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## Trabajo Fin de Grado

# **Daisy Buchanan, a Beautiful Little Femme Fatale in *The Great Gatsby***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*The Great Gatsby*, written by Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald in 1925, is considered as one of the great American novels, and remains a must of American literature. There are many reasons that could explain the fascination with Gatsby, and one of them is of course Fitzgerald's ability to bring forth all of the suffering that Gatsby experiences throughout the novel, in such a way that the reader is indeed bound to sympathize with him. Despite the fact that he is a handsome and wealthy young man, Jay Gatsby lacks the fulfillment of his dream, his ultimate aspiration. This dream is not an ephemeral concept or an abstract idea but is embodied in a person—Daisy Buchanan, who also stands for social ascent and wealth, and in whom Fitzgerald articulates the frustrated dream of being able to control time, of being able to repeat a bygone past, which is Gatsby's main obsession. By trying to fulfil his dream, Gatsby ends up encountering his own murder while Daisy goes far away and continues with her life, apparently untouched.

There have been several discussions about the reasons for Gatsby's tragic downfall: that everything surrounding him was rotten from the beginning, that he was just an alienated poor boy despite all his efforts, or that he was basically corrupt from the beginning. Part of this can be associated to determinism and seen as a criticism of a materialistic society where upward and downward mobility can often cost a high price. But there is one variable that has not been previously considered in criticism of *The*

*Great Gatsby*: I do believe—and will argue throughout this essay—that there is only one reason, one person to blame for his downfall, and that is Daisy. *The Great Gatsby* has been studied from many different perspectives, but in my view, not enough attention has been paid to the figure of Daisy as a femme fatale. The reader can either interpret her as an innocent being—even too simple at times—, a materialistic girl that likes the glimmering lights of her wealthy surroundings or, as the way this paper is going to present her: a femme fatale, the siren song of the American Dream, which has mesmerized and enchanted Gatsby, so much so that they, both Daisy and the American Dream, become responsible for his downfall and death.

Therefore, the paper is going to focus on the way the narrator, Nick Carraway, describes Daisy, which serves to represent her as both femme fatale and American Dream, and also present a brief introduction of the period—the Roaring 1920's, which is the context in which *The Great Gatsby* takes place and is essential to our understanding of the text. The paper will later offer a study of the two major characters, Daisy and Gatsby, presenting the way they are portrayed in the novel as well as some of their relevant characteristics, in order to try to understand Daisy's character and her influence upon Gatsby. The point of this analysis is to offer a different perspective on *The Great Gatsby* that starts from the view of an unattainable and destructive American Dream after the First World War, once attainable and full of promise, and how this is played out in the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy, the femme fatale of the novel.

## **THE FEMME FATALE PORTRAYED IN *THE GREAT GATSBY***

### Nick Carraway's account

*The Great Gatsby* has Nick Carraway as a first person narrator, so it is essential to keep in mind that all the events, accounts and points of view that are presented are Nick's impressions. Nick is a homodiegetic and extradiegetic narrator; he is a character in the story he is telling. However, there are some instances where the narrator is someone external to the story, that is, an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator.

By using this 'doubleness' in the narrator account, Fitzgerald's description of Daisy "comes to us through his filter" (Lewis 44). Nick may be biased and contradictory at some points of the novel regarding her, as he either shares Gatsby's attraction to her or gives an impression of complete dislike. In fact, when he first goes to visit the Buchanans after his arrival in the East, he makes it clear that he is visiting two old friends that he does not really know (Fitzgerald 6). That dislike towards Daisy will be more or less present until the middle of the novel, slowly fading when Nick sees Daisy crying after finally reencountering Gatsby, although Nick never really gets to know her.

