JAY GATSBY. ROMANTIC AND TRAGIC EMBODIMENT OF ETERNAL LOVE SEEK

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Abstract*: Have you met anyone where love has taken he or she to the end of his or her life? Have their flaws throughout their lives overcome them?*

A tragic hero can best be defined as a person of significance, who has a tragic flaw and who meets his or her fate with courage and nobility of spirit. In The Great Gatsby, Jay Gatsby is a tragic hero.

Jay Gatsby is an enormously rich man, and in the flashy years of the jazz age, wealth defined importance. Gatsby has endless wealth, power and influence but never uses material objects selfishly. Everything he owns exists only to attain his vision. Nick feels "inclined to reserve all judgements", but despite his disapproval of Gatsby's vulgarity, Nick respects him for the strength and unselfishness of his idealism. Gatsby is a romantic dreamer who wishes to fulfill his ideal by gaining wealth in hopes of impressing and eventually winning the heart of the materialistic, superficial Daisy. She is, however, completely undeserving of his worship.

Gatsby is overwhelmed by the one thing he does not possess: love. His one fatal personality flaw, in which he lives in non-reality and creates illusions, leads to his demise. Gatsby's love for Daisy is real and strong. It causes tension between Gatsby and Tom, Daisy's husband, and eventually costs him his life. It is evident that Gatsby plays the role of a tragic hero for Daisy through his strange, secret dreams, the end to his fancy lifestyle, his rich, powerful ways to lure her into his heart, and his protective love he has for Daisy.

Throughout the novel, Gatsby expresses his dreams of having Daisy with extreme desire and anxiety. For Gatsby living his love means all or nothing. When Daisy rejects him he realizes that all he had ever hoped and dreamed at collapses as a sand castle, and in these conditions the only reasonable solution is death, because a life without Daisy's love is no life at all.

Keywords**:** *sacrifice, illusion, Romanticism, human nature, dream.*

Jay Gatsby, the mysterious man living in the West Egg district of Long Island, is extremely wealthy and owns a mansion with a large swimming pool, a fancy car, and dozens of servants.

Gatsby seems to be the ideal man of his time. Fabulously wealthy, handsome, charismatic and intriguing, he seemed to be able to offer everything a woman could want. All he wanted in return was Daisy's complete unconditional love.

Jay Gatsby stands for the perfect quite disillusioned man. He is perplexed in a self-constructed world of heroism and fantasy alternating into reality. Gatsby is a dreamer who believed that he could "Repeat the past, of course". The tragic hero was too pre-occupied with his own fantastic image to fathom reality.

Fitgerald's masculine character devoted his life to the pursuit of a girl. He once had a romantic relationship with Daisy Faye when he was James Gatz, an unfortunate man. He fell in love with a girl who was in love with money, an element that Jay Gatz did not possess. She then walked out of his life. Gatz then did whatever he could to gain Daisy's love, which basically meant that he pursued what Daisy loved, money. He finally became a wealthy man and once again caught the eye of Daisy. He changed his name to Jay Gatsby. It was almost as if he were reincarnated into the man that he always wanted to be. The quandary with this newfound love was that Daisy was already

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married to one of the most prestigious men on Long Island, Tom Buchanon. Gatsby then became a fool in his attempt to rekindle the flame between himself and Daisy. He attempted to have an affair with her behind Tom's back, in hopes that it would blossom into a relationship then to marriage. The tragedy occurred when Daisy came to the realization that she wanted nothing to do with Gatsby because she was secure with her current husband, Tom. Gatsby then passed away and Daisy didn't even bother to pay sympathy or respect to the man she once loved. Jay Gatsby was a noble fool. Everything he stood for, and everything he had accomplished, was for Daisy. He was a fool in the manner that he believed he could take her away from her newfound husband. This led to his demise. Gatsby "had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice".

Gatsby aimed at pleasing the one that he gave his heart to, but what the character doesn't seem to realize is that he is lost within his own realms of false imagery and interpretations. The reader learns to feel compassion for this character who is living his fantasies, however, can expect him to come to terms with reality and be overwhelmed with the notion that one cannot dream forever. Jay Gatsby is a perfect dreamer, and he would let nothing stop his from fulfilling his goals. But Gatsby is noble too, because he did not harm anyone in his trials, and he is romantic because he did these deeds all in pursuit of love and happiness. The character is human, and all humans have faults. He was merely exploited in a tragic manner.

