An old world is collapsing and a new world rising; we have better eyes for the collapse than for the rise, for the old one is the world we know.

(John Updike)
CHAPTER IV
The Brave New World

In *The Great Gatsby* the enchantment of the American dream and the vision of the ideal become an inexhaustible mystery; while its luminescence continues to allure, the dream must wither all too soon and the American promise degenerate into sinister economic possibilities resulting in spiritual squalor and an end to all idealism. It is symbolised in Gatsby's quest for the material possibilities of American life which can only be realised in the ferocious acquisition of money and what comes to be the absurd and grotesque accumulation of the appearance of wealth. Besides, the novel provides a new insight into the American past as material for the novel, past of the American experience that Fitzgerald with his consummate artistic skill and imagination transmuted into a viable literary art form. This stands out as a contrast to the earlier Jazz Age documentaries, *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*, along with many short stories based on the "flapper" and "philosopher" whose popular appeal lay in their deeply rooted contemporaneity.

Nostalgia, the imaginative recall of the American past, becomes the realised achieved experience in *The Great Gatsby*. The wistful yearning for the past turns into an intense moment of awareness "a form of consciousness" that
permeates the entire psychological ambience of the novel. More than any other American novelist, Fitzgerald epitomised the role of nostalgia that shaped and tempered American fiction of the Twenties, that "lucid moment of grace":

In plumbing this [nostalgia] sentiment to its depths, rather than merely using or abusing it, Fitzgerald dropped to the deep, dead-end centre of the American mind. He let his line out deeper than Hemingway and Twain, deeper than Mississippi and the Big Two-Hearted River, down to that sunken island that once mythically flowered for Dutch sailors' eyes. That was where the dream began, he tells us, that still pandered to men in whispers: that was where man held his breath in the presence of this brave new world. It was Fitzgerald dreaming of paradise, who was compelled to an aesthetic contemplation that made of Nostalgia that snare and delusion; a work of art.¹

In the dream of Gatsby the act of evocation of nostalgia, the hauntedness of the American past, embraces the "mythic vastness" of the American continent. The evocation of the mood of reminiscence melts into the disastrous though charming "echoes of the Jazz Age". The novel is not only an indictment of the contemporary American society of the vulgar and insensitive rich, but it is also an arraignment of American aspirations and American history. However, Gatsby is something more "than a mere exorcising of whatever false elements of the American dream Fitzgerald felt within himself; he becomes a symbol of America itself dedicated to 'the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty'".

Gatsby pays the price for his romantic illusions; he is made to realise the futility of the dream he pursues and which proves unworthy of him; "his passage of golden illusions to the bitterness of loss to ultimate exile and return" and to the final failure of the dream itself are part of this disenchantment. In Gatsby's negating the relativistic concepts of time, Fitzgerald reflects the literary modernist's preoccupation with it. In this sense, Gatsby is the exemplar of the negation of the concept of measurable, statistical unit of time. This is a motif which links Fitzgerald with the modernists:

In *Cherry Orchard*, Vanya remarks that the thermometer is broken; it is the precursor of many other moments -- the thermometers of *The Magic Mountain*, the compass Ike McCaslin lays aside in *The Bear*, the tilted clock on the mantle piece in *The Great Gatsby* -- where conventional instruments of measurement become useless".  

The concept of time evoked in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* is a significant propositional motif which illumines Gatsby's own transcendent ideas of time:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable  

.............

What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always
present.4

The quest for perfection which Gatsby
represents thus has a triadic structure:
'the paradisal condition is to be
attained by a threefold legerdemain
compromising the transformation of
space, the suspension of time and the
negation of Experience with its
distinction of good and evil'.5

It was in Europe that Fitzgerald began to work earnestly on
his new novel thereby adding a new perspective to it. Europe
led to his exploration and rediscovery of American
consciousness in terms of self and social experience. This
was incorporated in Gatsby's colossal illusions as "The
perpetual possibilities of perfection of the American
imagination; in Gatsby's vision of the ideal self Fitzgerald
proposed to stretch the American dream to its utmost
possibilities. The novel would be more than a mere
autobiographical projection and he would bring his mental

4. T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton", Four Quartets (London,

5. D.S. Savage, "The Significance of F. Scott Fitzgerald",
F.Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays,
and spiritual growth and maturity to bear on it making it perfect in design and structure. He was tired of "trashy imaginings" and being the author of This Side of Paradise, and wanted to start all over again. He was conscious of the artistic grandeur that The Great Gatsby had attained and his earlier novels lacked.

My new novel appears in late March [it was published on April 10, 1925], The Great Gatsby. It represents about a years work and I think its about ten years better than anything I've done. All my harsh smartness has been kept ruthlessly out of it -- its the greatest weakness in my work, distracting and disfiguring it even when it calls up an isolated sardonic laugh. I don't think this has a touch left.6

The romantic vision that Fitzgerald thought he would recapture in the imaginative re-possession of the past seems to be the essential truth that Gatsby quests after but it all ends up in self-delusion and betrayal of the American dream. He was full of self confidence when he wrote to Maxwell Perkins from France:

I think my novel is about the best American novel ever written. It's been a fair summer. I've been unhappy but my work hasn't suffered from it. I am grown at last.  

When the book was completed, and a perfect artistic achievement, he put all his faith in his powers as an artist and novelist:

The cheerfulllest thing in my life are first Zelda and second the hope that my book has something extraordinary about it. I want to be extravagantly admired again.

He blended the aural and visual, and the impact of the techniques of cinema is unmistakable: the close-up, the flashbacks of narratives are obvious illustrations, and the motif of film itself as a celluloid extension of an individual's adolescent illusions.

In The Great Gatsby the sequence of actions and events filter through the consciousness of Nick Carraway, the narrator commentator of the book. The ironic greatness of

7. Ibid., p.185.
Jay Gatsby itself owes to the intuitional apprehension and vision of Nick. The burden of Gatsby's illusions is borne back ceaselessly through the mind and understanding of Nick, who seems to hold and encompass the novel's lived experience and resultant sense of values that structures and magnifies our comprehension of the deeper meaning of the American dream and its potent mythic powers and fascination for the American mind. Carraway's status as an observer-narrator gives him the necessary detachment and distance to view events objectively. But he is a participant too. What he tells has a ring of truth because of his deeper awareness of having shared and experienced what he relates. The point of view, "I was there" adds credence to the reporting. Such a perspective created out of a doubleness that Nick himself reflects, "I was within and without simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life" are in consonance with his own desire and feelings. Maxwell Perkins understood Fitzgerald's reasons for using the new technique:

It is an extraordinary book, suggestive of all sorts of thoughts and moods. You adopted exactly the right method, of telling it, that of employing a narrator who is more of a spectator than an actor: this puts the reader upon a point of observation on a higher level than that on which the characters stand and
at a distance that gives perspective. In no other way could your irony have been so effective nor the reader have been enabled so strongly to feel at times the strangeness of human circumstance in a vast heedless universe.  