*The Great Gatsby* is a written account of a period of time in Nick's life, the time when he met Jay Gatsby after deciding to move to the West to try to earn a living there. Already at the beginning of the story, Nick makes this clear, as he seems to be the writer

of a book, “presumably the same book that we are reading” (Garrett 110), pointing out that Gatsby is the one character who gives the title to his book (Fitzgerald 3). It is interesting to point out here that as the writer of the book, Nick is the one responsible for its title. Nick will refer to Daisy as the “golden girl” and for the male protagonist, he will use “great Gatsby”. The fact that he chooses these two adjectives is relevant, as they show Nick’s preferences and admiration for Gatsby, while in Daisy’s case, he clearly states that she is desirable, the woman who attracts men.

So, according to the narrator, things have already happened—he has already experienced the events he is sharing and has reacted to them too. But, there are also several elements of the story that are clearly in the present, as if Nick was introducing “present judgments of past actions” (Garrett 110) or assertions of a present memory when he decides to recall some past event as if it was happening right at that moment. So, as George Garrett also explains, *The Great Gatsby* has “two separate but simultaneous time schemes” (110)—the time of the events described and the time of the composition of their description.

This inevitably makes the reader’s attention focus on the aftermath, emphasizing Nick’s reactions rather than the actions that took place. In fact, this happens because the book is not yet finished, something the reader finds out in Chapter 3, when Nick comments that he has been reading over what he has written so far (Fitzgerald 37). This additional sense of time, which could be referred to as the time of revision, “asserts that

what is being reported has been carefully thought about and can be corrected if need be” (Garret 112).

This is why Nick’s descriptions of Daisy are so relevant in order to understand her nature—as the first person narrator that he is, he may be biased, but nevertheless, the way he depicts Daisy is the way he sees her after some time of reflection. Therefore, his account portrays her carefully, it is not based on present impulses or reactions. Kenneth E. Eble also points out another aspect of having Nick as the narrator, the fact that he uncovers for the reader the complete story by not following a straightforward chronology, which makes Daisy, as well as Gatsby, shadowy figures throughout the whole novel (93), therefore making Daisy and Gatsby mysterious characters.

As the novel advances, Nick is able to introduce the accounts of other characters in the novel, by using an indirect discourse telling Gatsby’s own story; or by using third person narrations from Jordan Baker, for instance when she is recalling the first time he saw Gatsby, who “looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at some time [...]. His name was Jay Gatsby” (Fitzgerald 48). Thus, Nick finds other styles appropriate to “the inner mystery and turmoil of the young (and mostly nonverbal) Gatsby” (Garrett 112). Fitzgerald’s style also contains some journalistic remainder when a third person account is employed when George kills Gatsby after his wife Myrtle—who is also Tom Buchanan’s lover—is murdered. Nick does not witness this event but it is nevertheless transferred to us. These stylistic

changes develop in the novel up to the point in which Nick is confident enough to wonder about Gatsby's last thoughts, stating that "he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream" (Fitzgerald 103).

### Daisy as a woman in the 1920's

As Frederick J. Hoffman brings to the forefront in his Preface, the decade of the 20's was "bounded [...] by a war and a depression" (ix), but it is usually considered as a tremendously gay period of time, of great opulence and great parties. In fact, the 1920's marked a difference between two Americas—"the older, simpler, more naive and idealist America and the bewildering, disparate, rootless, cynical America of the present" (Lewis 42). These two Americas in fact represent the division between the conception of the American Dream before the war and after it. This precarious society is the one in which we get to know one of our protagonists, Gatsby, who is in fact a dishonest businessman who has become wealthy because of his turbulent affairs—mainly illegal gambling and bootlegging.

Roger Lewis defends this idea of the two Americas, indicating the First World War as the turning point: "The laissez-faire democratic ideal that America has always believed is the product of an age when individual effort counted, when a man could rise by his own efforts, and when—if his affairs were not succeeding—he could at least



escape [...] ahead of the rest [...]. World War I shattered this vision” (41). Jay Gatsby is part of that ‘individual effort’ in which a man could make his own fortune, but he is corrupted as his affairs are not legal. He is a self-made man, different from the wealthy who have inherited their fortunes. While he is fighting in World War I, he uses his uniform as a disguise to be respected—mostly by Daisy—creating the false appearance that he is a respectable citizen, but the truth is that he has nothing else apart from that uniform he is wearing and a vision of himself.

