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One of the most important aspects of The Great Gatsby is the symbolism that is used throughout the novel. In particular, Fitzgerald uses symbolism to represent houses and cars.The houses in The Great Gatsby can be seen as symbols of the American Dream. The most impressive and expensive house in the novel belongs to Jay Gatsby, which represents his desire for wealth and status. Other characters, such as Tom Buchanan and Myrtle Wilson, also have houses that are symbolic of their wealth and status. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the American Dream is not all it is cracked up to be. The houses in The Great Gatsby come to represent a facade that hides the many problems that exist in society.The cars in The Great Gatsby can also be seen as symbols of the American Dream. The most expensive and impressive car in the novel is the Rolls-Royce that Tom Buchanan drives. This car represents his status and wealth. Other characters, such as Jay Gatsby and George Wilson, also drive expensive cars that are symbolic of their success. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the American Dream is not all it is cracked up to be. The cars in The Great Gatsby come to represent a facade that hides the many problems that exist in society.The houses and cars in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby are full of symbolism, which is represented by the structures and automobiles in a variety of ways. One of the more significant features of symbolism in The Great Gatsby is how completely it is integrated into the plot and structure.Symbols such as Gatsby’s home and automobile symbolize money. “A Tower on one side, spanning new under a thin beard of raw ivy” represents Gatsby’s enormous illegal income, according to his house “[is] a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy” which contains “a tower on one side, spanning new under a beard of raw ivy.”The car that Gatsby buys to win over Daisy, a “circular tour of the country in his richly upholstered motor car” is also a symbol of Gatsby’s wealth. The large number of symbols in The Great Gatsby and their interpretations are what make the novel so interesting. It is not simply a story about the betrayal, but much more. The symbols give the reader a greater understanding of the characters and their motivations. The green light at the end of Daisy’s dock is another important symbol in The Great Gatsby. The green light represents hope, and Gatsby’s hope for a life with Daisy. In Chapter 1, Nick describes the green light as “a queer, phosphorescent quality that made it seem to me that the porch and the whole front of the house were peopled with creatures from another world who had crept out of the night.”The symbolism of the green light is further developed in Chapter 9 when Gatsby makes a desperate attempt to reach it. The symbolism of the green light ties in with Gatsby’s desire for Daisy, his hopes and dreams, and his ultimate tragedy.The houses and cars in The Great Gatsby are symbols of wealth, hope, and desire. They play an important role in the development of the plot and help to reveal the characters’ motives. The symbols in The Great Gatsby are fascinating and add to the richness of the novel.Gatsby’s enormous earnings aren’t enough to make him satisfied. He requires “The house that he feels he need in order to be happy,” and it is also a perfect symbol of carelessness with money, which is a large part of his personality (Bewley 24). Gatsby’s mansion, like his automobile, represents his vulgar and extravagant desire for attention. Gatz’ home is characterized by a variety of styles and periods. Buchanan’s residence represents their beliefs. The more well-known wealthy families reside on East Egg.The West Egg is where the new money lives. The people on the West Egg are not as established and have not been wealthy for very long. Gatsby’s home is an example of this. The Valley of Ashes is a run-down and poverty stricken area that lies between West Egg and New York City. The Eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg are a pair of glasses without a face that look down upon the valley of ashes symbolizing God or a higher power looking down on the sinful acts that take place in this area.The Eggs also represent different lifestyles and ways people go about achieving their wealth. The Buchanans live a life of idleness while Gatsby works hard to achieve his dream of being with Daisy. The Eggs also have different morals, the people on the East Egg are established and proper while the people on the West Egg are new to money and believe that anything goes in order to achieve their goals.Cars also play a big role in The Great Gatsby. They are a symbol of status and wealth. The Buchanans have a number of expensive cars that they use to show off their wealth. Gatsby’s car is also a symbol of his wealth. It is a beautiful