Fitzgerald had confessed to Mencken how much he owed to Conrad regarding this technique:

You mention in your review .... that conrad has only two imitators...., How about ....me in Gatsby (God! I've learned allot from him) ..... But his (Conrad's) approach and his prose is naturally more imitated than his material.

Carraway emerges as a sympathetic and humane narrator concerned with the fate of Jay Gatsby, aiming to retrieve whatever meaning and value Gatsby's apparently futile and self-deluding pursuits of the past have to offer. In the end Carraway's unfailing faith in Gatsby's illusions is

justified, and this is what sustains the novels ultimate burden as well as its glory.

It is Nick's point of view which determines the novel's movements, directs its moral vision and lends imaginative meaning to what the book is about. Without his repudiation of the Buchanan world of irresponsibility and carelessness, and upholding the value of Gatsby's passionate force and innocence of his dreams and illusions, his "romantic readiness" the moral centre of the novel would collapse, and fall to pieces. At the end of the book when Gatsby is dead, Nick Carraway knows that he (Gatsby) alone has been all right, that what eventually destroyed him was "what preyed on [him], what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams". Gatsby gains in depth and relevance because of the understanding extended to him by Nick for left to himself he has nothing to say; his consciousness of his own "Platonic conception of himself" becomes articulate in his narrator. Carraway's attitude as a spectator, his aesthetic detachment and his perceptive mind make him the most authentic narrator in probing Gatsby's mythic proneness, the disenchantment of his dream; his dream and his world dissolved in their own excesses; but the spectre-like insubstantiality of his romantic illusions and dream is the heady wine that turns into commercialism and corruption that finally destroys the "incorruptible dreams". Van Wyck Brooks maintains that the
Puritan tradition's undue emphasis on material values and consequent neglect of the aesthetic side of life had crushed American culture. The impalpable idealism of Gatsby makes him soar above reality and the inhuman "gross materiality" of Tom Buchanan which stands as a blatant contrast to that idealism:

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.11

Nick understands this, and alone apprehends that Gatsby is "worth the whole damned bunch put together". They both complement each other inspite of their opposed desires and tensions, and lend meaning to the tale. Nick is what rational experience, history and reason is, against Gatsby's innocent imagination, state of idealism, dream and timelessness; such is their allegorical representation:

Nick is like Wordsworth listening "to the still, sad music of humanity", while

Gatsby is like Blake seeing hosts of angels in the sun. The one can only look at the facts and see them as tragic; the other tries to transform the facts by an act of the imagination. Nick's mind is conservative and historical, as is his lineage; Gatsby's is radical and apocalyptic --- as rootless as his heritage. Nick is too much immersed in time and in reality; Gatsby is hopelessly out of it. Nick is always withdrawing while Gatsby pursues the green light. Nick can't hurt, but neither can he be happy. Gatsby can experience ecstasy, but his fate is necessarily tragic. They are two of the best type of humanity: the moralist and the radical.12

The images that most eminently reflect the American ideographs of wealth and beauty of life and social identity are strung together in a series of parties -- gorgeous, vulgar, incoherent -- that determine the inter-relatedness of characters in terms of evaluation and meaning they

represent. All the major events of the novel are organised and revolve round parties: They knit the chapters neatly together and set the mood and central conflict into motion.

In the opening chapter the dinner party at the Buchanans focuses their "freedom with money"; they "drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people.... were rich together". The life of the fabulously rich epitomised in Tom and Daisy Buchanan contrasts unfavourably with the glaring immediacy of the dismal effects of poverty on the garage keeper, Wilson in the Valley of Ashes. The party in the next chapter, of Tom Buchanan and Myrtle Wilson in their clandestine New York hide-out emphasises the impact of material grossness on the lives of the poor when wealth vulgarises the already coarsening poverty.

The following chapter further heightens the parties that already hint at the vast ostentation and pretentiousness of the rich in the earlier chapters. It serves to point to the culmination of Gatsby's party, the central action of the novel, the highest pitch of wealth displayed in its utmost gaudiness and splendour. It is Gatsby's thunderbolt appearance from out of nowhere to host fabulous parties to the rich "moths" of New York who come almost always uninvited and go away with the same nonchalance. Gatsby, in self-dramatisation is making supreme efforts to find social
moorings where paradoxically none can be found for it is a
rootless society. The parties are a counterpoise to Gatsby's
self-imposed isolation which is a legendary mark of his
self-sufficiency. He has a larger and more dramatic purpose
in having the elaborate decor of tinsel ostentation, however
brittle and jarring its glory; it is one of making
impressions of his greatness on Daisy Buchanan, this is his
"pathetic substitute for heroism"; to win her over, to
reunite his dreams of love to wipe out her five years of
married life with Tom because she is the only absolute
reality, the untarnished ideal to which all his dreams must
subserve.

Chapter IV of the novel again enlists the characters most
frequently present at Gatsby's parties. An oblique hint at
his "business connections" comes out at a private luncheon
party in New York where Nick, Gatsby and Wolfsheim are
present. There is something shady about Gatsby's wealth in
contrast with the Buchanan's inherited wealth though the
latter use theirs for vicious and vile purposes. All come to
share the sumptuous delicacies at Gatsby's party and nibble
at what wealth offers while he remains unconcerned, remote
and aloof -- the absentee host; though the wealth has been
acquired by dubious means there is in it a confused co-
ingling of idealism, love, beauty and lust; it is like the
American dream which impelled the seeker to scramble for
easy money like the early English merchants and Dutch adventurers.

The accent on wealth is symbolised in the "huge incoherent failure of a house" which Gatsby has bought to out-do everyone in the possession of wealth and to give to it the proximity of the dream, "so that Daisy would be just across the bay". This stunning revelation makes clear the fixation of Gatsby who is "delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendour"; womb is symbolic of life conceived in its minutest form; the social womb, however, from which an upstart like Gatsby catapults into sudden wealth and popularity is diseased at the very source and fails to turn out anything better than poison vitiating the whole moral ethos. America, like its wealth, is no longer innocent; it is corrupt.

