



Undergraduate Dissertation

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Different Perspectives on Love and Relationships in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

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2019

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Introduction

In 1925, American writer Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940) published his third novel, *The Great Gatsby*. Set in Long Island (New York) in the summer of 1922, it is a literary classic and is considered one of the great American novels and a true symbol of American culture, as it faithfully portrays the society of the time in its various aspects, ranging from the way of dressing and speaking, to the way of thinking of American citizens.

The novel has been interpreted from many different approaches – literary, historical, mythical, psychological, feminist, sociological – and so have been its various film adaptations, made between 1974 and 2013, both in comparative studies with the text and in terms of the representation (and decline) of the "American dream".

The objective of this dissertation is to explore, among the various interpersonal relationships that are displayed in the novel, the moral description and social analysis of the love relationships its main characters engage in, taking into account their motivations and conditions, the "real" meaning of love and its place in a society more focused on materialism and consumerism than on the observance of traditional moral values sustained by the previous generations.

For this purpose, I will first specify what the role of love was in marriage and other related interpersonal relationships in the era in which the novel is set, as it is a concept that has undergone various changes throughout history. The Victorians (1830-1890) saw sexual pleasure as a threat to the essentially spiritual character of marriage, so they tried to separate procreative sex (otherwise necessary) from erotic pleasure. The Victorians sought to "desexualize love and de-eroticize sex" (Seidman, p. 82). But in the

early twentieth century, sexual morality and marriage undergo a transformation that makes the antithesis between love and sensuality disappear. The erotic aspects of marriage become a main motivation and sustainable source of love – the sexualisation of love legitimizes sexual pleasure – and marriage becomes a matter of companionship and pleasure.

Bearing this in mind, this essay aims to analyse the different relationships portrayed in the novel taking into account the sociocultural features that surround the characters. Once these relationships have been defined and studied, they will be compared by using the perception of love that was predominant in the society in which the characters of the novel are immersed, in which money was usually put before love or any other emotion that can alter the lifestyle that the high spheres of society had embraced.

This study of love in the novel will be connected to a reflection that underlies the author's thinking, an advocate of the "original" American dream in which people have the right to be happy – which is defended by the Declaration of Independence (1776): "[...] Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable rights" –, but he considers that capitalism is responsible for the corruption of the society in which he lives.

The methodology used in this dissertation consists in a combination of narratological and contextual analysis of the novel, especially of the passages related to love, and their study under the lenses of the above-mentioned conceptualizations of love.

Love and its Perception

2.1: Historical and Social Context

The Great Gatsby was first published in 1925 and is regarded as one of the most important pieces of North American Literature. Scott Fitzgerald chose to set the action of his story in the society of his time, and so he carefully described its features in order to create a realistic representation of reality. In order to understand the novel, the historical and social context in which the plot develops must also be studied, as the first quarter of the twentieth century was a very shocking period in North American society.

After the First World War ended, the economy was in a state of recovery due to the great investment the War meant: “By the summer of 1921, the economy was beginning to turn around. [...] The next year, 1922, began the period of economic prosperity known as the Roaring Twenties, led by automobile factories, industrial production increased, and with increased production came jobs and then a spending boom that lifted prices and stocks” (Stillman, p.136). This almost miraculous recovery brought along feelings of freedom and well-being, which are two of the key concepts that describe what the Roaring Twenties meant for the population in the United States. Although economic prosperity and happiness were not evenly distributed throughout the whole country, the overall feeling of joy in society, especially in the middle and upper classes, was overwhelming: “The decade is often associated with outrageousness. Women broke free of the traditions and restraints of the Victorian era in favour of short dresses, short hairstyles, and carefree ways. In clubs and on the radio, the new sounds of jazz became the music of the day” (Benson, p. 1318).