Indeed, the decade’s nickname is known to be *The Roaring Twenties*, somehow suggesting the seemingly free and easy life that Americans lived then. It is in this easy life that the figure of the flapper can be found—a new type of woman who defied “the conventions [...] because of her poise, boldness, and freedom in dress and manners” (Rubio and García 3). These conventions were mainly the codes of social and moral conduct that had been present in previous generations, which the flappers interpreted as something repressive. They basically defied all the accepted conventions of feminine behavior. Daisy is of course an embodiment of this figure in *The Great Gatsby*, as she is an easy-going female who loves to flirt and to be admired.

It is clear that both the American Dream and the women of the decade had undergone a change after the First World War. Before the Great War, America was considered to be a land of limitless opportunities, a way to make one’s path—in other words, a land of prosperity. After the War, this vision became unattainable as well as

devastating, as *The Great Gatsby* exemplifies. Thus, Daisy, as the representation of that dream as well as a new woman of the 1920's, freed from previous repressions, becomes a force that Gatsby cannot reconcile.

## **REPRESENTING DAISY: TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS**

### The Golden Daisy as the Femme Fatale

In this section, I aim to prove Daisy's relation to a very popular figure in literature and other cultural manifestations: the femme fatale. In her study about the femme fatale, Erika Bornay quotes Ramón del Valle Inclán's words, clearly giving a definition of this type of woman: "la mujer fatal es la que se ve una vez y se recuerda siempre. Esas mujeres son desastres de los cuales quedan siempre vestigios en el cuerpo y en el alma. Hay hombres que se matan por ellas; otros que se extravían" (1). As I have mentioned in the Introduction, Daisy Buchanan is a character that can be seen as a very innocent simple girl or as a manipulative woman, quite selfish and self-centered. The latter is the view that I am going to discuss, for it has not been sufficiently acknowledged by the critics so far.

Considering the characteristics of a femme fatale and her origins, Eva Bru-Domínguez reports that a femme fatale "embodies traces of a myriad of powerful, as well as menacing, historical, biblical and mythical female figures, such as Cleopatra, Salome, or the Sirens; yet this wicked and barren creature is always imbued with an alluring beauty and rapacious sexuality that is potentially deadly to man" (50). The novel states that when Gatsby first had Daisy, an incarnation was complete—my interpretation is that a change happened in Gatsby, who felt wed to her forever.

In relation to the origins of the femme fatale, Allan Bell mentions Pollock, who “suggests that the original femmes fatales were the Sirens of Homer’s *Odyssey*, and that their allure was located in sound rather than sight. It was the *singing* of the sirens that drew men to their death not their appearance” (650). Sirens were not attractive per se, but there was something in their voice that made men sink. The same happens with Daisy, who is mainly desired and described by the use of her voice instead of her appearance, as we will see in more detail later.

Erika Bornay mentions the physical appearance that a femme fatale usually has, which includes some characteristics that have not really changed throughout time—they are supposed to have an ambiguous and disturbing beauty, being sensuous and attractive (3). She can also be sophisticated, with a very appealing appearance and with dark hair (Pérez 360). Daisy, with her “dark shining hair” (Fitzgerald 95), becomes the golden girl that every man admires, her glowing face leaves men breathless and even the light regrets leaving her pleasant face (Fitzgerald 11).