yellow car that attracts a lot of attention. The colour of the car is also significant, yellow often represents deceit and betrayal. The colour could be embolic of Gatsby’s character, he is not who he seems to be and he is hiding a lot of secrets.The car could also represent Gatsby’s American dream. It is a symbol of his success. The green light at the end of Daisy’s dock is also a symbol of the American dream. It represents hope and the possibilities that life has to offer. The green light is also symbolic of money, which is something that Gatsby is obsessed with.Houses and cars play a big role in The Great Gatsby and are used to symbolize different things. Gatsby’s house is a symbol of his wealth and his attempts to win over Daisy. The Buchanans’ house is a symbol of their established wealth and status. Today is World Emoji Day, a celebration of those little pictograms found in social media, text messages, e-mails, and other communications. The first emojis were introduced by Japanese phone companies in the late 1990s, evolving from the emoticon. The term itself is a mash-up of two Japanese words: e, meaning “picture,” and moji, for “written character.” As the Internet’s impact on language evolves, one thing’s for sure: These hieroglyphics will lol and face-palm for years to come. The Mind-Blowing History of Emojis © Koya79/Dreamstime.com How Was the Internet Invented? Encyclopaedia Britannica. Inc. What’s the Difference Between Emojis and Emoticons? © denisgorelkin/Fotolia Your 401(k) might soon include private markets and other alternative investments, tariffs are back in the news, and why is Trump again talking about replacing Jerome Powell as Fed chair? Private markets and 401(k) plans/Private equity, private credit, and other so-called alternative investments have historically been limited to institutional investors (e.g., pension plans and university endowments) and high-net-worth individuals because of their complexity, lack of transparency, and high fees. A Trump administration proposal may pave the way for private markets to be included in defined contribution plans, such as IRAs and 401(k)s. Trump, tariffs, and TACO President Trump’s latest tariff salvo targets two major trading partners: Mexico and the European Union. Trump is calling for a 30 percent tariff to take effect August 1. Whether he’ll follow through on the threat has become a familiar wager on Wall Street: The strategy bets that the president will ultimately retreat from his most extreme tariff measures, a pattern that has paid off for many investors. Trump once again targets PowellTrump has broached the subject of ousting Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, and it has nothing to do with Powell’s handling of the economy. Rather, the president and administration officials say Powell’s mismanagement of \$2.5 billion in renovations to two Fed buildings are grounds for his dismissal. But critics say the real issue is Powell’s resistance to political pressure. His term ends in May 2026. Popular ProCon Debate Topics Britannica’s content is among the most trusted in the world. Subscribe to Britannica Premium and unlock our entire database of trusted content today. Subscribe Now! ProCon Award-winning ProCon promotes critical thinking, education, and informed citizenship by presenting the pro and con arguments to controversial issues in a straightforward, nonpartisan, freely accessible way. Britannica Money Discover all you need to know about retirement, investing, and household finance, without the jargon or agenda. Get reliable guidance, insight, and easy-to-understand explanations, written, edited, and verified to Britannica’s exacting standards. Advocacy for Animals Presenting Advocacy for Animals, a blog focused primarily on animal rights, wildlife conservation, environmental health and safety, and the legal and cultural issues related to these topics. This blog is a source of information and a call to action. It is meant to be a provocation and a stimulus to thought regarding humanity’s relationship with nonhuman animals. Alvin Elkann Interviews Alvin, describes Jay Gatsby thusly when he first encounters the man in person. In this description, focused on Gatsby’s particular manner of smiling, he captures Gatsby’s easy, assured, almost magnetic charisma. A huge part of Gatsby’s appeal is his ability to make anyone feel like the most important person in the room. This quality mirrors Nick’s own early perceptions of Gatsby: feeling unusually lucky to be his friend, when so many others never even meet him in person. However, this passage also foreshadows Gatsby’s showmanship and ability to put on whatever mask someone wants to see. “In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars.” (Chapter 3) Although The Great Gatsby is often held up as a celebration of Jazz Age culture, it’s actually the opposite, often critiquing the era’s carefree hedonism. Fitzgerald’s