Gatsby's intricate web of wealth is entangled in his love for Daisy. This relation springs up in the "party --sequence plot" in swift consequence of what has preceded and what climaxes at Nick's tea party where the dream of dreams meets and Gatsby and Daisy are reunited. However, the subsequent chapter makes veiled insinuations to the impossibility of their final reunion; it becomes clear that the dream would be dissipated and there would be disillusionment, even death. The party at the Plaza
announces the end of Gatsby's dream and expectations. The end comes in the eventual death of Myrtle, preceded by the ironic floating strains of Mendelssohn's Wedding March. This irony and symbolism forces the conclusion that in the vicious web of money no one is immune to the pervasive and endemic corruption and spiritual ruin: even the apparently unrelated Myrtle Wilson has been killed by Daisy, the wife of her paramour, Tom: they remained unknown to each other until Myrtle's death brought home the significance of their relationship; each bears the taint of moral deterioration. Myrtle's death is symbolic of the destruction of American yearnings for higher things even in the face of hindering poverty and absence of social moorings and status. She prefigures Gatsby's aspirations in the sense of possessing wealth inspite of humble origins. Whereas she is defeated and dies, he has a unifying imagination and dream that gives him an edge and a promise of survival over her; he is able to transcend the circumstances that she succumbs to. Her death therefore polarises the fact of wealth against the dreams, illusions and innocent hopes. Such is the significance of human relationship that Fitzgerald portrays in the novel -- the moral depravity and spiritual decrepitude that lies underneath. It marks an end to all parties; no social conviviality, no large impersonal gatherings or search for social identities; only unfulfilled
promises, unrealised hopes, broken dreams and unassuaged alliances.

The closing scene to the episode is a party for two, Tom and Daisy in a non-party mood sitting over:

a plate of cold chicken between them and two bottles of ale.... They weren't happy and neither of them had touched the chicken or the ale -- and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together.\textsuperscript{13}

The "plate of cold chicken" points to the ironic contrast of Myrtle's death and how it brings together money alliances. It is suggestive of utter callousness and moral indifference of the rich who "retreat into their wealth" when threatened by external reality, scorning love, idealism and all such positive values that give life spiritual contentment. Daisy has finally turned her back on Gatsby's love and has returned to Tom and completely identified herself with him, the symbol of corruption and desiccation of American wealth. All this while Gatsby waits outside, alone "standing there in the moonlight -- watching over nothing". It is a moment

\textsuperscript{13} The Great Gatsby, p.116.
of absolute sterility and intellectual vacuity experiencing the death of his dreams, an end to the "colossal vitality of his illusions"; nothing is left that can rejuvenate his illusions with meaning and purpose. The breakfast party of Gatsby and Carraway marks the end of Gatsby's unfulfilled aspirations and dreams of love. He relates to Nick the remainder of the story and the former misses his appointment with Jordan Baker implying perhaps another severance of a life time relationship. Gatsby is murdered followed by the death of George Wilson "and the holocaust is complete".

The pernicious manoeuvrings that lead to the disastrous end of Myrtle, Gatsby and George Wilson show only how the poverty-stricken aspirants for wealth seem to be reduced to death and nothingness; death of an illusion is the death of the self; these people had nothing to retreat into and death seems the only logical possibility for them because through the acquisition of wealth they had tried to elude the larger issues of life. On the other hand, wealth appears to solidly protect its possessors, Tom and Daisy. This is also the ironic symbolism of the nameless hundreds that flocked to Gatsby's parties but not to his funeral. Wealth was welcome for it gave social status and identity but not its sinister links and associations. The final chapter too is a party. But it is a non-party funeral of Gatsby where the guests are not turning up even though they have been invited. It is
only Owl Eyes who realises the absence, "Why, my God! They used to go there by the hundred".\textsuperscript{14} Gatsby is dead but the show goes on showing that the wheels of pollution set in motion by the forces of wealth continue moving unabated. Thus though the parties are over for Gatsby, and his dreams are buried with him, "the greatest, gaudiest spree in history" is on for America, and the story of the Golden West, the beginning of the American Dream continues in a different context.

The whole movement in \textit{The Great Gatsby} gains a transcendent meaning in Nick Carraway's leaving the Mid West for the East, for Long Island village of West Egg, a migration inevitable in the prevailing conditions of post-war America. The Eastward "push" was in that logic of the situation:

\begin{quote}
Instead of being the warm centre of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe -- so I decided to go East and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.140.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.3.
The golden West of glamour and excitement had moved to the East and with it "everybody". In the East, it was East Egg that lured the seeker with its widening horizons of the possibility of wealth; it was the "green light" of the rich while West Egg remained "the less fashionable of the two". The distinction between East and West Egg pertained to an unsightly contrast of wealth, inherited and established, and what the noveaux riche possessed. Such a contrasting and marked physical resemblance must have been a source of perpetual confusion to the gulls that fly overhead. To the wingless a more arresting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular aspect, shape and size.\(^\text{16}\)

West Egg with all the middle-class new wealth revealed the passionate intensity of Gatsby's dreams and urges; East Egg wealth had a compelling insistence of "bourgeois respectability" symbolised by Tom Buchanan.

The movement from one region to another does not materially change people from the old continuing actualities of which they have been parts; the social contours remain unerased.

\(^\text{16}\) Ibid., p.4.
The blurring distinctions of East and West Egg are the moral vacuity and hollowness for lack of hopeful dreams and desires, a complete absence of adolescent expectations. This makes Nick aware of the continual drift in people's lives, unrestful and incoherent; the interior of the Buchanan's house which sways in its glittering ambience is the most coherent symbol of this "drift":

A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine coloured rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea. The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. 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 ....... then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room, and the
curtains and the rugs and the two young
women ballooned slowly to the floor.\textsuperscript{17}

The "anchored balloon" imagery of drift here evokes a
fragile feeling about the creatures in the room living their
precarious lives without any purposeful direction, languid,
silent lives, desireless, unprotesting, with a languor and
sadness about them that is the East which allures only to
disillusion.

The nostalgia of expectations, the past full of thrilling
possibilities, not as a social reality but as a figment of
the mind, are what tantalize the imagination; inspite of its
betrayal the dream is always present. For Nick, however, the
dream ends with Gatsby's death, and the spiritually
enervated East becomes haunted so that he must return West,
to the Mid West of "the thrilling returning trains of my
youth" as he recalls. While there is no escape from this
stuffy stultifying atmosphere, there is a frantic quest in
vain for a place of rest and repose. He sees "that this has
been the story of the West, afterall -- Tom and Gatsby,
Daisy and Jordan and I were all Westerners, and perhaps we
possessed some deficiency common which made us subtly

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p.7.
unadaptable to Eastern life".\textsuperscript{18} He knows that Gatsby has been cheated and destroyed by the East. The present fact of the East ruined and desiccated the past dream of the West. Gatsby could not go "home". Nick follows the ethical imperative, "go home, go West." Gatsby had found his social status, his class identity in the East; whereas the West had only vitalised his dream, "Jimmy always liked it better down East. He rose to his position in the East".\textsuperscript{19} But Nick has his identity with the West where he must be "rid of his provincial squeamishness forever". Both cling to that West as the only reality they know and understand. The East they have known is the unstable, fluid ambivalent world of American wealth where past must be completely obliterated before new identities can be found, where Gatsby or Western sojourners are "Mr Nobody from Nowhere". But the East is also the image of new excitement engendered by money, that Nick must be initiated into through the books he bought" in red and gold like new money from the mint promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas, Morgan and Maecenas knew".\textsuperscript{20}

Gatsby's own house is that central symbol of the new thrill and exhilaration of money: "a marble swimming pool and more