This period of North American history is also marked by the Prohibition Act, which banned alcohol selling and transporting: “On January 16, 1920, the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution went into effect. At midnight, it became illegal to sell, manufacture, or transport alcoholic beverages anywhere in the United States. The era of Prohibition had begun” (Streissguth, p. 27). This act was a measure that put a provisional end to a long-lasting conflict that had begun in the nineteenth century, when the consumption, selling and trading of alcoholic beverages became a real issue in the United States. Although the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed in 1933, this does not mean that the United States was free from alcoholic beverages all throughout this period of its history. Instead, alcohol was smuggled into cities and consumed secretly among the population.

The Roaring Twenties and Prohibition are closely linked, and in this novel both are key pieces in the story’s setting. The characters in *The Great Gatsby* embody the spirit of the Roaring Twenties, as the majority of them are part of the high sphere of society, and the main character, Jay Gatsby, is often accused of being an alcohol smuggler, the reason being how little time it took him to make such a vast fortune, which leads other characters to believe that he did so illegally. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel is a representation of how the high society developed from the 1920s onwards, and by reading *The Great Gatsby* we get an accurate picture of how these people behaved, thought and talked during this period. But most importantly, we can also see the way the characters of the novel are different from one another depending on their social status, which not only marks the way they view life, which used to be brighter the richer a person was, but also the way they express and experience their feelings.

2.2: Love and Marriage

Scott Fitzgerald's novel is a mixture of different topics, such as money or the absence of moral values motivated by money, but at core, *The Great Gatsby* is a love story. To fully understand how love is portrayed, we need not only to understand what love means in the historical and social setting of the novel, but also to know the individual perspective that each character has on love. The concept of love evolved in the twentieth century, escaping from its perception in the Victorian era: "Victorian marriages were said to be arrangements that aimed at social and economic security; the goal of modern marriage was said to be to secure personal happiness and companionship" (Seidman, p.78). Back in the nineteenth century, love was pictured as a secondary matter, and was not considered a key factor in a marriage; instead, economic stability was seen as the number one priority in the society at that time, which greatly conditioned the way people socialised, as they tended to interact with people that belonged to their social class, aware of the fact that those above them in the social scale would marry people on their own level or above, and those below them would not be a suitable partner to marry, as it would decrease their status.

Thus, love and marriage tended to be unrelated, although this does not mean that there were no marriages in the nineteenth century in which love was present. Still, this perspective changed at the turn of the century, when love gained relevance, and the goal of marriage changed; although economic stability was one of the main objectives of getting married, love became an important part in married people's lives. This is the result of the economic growth experienced during the first quarter of the twentieth century, which allowed individuals to gain economic stability without marrying another person with equal, if not higher, financial status.

Thanks to economic prosperity, love became the main reason why people married, and happiness became the main goal for society. This new perspective normalised sexual desire, which became an important part of relationships: “The foundation of, the basis of all love is sexual attraction” (Seidman, p. 83). In contrast with the Victorian perspective, the society of the twentieth century became free to decide who to have a relationship with excluding the concept of social status from the equation, although people still got married with people of their same social status, as the group of people with which each social class interacted remained unaltered. But the relegation of money or economic stability to a secondary place opened an opportunity for romantic love, which overall made people happier than before.

Nevertheless, assuming that marrying the person you love would make you happy ever after would be unrealistic; there are certain features from the way Victorians maintained their relationships that still survived in this modern perspective; such is the case of extra-marital relationships. In the Victorian era, men and women were not treated as equal in terms of sexual freedom, as sexual necessities were viewed differently depending on gender: “Virtue has long been defined in terms of woman’s refusal to succumb to sexual temptation. [...] Men, on the other hand, have traditionally been regarded [...] as requiring sexual variety for their physical health” (Giddens, p.7).

Fortunately, this aspect also evolved through the years, reaching a certain degree of equality for both genders; in Giddens’s words: “The double standard still exists, but women are no longer tolerant of the view that, while men need variety and can be expected to engage in extramarital adventures, they should not behave likewise” (p.12). The analysis that follows in subsequent sections of this dissertation will examine these issues and perspectives as they apply to the diverse interpersonal relationships established in *The Great Gatsby*.