language here captures the beautiful but impermanent nature of the wealthy’s lifestyle. Like moths, they’re always attracted to whatever the brightest light happens to be, flitting away when something else grabs their attention. Stars, champagne, and whisperings are all romantic but temporary and, ultimately, useless. Everything about their lives is very beautiful and full of sparkle and shine, but disappears when the harsh light of day—or reality—appears. “No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart.” (Chapter 5) As Nick reflects on Gatsby’s opinion of Daisy, he realizes how much Gatsby has built her up in his mind, so much so that no real person could ever live up to the fantasy. After meeting and being separated from Daisy, Gatsby spent years idealizing and romanticizing his memory of her, turning her into more illusion than woman. By the time they meet again, Daisy has grown and changed; she is a real and flawed human who could never measure up to Gatsby’s image of her. Gatsby continues to love Daisy, but whether he loves the real Daisy or simply the fantasy he believes her to be remains unclear. “Can’t repeat the past?..Why of course you can!” (Chapter 6) If there’s one statement that sums up Gatsby’s entire philosophy, this is it. Throughout his adult life, Gatsby’s goal has been to recapture the past. Specifically, he longs to recapture the past romance he had with Daisy. Nick, the realist, tries to point out that recapturing the past is impossible, but Gatsby utterly rejects that idea. Instead, he believes that money is the key to happiness, reasoning that if you have enough money, you can make even the wildest dreams come true. We see this belief in action with Gatsby’s wild parties, thrown just to attract Daisy’s attention, and his insistence on rekindling his affair with her. Notably, however, Gatsby’s entire identity stemmed from his initial attempt to escape his poor background, which is what motivated him to create the persona of “Jay Gatsby.” “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” (Chapter 9) This sentence is the final line of the novel, and one of the most famous lines in all of literature. By this point, Nick, the narrator, has become disillusioned with Gatsby’s hedonistic displays of wealth. He has seen how Gatsby’s fruitless, desperate quest—to escape his past identity and recapture his past romance with Daisy—destroyed him. Ultimately, no amount of money or time was enough to win Daisy, and none of the novel’s characters were able to escape the limitations imposed by their own pasts. This final statement serves as a commentary on the very concept of the American dream, which claims that anyone can be anything, if only they work hard enough. With this sentence, the novel seems to suggest that such hard work will prove futile, because the “currents” of nature or society will always push one back towards the past. Home > Q&A by Experts > Literature > “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” The most famous among The Great Gatsby quotes is the novel’s final sentence, restating its central theme. It reflects Jay Gatsby’s inability to let go of the past. His efforts to bring it back are barely worth it. Detailed answer: The Great Gatsby is generally considered to be one of the main novels of the Roaring Twenties. That time is characterized by a widespread disregard for tradition and the past. High on prosperity and freedom, Americans embraced materialism and hedonism. The novel sheds light on the shortcomings of this mentality. Fitzgerald demonstrates the powerful hold that the past has on its protagonist, Jay Gatsby. We will write a custom essay specifically for you by our professional experts a custom essay specifically for you Although wealthy, famous, and successful by the time standards, Gatsby is not a happy man. The driving purpose behind his pursuit of wealth and fame is his desire to be accepted by Daisy. She was his first love but has married another man. The symbolic literary device of the green light on Daisy’s dock across the bay represents this hope. At the same time, it underlines the distance between Gatsby and its fulfillment. His efforts to resume their past relationship are futile because the currents of time have long since pulled them apart. The quote meaning becomes incredibly rich in this historical and personal context. As a man of the Roaring Twenties, Gatsby persistently pursues his personal objective. He doesn’t lose hope despite harsh reality. He struggles against the current, but contrary to recent convictions, such a struggle is doomed to failure. Fitzgerald shows that, no matter how we struggle, the past remains in the past. The present is also doomed to become the past, putting the vanity of his generation into perspective. One of our experts with a specialization in literature has kindly provided an answer to this question. Feel free to rate the answer and let us know if you liked it. Reference IvyPanda. (2024, August 21). “So We Beat On, Boats Against the Current...” Explain the Quote. “So We Beat On, Boats Against the Current...” Explain the Quote.” IvyPanda, 21 Aug. 2024, ivypanda.com/q/so-we-beat-on-boats-against-the-current/. Reference IvyPanda. (2024) “So We Beat On, Boats Against the Current...” Explain the Quote.” 