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.141.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.134.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp.3-4.
than forty acres of lawn and garden". Bought from 'a brewer's deceased descendant', it is a distortion of American wealth and it fails to sustain the owner's identity, his status and his sense of belonging. It was a symbol of the external structure of his life and falls into obscurity when he dies. This obscurity in itself is an act of indifference, symbolic of the obscure indifference shown to him by the very people who had accepted his hospitality on numerous occasions. However, he drifted away from change to fixity, to something rooted in time and place but which tends to put the clock of history back, to retrieve a past wherein lies his future. He succeeds only in debasing the dream since it yields to the debilitating possibilities of wealth. His clinching of the idealised, pastoral past is only a possibility of the American imagination which is annihilated by the realism of industrialisation. It is Nick Carraway's Wordsworthian rejection of the wicked, citified East, and his return to the 'good' Mid West by implication a turning from contemporary moral shoddiness to an earlier pastoral point in history when men were close to Nature and therefore virtuous.21

The American peasant is not the real material for fiction, as Fitzgerald knew:

Either Lewis, Lardner, and myself have been badly fooled, or else using him as typical American material is simply a stubborn seeking for the static in a world that for almost a hundred years had simply not been static. Isn't it a fourth rate imagination that can find only the old property farmer in all this amazing time and land? 22

But such a longing Gatsby does fulfil. He dedicates himself to the faith and hope of the Edenic dream and its possibilities through wealth and its meretricious pursuits, everything for which Nick had expressed "unaffected scorn" and abomination. However, he remains dissociated and stands aloof from the very quest for status and identity which he epitomises in his dream and the facade that he erects of anonymity.

The world of East and West Egg is that nameless, anonymous world into which flow rich New York "moths" and butterflies who drift into Gatsby's lavish parties unannounced, non-

caring, non-knowing and having no identifiable names. But this is because his fantastic image must conform to his impersonal, unreal stature. He welcomes such people who affect his dream and are at the same time unaware of the inner compulsion that prompts him to host such fabulous parties:

There was music from my neighbour's house through summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while two motor boats slit the waters of the sound, drawing aquaplane over cataracts of foam. On the weekends his Rolls Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains.23

The exertion and competence with which the affairs are organised show his passionate energy to keep "the foul dust" from floating into his dreams and blurring them, and to focus the dream as a promise of life; he did succeed to some extent. While the formidable paraphernalia catered to every whim of his guests they left behind a wreck; a terrible mess;

On Monday eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing brushes and hammers and garden shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.24

Such is the ironic-symbolism of the nuance of people outside Gatsby's world treating with contempt and indifference the dream he has nurtured with care and labour. Symbolically also its implications are a meaningless drift of life on a sea of moral vacuity:

The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd
But now I only hear Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,

24. Ibid., p.31.
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world. 25

The weekend parties are Gatsby's gigantic gesture of earthly paradise with all the over-fragile imagery of the "moths", "blue gardens", champagne, and the fairy-land atmosphere; what the quests make of it reflects the breach and brokenness of American society. It is Fitzgerald's own clustering and intensifying details of meaningless contacts between people who have come to symbolise the inertia of human relations:

chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never know each other's names..... Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave

here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the centre of a group and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color and the constantly changing light . . . . There is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that (one of the wandering girls) is Gilda Gray's understudy from the Follies.  

In such a state nobody gives a damn as to who the other is. They are all knitted in fragile contacts. In Gatsby's world, he is the central figure, the pivot on which everything hinges. This is a consciously contrived, well maneuvered and surreptitious move, the crowning irony being that even he is not known to everybody:

People were not invited -- they went there . . . some how they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behaviour associated with an amusement park.  

All kinds of rumours are afloat which everyone tends to believe and no one cares or tries to investigate. Gatsby himself with his carefully studied graces pretends to know everyone: in the midst of clattering noises he whispers to Nick, "Your face is familiar. Weren't you in the Third Division during the War?" Only one of the other guests besides Nick, Owl Eye's tries to penetrate beyond the pretentious facade and magnitude of what Gatsby has created about himself, the colossal betrayal of the American dream; besides, out of the hundreds he's the only one to turn up for Gatsby's funeral. When the party is in full-swing there is "the first supper- there would be another one after midnight". A bell rings that the "first supper" would be followed by "the last supper" at which the host, here Gatsby, would be betrayed and crucified. That is what actually happens and there is a party after the funeral only that hardly any of the "disciples" turn up.

Owl Eyes becomes significant and seems to have a symbolic role, and reminds one of the eyes of Dr. T.J. Fickleburg. In the Gatsby world of purposive blindness to keep away the dust of reality from floating in to dispel the dream, to keep illusions intact, where everyone is non-self and no one seems to know his true-self, the "eyes" faculty to see and

27. Ibid., p.32.
envision reality, is also what can give meaning to life and reality against dreams and illusions. The "eyes" could be a symbol of God or Gatsby's dream, and perhaps even more in their having everything within its purview, and survey the entire span of the "foul dust" and ash-heaps in the valley, in the abandoned nightmare of "the haunting symbol of the dens absconditus who might once have set the wasteland in motion". It could thus serve both as a focus and an undeviating base, a single point of reference in the midst of monstrous disorders where the American dream and promise had long lost their vision. Yet the brooding quality of the vision lingers. Eckleburg's eyes become the symbolic manifestation of the flickers once alive in the American dream but now only brooding eternally over the dead and deadening ash heaps of the Valley of Ashes, what Gatsby's own summer parties have turned into -- the youthful innocent expectations lost in the irrecapturable past, dead in the sun and rain. The reality obscured by "foul dust" is thus what Owl Eyes tries to see through the descending darkness. He is among the nameless ones of Gatsby's world. Nick witnesses a, "bizarre and tumultuous scene"; finds a coupe resting in a ditch shorn of one wheel and later on the occupant coming out and trying to drive it back. Owl Eyes was pleading that he was not guilty of overturning: "You

don't understand, I wasn't driving. There's another man in the car", explained the criminal. The man who emerges from the car makes the incident look even more bizarre when he says that there's "No harm in trying [to drive] -- Rack out -- [even when] the wheel and car are no longer joined by any physical bond". Thus Owl Eyes being accused of a crime he hasn't committed foreshadows Gatsby's own plight when he had to die for a crime he hasn't committed. Like Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, Owl Eyes not only watches but seems to sympathise with Gatsby and puts the seal of approval on him, "A poor son-of-a bitch" because he too wasn't driving the "death car".