2.3: Formal Analysis

This novel has a peculiar way to tell its story. All the information we obtain about the characters and events that take place in the story is given to us through Nick Carraway, who takes the role of the narrator and is at the same time one of the main characters of the story. The key of the structure of the novel relies on how Nick narrates the events. He is a homodiegetic narrator; he is a character of the story and narrates the events from his own point of view. The story is told entirely by him from a retrospective perspective, that is, the story is told after it has happened; Nick begins to narrate the events when he has returned to the Midwest after Jay Gatsby's death.

The fact that Nick tells the story after returning to where he was born suggests that he has left behind the superficial values that he found when he first arrived in New York, and has chosen to come back to the traditional values that were still present in the Midwest. Thus, the story begins after Nick has already rejected the nature of the events that he is about to narrate, which suggests that the novel itself is going to be narrated from a subjective point of view, as the narrator is conditioned from the beginning to neglect the ideas and values of the society in which the story takes place.

This idea is reinforced by the fact that Nick acknowledges that he even changes the order in which the events in the story are narrated, as it is revealed to the reader in the sixth chapter after Nick explains Gatsby's true origins: "He told me all this very much later, but I've put it down here with the idea of exploding those first wild rumours about his antecedents, which weren't even faintly true" (p. 101). This is a key moment in the story, because it is a proof of the manipulation of the events that take place in the story, as well as the order in which these events appear in it.

After analysing these evidences, we can conclude that Nick Carraway is an unreliable narrator, as he implicitly exaggerates the events that happen in the story in favour of Gatsby, and also explicitly confesses that his narration deviates from the chronological order of the events, as he has changed it on purpose to clarify Gatsby's story. This means that the whole story is just an interpretation of the events that took place, meaning that the story that we read is composed of Nick's memories from his past adventures. This also implies that the events should not be taken as the absolute truth, as memory changes in time, distorting retrospective perceptions of reality.

In addition to this, the relationship between Nick and Gatsby must be considered as a factor that influences the telling of the story; this is due to the fact that Nick befriended Gatsby very quickly, drawn by his charisma: "He Smiled understandingly – much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it that you may come across four or five times in life" (p. 49). With the passing of time, Nick became Gatsby's only friend, as he is the only person who Gatsby trusts enough to reveal his true identity. Nick is clearly conditioned by his friendship and admiration to Gatsby, and it is plausible that the events that are displayed in this novel would have been different if Nick and Gatsby had happened to be enemies. The same can be said about Nick's possibly subjective rendering of the nature of love relationships in the novel, which is the focus of this dissertation.

2.4: Relationships and their Features

Scott Fitzgerald creates in this novel an intricate web of intertwined relationships that start and are broken in the blink of an eye, which reinforces the idea that the society in which the action takes place has distanced itself from the idea of long term relationships as a result of the evolution of traditional values: “We see two marriages breaking to form two new relationships, thus hinting that the institution of marriage has lost all of its value” (Berman, p. 75). These relationships are not only marriages, but also affairs, and often both types are closely related, as some of the characters have both at the same time.

The first relationship that appears in the story is that between Daisy and Tom Buchanan. Their marriage resembles a typical Victorian marriage, in the sense that their main objective when they got married was to achieve economic stability, leaving love outside of their marriage, or rather making love a secondary matter in their relationship. Although both of them loved each other at the beginning of their marriage, love faded as time went by, and it was replaced with high social status, money and social respectability. Their relationship, although only focused on money, proves to be strong, as after all the events that take place in the novel, they begin this story together and they also end it together. The affairs that both Tom and Daisy maintain outside their marriage resemble the way people from the Victorian era solved their sexual needs, which excluded love from sex in order to make their marriage stable. Daisy comes from a high-society family, and so does Tom, who is a successful man with a bright future ahead of him, so their marriage seems only logical from their perspective. But from their marriage, two extramarital affairs arise: the first one is maintained by Tom and the second is formed by Daisy.