21 August. Reference IvyPanda. 2024. “”So We Beat On, Boats Against the Current...” Explain the Quote.” August 21, 2024. . 1. IvyPanda. “”So We Beat On, Boats Against the Current...” Explain the Quote.” August 21, 2024. . Bibliography IvyPanda. “”So We Beat On, Boats Against the Current...” Explain the Quote.” August 21, 2024. . edit descriptions of this character We hope you are enjoying the book so far. To continue reading... Read on the go for free — download Kindle for Android, Kindle for iOS, Kindle for PC, Kindle for Mac and more. Conditions of Use Privacy Notice Legal Notices edit descriptions of this character Jump to ratings and reviewsAlternate covers of this ISBN can be found here and hereJames L.W. West III to include the author’s final revisions and features a note on the composition and text, a personal foreword by Fitzgerald’s granddaughter, Eleanor Lananah—and a new introduction by two-time National Book Award winner Jesmyn Ward.The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s third book, stands as the supreme achievement of his career. First published in 1925, this quintessential novel of the Jazz Age has been acclaimed by generations of readers. The story of the mysteriously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when The New York Times noted “gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession,” it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s. 77298 people are currently reading 193698 people want to readFrancis Scott Key Fitzgerald, widely known simply as Scott Fitzgerald, and short story writer. He is best known for his novels depicting the flamboyance and excess of the Jazz Age, a term he popularized in his short story collection Tales of the Jazz Age. During his lifetime, he published four novels, four story collections, and 164 short stories. Although he achieved temporary popular success and fortune in the 1920s, Fitzgerald received critical acclaim only after his death and is now widely regarded as one of the greatest American writers of the 20th century. Born into a middle-class family in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Fitzgerald was raised primarily in New York state. He attended Princeton University where he befriended future literary critic Edmund Wilson. Owing to a failed romantic relationship with Chicago socialite Ginevra King, he dropped out in 1917 to join the United States Army during World War I. While stationed in Alabama, he met Zelda Sayre, a Southern debutante who belonged to Montgomery’s exclusive country-club set. Although she initially rejected Fitzgerald’s marriage proposal due to his lack of financial prospects, Zelda agreed to marry him after he published the commercially successful This Side of Paradise (1920). The novel became a cultural sensation and cemented his reputation as one of the eminent writers of the decade.His second novel, The Beautiful and Damned (1922), propelled him further into the cultural elite. To maintain his affluent lifestyle, he wrote numerous stories for popular magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post, Collier’s Weekly, and Esquire. During this period, Fitzgerald frequented Europe, where he befriended modernist writers and artists of the “Lost Generation” expatriate community, including Ernest Hemingway. His third novel, The Great Gatsby (1925), received generally favorable reviews but was a commercial failure, selling fewer than 23,000 copies in its first year. Despite its lackluster debut, The Great Gatsby is now hailed by some literary critics as the “Great American Novel”. Following the deterioration of his wife’s mental health and her placement in a mental institute for schizophrenia, Fitzgerald completed his final novel, Tender Is the Night (1934).Struggling financially because of the declining popularity of his works during the Great Depression, Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood, where he embarked upon an unsuccessful career as a screenwriter. While living in Hollywood, he cohabited with columnist Sheila Graham, his final companion before his death. After a long struggle with alcoholism, he attained sobriety and tried to die of a heart attack in 1940, at 44. His friend Edmund Wilson edited and published an unfinished fifth novel, The Last Tycoon (1941), after Fitzgerald’s death. In 1993, a new edition was published as The Love of the Last Tycoon, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli.Displaying 1 - 30 of 122,630 reviewsMarch 17, 2023Oh Gatsby, you old sport, you poor semi-delusionally hopeful dreamer with “some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life”, focusing your whole self and soul on that elusive money-colored green light - a dream that shatters just when you are *this* close to it. Jay Gatsby, who dreamed a dream with the passion and courage few possess - and the tragedy was that it was a wrong dream colliding with reality that was even more wrong - and deadly. Just like the Great Houdini - the association the title of this book so easily invokes - you specialized in illusions and escape. Except even our power of most courageous dreamers can be quite helpless to allow us escape the world, our past, and ourselves, giving rise to one of the most famous closing lines of a novel. “Gatsby believed in the green light, the organic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter —to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And one fine morning — So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” Dear Gatsby, not everything I liked back when I was fourteen has withstood the test of time! - but you clearly did, and as I get older, closer to your and Nick Carraway’s age, your story gathers more dimensions and more tragedy, fleshing out so much more from what I thought of as a tragic love story when I was a child - turning into a great American tragedy. “I hang my head in shame at my ability to still belt out an enthusiastic (albeit poorly rendered) version of “...Baby One More Time” when it comes on the radio (provided, of course, that my car windows are safely up). I blame it on my residual teenage hormones. Jay Gatsby, you barged head-on to achieve and conquer your American dream, not stopping until you dreams became your reality, until you reinvented yourself with the dizzying strength of your belief. You carees if he has the money and the ability to throw parties worthy of reality show fame?? Because in the present world just the fact of having heaps of money makes you worthy - and therefore the people whose voices are “full of money”, who are “gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor”, people who end you chose to let your delusion continue, you poor soul.Poor Gatsby! Yours is the story of a young man who suddenly rose to wealth and fame, running like a hatter on the wheel amassing wealth for the sake of love, for the sake of winning the heart of a Southern belle, the one whose “voice is full of money” - in a book written by a young man who suddenly rose to wealth and fame, desperately running on the hamster wheel of ‘high life’ to win the heart of his own Southern belle. Poor Gatsby, and poor F. Scott Fitzgerald - the guy who so brilliantly described it all, but who continued to live the life his character failed to see for what it was. The Great Gatsby is a story about the lavish excesses meant to serve every little whim of the rich and wannabe-rich in the splendid but unsatisfying in their shallow emptiness and gaudy post-war years, and the resulting suffocation under the uselessness and unexpected oppressiveness of elusive American dream in the time when money was plenty and the alluring seemingly dream life was just around the corner, just within reach.But first and foremost, it is a story of disillusionment with dreams that prove to be shallow and unworthy of the dreamer - while at the same time firmly hanging on to the idea of the dream, the ability to dream big, and the stubborn tenacity of the dreamer, “an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again”. This is why Gatsby is still so relevant in the world we live in - almost a hundred years after Fitzgerald wrote it in the Roaring Twenties - the present-day world that still worships money and views it as a substitute for the American dream, the world that hinges on materialism, the world that no longer frowns on the gaudiness and glitz of the nouveau riche. In this world Jay Gatsby, poor old sport, with his huge tasteless mansion and lavish tasteless parties and in-your-face tasteless car and tasteless pink suit would be, perhaps, quietly sniggered at - but would have fit in without the need for aristocratic breeding - the instantly likable narrator Nick Carraway, seemingly the only voice of reason amongst all the chaos. But when those boats are finally borne back ceaselessly by the current, no one is left afloat. It is an ethical massacre, and Fitzgerald spares no lives; there is perhaps not a single character of any significance worthy even of a Sportsmanship Award from the Boys and Girls Club.In a word, The Great Gatsby is about deception; Fitzgerald tints our glasses rose with gorgeous prose and a narrator you want so much to trust, but leaves the lenses just translucent enough for us to see that Gatsby is getting the same treatment. And if Gatsby represents the truth of the American Dream, it means trouble for us all. Consider it the most pleasant insult you’ll ever receive.April 14, 2025Fitzgerald, you have ruined me.Fitzgerald