Apart from that reference to “her dark shining hair” (Fitzgerald 95), there are almost no other physical descriptions of Daisy in the text. However, cinematic representations have presented her as a blonde. In *The Great Gatsby*’s movie adaptations by Coppola (1974) and Luhrmann (2013), Daisy is represented as having short blonde hair. This would actually complicate the conception of Daisy being a femme fatale in these movies, as blonde hair has been traditionally connected to

“characteristics such as virtue, gentleness, and godliness” as well as an “exalted spiritual and sexual purity and chastity” (Shimmin). In contrast, dark-haired women have been associated with ideas of having sexually active roles or just being dangerous females—sometimes referred to as *femmes fatales*. Indeed, Daisy’s dark hair is one of the main characteristics that define her as a *femme fatale*, and in my view, it should not be replaced in any narrative, for it is essential to a full understanding of her character. Taking this into account, it would appear that the two movies—which are of course cultural manifestations related to their own specific context too, and both the 1970s and the 2010s are quite different from the 1920s in which the original was created—are trying to present a Daisy who is different from the one in the novel, one that is innocent and naive as represented by that blonde hair. Because of the prevalence of these very popular cinematic images, it is necessary to acknowledge the original view.

Even more than her physical appearance, which as has been mentioned does not offer much descriptive detail, Daisy’s voice plays a rather relevant role in the novel, because as Roger Lewis enhances, “Daisy’s voice has been described as the seductive, thrilling aspect of her” (50). She has a destructive power in her tone of voice—just like a siren—, her voice glows and sings to the men willing to listen to her. When describing her, Nick says that her voice was the kind

that the ear follows up and down as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth—but there was an excitement in her voice that men who

had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered Listen.”

(Fitzgerald 8)

It appears as if her voice was a spell that promises men everything they can imagine and more. Her voice is so magical that it can become a “wild tonic in the rain” (Fitzgerald 54), but, at the same time, it can also be used to manipulate people as Daisy knows very well how to play “murmurous tricks in her throat” (Fitzgerald 64). Gatsby is the one that finally reveals the secret of Daisy’s voice, when he says that “her voice is full of money,” which gives it an “inexhaustible charm that rose and fell” (Fitzgerald 76).

Daisy is well aware of the power of her voice and there are several instances in which the ways she uses this tool is shown. At the beginning of the novel, Nick describes her laugh as “an absurd, charming little laugh” and he draws attention to the way she looks at his face “promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had” (Fitzgerald 8). Just by using her voice and her eyes, she is able to look like an innocent girl but a desirable grown woman at the same time. She also has a very strong desire for attention, as Nick explains that he had heard that “Daisy’s murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming” (Fitzgerald 8). If this statement is analyzed, we confirm that Daisy is using her voice precisely to draw people closer to her, using that charm of hers.

Gatsby falls for her spell without remedy, because even when she has a cold, he thinks “her voice huskier and more charming than ever” (Fitzgerald 95). Gatsby is

attracted to a doomed fate by listening to this siren's speech. Indeed, Daisy's voice "held him most with its fluctuating, feverish warmth" but her "voice was a deathless song" (Fitzgerald 61), just like the ones the aforementioned sirens used to sing.

According to the words above, Daisy is not unaware of the power she has over Gatsby, she knows that Gatsby is mesmerized by her presence but she is just too selfish and childish to reciprocate his feelings in the same way. As Mario Vargas Llosa explains, "su egoísmo es tan genuino y natural como su carita de muñeca y nada tiene de extraño que sea incapaz de seguir a Gatsby en su quimérico empeño de abolir el pasado, renegando del amor que en algún momento debió sentir por su marido, Tom Buchanan" (97). She is just not interested in having anything more than an affair with Gatsby now that she is married.

Following this idea, Kattie Baker remarks that Daisy is coquettish and coveted, "the most desirable debutante, the ever-evading maid. She's warm, feverish, thrilling, intoxicating—a siren, an enchantress, a blossoming flower, [...] all bright eyes and a voice full of money—and of course she's the light, that green light, drawing men, mothlike, to her flame" (Baker). The fact that she attracts men to condemn them to her flame again brings to the forth the idea of her nature as a femme fatale. As a consequence, "Daisy's affections cannot be relied upon" (Baker), but this also makes her so desirable, as she is the "golden girl" (Fitzgerald 76) that Tom, Gatsby or even Nick wish to possess.