There is another relationship that is present from the beginning of the novel, which is George and Myrtle Wilson's marriage. In contrast to Tom and Daisy, who appear unified from the beginning of the story, Tom and Myrtle are split; they are still married, but Myrtle feels trapped in her own marriage, and so decides to look for a solution through an affair. There are two aspects that both marriages have in common: the first one is that in both couples the two members have the same social status; the second one is that the reason for the affairs to start is that love has faded in time, and so one of the members of both marriages tries to solve their problems outside the original relationship.

Thus, Tom has an affair with Myrtle Wilson. Their affair is present from the beginning of the novel, and both of them maintain this affair publicly; it is Tom who actually reveals his affair to Nick when they drive to the Valley of Ashes to pick up Myrtle on their way to New York from the West Egg, and the affair is also known by Daisy, who simply accepts it. Daisy's complete submission to her husband's affair bears a great similitude with the nature of extra-marital relationships in the Victorian era which, as stated above, saw women's resistance to sexual desire as a proof of their value, whereas men were allowed to seek sexual satisfaction outside their marriage, due to the belief that it was a male physical need that should not be restricted.

Daisy's affair begins after a long period of time, about five years into her marriage with Tom. In Daisy's case, she has an affair with Gatsby, who had previously maintained a relationship with her before he had to go to war, an event which is located before the beginning of the story. It is during his service in the First World War that Daisy decides to marry Tom instead of waiting for Gatsby, which makes Gatsby become obsessed with her, and propels him to make a vast fortune just to win her back and show her that he can also be the man she wants. Daisy resists her temptation until

Nick arranges a meeting between them, where they begin to talk again and start an affair.

These two affairs have some similarities, for example the class difference between Tom and Daisy, who have been members of the high society from their birth, and Myrtle and Gatsby, who were born in the lower class. But apart from this fact, the only character whose intentions could be differentiated from the rest is Jay Gatsby, who began his journey to the high class with love as its objective.

Tom, Daisy and Myrtle do not see beyond money, and believe that sex is just a physical need that is not related to love, or at least it does not have to. In Gatsby's case, sex is secondary; he could have had multiple sexual relationships before reuniting with Daisy, due to his power, charisma and extraordinary wealth, but instead chose to pursue love, almost beyond what could be considered as humanly possible.

It is through Gatsby that we receive the first representation of a more modern vision of interpersonal relationships. His disinterest in money is proven when he asks Daisy to elope with him, demonstrating that he is willing to leave all behind if that means that he can love and be loved. This is nonsense from the point of view of the rest of the characters, even Daisy who, although she admits to have loved Gatsby in the past, refuses to abandon the comfortable lifestyle she has achieved through her marriage to Tom.

There is another relationship that is worth commenting on, which is the one maintained by Nick Carraway and Jordan Baker. Their relationship is the only one in the story that has no antecedents, as both meet each other for the first time in the West Egg, and neither of them knew about the other beforehand. This may be the relationship that more closely resembles a love-based relationship, meaning that the attraction both

feel for each other is originated by their meetings, although it is true that there is some manipulation on Daisy's part: "Of course you will,' confirmed Daisy. 'In fact I think I'll arrange a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I'll sort of—oh—fling you together. You know—lock you up accidentally in linen closets and push you out to sea in a boat, and all that sort of thing—'" (p. 21). Nevertheless, their relationship develops normally, as they increasingly open to each other and start to bond in a natural way, but unfortunately, their relationship does not evolve throughout the rest of the novel due to the complication of the other affairs involving the other main characters which are taking place at the same time. This distancing, which is not only physical but also emotional, marks the breaking of their relationship, which culminates after Gatsby's death, an event that triggers Nick's return to the Midwest.