But there are those whose names are catalogued and bear certain relationships to Gatsby. The names suggest a certain quality of life and association in Gatsby's world. Even they are blind and unaware of his real identity and the "time-table in which the names are recorded symbolizes the time defunct and sunk in the morass of obsolescence "an insubstantial world .... torn loose from its moorings.... grotesque and unreal as a nightmare". It is a past dead and obliterated:

Once I wrote down on the empty spaces of a time-table the names of those who came to Gatsby's house that summer. It is an
old time-table now 'disintegrating in its folds, and headed. This schedule in effect July 5th, 1922'. But I can still read the gray names, and they will give you a better impression than my generalities of those who accepted Gatsby's hospitality and paid him the subtle tribute of knowing nothing about him.29

The people named have names resembling flora and fauna (Orchid, Gloria, Lilly, Leeches, Beaver, Fishguards, Snell, Hammerheads to mention a few), a direct relationship of their blindness to their own selves as also to Gatsby. They are disembodied creatures, illusions, transient beings, and since they stand in symbolic relationship to the brittle and shattered American dream, their names appropriately enough come to be mentioned the day after the American national festival.

Gatsby's dream is his strategy for survival, his buffer against annihilating actualities of American experience. But what eventually survives is the discolouration of that dream into a nightmare. He dies before the nightmare has had its full impact on the events of his life and before he can

confront his actual annihilation because the dream doesn't survive. Myrtle Wilson possesses the kind of passionate energy that Tom, the macho polo player, finds sensual gratification in, which Daisy fails to provide, and which Jordan Baker doesn't promise. He signifies the kind of brutalising force of American wealth that exactly matches the coarsening vulgarising pursuits of Myrtle to copy the moneyed status of the newly rich, seeking their identity in the American upper-class. He can purchase Daisy as he can purchase his mansion and thereby bring destruction of the dream, the very dream that sustained Gatsby for Daisy is bought by the highest bidder; the love of Gatsby, for all its gorgeous idealism couldn't equal the power and lure of money; however, this dream, the ideal American wealth becomes dehumanised.

Gatsby dies a violent meaningless death, no less than Myrtle whose death prefigures the vision of final catastrophe about to overtake the dreamer, Gatsby, whose dreams spun the entire intricate web of the entangled destinies of those who figure in the novel. Myrtle symbolises the eagerness for over-reaching expectations which are promised and then debased and dehumanised by the American experience. The eager hopefuls include all those who went to Gatsby's parties especially the nameless hundred:
all well-dressed and looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. They were at least agonisingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key.  

They are enticed by the dream to West Egg where they emerge from New York uninvited and lacking identities. There is a muted but unmistakable atmosphere of violence which pervades the novel; several of the quests who attend Gatsby's parties get involved in violent incidents: Civit was 'drowned; Mouldon had 'strangled his wife', Henry L. Palmelta 'killed himself by jumping in front of a subway train in Times Square,' and Young Brewer 'had his nose shot-off in the war'. The car itself as an instrument of destruction plays an important role. Tom, for instance, is involved in a car accident, with the hotel chamber maid, and another guest. Ripley Snell is 'so drunk that an automobile went over his right hand'.

The poverty-stricken, striving poor are also allured here from the Valley of Ashes, and are hurt and destroyed because the illusions are so colossal that they cannot remain

30. Ibid., p.33.
untarnished, be they the romantic innocence of Gatsby or the high aspirations of Myrtle. But the rich, Tom and Daisy, with their established wealth can retreat unhurt to enjoy their leisured, irresponsible, careless gaiety. It is Gatsby who is disillusioned, broken in his affair with Daisy, and totally shattered; whereas she has few regrets and fewer tears for him. Similarly Tom has little time for Myrtle once she is dead and lost. He is even indirectly responsible for Gatsby's death in the way he set George Wilson on Gatsby's trail, leading to the latter's fatal shooting of Gatsby and then to his own suicide. But Tom after having worked things out and used people for his own designs can go back to his moneyed barbarism since moral approbation is scorned by him.

Myrtle's indigent circumstances allow her only a small flat above Wilson's garage but Tom's money can procure her an apartment in New York:

On the top floor -- a small living-room
a small dining room, a small bedroom,
and a bath. The living room was crowded
to the doors with a set of tapestried
furniture entirely too large for it, so
that to move about was to stumble
continually over scenes of ladies
swinging in the gardens of
Versailles.... Several old copies of *Town Tattle* lay on the table together with a copy of *Simon Called Peter.*31

It is symbolic of the appearances of wealth that Myrtle hankers after, and Tom alone can help maintain that illusion for her. All her appurtenances of the rich, her dress, her conversation, the furnishings of her apartment and the car, become representative motifs of the contrasting aspirations from what her social status with George Wilson is, and what she desires and hopes she can attain with Tom. All her pretences while she is in her New York apartment, are sympathetic to vital passions trying to transcend the reality of her life. She succeeds in projecting an image of herself which is one of meaningless vulgar pursuit. Her straining after the sophisticated upper class advantages has a touch of futility and disaster. She becomes a ludicrous representative of 'genteel' society: with apparent delicacy she asks if the dog is a boy or a girl; this is in response to the seller referring to her (Myrtle) as 'Lady'; Tom cuts the conversation short with a harsh remark, "It's a bitch". This is a superb' cameo, pin-pointing a reversal of social classes. Yet, to Myrtle, it is, as the well-lit windows of her apartment are to the casual watcher outside, the

31. Ibid., p.23.
semblance of excitement and glittering mystery. This is what Nick could perceive:

High over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.32

Presumably, such snobbishness is the hope of salvaging the glory and regaining what is lost in the past, though it be totally irrelevant to the present reality. Like Gatsby, Myrtle too is destroyed by the illusory pretence of that expectation.

But death comes to Gatsby when the vision is dead and no more illusions are left to energise his dream. The history of America and its larger possibilities are over for him, no more telephone calls from Daisy:

I have an idea [says Nick] that Gatsby himself didn't believe [the phone call]

32. Ibid., p.28.
from Daisy] would come, perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about .... like that ashen, fantastic figure [George B. Wilson] gliding toward him through the amorphous trees. 33

Gatsby had paid a high price for that gorgeously romantic dream. He ultimately transcended the very history of America that first lifted him to the heights of imaginative grandeur and then destroyed him. He was devoured by the cannibalistic predation of wealth that Dan Cody represents in the West; now that had been shifted to the East to New York where Meyer Wolfsheim had come to represent it symbolising the debasement of the dream and the ideal of older America.

33. Ibid., p.129.
Wolfsheim is the very man who has converted all national faith and aspirations to one single measure and mode of value -- money:

He's the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919...... The idea staggered me... If I had thought of it at all I would have thought of it as a thing that merely happened, the end of some inevitable chain. It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people -- with the single mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe.\(^{34}\)

Like the insouciance of the rich, Wolfsheim too evades his social responsibility, for in such a world moral accountability has been dispensed with for a mere expedience of dominating over-powering reality of money that now annihilates the genteel past and its memory. He would not come for Gatsby's funeral because we should "learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not when he is dead ..... After that my own rule is to leave everything

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p.58.
alone". But the rationalization has deeper implications. His "gennections" with Gatsby are of a nature that shouldn't be betrayed by gestures of overt sentimentality especially when Gatsby's money is stained by illegal bootlegging and he has been murdered. It is a cautious move because it is Wolfsheim who has "made him" and his rotten wealth. Wolfsheim is also linked to all the names of Fast Egg and West Egg who have acquired respectability though the source of their money has the same rapacious history.