In the book, Mr. Gatsby himself was a romantic character that was in a world of reality. He funded all of his enterprise, not caring about the means to get there, just in order to impress a woman with his wealth. All of the relationships that he had acquired and decisions that he had made in his life were mainly just to have this woman, Daisy Buchanan, to be his lover. In the book The Great Gatsby, the character Jay Gatsby was a romantic hero in an era of realism and since he wanted to remake the world, exaggerate to impress and was completely preoccupied with Daisy, he was predestined to die.

One of the major reasons for Jay Gatsby to die in the end of the book was the fact that constantly throughout the story tried to remake the world to his will.

Although we look at life in this novel through the eyes of Nick Carraway, all of the drama that takes place in the narrative seems to revolve around Jay Gatsby. He is extremely wealthy, which readers notice as they become more familiar with his background. He has parties every weekend, drives a Rolls Royce, and lives in a big mansion in West Egg. He becomes good friends with Nick Carraway, especially because Nick ends up moving next-door to him in the beginning of the novel. Gatsby is a young man who is confused with himself and the situation he is in with Daisy. His special love for Daisy makes him such a determined and romantic person. He never gives up on the love he had for her and always tries to win her from Tom. He is a very determined and romantic person yet throughout the process of winning her, he has a propensity to live in the past. Since he and Daisy had such a great love for each other in the past, he assumes it will be easy for Daisy to love him. This soon becomes a negative characteristic mainly because he cannot continue in life therefore he soon becomes despondent. Although Gatsby keeps living in the past, his capacity for love is beyond that of any other character in the novel.

When the readers first meet Gatsby, they realize that he is romantic based on the past experiences he's had with Daisy. Jay Gatsby can be a romantic person. Still, it may also be possible that he is fearful of letting go. He carries on living in the past mainly because it is simple for him. It is difficult for Gatsby to get Daisy out of his mind

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because he knows that if he did, he would end up being miserable in the long run. Since he thinks this way, he persists to live in the past; trying hard to bring back the relationship he had with Daisy. When Nick Carraway tells him he cannot repeat the past, Gatsby states, “Can’t repeat the past? Why of course you can” (111). This quote tells the readers that Gatsby is misunderstanding his own love life. It appears as though Jay Gatsby adores living in the past. Gatsby focuses a great deal on trying to get what he had in the past but he cannot face the reality that he cannot have Daisy. Gatsby risks everything on his dreams, but he does not realize that his dreams are worthless for him. Still, he loves Daisy so much, that he would do anything to have her.

Although Gatsby has a tendency to live in the past, readers find out that he is very determined to win Daisy’s love and to keep her for his own. “'Nothing happened,’ he said wanly. ‘I waited, and about four o’clock she came to the window and stood there for a minute and then turned out the light’” (154). This quote in the novel tells readers that Gatsby really wants to love Daisy. He waits for Tom to argue with her and chase her out of the house. Instead, they get along well that night and Gatsby waits outside her house for nothing. Still, he keeps trying to win Daisy’s love. “Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock… his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him” (189). This quote emphasizes to the readers, the struggles Gatsby goes through to have Daisy for himself. The green light at Daisy’s dock resembles how far Gatsby must really reach to win Daisy for himself. It seemed, at first, that she would be very easy to win, especially because they had a romantic past together. Instead, it becomes very difficult, mainly because his dream is not so close after all.

Readers notice that Gatsby is awfully romantic and tends to be the most romantic character, in the story, of them all. Throughout the novel, he shows his love towards Daisy by what he states throughout the novel. “Your wife doesn’t love you,” said Gatsby quietly. “She’s never loved you. She loves me” (137). This quote is very important in the novel because this is the scene where Tom finds out about the affair Gatsby and Daisy are having. Readers know Tom as a hulking man and for Gatsby to say something like this to him; it makes Gatsby look extremely determined to win Daisy’s love. This shows that nothing can break what Gatsby feels about Daisy and nobody can scare Gatsby away from her. “Her voice is full of money” (120). Readers come to realize that Gatsby does not only like Daisy for the person she is, but for the money she has. Although he mentions her voice, the true idea of the quote is to describe how much money Daisy has. He did not only fall in love with a beautiful girl, but with a girl that has money. To Gatsby, this makes her seem classy and he realizes that she has money. In the past, Gatsby was a poor man who did not have much money. Now that he has the money and the looks, he probably thinks it will be simple to win Daisy’s love back.

Throughout the novel, Gatsby tries different methods in order to try and win Daisy back again but unfortunately has a propensity to live in the past to do so. From being determined and romantic, to even trying to refer to the past experiences he’s had with her, Gatsby cannot comprehend that illusion cannot win over reality. The past is long gone for Gatsby and Daisy. Although he figures it should be easy for him to be with her because they had a past together, when he tries to live in the past, it confines his future. The hardest issue he faces throughout the whole novel is obviously the love

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he wants from Daisy. Still, as we find out in the end, Gatsby falls too short of his dream, and cannot make Daisy his own.

