not pleased by the dominant culture’s degradation of knowledge.
- 6- When the course of World War I was about to be decided in favor of the Allied Forces, President Wilson proposed to the world his Fourteen Points which were a reflection about post-war global issues. The most important points are the right to self-determination of peoples and the international League of Nations.
- 7- In the United States Progressivism is a word which refers to the spirit and set of reforms of the early twentieth century. However, the meaning here is more about the optimistic view of life and faith in man and progress. Post-war America is the symbol of Nativism and Conservatism.
- 8- The Great Migration is a movement of about 1.5 million African Americans who moved from the rural south of the United States to settle in the urban and industrialized areas of the North, beginning from 1910.
- 9- Note-6 explains the most important aspects of the Fourteen Points. The case here is to point out the ambivalence that suggests: how can a nation aspire to bring democracy and justice to the world when it is domestically a house of the same injustices, exclusions, and oppression?
- 10- The Harlem Renaissance is that movement in the United States, which advocated the use of African American life and material as the major subject matter. It was a manifestation of pride of the African American. Harlem which is a section of New York was the centre of the movement.

- 11- The Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1866. It was a secret society which aimed at preserving the white American values and supremacy in the South of the United States. Among the various objectives of the Klan is found a will to stand against the newly-emancipated slaves and their eventual rise to prominent positions in society. Through time the Klan has evolved to an extremist group. By the late 1870s the “natural segregation of blacks from whites” was backed by a federal compromise, and the influence and membership of the Klan decreased. By 1920 the Klan was revived and became predominantly racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic.
- 12- One of the global influences of World War II was the rise of a certain worldwide sympathy towards the Jewish community as a result of the Holocaust. Since then there was a change in the dynamics and essence of American anti-Semitism. The old prejudices were re-directed towards the people of the Middle East.
- 13- Woodrow Wilson was welcomed in different capitals of Europe as a prophet who would bring a lasting peace. Even the Germans trusted him for the negotiations of the Peace Treaty. But Wilson was betrayed by the British and French pragmatism, and more importantly by the American refusal to join the League of Nations whose idea belonged to him and on which he relied to implement his famous Fourteen Points. This led to the President’s physical and political downfall.
- 14- Eugenics is a science specialized in the study of methods of improving humans by allowing only carefully chosen people to reproduce. However, it remains one of the most controversial parts of social philosophy.
- 15- The Nordic element refers to an ethnic designation of any of the Scandinavian or Germanic peoples. The English kinship with Nordics goes back to the early fifth century invasions of eastern parts of Britain by Anglo-Saxon tribes. The American brotherhood is justified by their English ancestry.
- 16- The sacred and supreme law of the United States, the Federal Constitution has prohibited any individual or state to deny the right to vote on the basis of one’s sex, beginning from August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1920.
- 17- In the tradition of literary criticism there is a widely shared tendency to take the rose as the symbol of femininity.
- 18- The American tradition cherishes the notion (that has become a recurrent theme) of a male protagonist who rises from poverty, through hard work, and achieves a certain wealth and grandeur. The major representatives of the self-made man narrative are Horatio Alger and Benjamin Franklin.
- 19- The Holy Grail is that famous and mysterious object of quest of the European medieval knight. In Britain it has an association with King Arthur’s legends. The precious grail in the Christian thought is linked with Jesus Christ’s Last Supper when his blood is caught from his body and is said to be put in the grail.
- 20- One of the important motivations of the Women’s Movement of the 1960s was the “abolition” of the widespread idea that women are naturally intellectually inferior to men.