can set a scene so perfectly, flawlessly. He paints a world of magic and introduces one of the greatest characters of all time, Jay Gatsby. Gatsby is the embodiment of hope, and no one can dissuade him from his dreams. Have you ever had a dream that carried you to heights you could never have dreamed otherwise? When Gatsby is reunited with Daisy Buchanan, he fills the space to the brim with flowers, creating a living dream. How is anyone supposed to compete with that?The Great Gatsby perfectly makes use of a narrator, Nick. Why is Gatsby so great? Because Nick tells us. If Gatsby told us, we would just think that he is a braggard, the least humble person in the world. This book is wildly addictive, so intricate yet perfectly woven together, a brilliant literary masterpiece. I have to keep going back to reconnect with Jay Gatsby, a naïve but beautiful and charming hook, perfectly imperfect, a relentless dreamer.2025 Reading ScheduleJan A Town Like AliceFeb BirdsongMar Captain Corelli’s Mandolin - Louis De BernieresApr War and PeaceMay The Woman in WhiteJun AtonementJul The Shadow of the WindAug Jude the ObscureSep UlyssesOct Vanity FairNov A Fine BalanceDec GerminalConnect With Me!Blog Twitter BookTube Facebook Insta My Bookstore at PangoMay 26, 2010Jay Gatsby, you poor doomed bastard. You were ahead of your time. If you would have pulled your scam after the invention of reality TV, you would have been a huge star on a show like The Bachelor and a dozen shameless Daisy-types would have thrown themselves at you. Mass media and modern fame would have embraced the way you tried to push your way into a social circle you didn’t belong to in an effort to fulfill a fool’s dream as your entire existence became a lie and you desperately sought to rewrite history to an ending you wanted. You had a talent for it, Jay, but a modern PR expert would have made you bigger than Kate Gosselin. Your knack for self-promotion and over the top displays of wealth to try and buy respectability would have fit right in these days. I can just about see you on a red carpet with Paris Hilton. And the ending would have been different. No aftermath for rich folks these days. Lawyers and pay-off money would have quietly settled the matter. No harm, no foul. But then you’d have realized how worthless Daisy really was at some point. I’m sure you could’ve dealt with that. So maybe it is better that your story happened in the Jazz Age where you could keep your illusions intact to the bitter end.The greatest American novel? I don’t know if there is such an animal. But I think you’d have to include this one in the conversation.100 famous-books favorites April 11, 2025Once upon a time, I had a very long, very passionate review of this book uploaded, with very long, very passionate pages of comments, and generally it was one of my favorite reviews (and of one of my favorite books) with one of my favorite ensuing discussions.today I realized goodreads deleted it/read the only one of my 2000+ reviews that goodreads has simply straight up taken down here, where it’s safe: beautifully-written classics September 17, 2024Our fantasies of grandeur are always restricted by our aesthetic tastes and The Great Gatsby is literally an anthem to vulgarity and fraudulence...But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked in the washstand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an indelible emphasis. The grotesque aesthetic stupidity and the fabulously bad taste of the characters are outright shocking. Instead of wishing for variety and quality, they just want to get more of what they get. He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought out the and the soft rich heap mounted higher - shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and 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. Gatsby’s is a fraud and the narrator doesn’t have much sympathy for him but in the end the raconteur finds out that the respectable members of society are just hypocrites and that they are even more fake than Gatsby.Honesty and intellect don’t mean a thing, all that counts is the art of pretending and the greatest pretender takes all the-hundreds-of-the-best-novelsJuly 31, 2007After six years of these heated and polarized debates, I’m deleting the reviews that sparked them. Thanks for sharing your frustrations, joys, and insights with me, goodreaders. Happy reading! In love and good faith, always.SavannahMay 9, 2023 Bright lights, big city When I avowed my disenchantment with Tender Is the Night, a few FR friends urged me to read The Great Gatsby to truly appreciate F. Scott Fitzgerald. I cannot but admit The Great Gatsby was a far more exhilarating read than I had expected it to be, its tight composition and restless pace a remarkable contrast with the muddled slow mess that made Tender Is the Night hard for me to get through, the exquisite, visual original writing more than in