Daisy knows she is desired, she is a coquette and she likes that role, but she is also heartless in some moments, being able to destroy men precisely because of those acknowledgements, as well as being “atractiva, malvada y peligrosa” for them (Román Casas 5). As a femme fatale, she also has a “powerful and bewitching personality, which is yoked with disdain, coldness, unattainability, leading to male servitude and domination, and on to darkness, chaos, and death” (Bell 631).

That imperturbable nature has helped Daisy to come out with an absolutely perfect reputation among the young, rich and wild society she spends her days in. As Jordan Baker reflects in the novel, this may be because “she doesn’t drink. It’s a great advantage not to drink among hard-drinking people. You can hold your tongue and, moreover, you can time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don’t see or care” (Fitzgerald 50). Daisy is capable of such self-control because she does not want to leave anything to chance.

In fact, “Daisy’s voice on a clear artificial note” (Fitzgerald 55) is what Gatsby hears when they meet again after five years, a period of time that she describes as many years while Gatsby clearly states that it would have been “five years next November” (Fitzgerald 56). The fact that her memory is so blurred and that her voice has an artificial note proves that she is not as interested in the reencounter as Gatsby is, remaining rather cold towards the reencounter.



The fact that she preaches that the best thing for a girl is to be “a beautiful little fool” (Fitzgerald 13) is quite ironic because as it has been proved, she is no fool herself, for she is well aware of the things she does. This only reinforces the fact that most of the time she is playing the role of the innocent girl but she is by far much more intelligent than what she wants to show. Daisy is then able to play with Gatsby as she pleases and he is just enchanted by her—he lost her once and he realized he could not live without her. But Daisy, precisely because she is the embodiment of a femme fatale, did not need him at all. In the period they were apart—and before she got married—“she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside her bed” (Fitzgerald 96).

When a wealthy opportunity named Tom Buchanan appears, she does not hesitate, she marries Tom because Gatsby “was poor and she was tired of waiting” (Fitzgerald 83). This is what Gatsby thinks, that she married Tom because he had nothing to offer her. Tom gave her “a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars” (Fitzgerald 49) as a present, a valuable object she could not possibly resist to possess. It is true that the reader does not have Daisy’s point of view, but in fact, after Gatsby disappears, the novel also mentions that she was gay as ever (Fitzgerald 49), so her attachment to Gatsby did not have such a relevance to her. Those pearls

represent Daisy's greed and attraction towards wealth and Tom, the man that represents that wealth, which makes her "mad about her husband" (Fitzgerald 49).

Daisy's attraction to money is also exemplified when she visits Gatsby at his place, as she feels attracted towards "a toilet set of pure dull gold" (Fitzgerald 59), which she immediately starts to use for Gatsby's delight. Just in the same page, she starts crying because Gatsby's shirts are beautiful, but underneath that statement lies the acknowledgment that she is overwhelmed by too much wealth surrounding her, and that is the reason why she cries—appearing quite materialistic in this sense, as there is not an emotional implication for her tears.

She is wrapped up in a world of money that can fix everything, which made her and her husband careless people who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made" (Fitzgerald 114). She decides to stay with Tom, because they both like and understand the way their lives in the upper class work. In contrast, Gatsby is an idealist that just wants Daisy's love and that is why "she doesn't understand" what Gatsby is offering her (Fitzgerald 70).