The only relationships that could be based on true love would be those maintained by George and Myrtle, and Gatsby and Daisy; but there is a major difference when comparing these two against Jordan and Nick's. This difference relies on the reciprocity of love: Nick and Jordan seem to love each other, but in the other two cases there is one member – the woman – who does not feel the same way as their partner. Focusing on this aspect, and treating Gatsby and Daisy's relationship as if it had never been broken after Gatsby went to fight in the First World War, Myrtle and Daisy share some common ground on their respective relationships with George and Gatsby, as although both of them loved their partner at the beginning of their relationship, this feeling fades in time, leaving George and Gatsby devastated because their love is no longer required. Moreover, the economic factor is also present in both affairs, as both women leave their husbands for a rich man, and although on Daisy's case their economic difference is not as big as in Myrtle's case, it is true that her attraction to Gatsby is partially caused by his success and his wealth, which are always on display.

2.5: On Gatsby and Daisy's Affair

Out of all of the relationships that are featured in this novel, Gatsby and Daisy's is considered the most important, due to the fact that all of the characters are involved in it in one way or another, either through Daisy's friendship with Jordan Baker and her family ties with Nick Carraway and Tom Buchanan, or through Tom's affair with Myrtle and subsequently their connection with George Wilson, who is also connected to Gatsby, as he will be the one putting an end to the protagonist's life after Tom's misleading information regarding the accident where Myrtle was killed.

Apart from the way this affair affects all of the main characters to some degree, the most obvious reason why this is the most important affair of all is the process that leads to this relationship being formed. In all the other examples, affairs happen naturally, and there is no case in which one of the parts makes an excessive effort into forming this bond, but in Gatsby's case, this affair means the culmination of a very tough quest, which not only changes him on his outside, but also changes him on the inside. Their relationship must be carefully analysed from its beginning in order to understand the way in which the events take place throughout the story.

At the beginning of their original relationship, both Gatsby and Daisy love each other, and Gatsby is happy at this point in his life. But after the War begins and Gatsby leaves, Daisy changes her mind, and instead of waiting for Gatsby to come back, she decides to marry Tom Buchanan, marking the break of their initial relationship and the beginning of Gatsby's quest. This choice that Daisy makes indicates the first clear difference in Gatsby's and Daisy's morals; Gatsby would have never married another woman, but Daisy took the easy way by marrying Tom.

There are various reasons by which Daisy's marriage to Tom can be explained, for example the fact that Gatsby had an inferior social status than Daisy, whereas Tom was at the same level, or Daisy's parents' disapproval of her marrying Gatsby, as opposed to their acceptance of Daisy and Tom's marriage. These two reasons could justify Daisy's choice, as it would mean that she was forced into marrying Tom by her parents and by social pressure, but as the story develops we begin to realise that there is a deeper difference between Daisy and Gatsby.

After Gatsby discovers that Daisy has left him he is heartbroken; the sole reason that motivated him during the war was the hope of reuniting with his lover. When Gatsby finds out that Daisy has married Tom Buchanan, he tries to change himself in order to become what Daisy wants, that is, a successful, high society man. And thus, Gatsby starts to build his fortune up, and although the way in which he earns money is not clear, as is pointed out by Tom, who believes Gatsby to be an alcohol smuggler, he reaches his goal of becoming overwhelmingly rich, which allows him to get closer to Daisy.

During this five year period, Gatsby's motivation is love, the desire of meeting Daisy again and getting her back. But due to this process, Gatsby also becomes that which he is pretending to be: "He is not the simple antithesis of Tom and Daisy; he is implicated in their kind of corruption too, and his dream is proved hollow not only by the inadequacy of the actual correlative—that is, Daisy—to the hunger of his aspiring imagination, but also by the means he uses to build up the gaudy fabric of his vision. He, too, shares in the restlessness of the actual world which will defeat his ideal Platonic conceptions" (Harvey, p. 83).

