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LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF THE *AMERICAN DREAM'S* TRANSFORMATION IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY*

The evolution of the *American Dream* in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is reflected throughout the novel's language, shifting from a dynamic verb of aspiration to a static noun of material possession. This change represents a movement from moral idealism to the moral emptiness and hypocrisy hidden beneath the glamour of the Jazz Age [5, p. 197]. One of the key linguistic features of this transformation is the artificial refinement of Jay Gatsby's speech. In the following example, when Jay Gatsby addresses Nick, he says: *Good morning, old sport. You're having lunch with me today and I thought we'd ride up together* [3, p. 69], Fitzgerald presents Gatsby's affected aristocratic manner of speaking. The recurring catchphrase *Old Sport* acts as a linguistic mask that obscures his lower-class origins and helps create the image of an aristocratic gentleman [1, p. 70]. Fitzgerald structures Gatsby's speech in a smooth and carefully organized way that creates an impression of confidence and social ease. The direct statement: *You're having lunch with me today* assumes agreement in advance, suggesting Gatsby's desire to control social situations and appear naturally authoritative. Meanwhile, the phrase *we'd ride up together* introduces a more personal and cooperative tone, making the interaction sound relaxed and friendly. This balance between control and friendliness reflects Gatsby's effort to maintain the image of a sophisticated and socially secure gentleman.

This artificial style is contrasted with the aggressive and dominant discourse of Tom Buchanan, whose language reflects the established power of the traditional aristocracy [1, p. 70-71]. For example, when Tom speaks about his move to the East, his language is filled with verbs expressing possession and physical dominance: *I've got a nice place here... It belonged to Demaine, the oil man* [3, p. 10]. In this example, the linguistic focus is on ownership and the inheritance of "Old Money" status, reinforcing the concept of the *Dream* as a fixed state of "having" rather than "doing." Tom's sense of superiority is also shown through his physical presence, which Nick sees as a kind of bodily dominance. This is reflected in the idea that he is: *just because I'm stronger and more of a man than you are*, which highlights Tom's belief in natural male and physical superiority rather than direct speech. A similar attitude appears later in Tom's conversation with Gatsby: *I don't think there's much gas, he objected. Plenty of gas, said Tom boisterously... You can buy anything at a drug store nowadays* [3, p. 128]. Tom's confident and dismissive tone reflects his belief that money can solve any problem instantly. The indefinite pronoun *anything* exaggerates the limitless power of wealth, while the casual certainty of his speech demonstrates the privilege and material security associated with the old aristocracy. Through Tom's language, Fitzgerald presents material possession as both a source of comfort and a form of social authority and dominance.

The transition from humanity to materiality is further represented through the strategic use of color symbolism and sensory narratives. The novel contains a rich system of colors in which each shade carries multiple meanings. Green symbolizes both hope and greed [4, p. 514]. The symbol first appears as something distant and unclear when Nick observes Gatsby

stretching toward *a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock* [3, p. 24]. In this moment, the distance of the light emphasizes the unattainability of Gatsby's dream and the fragile nature of his aspiration, which is based on illusion instead of reality. Later, the meaning of green shifts more clearly toward hope and emotional fulfillment when Gatsby points across the bay and says: *If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay… You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock* [3, p. 99]. Here, the green light becomes a stable symbol of desire and imagined closeness to Daisy, representing both longing and the belief in a future union. At the same time, this hope is inseparable from obsession, suggesting that aspiration itself is already tied to a form of greed.

Yellow, in turn, represents wealth but gradually becomes associated with death and decay [4, p. 514]. This is clearly reflected in the description of Gatsby's car: *It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel… with a labyrinth of windshields that mirrored a dozen suns* [3, p. 69]. The excessive brightness and metallic shine emphasize material excess and visual display of prosperity. Similarly, Gatsby's station wagon is described as a *brisk yellow bug* [3, p. 43], reinforcing the connection between yellow and visible, performative wealth. However, Fitzgerald later subverts this meaning by associating yellow with emptiness and decay, as seen in this example: *They look out of no face but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose* [3, p. 26]. In this image, the *yellow* color in the spectacles is removed from any connection to wealth or vitality and instead becomes part of an empty, lifeless structure. The absence of a face emphasizes dehumanization, while the *nonexistent nose* reinforces the idea of spiritual and moral void beneath the surface of material imagery.