The Curious Case of Benjamin Button unfurling in all its grandeur, alternating the scrumptious and the gritty, just like the narrative unfolding more coherently. Reading The Great Gatsby immediately after Tra dome sole (among women only) by Cesare Pavese, featuring also some bored socialites as seen by an outsider who almost unwillingly turns into an insider, it struck me how little difference living in 1922 New York or fifties Turin seemed to make, at least for a certain class of people, the ones leisured and wealthy - however Pavese’s women seem more despondent and philosophical, responding to the shallowness of their lives by cynicism, nihilism or suicide. F. Scott Fitzgerald paints brightly lit places, populated by shady people. Daisy and Tom Buchanan, Jay Gatsby, Jordan Baker and the outsider-insider narrator Nick Carraway are a fine fleur of unlovable, amoral and superficial characters, representatives of old and new money being equally dreadful, reducing friendships and loving relationships to commodities, cheating and lying themselves through their lives, crooks, dishonest to the core, whether in golf, in business or in relationships, so corrupt that even the narrator who conspicuously prides himself on his honesty makes himself untrustworthy by doing so. These are people who are moved to tears by a soft rich heap of beautiful shirts ordered from England, in the meantime thoughtlessly wrecking other people’s lives without even blinking (Pavese’s novel also pivots around haute couture). They were careless people... they smashed up things and creations and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness... and let other people clean up the mess they had made.Among many other things, The Great Gatsby is also tale of the ludicrous things we do for love (and which inevitably will leave us with empty hands), a painful story about holding on to illusions against one’s better judgment and a cautionary tale on the (at that time perhaps) quintessential American belief in the malleability of the individual, the American dream, at which I am aware as a European I can only look at from an unbridgeable distance, bemused at a cultural trope which feels alien to me. Reading The Great Gatsby as a trenchant commentary on this belief however, Fitzgerald nor to my surprise struck me as a sheer visionary, illustrating sharply the downsides and dangers of this belief and capitalist ethos even if he couldn’t foresee how this pseudo-meritocratic mentality would spread and spill over times and oceans, how it would change societies and poison individuals with it all over the world in the wake of capitalism and neo-liberalism, which would make it fit into a personal vocation and permanent responsibility to remodel and market oneself to be a worthy individual in a hyper competitive society (and on the flipside blame oneself if one fails to succeed or succumbs under the pressure to achieve and be happy) - an ethos conditioning individuals who are made to think of themselves as one-person enterprises, judged by (and judging themselves) by what they have and do rather than what they are. If you are so smart why aren’t you rich? No wonder people are lonely and struggle with a warped view of the self and feelings of failure (Paul Verhaeghe, What About Me? The Struggle for Identity in a Market-based Society). By Jay Gatsby’s fate, Fitzgerald exposes the vicious lie that we can be what and who we want to be if we only work on ourselves and that we will be loved if doing so. (Illustration: Michelle Lagasca) As a counterpoint to all the extravagant and baffling materialism of the world he evokes, F. Scott Fitzgerald gently invites the reader to contemplate past, present and future in a burst of melancholic beauty that will glow on in my mind for a long time. “Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.And as I sat there, brooding on the old unknown world, I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn and 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, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.Gatsby believed in the green light, the organic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter—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 into the past.”2021 20th-century american literature November 5, 2024So this was a weird little story about a man who had too much money, the main characters just kind of dropped around drinking and smoking and complaining about their spouses, but the plot is that this guy Nick, who is the only person with normal human emotions in the entire book, is recounting his special summer with The Great Gatsby.Gatsby is this ultra-mysterious man with gobs of money who likes to throw lavish wingdings. Everyone who is anyone shows up to drink his booze, eat his food, and party till they puke.BUT! He has a secret and he needs Nick’s help.He’s in love.

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