At the end of the novel, Daisy disappears with Tom and their child, without attending Gatsby's funeral or even sending flowers. Nick informs the reader that they "had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them" (Fitzgerald 104), leaving everything behind—Daisy's implication in Myrtle's murder as well as Gatsby's

figure. Jay Gatsby does not kill for Daisy Buchanan, but he tries to protect her regardless the consequences, that is, taking the blame of a murder he did not commit. He is so trapped by her that he does simply not want to accept that he cannot repeat the past with her. He has been idealizing her for so long, as her muse, the woman who would be able to bring meaning to his life. But Gatsby is just a prisoner of her power as a femme fatale—she is able to attract him for five years, without their even being together.

#### Jay Gatsby's romanticized Daisy and failed American Dream

The femme fatale Daisy Buchanan is out of reach for Jay Gatsby, mainly “because his lowly origins pose a serious financial and social obstacle. Nevertheless, he is determined to win her” (Cullen 180) and that is why he decides to make his fortune and be part of her higher social class. Because he is not part of the traditional high class, he is tremendously careful with his speech, trying to imitate a cultivated man. This change in speech began when he was seventeen, at the time he met Dan Cody, “a millionaire copper magnate who hires him to serve as a steward-mate-skipper for his yacht” (Cullen 179). He almost inherited his fortune but he was just “left with his singularly appropriate education” (Fitzgerald 64) and an evolution from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby, a name he decided to change, therefore becoming an American self-made man, as he always had a very clear conception of himself .

According to Richard Anderson, *The Great Gatsby* offers a “clear and detailed command of the nuance of the American fascination with success—not crass material riches but fulfillment measure by realizing a dream” (29). Jay Gatsby’s unfulfilled dream is Daisy, the femme fatale that shatters his fate. Gatsby falls in love with Daisy and he imagines her as the perfect being. The fact that he idealizes her in this way only makes him blind—he spends five years idealizing a perfect woman who only existed inside his head. That mythical Daisy he was trying to reach out to was nothing but an illusion, an ideal woman built by Gatsby that “had gone beyond her, beyond everything” (Fitzgerald 61).

But what lies underneath that chimera is in fact the realization of the American Dream, as the novel itself has been considered “the quintessential expression of the American Dream” (Cullen 180). The American historian James Truslow Adams was the first one to coin the term in his 1931 book *The Epic of America* and, according to him, the meaning of the American Dream was the following:

that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by

others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.

(214-215)

However, these goals of a better future are not always achieved. Although the prospect of seemingly effortless riches may lead Americans to move mountains in pursuit of this dream, its fulfilment is not always possible, as frustration and violence often accompany the dream (Cullen 170). In the novel, in his quest for the American Dream—for Daisy—Gatsby pays for his dream with his life.

In order to be nearer his dream, Gatsby decides to adopt what “he believes are the appropriate mannerisms and surrounds himself with what he believes are the right props” (Resneck 63), that is, by such wealth and manners that he appears to belong to Daisy’s social status. However, as Sergio Daniel Dutto explains, “ser millonario para Gatsby es un medio, no un fin. Si la primera ley del amor cortés es que la legislación pasional está por encima de todos los códigos civiles, al lector, como a Carraway, no le importa desentramar cuánto whisky contrabandó Gatsby para ser millonario” (3). Gatsby has ‘new money’ and everything he buys has a purpose: to win Daisy. When Gatsby “buys his fantastic house, he thinks he is buying a dream, not simply purchasing property” (Lewis 51), a dream that he has believed for five years. In fact, when Daisy finally visits Gatsby’s house, “he revalued everything [...] according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real” (Fitzgerald 59).

But Daisy does not just symbolize the American dream. The first time Nick Carraway sees Gatsby at the end of his dock, Nick does not really see Gatsby face to face, he just has the impression that Gatsby is trying to reach out a distant green light. He is trying to hold onto a distant dream, Daisy Buchanan, who lives on the opposite shore. The green light clearly embodies Gatsby's dream—his love for Daisy as well as his hopes for a fulfilled future next to his dream, which will later turn into dust. But when Daisy and Gatsby visit his place, the green light cannot be seen, as if its significance “had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. [...] His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one” (Fitzgerald 60). The green light has an almost fantastic embodiment in the novel but since Gatsby is with Daisy, he realizes that some ‘magic’ element has been now lost forever, as that green light will just remain a light.