- 21- As stated in note-4, many Celtic legends are linked to the Holy Grail. The quest became an ideal for the Arthurian knight. An important point to add is Scott Fitzgerald's Celtic background. There is a controversy about the "nordicity" of the Celt, but it is so deep an issue that I content myself with present relevant considerations.
- 22- The Gibson girl is the Victorian girl who is said to be the contrastive contrast of the flapper girl. She is timid, submissive, polite and careful about the preservation of the family values and social institutions. The Gibson girl represses her sexuality and avoids being obscene.
- 23- The significance of the old ship and modern car are often linked to the trajectory, fate and movement of nations.
- 24- Narcissism is a word derived from the Greek myth of a beautiful youth having fallen in love with his own reflection in a pool; it is associated with Daisy's beauty. Solipsism is the consideration that anything outside one's own mind is needless to justification. Its existence is of a second-degree importance or no importance at all to one's reality. Gatsby is by no means answerable in vowing to make Daisy the embodiment of his dream or his object of wonder.
- 25- The prototype of whiteness was not only a question of color and skin. Ethnic whites, poor whites and immigrant whites were not considered to be as white as the old-established Anglo-Saxon upper middle class. Ethnicity in this work relates to people sharing distinctions of culture. Race is related to the small morphological similarities, basically skin color in this sense.
- 26- Hegemony is a certain power exerted by a dominant group over other ones, as it is the case of the dominant culture in relation to racial minorities, ethnic groups... Hegemony can be cultural, political, social, economic...etc
- 27- In the following chapter it will be noticed how it is shown that the literature of American modernists abounds with themes of fathers and brothers anxious about the contamination of their purity by marriages of careless daughters and sisters marrying members of "inferior races".
- 28- Arnold Rothstein was a criminal of the Yiddish Connection which represents Meyer Wolfshiem's underworld involvement. Rothstein was a native wealthy business man of Manhattan and he is considered to be the founder of organized crime in North America.
- 29- It is a word which began to be used after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, 1917. Its major connotations go with the centralization of power on one body politic and ideology, the use of violent means to take power and establish social welfare and right share of wealth. It is set in opposition with the spirit of Capitalism.
- 30- Zionism is associated by a Jewish community's will to achieve global domination and control of world resources. *The Protocols* are said to be the prints written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and published in Russia by the beginning of the twentieth.
- 31- By ideology is meant the perception or one's visions and way of looking at the world, which are suggested by the dominant culture or majority group.

- 32- While carrying this project there occurred to me that *The Great Gatsby* can provide a perfect case study of the Jewish Question in the United States by applying Jean Paul Sartre's theory. We will have Fitzgerald both radical and liberal anti-Semite, Gatsby an inauthentic Jew and Wolfsheim the authentic Jew.
- 33- As it was the case with the Biblical Israelites who suffered migration and persecution in Egypt and elsewhere, some African Americans tended to use this Biblical experience to sustain their ideas, either of progress or Black Nationalism.
- 34- The Vikings are thought to have set foot on the New World centuries before the birth of Christopher Columbus. Anglo-Saxon Americans of the twenties not only assigned Nordics, but the foundation of the nation was attributed to them.
- 35- Forty acres was the amount of arable land promised by President Abraham Lincoln to the newly freed slaves. After Lincoln's assassination, the next president abrogated the law.
- 36- The early black face minstrel shows portrayed blacks as usually superstitious, naïve, and above all leisurely and lazy. The myth of black laziness in the South of the United States goes with slavery. The sudden emancipation of slaves freed them from slavery, but threw them to unemployment and precarious social conditions.
- 37- The structure of Blackwell Island and Queensboro scene links Gatsby with black Jewry. Hog is known to be forbidden for Semites, and Henry Gatz's reaction is the same as that of Malcolm X's mother. During one of Gatsby's parties the link is then more obvious. Among the guests Nick notices a whole clan called *BlackBuck*, who always gathered in a corner and flipped up their *noses* like goats at whosoever came nearer.
- 38- The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed the appearance of some religious congregations, at their head the Black Jews. They claimed Jewish faith and African descent. The revelation of their existence, especially in Harlem, was often dealt with mocking words in the press.
- 39- In an article published in *The Crisis* W E B Du Bois attacked the novel on the basis of Van Vechten's treatment of African American as hospitable but not as intelligent as the white man. The novel is about Harlem and daily life of blackfolk.
- 40- The Promised Land is a reference to the Biblical promise of God to Abraham. The promise consists of giving the Israelites a land stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates. Through time the concept has acquired a number of associations and connotations.
- 41- Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican immigrant who founded the influential and popularly covered Universal Negro Improvement Association. Garveyism is a kind of aim at ending the "Exodus" of African Americans who "had been forced" to live in the United States. One of the probable references to Garveyism in *The Great Gatsby* is the scene of blacks in a limousine with the white man. It may stand for the *contre nature* talks of Garvey with some leaders of the Ku Klux Klan.
- 42- By the 1850s the national art in the United States became blackface minstrelsy. The latter is a way of entertainment, roles taken by whites in imitating the African American. The shows presented the African American as superstitious, lazy, joyous, and ignorant.