Gatsby's immersion into the world of the rich also damages his perception about life, and his apparent numbness in the way he expresses his feelings starts to take a hold of him, making him identify with this group more and more as he becomes richer and richer. Nevertheless, even if his original quest for love may have been crooked, his aim is still focused on Daisy; the problem that underlies Gatsby's determination and extraordinarily strong will lies in the deformation of his feelings. Gatsby was really happy at the beginning of his relationship with Daisy prior to the war, but since then, he has not been truly happy. He has been heartbroken for so many years that his vision of Daisy has been altered, and Daisy has become over-idealised, because the harder his path to happiness became, the more he relied on his memories of his happiness to keep going forward; this process has damaged Gatsby mentally to the point that Daisy has become his only reason to keep living.

After a long, long wait, Gatsby at last has the chance to take Daisy back, thanks to the meeting that Nick arranges between them. And after the meeting, Gatsby and Daisy begin their affair; it is fair to say that Gatsby has now accomplished his goal, and he is happier than ever, but after some time goes by, new problems start to arise, and these problems will inevitably break their affair.

Daisy and Gatsby start having trouble with their relationship when Daisy realises how much suffering she has caused in Gatsby, which Daisy realises when she cannot meet the expectations that match Gatsby's conception of her: "“Oh, you want too much!’ she cried to Gatsby. ‘I love you now—isn't that enough? I can't help what's past.’ She began to sob helplessly. ‘I did love him once—but I loved you too’” (p. 132). Daisy feels trapped inside her affair with Gatsby, and this starts to break the recently-reunited couple, but there is another key factor that will mean the absolute break of their relationship.

When Gatsby tries to talk Daisy into eloping with him, she refuses to do so. It is in this section of the story that we find the strongest evidence of the difference between Gatsby and Daisy, which is their vision about love and relationships overall. Gatsby was ready to leave everything behind to create a new life beside Daisy, but when Daisy faces this dilemma, she hesitates. She is unsure about her feelings for Gatsby because she has never had to deal with love the way Gatsby has. Her life has not been focused on love, but instead it has centred on gaining financial and emotional stability. The life she has chosen would seem empty for a normal person, given that Daisy's life features no real feelings apart from safety, and her marriage is just a contract between her and Tom by which they are a couple from the society's point of view, but in actuality they are just two people that happen to live in the same house and have a daughter.

After this incident, Gatsby and Daisy's affair is still going, but when Tom confronts Gatsby on the origins of his fortune, and pressures Daisy into deciding between them, Daisy finally chooses Tom over Gatsby: "But with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up, and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, towards that lost voice across the room. 'Please, Tom! I can't stand this anymore'" (p. 134). This is the event that marks the breaking of their affair, and serves as another proof of Daisy's true intentions, which force her to stick to her marriage with Tom; in Fryer's words: "Nick's simple descriptions of Daisy reveal her genuine love for Gatsby, her intense fear of emotions in general, and her craving for stability [...] her fear of emotions and her need for stability make her cling to her unsatisfactory marriage to Tom" (p. 158). This second break of their relationship shatters Gatsby internally, taking him back to the beginning of his journey.

Soon thereafter, Tom sends Daisy with Gatsby back to their home, and in their ride through the Valley of Ashes, Daisy runs over Myrtle, killing her. Making a last sacrifice for his love to Daisy, Gatsby decides to take the blame for the accident, proving for the last time that his love for Daisy is impossible to fade; Gatsby is a prisoner of his own passion, and there is nothing he can do to forget Daisy. The love he professes for her surpasses any circumstance; not even the fact that Daisy chose Tom over him could stop him from loving her.

Myrtle's death will be a death sentence to Gatsby, as Tom tells George that it was Gatsby who killed her, not Daisy. George, devastated for his loss, goes after Gatsby with the intention of killing him; he finds him in his own house and shoots him dead, after which he commits suicide. At Gatsby's funeral there are only a few people present, including a few servants, the West Egg postman, the minister overseeing the service, Owl Eyes, and Henry Gatz, Gatsby's father. The absence of both Daisy and Tom comes to show just how different the mindsets of Gatsby and Daisy are; if we were to imagine Daisy's funeral, we would picture it being crowded, as she had a much more stable social status than Gatsby had, due to her life-long presence in the high society, whereas Gatsby had just entered it. But apart from that, it is certain that Gatsby would have attended it, and would have certainly felt completely devastated by this incident.