Similarly, the repeated use of the color white in descriptions of Daisy's house suggests shallowness and ruthlessness beneath the appearance of purity [4, p. 515]. This structural hypocrisy is linguistically established the moment Nick first views the Buchanan estate: *Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red and white Georgian Colonial mansion overlooking the bay* [3, p. 9]. Fitzgerald uses the positive adjective *cheerful* and the traditional *red and white* color scheme to create an impression of warmth and stability. However, the adjective *elaborate* also hints at artificiality and excessive wealth, revealing the contrast between the attractive appearance of the house and the emotional coldness hidden beneath it.

A significant example of this detachment appears in the description of Daisy and Jordan: *They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house* [3, p. 10]. The simile *as if they had just been blown back* implies a lack of agency, presenting the women as passive and weightless figures rather than fully grounded individuals. Through this imagery, Fitzgerald constructs a semantic field of wealth and luxury, where Gatsby's excessive lifestyle, frequently emphasized through polysyndeton, is contrasted with the emotional emptiness and moral decline of the upper class.

Another important aspect of the novel is the commodification of identity, or what may be described as the reduction of human identity to material value, where human attributes are linguistically transformed into economic assets. Early in the novel, Nick describes his first interaction with Daisy: *I looked back at my cousin who began to ask me questions in her low, thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again* [3, p. 12]. Here, Fitzgerald relies on auditory imagery and an intricate musical metaphor. By comparing her speech to a finite *arrangement of notes that will never be played again*, the language fills her voice with an

ephemeral, rare value, hinting at scarcity and exclusivity. This subtle use of sound prepares the reader for the more obvious commodification presented later in Chapter 7, when Gatsby explicitly states: *Her voice is full of money* [3, p. 128]. Linguistically, this famous climax uses synesthesia by combining the auditory quality of a voice with the abstract concept of financial value, thereby connecting Daisy's identity entirely to her social and economic status.

This materialistic perception of Daisy is also reinforced in earlier scenes that reveal her dependence on wealth and social security. For example, when she momentarily rejects the pearls, she says: *Take 'em downstairs and give 'em back to whoever they belong to. Tell 'em all Daisy's change' her mine. Say 'Daisy's change' her mine!* [3, p. 82]. However, this emotional protest is unstable and short-lived, as the pearls – symbols of material wealth and social status – are quickly returned to her possession. This shift is confirmed in the following description: *We gave her spirits of ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress and half an hour later when we walked out of the room the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at five o'clock she married Tom Buchanan* [3, p. 83]. The quick return to material comfort and her immediate acceptance of marriage show that Daisy's choices are mainly guided by money and security rather than real feelings. In this material and money-obsessed society, characters are often described through contrasting fleshy and metallic language, showing how people gradually become viewed as commodities rather than human beings [6, p. 473].

Fitzgerald deepens this critique through the industrial geography of the Valley of Ashes, which acts as a spatial symbol of socioeconomic decay. In describing this bleak landscape, the text employs a striking combination of personification and paradoxical agricultural similes. In the text it is noted: *This is a valley of ashes – a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air* [3, p. 26]. The juxtaposition of *ashes* with the verb *grow* and the noun *wheat* subverts a typical symbol of life, fertility, and the traditional agrarian *American Dream* into an unnatural image of industrial waste and desolation. This linguistic distortion emphasizes that the excessive wealth of places like East Egg directly results in a grim, barren byproduct, effectively mirroring the moral decay and human cost underlying the pursuit of material wealth.

Moreover, the narrative voice itself reflects a delicately poised ambiguity, since Nick Carraway remains both enchanted and repelled by the materialistic world around him [2, p. 611]. This inner conflict reaches its climax in the stylistic synthesis of the novel's closing lines: *So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past* [3, p. 193]. The alliteration of repeated b-sounds creates a rhythmic and heavy cadence that imitates the physical struggle of rowing against a powerful current. At the same time, the use of dynamic and passive verbal structures *beat, borne* emphasizes the endless, repetitive, and ultimately futile nature of the *American Dream* in a society that has replaced moral values with material obsession. As a result, Fitzgerald portrays the *Dream* not as a source of fulfillment, but as a broken American ideal trapped in an endless cycle of illusion and disappointment [5, p. 198].

In conclusion, the style of *The Great Gatsby* reflects the decline of the *American Dream*. Fitzgerald moves from language filled with life, music, and movement to language focused on money, materialism, and industrial imagery. This change shows how the values of the Jazz Age have become corrupted. The novel ultimately leaves the reader with a profound sense of

disillusionment: once human identity and aspiration are reduced to commodities, possessions, and surfaces, the dream of progress can no longer move forward. Instead, it is drawn into a continuous pull of memory and retrospection that prevents any real sense of forward movement.

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