Wolfsheim has connections with places and identities that Tom and Daisy can claim. When he goes to Chicago avoiding not be involved with Gatsby's affairs by attending his funeral, it is the very Chicago from where Tom comes and to which Daisy looks for tokens of her social popularity. Tom Buchanan too is seen in Chicago for the last time when engaged in his irresponsible, futile activity of buying some "pearl necklace or perhaps only a pair of cuff buttons", the careless squandering of fortune he did not sweat to accumulate; his wife already has a pearl necklace; may be this one is for a mistress he's found soon after Myrtle's death. Wolfsheim, as all the other possessors of predatory wealth, has passed into vulgar obscenity once the history of the American dream has been actualised in amassing of fortune which is the manifest symbol of how the American

35. Ibid., p137.
rich display their money, a lack of virtues of general culture:

Those ideologies of work, responsibility, politeness, respect, decency [that] had been perverted and bastardised in actualities which were the grabbing of wealth and the cloaking of the sweat and the 'marks' with gentility and the pretentious manner of a long established identity.\(^{36}\)

Wolfsheim knows there's nothing much to attend in Gatsby's funeral except the history of Gatsby, his exploitative fortune as colossal, incoherent and fantastic as his dream. What vanishes with that dream, of course, is the vision of that America which once held out hopes for the redemption of mankind, the vision of Columbus, the Dutch sailors, Gatsby himself and the meaning and relevance of his story.

The dehumanised aspect of the wealthy of the East and West Egg is their absolute indifference and lack of fellow-feeling and sympathy for those down the social ladder. The lavish parties are lacking in this essential human contact for it is money which is the criterion of value and has

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precedence over everything else, including people. Money is the sole end of life; it lures and deceives, sickens both the possessed and dispossessed. In a society where values are determined by nothing but money, it becomes the only guarantee of survival. On the contrary, lack of money abrogates whatever chances and assurances there are, confirming extermination. It gives social identity and the cardinal tenet in the race for life which is survival of the ruthless. This is the reason why everyone wishes to come East, to make material success and life possible. Poverty makes living a precarious business, the kind the Wilsons know in their "wasteland" apartment. Their garage and the dwelling is appropriately set "on the edge of the wasteland... contiguous to absolutely nothing." It symbolically implies a life reduced to nothingness divested of all meaningful direction and purpose. Gatsby too has such an identity, "Mr Nobody from Nowhere". It is very West Egg "raw vigour" that Nick knows "that chaffed under the old euphemism and... the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing". It is reminiscent of Hemingway's concept of Nada, "a something called nothing which is so huge, terrible, overbearing, inevitable, omnipresent that once experienced it can never be forgotten".37 This nothingness, is in essence,

Fitzgerald's creative vision of his American society. The abysmal depths to which poverty or moneyness in the American moneyed society can let an individual sink is symbolised in George B. Wilson and his motor garage. He has cars which he doesn't own but repairs and makes roadworthy so that they can resume their American journeys i.e. the quest for wealth, social status and identity. His poverty is in the way of his return to the West, the symbol of peace and rest after having achieved material success in the East. He must depend on Tom Buchanan for getting cars, to be metaphorically transported beyond poverty beyond the chances that might otherwise be erased in attaining the possibility of the self:

"But I need money pretty bad, and I was wondering what you are going to do with your old car", says Wilson to Tom Buchanan.

"What do you want money for, all of a sudden?"

"I've been here too long. I want to get away. My wife and I want to go West".

38. The Great Gatsby, p. 98.
Though the Wilsons are hinged on Tom's money, George Wilson can somehow comprehend the meaning of Myrtle's betrayal in having a "life apart from him in another world". He is apparently ruined by remorse for that in which he has no part, in what she has secretly connived against him. He "was so sick that he looked guilty." On the contrary, Tom Buchanan, whose wealth has mainly been responsible for his adulterous life with Myrtle as her extreme poverty compels her to solicit sex for something material and mundane, has no qualms of conscience or moral compunctions. He cuckolds George and is responsible for his ruin; he is also responsible for Myrtle's death and in an indirect way is the potential destroyer of Gatsby. Daisy too betrays Gatsby after leading him too far in his romantic expectations. He and his wife are at the apex of American aspirations and on the vantage point from where their actions are not open to the scrutiny and judgement of their inferiors. Even Gatsby for all his wealth, cannot equal their privileges and social preferments. He remains sad and wistfully pines for something beyond the reach of wealth. He remains a non-belonger and his social placelessness and resultant discontent is a perpetual blot. He thus symbolises debauching and debasing of the American ideal that the pioneers had dreamed of and realised through the material reality of accumulated riches.
The source of the inherited Buchanan wealth too has predacious origins. It takes from Demaine the oil magnate a direct legacy of American land resources. The comfortable fortune of the Carraways has the same source of American exploitative wealth. It was reshaping of the American myth of success in the post Civil War era that provided a new impetus for amassing wealth. This gave a new meaning to the significance and grandeur of the pioneer heritage that had larger cultural implications. The American identity was completely submerged within that milieu. Afterall, the tall claims of inherited wealth being free from the stigma of adventurism was in itself a myth that the Civil War had exploded. The purse-pride of the Buchanans and their corresponding scorn of Gatsby's wealth and his new social identity in concert with his status conferred by his newly acquired fortune, has the same predatory beginnings. Only the lag of time' the American past, seemed to lend the gloss of respectability. Guilty is no more guilty and deserving the scorn than the Buchanans or Carraways. But whereas Tom Buchanan has been brutalised by his wealth, Nick Carraway has been humanised by it. For Gatsby it has been a lesson in self-understanding; no sooner does the dream become dissipated than he relinquishes all efforts to manoeuvre the show of wealth he had so assiduously organised.
The process of social disruption set in motion by great American fortunes is no different in Gatsby than it is in the rapacious past of a DeMamone, a Buchanan, a Dan Cody. Only Gatsby pursues the American past and the dream more resolutely and with greater tenacity of will than what became typical of the era of fortune hunting. He keeps the American past to his single private dream, symbolised in the "green light" that keeps it pure and incorruptible within the wolfish urge of average aspirations. Others like Tom and Daisy have simply debauched the dream and sold it to money and the glamorous display of wealth. This is what compels Nick to comment that Gatsby was worth more than "the whole damned bunch put together". But for his dream, Gatsby would be as damned as the others. His aspirations symbolise the incorruptible golden West and the golden moment of that past which has unloosened itself from the tight grip of material reality and become untarnished and idealised in the imagination. All this is suggested in the history of Dan Cody who stands for the wistful longing that the dream of the West has come to symbolise. Gatsby as a transcendent figure grows in our estimation and goes beyond what could be defined and constricted within social possibilities. He remains aloof and bright in his image, retaining the immense vitality of his illusions. Everything else seems hollow, vicious and unworthy of him more so his love for Daisy. For
that matter, his wealth and affair with Daisy hardly have the force to arouse deep interest.