In turn, we find out that Daisy either does not have the guts to attend Gatsby's funeral, or she just does not care about Gatsby enough to be present. Either way, her attitude reveals once again how the way she acts and thinks is completely different from Gatsby's, exposing how the societies in which both Daisy and Gatsby have grown up are essentially incompatible. Daisy is cold-hearted at core, and even though originally she came close to Gatsby's perspective, in the end their true selves proved to be unable to work together, due to their essential differences.

Conclusions

The analysis of love and relationships that has been carried out in this dissertation on Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* has focused on the contraposition of the two main perceptions of love that have been studied in two of the main characters of the novel, that is, Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan, using the other main characters as a support for either perspective, being Nick Carraway, Jordan Baker and George Wilson the characters identified with a perception of love similar to Gatsby's, and Tom Buchanan and Myrtle Wilson representing Daisy's vision of love.

Although there are several differences between all of these characters, they are all located in the same period of North American history; *The Great Gatsby* was set in a socio-historical context that matched the reality that Fitzgerald was experiencing at that time, meaning that the novel's context identifies with the Roaring Twenties. Regardless of their social status, each character in this novel chose freely the way in which they treated love when it came to an interpersonal relationship, which indicates that their perception of love was not entirely defined by their economic stability.

After analysing each character individually we come to the conclusion that every character had one of two perceptions of love, and depending on their partner's perspective on this subject, their relationship develops or breaks due to a love affair that is initiated by one of them. The only exception to this pattern is Jordan Baker and Nick Carraway's romance, which was cut short due to the circumstances that surrounded their relationship from its beginning, which led this relationship to an emotional distancing between both individuals. Although this distancing could have been fixed under normal circumstances, this brief relationship is broken by Nick, who decides to return to the Midwest after Gatsby's death.

Regardless of how their relationship ended, Nick and Jordan serve as the example of a couple that maintain a modern perception of love, when compared to other characters. This means that both Nick and Jordan had a more complex idea of love than some of the other characters described in the novel, and both of them identified love as the main objective of beginning a relationship with each other, leaving economic stability as a secondary matter; this does not necessarily imply that they would be completely happy being poor and together – indeed, they belong to the middle class –, but they would be able to love each other in a different socio-economic situation.

The other two formal relationships featured in this novel, one being Daisy and Tom Buchanan's marriage and the other being Myrtle and George Wilson's marriage, follow a similar pattern; we may assume that, at the beginning of their relationships, both couples loved each other, but this love quickly faded. In Daisy and Tom's case, this love fades due to the fact that love is not pictured as an important matter in a relationship, and sexual satisfaction was not pictured as a necessity in a marriage, thus leading Tom to have extra-marital sexual relationships while Daisy simply accepted the reality of her husband's affair.

In Myrtle and George's case, their marriage breaks due to the economic status of the couple. Both of them are really poor, but regardless of their situation Myrtle wants to have what the members of the high society have, and in order to achieve that she starts an affair with Tom, who can provide her with everything she wishes for. Myrtle's consumerist desires are beyond her willingness to love George, and so she betrays her husband in order to receive gifts from an incredibly rich man who can afford her expensive whims, leaving love aside and fully embracing the life style of the high strata of society, focused on money above everything else.

As we can appreciate in these two marriages, the stronger individual is the one who holds a more detached approach to love. Thanks to the analysis of the perception of love in the Victorian era, a parallel can be drawn between this perception of love and the way these characters view their marriage, as during the Victorian era marriages were closer to a contract than they were to an interpersonal relationship; this means that a married couple that maintains this perception cares much more about obtaining economic stability than about their feelings, which are relegated to a secondary level.