Since Gatsby has loved Daisy for so long, their love—or his love—is founded upon the feelings from the past. This is the reason why Gatsby shows this “insistence on being able to repeat the past” (Lewis 48). Indeed, he has a really hard time separating his vision of a perfect maiden, embodied in the figure his beloved, from the real Daisy, who is a married woman and a mother. His insistence on being able to repeat the past is therefore understandable, as he wants to bring back his maiden, his ideal pure woman, not a real human being that got married and had a baby with another man. It could be

said that his idea of the past is closely related to his hope to bring it back, as hope “rests on confidence not so much in the future as in the past. It derives from early memories—no doubt distorted, overlaid with later memories” (Cullen 184).

Jay Gatsby seems to be a remainder of an old knight too, someone who is on a quest to win his maiden’s love. But this maiden is in fact a femme fatale, and so the “knight is deflected from his quest by a beautiful woman who lures him to moral and physical destruction” (Pérez Martínez 358). For example, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the beautiful femme fatale “retrasa la tarea del caballero y hace que incumpla sus votos como caballero” (Pérez Martínez 360). The same can be said of Daisy, who also works as a disturbing element for Gatsby with her presence, who is led to a fatal end. As it has been mentioned, the great conception of himself that Gatsby had is shattered by Daisy’s influence as a femme fatale.

But his failure, losing himself while pursuing his dream, also connects to the failure of the American dream, because without Daisy, without the dream, Gatsby has no purpose in life. *The Great Gatsby* makes it clear that dreams are destroyed in an unavoidable sense as they are just that, dreams. Indeed, the last paragraph of the novel reflects on the idea that “all of our great dreams are grounded in impossibility: we progress toward that which we want, but the natural movement of live is retrograde—we die” (Lewis 56). Gatsby tried so hard to reach out for a dream, a dream he really believed in, because he thought it was just in front of him, that was so close to him. But

his dream was indeed grounded in impossibility. Although “he had come a long way [...] 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” (Fitzgerald 115).



## **CONCLUSION**

Daisy Buchanan is the embodiment of the alluring yet irrecoverable American Dream in her role as the femme fatale of the novel. She possesses all the characteristics that define said figure in literature: her siren song, her dark hair and that air of 'attraction' around her. She casts her spell on Gatsby, just as the American Dream had cast its spell over an entire generation, and from that moment on, she becomes his obsession, the very chimera he longs for throughout the novel. He rejects the idea of the impossibility of repeating the past, refusing to accept that both his concept of the American Dream and his relationship with Daisy have undergone an immutable change, in much the same way that society of The Roaring 20's refused to accept their new reality after The Great War.

Daisy Buchanan is described as the golden girl by Nick Carraway, admired and desired by everyone—a reality she very much likes to live in. She represents the femme fatale that comes into Gatsby's life to ruin it completely. He thinks that by being wealthy and respected, his dream will come back to him but that dream, that golden girl, was already behind him. In fact, it may never have existed at all, for as this paper has attempted to demonstrate, Daisy is not the perfect maiden but a rather manipulative and greedy woman. Gatsby's idealized vision of Daisy is also related to the naive vision he had of the American Dream, which was as unreal as the one he had of his femme fatale.

I do believe that a study of *The Great Gatsby* needed this approach, focusing on the female character, for Daisy's power is an element that cannot be avoided in any kind of analysis of the novel. Her influence upon Gatsby seems to be limitless, and she determines the whole development of the narrative. All in all, *The Great Gatsby* is a novel about a man's downfall because of his inability to let go of a femme fatale and a dream, as well as his insistence on believing rather naively that the past is recoverable. He had a splendid vision of himself in a society where everything seemed to be possible, but that was just an illusion.

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