- 43- I do not mean the physical contact and the particularity that the contact gives to the American/foreign other relation. What is meant instead, is that the United States, by the 1920s, started imagining the foreign others and began to Orientalize them. Orientalism deals also with the importance of the period preceding the act of colonialism.
- 44- I just signal out that the Near Orient and Middle East I refer to are the same reality. But the word “Orient” bears a wider geographical and non-geographical dimension.
- 45- Said stated the example of Valentine Chirol, a well known European newspaperman. Chirol gave a series of lectures at the University of Chicago in 1924, entitled “The Occident and the Orient”.
- 46- Valentino is an Italian-born actor of the 1920s. Before integrating cinema, Valentino was a popular and seducing professional dancer around New York. *The Chicago Tribune* accused him of offending American masculinity.
- 47- Rudyard Kipling wrote a ballad which opens: East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet/ Till Earth and Sky stand, presently at God’s great judgment’s seat. In his *Kim* Kipling maintained a parallel separation of the British and natives, symbolized by the parallels of Grand Trunk.
- 48- “The White Man’s Burden” is another poem by Kipling, which appeals to the “Savage wars of peace”. The myth of the White man’s civilizing mission is at the heart of colonial discourse.

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## Résumé

«Gatsby le magnifique» est une référence majeure dans la tradition littéraire américaine. On retrouve le roman dans bon nombre d'universités et écoles. En somme, «Gatsby» est un classique des années 1920. Il reflète les différentes tensions de genre, d'ethnie, et de race. Ses personnages principaux sont tous issus de familles anglo-saxonnes, riches, blanches, et établies. «Gatsby» est interprété comme étant la manifestation de la suppression de la différence et du changement, requise pour maintenir l'illusion de l'identité. Son auteur est souvent cité pour son obsession avec l'Est et l'Ouest. Mon but par cette présente thèse est de réaliser une étude thématique de «Gatsby», en y recherchant la manière dont la femme, le juif, et le Noir et l'Oriental se retrouvent dans une position de «l'autre» ; une position qui soit juxtaposée avec l'identité de la culture dominante. Cette identité est vue défendue et barricadée par Fitzgerald qui s'aligne avec elle, et dont il veut maintenir la suprématie.

Le mouvement des américains vers l'Ouest a cessé avec la fermeture officielle de la frontière. Le début du XXe siècle a vu les américains forcés de trouver de nouvelles orientations à leur *manifest destiny*. Les années 20 sont évoquées pour leur intolérance et caractère conservateur. « Gatsby le magnifique» est dit être le roman parfait de l'ère du Jazz.

Ce projet est divisé en quatre chapitres. Le premier chapitre est une contextualisation du roman en fonction des différentes tensions qui reflètent l'aspect conservateur et « nativiste » de l'époque. Ce chapitre informe sur les orientations littéraires majeures de la période, ainsi que sur le courant du moment. Il termine avec l'explication de sa susceptibilité à être approché d'une perspective postcoloniale, en y recherchant l'expression du discours de l'Orientalisme.

Le second chapitre porte sur la démonstration de la notion idéale de l'identité masculine ; une identité qui est l'appartenance au groupe de Tom Buchanan. Ce dernier est donné une masculinité stéréotypée. Tous ceux qui le connaissent lui témoignent son énorme morphologie. Les femmes sont par contre

décries comme étant faibles, irresponsables, absurdes, malhonnêtes, ou encore destructrices.

Le troisième chapitre focalise sur les expressions manifestes et/ou discrètes de l'auteur envers les juifs et les immigrants ethniques. Les immigrants juifs étaient souvent associés au crime organisé. Ils constituaient, dit-on, une menace à la pureté de l'identité anglo-saxonne et à l'homogénéité de l'élément nordique. L'argument est que, pour Fitzgerald, les nordiques étaient responsables de « toutes les choses qui font la civilisation » hors que le Sémite, lui représente l'antithèse du développement.

Le dernier chapitre attire l'attention sur l'idéal fitzgeraldien de la « blancheur ». Le roman est alors révélé tournant autour de la menace de mariages interraciaux qui finiraient, craignait on, par contaminer pureté de la race blanche, et finiraient par « décimer la civilisation ». Ce chapitre explique comment l'auteur associe le protagoniste avec les membres de la race noire, et comment «Gatsby» reflète la « ségrégation naturelle» des Blancs et Noirs. Le chapitre conclut avec une suggestion d'une éventuelle étude plus approfondie du roman, et ce en relation avec le mythe occidental de la supériorité de l'homme blanc. Ce qu'étaient les perceptions des Afro-Américains allaient en parallèle avec les réalités des indigènes en relation avec les puissances coloniales. L'accent est mis sur les références à la fraternité avec l'impérialisme anglais, ainsi que sur les premières géographies imaginées des Etats Unis pour les premières décennies du siècle précédant.

**N.B : Ce qui est mis entre guillemets est soit une traduction personnelle ou une idée qui est développée ultérieurement.**

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