The huge mansions and dwelling houses in the East and West Egg, like other objects and items of vast luxury and material opulence, big limousines, Rolls Royces, aquaplanes, motor-boats, private launches, private beaches, diving towers, enormous gardens and lawns, symbolise betrayal of the dream through social pretensions. The desired world of wasteful luxury and appearances is yearned for by all, from Gatsby leading the avaricious pack down to the West Egg tycoons and upstart mercantiles of New York, further down to the garage keepers and all in the Valley of Ashes. But wealth and its possessions are primarily symbols of brutish inhuman energy and crushing arrogance. Tom Buchanan represents that arrogance and snobbery in riding clothes:

standing with his legs apart on the front porch.... a sturdy straw-haired man... with a hard mouth and a supercilious manner... two shining arrogant eyes had established dominace over his face and gave the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. It
A sportsman and macho hero of his times, Tom has taken a house in East Egg which is a parallel projection of the display of dazzling wealth to his taking Daisy whom every covetous eye gloats on; the same imagery of pink and white fragile comely beauty is used for both. They both become tangible manifestations of the enticement of the American dream. Tom is a symbolic representation of that American class of plutocratic wealth where their only distinction is their riches; they are unrestrained by the mores and moral codes of the middle class. He thus satisfies his ego only by having his East Egg house and Daisy commensurate with his enormous wealth but also covets the wives of others, Myrtle Wilson being one. In portraying Tom Buchanan, Fitzgerald brings not only his insight into the arrogance and crudity of the very rich but also their frightening intellectual impoverishment. The 'civilization is going to pieces' refrain Tom mouths constantly makes him one among many of the contemporary 'hollow men', 'headpiece filled with straw'. What makes Tom pathetic is not only that he 'nibbles at the edge of state ideas' but also undermines by his behaviour whatever grain of sense underlies these ideas. It

39. Ibid., p.6.
is part of the ambiguity of character that while intellectually he hates the class mix-up and the rise of 'coloreds', he does not have any hesitation in having affairs with hotel maids and others outside the pale of class. This is what had invited the wrath of young Fitzgerald; his distrust and hatred of the powerfully rich with the smouldering anger of the peasant. Tom Buchanan is the appropriate symbol of East Egg, of old inherited established wealth and social position. His rich, glittering world is his social strength, the inhuman strength of "hard malice" against which Gatsby would be "broken up like glass" and Tom and Daisy would return to the security and stability of money and "to the self-enclosed enjoyment of their careless, glittering lives". As a contrast, Gatsby's newly acquired wealth is emblematic of the West Egg magical appearances, out-doing Buchanan's plutocratic acquisitions.

The house which Nick Carraway dwells in is between the two Eggs. It is an "eyesore" compared to the residences of Gatsby and the Buchanans; it is "squeezed between huge places". What redeems it is "the white palaces of the fashionable East Egg [glittering] along the water". It is a faceless house and has the unpretentiousness of the Mid West identity. Symbolically his house gives Nick the very centrality needed to preserve perfect objectivity in observing the events of the society of affluence that
attracts and repels him. But with his objective neutrality, each step that he takes is in the direction of his education and understanding of the rich, and the moral implications of their wealth. Inspite of the allurement, Nick remains discreetly aloof from the charmed circle, never losing his balance or deviating from the centre. He has an entrenched social position; his "family have been prominent well-to-do people in this Mid West city for three generations"; thus he is not a seeker after social identity as Gatsby is; nor has he the eagerness for wealth that brutalises human sensibility, and is the hallmark of Tom Buchanan. He has the necessary moral imagination that can afford to scorn the cinematic gaudy, pretentiousness that is used to compensate the moral and spiritual hollowness of the rich.

Lower down the scales is the house of the Wilsons "a small block of yellow brick sitting on the edge of the wasteland ... contiguous to absolutely nothing", a garage and upper flat in the Valley of Ashes supervised by the diabolical and piercing eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. They too, like Gatsby, aspire for all that wealth can provide, but, unlike him, lack the superior energy of his unifying dream, the idealism that grips and possesses, and finally destroys him. The placelessness and non-belonging make it the very scum of American society. It has no dreamy, delicate quality that is an inalienable part of the metaphorical white and rosy
loveliness of the glittering white palaces of East Egg, but is the very opposite, the "shoes" of social stratum. The very location of the Valley of Ashes is significant in underscoring American placelessness:

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes --- a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens' .... Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible track.40

In the Wilsons we see that the more the struggle, the more the sweat, the natural consequence of poverty. Thus money and social identity are merged. However, money fails to confer human or social values or definitions. Even those without riches like the Wilsons hankering after the East Egg-West Egg syndrome are shorn of recognition inspite of their labours.

40. Ibid., p.18.
In Fitzgerald the Wasteland symbol assumes greater proportions than what Eliot endowed it with; it refers to change and mutability in human circumstances owing to deprivation of economic advantages. Here the redemption is necessarily human and social. Myrtle in particular symbolises the peculiar vitality which underlies the sweat and exertion of the poor and the discontented. She carried:

her surplus flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face.... contained no facet or gleam of beauty, but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smouldering.41

Even in her death her mouth is "wide open and ripped at the corners, as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored so long".42 George Wilson in comparison is completely opposite and seems to mingle "immediately with the ashen dust...." both in his apparent struggles as well as in his ambition.

While houses are immovable, fixed and rooted, in a world of fluctuation, the car is a symbol of mobility. It is a

41. Ibid., p.20.
42. Ibid., p.110.
recurring motif which is linked to the American search for social identity as well as what can be seen as the glamourised appearance of opulence. It is a tangible manifestation of the Kaleidoscopic identity and mobility which money makes possible. The car motif finds its most logical culmination in the performance of Daisy, who, for all her innocence, is the one responsible for a chain of murders and deaths she unleashes when she kills Myrtle with the car she is driving. But she is the very incarnation of Gatsby's dream. Her very voice is full of that quality of money which America excites:

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.... There was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered 'Listen', a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour.43

43. Ibid., p.8.
Her voice promises the kind of excitement and enlargement of life that money alone can make possible:

'She's got an indiscreet voice', [Nick remarked].

'Its full of ---', I hesitated.

'Her voice is full of money', [Gatsby said suddenly].

That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money -- that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it.... High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl.44

The new promise of life that Nick Carraway imagines is imminent in America that summer and is linked to the image of "quick mobility road-masters",:

Already it was deep summer on roadhouse roofs and infront of wayside garages.