But Jay Gatsby is not only the romantic character of the novel, he is also the tragic hero of the novel. According to Aristotle, there are a number of characteristics that identify a tragic hero: he must cause his own downfall; his fate is not deserved, and his punishment exceeds the crime; he also must be of noble stature and have greatness. These are all characteristics of Jay Gatsby. Jay Gatsby is a tragic hero according to Aristotle's definition.

This is because he believes there is a logical purpose for his actions, yet his actions lead to pain and disaster. He had followed the "American Dream," being poor and then working until he becomes rich and successful. Jay's wealth is gained through bootlegging and other speculative practices. The corrupt ways in which he made his money soured the pure idea of the "real" work ethic and foreshadowed his corrupt life. Jay falls into the materialistic "trap" when he first meets Daisy. He was young and poor, and she rich; their difference in social status leads to their separation although Jay can never get over her. Daisy's materialistic outlook influences Jay enough to cause him eventually have that outlook also. At first, his excuse is Daisy, claiming the wealth is for her, so she would again be able to love him. Later, it becomes evident Jay himself has become excessively materialistic and realizes too late, it is not enough to make him happy. When Jay's one goal of reuniting fails his life falls apart. He dies tragically, at the end of the novel. Not knowing the past "was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night" (189). None of his "friends," who had always come to his parties, went to his funeral. This made this tragic hero have a fitting end to life.

Mr. Gatsby seems never to understand that Daisy during his absence did go on with her life. A good example of this is shown when he saw Daisy's daughter for the first time. "Afterward he kept looking at the child with surprise. I don't think he had ever really believed in its existence before" (Fitzgerald 117). His obsession with her kept him from accepting the fact that she did share something with Tom. Mr. Gatsby puts Daisy on a pedestal, and this pedestal belongs to him only, at least so he wants to believe. However, even evidence at the beginning of the story points otherwise. Jordan even says that it appeared that Daisy loved Tom when they were first married. Also, why would she keep bringing Tom along if she is truly devoted to Gatsby? Why bring him to the party? Why flaunt her love affair in front of Tom? Perhaps, the answer is jealousy. Tom is having an affair. Everyone knows about it. She wants her revenge. However, she never plans on leaving him. Daisy after all is human. This explains why when Gatsby forces the confrontation, she backs down. Tom reveals to everyone that Mr. Gatsby is a fraud. He made his fortune from being a bootlegger. He isn't a true Oxford man. He isn't truly a part of their social club. Gatsby begins to fall apart. He wants her to admit she never loved Tom in front of everyone and that she's leaving him. She can't do that though. It isn't the truth. "I did love him once - but I loved you too" (Fitzgerald 133). The key word here is "loved". She doesn't say love. Although dismayed, Gatsby still dies not understanding the truth. "In the end, a victim of time and its own fictionality, the dream dies. Almost anticlimactically, Gatsby's death follows". His dream of having her is exactly that, a dream. "'I don't think she ever loved him,' Gatsby turned around from a window and looked at me [Nick] challengingly" (Fitzgerald 152). In the end, Gatsby is willing to give up everything for her. Daisy

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accidentally runs over and kills Mrs. Wilson, the woman Tom is having an affair with. Gatsby covers it up for her and is willing to take the blame. However, Mr. Wilson is made to believe by Tom that Gatsby purposely ran over his wife. Thus, Mr. Wilson shoots both Gatsby and himself. Mr. Gatsby, the romantic, dies never achieving his one true goal. His fortune and his house meant nothing to him without Daisy. His house lay empty and ghostlike after his death, but worst of all the only loved ones to show up to his funeral is his father and Nick. None of his so called friends come. Daisy does not come. Mr. Gatsby achieves the American dream, but without his one true love he dies an unsuccessful man.

Jay Gatsby dies a tragic figure because he wastes his life chasing an unattainable dream by the name of Daisy Buchanan. Like many young, poor, American boys, James Gatz starts out in life with the American dream. From early on, he shows great determination and intelligence. However, after he meets Daisy he trades in his American ideals for an obsession with her. He still achieves what many would consider the American dream, but it no longer is his dream. Like the Great Houdini, Gatsby creates an illusion. The illusion is that he belongs with her and her crowd. He obtains a mansion and a fortune, but it is all to make Daisy happy for when she eventually leaves her husband and comes to live with him. This is his dream, and he stays faithful to it to the end. However, this doesn't happen. After, Gatsby's illusion falls apart, he dies shortly after. They find out the truth about who Gatsby really is, and he doesn't win Daisy. Thus, he dies tragically and all alone.