Tom and Daisy's marriage is the perfect example of how a Victorian marriage would look like in the 1920s; as has been stated before, their marriage prioritised wealth over happiness and love, and both Tom and Daisy are fine with this. The fact that they begin the novel as a married couple and they remain together at the end implies that, although their perception of love may seem inhumane, it works for them. In George and Myrtle's relationship we see the first example of the opposition to the Victorian view of love and its modern perspective, which emphasised the compatibility of a couple over their economic stability. The stronger member of the marriage is Myrtle, who could be identified with the Victorian idea of love, whereas George is the weak part of the marriage, due to his emotional sensibility, which identifies him with a more modern concept of love.

The fact that the stronger individual always has a Victorian perception of love and relationships is not a coincidence. Their desensitization makes them more resistant to emotional damage, as they not only choose to limit their expression of love, but they also minimise the role feelings play in their lives, which allows them to be internally stronger when compared to a sensitive person.

Taking Daisy and Tom's marriage as an example of the Victorian idea of love, and Nick and Jordan's romance as the modern concept of love, now the focus is on Daisy and Gatsby's affair. Their affair is different from Tom and Myrtle's due to the existence of a past relationship between them which certainly marks both of them. In their affair we see a very clear fight between the Victorian perspective, embodied by Daisy, and the modern conception of love, which is represented by Gatsby. The difference between this relationship and the rest is that, in this case, both individuals struggle to become the strong one, meaning that both their perspectives are in a constant fight for power; this fight will inevitably damage the affair, forcing the end of the relationship.

Gatsby's love for Daisy is pictured by Nick as the ultimate exercise of love, a passion so intense that drives Gatsby almost insane, and which will ultimately be the cause of his death. Although Nick's depiction of Gatsby may be altered due to the inaccuracy of his memories, the way in which every character experiences love is presumably the same than the one that is described by Nick, indicating that even if Gatsby's love was not as intense as it has been described, at least his perception of love remained unchanged, validating the idea that Gatsby had a more romantic view of love than Daisy.

Gatsby's death symbolises the death of love itself, the victory of a practical interpretation of feelings over its development. The Victorian perspective manages to survive due to its stability against the spontaneous nature of the modern idea of love, which needs a more human approach in order to succeed. The reason behind it is that possessions and wealth always stay the same, and their value does not usually change with time, whereas love is constantly varying; its value may increase or decrease over time and it is not worth the same for everybody, which makes it difficult to measure.

The Victorian mentality was focused on safety, trying to provide a better future for the younger generations; and although its purpose is noble, its execution proves to be alienating. Those who follow this perception often disable their capability of feeling just so they can live without truly loving or being loved, in return for a safer, more luxurious life. Directly confronted with this idealization, the modern perception of marriage tends to be more romantic, and does not rely on money or possessions, but instead needs to have intense love as the motor of the relationship. This means that the key to the success of this kind of relationship is the reciprocity of love, which is precisely what we do not find in this novel.

The simplicity of the Victorian perspective turns it into a stronger relationship overall, but it also makes it more empty. There is no affection in the couples, no more interests between them other than money and possessions; in contrast, relationships based on love are more wholesome and promote happiness within the couple. Unfortunately, love is harder to maintain than money, and also harder to balance. That is the reason why Gatsby and Daisy's affair did not work out; their perception of love was different, placing Gatsby on the weaker side of the relationship.

His fixation on getting back with Daisy is originally motivated by love, but as he introduces himself into the higher strata of society he experiences the ideology of this section of society, which has little interest in love. When he finally reunites with Daisy, he realises that he is unable to persuade Daisy into accepting his perspective on love, due to the fact that her perception of marriage is rooted in the society she has grown up in, and their ideas prove to be incompatible, making futile any attempt of establishing a relationship. The modern, romantic perspective of love ultimately succumbs to the Victorian concept of love that prioritises stability over happiness.

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