Jay Gatsby is the tragic hero who suffers as a consequence of his neurotic love for an undeserving recipient. As a result of his obsession, Gatsby is really blinded to the realities of life till his death. Although Gatsby is a success in terms of the standards of American society, his inability to fulfill his own guarantees his own destruction. Thus for a human to truly succeed in life, one must meet one s own expectations, rather than society’s.

True to the definition of a tragic hero, Gatsby pays the ultimate price for his obsession; prior to his death, however, he inspires pity in the audience by partially redeeming himself and recognizing his fatal mistakes. After Daisy tells Nick that she had loved Tom before, he is dismayed and heartbroken. He begins to discover that his wealth is unable to repeat the past and bring Daisy back to him. He now knows that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever (Fitzgerald 161).

Gatsby's love takes on an aspect of archaic Romanticism, an artifact from some forgotten Arthurian time of chivalry and honour. This honour is tainted from the start, however. It is the "mystery of wealth" and "the freshness of new clothes" (pg. 150) that attracts Gatsby, not purer concepts of beauty, chastity, or virtue. It is his love for Daisy- impure love or impossible- that damns him: "He knew that when he kissed [Daisy], and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God." (pg. 112) He abandons a possibly glorious future, a chance to climb a "ladder" that, "if he climbed alone," would allow him to "suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder." (p. 112). This is a reversal of classic themes-love is no longer the greatest virtue; it has been superceded by something more solitary.

Similar to a typical tragic hero, Jay Gatsby is an admirable man who is superior to other men and women. Even in Gatsby s youth, he seems unique from the average child; for instance, Gatsby s father informs Nick that Gatsby had created a list

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of goals for himself patterned after the resolves of Benjamin Franklin in order to maximize his potential for success.

Gatsby is a too romantic person and his romanticism and sensibility are not appropriate for his time and condition. He loves Daisy to obsession but he is blind she doesn't perceive the woman as she is: unstable psychically and morally, weak will, remorseless and completely changed by her marriage. Jay thinks that the love feeling is reciprocal: *I can't tell you how surprised I was to find out I loved her, old sport. I even hoped for a while that she would throw me over, but she didn't because she was in love with me too…I was getting deeper in love every minute and all of a sudden I didn't care of my plans.*

Gatsby is convinced that he is the only man in Daisy's life: *I don't think she ever loved him.* (*him* is Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband). *Of course, she might have loved him for just a minute when they were first married – and loved me more even then, do you see?,* his vision being totally egocentric.

We may say that Gatsby is one of Plato's characters because just as Plato's hero from T*he myth of the cave* does everything to see the light of the sun (though this implies a great physical and mental suffering), Fitzgerald's masculine protagonist wants to regain Daisy at any costs, and both of them have a tragic destiny that puts a stop to their plans: death.

Plato said *To love means to find the other half of the whole of which you were once a part,* but he also said that *Important is not to live but to live as it should* (Plato, **Banchetul** and **Criton.**). Gatsby is a person that "lives at it should"; he has an aim and for reaching it tries to do the impossible: to change human nature, but he fails and when everything starts to shake and he glimpses at the truth, death is the only solution of his contradiction: he could not have Daisy because she didn't have, anymore, strong feelings for him and had accepted gladly her family life with Tom, and, on the other hand he could not live with this new discovery. Everything he built collapses like a sandcastle taken by the sea wave. Jay Gatsby is *worth the whole lot of them!* (*of them* means Daisy and her husband, Tom) is Nick Carraway's final conclusion.

The Great Gatsby is a novel that speaks the truth about every human heart. It demolishes the idealistic notions of love and expounds on the mystery of man's selfish nature. Albeit, Gatsby showed a love that has stood the test of time and draws on the great power of self-belief, it was nonetheless, a kind of love that can destroy a man. And, true enough in Gatsby's case, his love for Daisy Buchanan proved to be his downfall.

Gatsby's love for Daisy is something all ladies in this world would want someone to have for them at one point of their lives. The term "obsession" does have a negative feeling when partnered with love yet, Gatsby's love is obsession but an obsession that is selfless and pure.

Jay Gatsby remains a masculine prototype for eternal love, remains an example of how men can be and feel. His creator used to say: *Life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat and that the redeeming things are not happiness and pleasure but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle.*

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