44. Ibid., p.95.
where the new gas-pumps sat out in the pools of light.45

Gatsby's early courting of Daisy had his symbolic excitement in Daisy's "little white roadstar". There are several images associated with cars that excite, and no less cheat one of the promise of life because of its treacherous betrayal and killing of people. It is Daisy's voice again that misleads Gatsby and excites that "heightened sensitivity to the promise of life" which intoxicates him even to the extent of imagining the road to eternal happiness that he is following with her in his yellow Rolls Royce which becomes the instrument of Myrtle's death, foreboding his doom and ultimate death. The journey from New York to West Egg has been Gatsby's final lesson in self-deception even though it was one of those enthralling moments he had waited for; it was the moment of a life-time, in which the past melted into the harsh actualities of the present. Nick has the same presentiment when he said, "So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight". The cars had in a sense witnessed the inside life of the rich in New York:

at eight O'clock, when the dark lanes of the Forties were five deep with throbbing taxicabs, bound for the

45. Ibid., p.17.
theatre district, I felt a sinking in my heart. Forms leaned together in the taxis as they waited and voices sang, and there was laughter from unheard jokes, and lighted cigarettes outlined unintelligible gestures inside. Imagining that I, too, was hurrying toward gayety and sharing their intimate excitement, I wished them well. 46

It is Fitzgerald's own experience that is echoed:

I remember riding on top of a taxicab along deserted Fifth Avenue on a hot Sunday night... I remember riding in a taxi one afternoon between very tall buildings under a mauve and rosy sky, I began to bawl because I had everything I wanted and knew I would never be so happy again. 47

Nick has already detected the hollowness, the presentation of the "voice of money" in the golden girl as phony and

46. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "My Lost City", The Crack-up, pp. 28-29.

47. Ibid., p. 29.
dehumanised. He knows that Daisy's sophistication is basically insincere:

I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged.48

In Fitzgerald's mind the associative symbolism of cars and parties has the same significance of utter irresponsibility of the rich. The same casual careless conversation marks a gathering whether at a party or in a car, the same sense of placelessness and inane drift into nowhere:

They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody

48. The Great Gatsby, p.15.
who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behaviour associated with an amusement park.49

This absence of rules of responsible conduct is suggestive of the nonchalant behaviour of the rich, their affectation and insincerity. The exodus away from the Gatsby party indicates a similar lack of ethical norms and social obligations. Then there is the telephone which like the car, figures at several levels, and instrument which banishes distance and also becomes an extension of shady deals. It is a hint of marital disharmony: Myrtle rings Tom is chap.1; it is also a reminder of Gatsby's shady deals. Even at the height of his idyllic reunion with Daisy, the intervention of the telephone shows the thin borderline between Gatsby, the shady businessman, and Gatsby, the romantic; with its obvious reference to some illicit transaction it cuts into the euphoria and never allows the reader to forget the illicit source of Gatsby's wealth. Even after he dies there is a telephone call asking him for instructions.

The scene after the Gatsby party when cars cluster about, driven by drunken drivers, all in a crescendo accusing Owl Eye for the mess, venting their righteous anger, serves to

49. Ibid., p.32.
emphasise the insolence and crudity of their life pattern. They are corruption - ridden and soiled, past all tidiness. Only Gatsby is untainted by the seething corruption of riches all round him, and is able to retain his innocence to an appreciable extent inspite of the riotous, hedonistic spree. His isolation from the rottenness is complete and unalloyed. At the end of the party:

The caterwauling horns had reached a crescendo and I turned away and cut across the lawn toward home. I glanced back once. A wafer of a moon was shining over Gatsby's house, making the night fine as before, and surviving the laughter and sound of his still glowing garden. A sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell.50

The moral semblance of the Fast and West Egg is represented by the wheels of cars. Tom's honeymoon is fraught with confusion at the exposure of his adulterousness while he:

50. Ibid., p.45.
ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one
night, and ripped a front wheel off his
car. The girl who was with him got into
the papers, too, because her arm was
broken -- she was one of the chamber­
maids in Santa Barbara Hotel.51

Later he breaks Myrtle's nose. His double moral standard, a
proclivity of the rich, which finds its reverberation in the
postmortem of Gatsby's memory that Nick recalls with such
overwhelming nostalgia:

I spent my Saturday nights in New York,
because those gleaming dazzling parties
of his were with me so vividly that I
could still hear the music and laughter,
faint and incessant, from his garden,
and the cars going up and down his
drive. One night I did hear a material
car there, and saw its lights stop at
his front steps..... Probably it was
some final guest who had been away at

51. Ibid., p.61.
the ends of the earth and didn't know that the party was over.\textsuperscript{52}

This reliving of excitement generated by the automobile revolution, the peculiar association of party sprees with the resplendent boom and bluster of the Twenties, the enactment of new identities of the rich associated with "the white palaces" in their silvery splendour, all had been one singular effort to pander to the American dream symbolised by the voice of Daisy which was "full of money". To Fitzgerald's mind, Daisy was an apt metaphor of that moment of American history when it was still free from the corruption of material environment, and before the ideal of America was betrayed by the false glitter of wealth. Nick broods over the mystery that summer:

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

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p.144.
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. 53

Gatsby follows that trail of history without having known its peculiar demands and his assiduous pursuits of that dream of gorgeous splendour symbolised in the "green light" at the end of Daisy's dock that absorbs Gatsby in his lonely contemplation. The green light that beckons and allures anticipates his eventual doom. Inspite of the impression that the magic world has made on him, Gatsby retains his faculty for wonder, and that is his saving grace. Nick Carraway too is untouched by the loss of moral fervour and dehumanisation which infects all those who fatten on Gatsby's riches.

The cohesive meaning and idea forms a veritable tapestry of symbols with the image-pattern of cars, houses, regions, names, chronological time, flowers, colours, variations of natural hues, light and shade, sun and moon, heat and

53. Ibid., p.144.
coolness; all these fall into a symbolic pattern fashioned out of social material, and are woven into the very meaning and significance of the story. They are also manifestations of the superficialities of contemporary American commercial culture. This is expressive of Fitzgerald's attitude to the life of the rich with which he associates the world of sensual excitement, romantic splendour, night and feminine glory. Such a world of carefree existence, show and glitter is opposite to the daytime world of ruthless materialistic pursuits, the sweating hot struggles of the poor, the ferocious struggles of the rich for financial exploitation and fiscal strength, the struggle primarily for maintaining the egregious demands of the luxurious life.

The associated images have a cyclic structure that are linked in Nick's mind with the American West and the constantly changing natural cycle of the seasons. Not only is Nick the repository for the motives of all others in the story but that the shaping vision which is the real reason for his journey East is essentially a Western desire and feeling and he stands for their representative voice. He goes East not only for a particular reason but in a particular season, summer:
And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.  

Summer, the season of new throbbing movements of life, was to turn into a symbol of Nature woven into the fabric of Nick's vision of life. When Nick makes his trip to New York, that new "warm centre of the world" the images that cluster in his mind are from his Western Frontier:

When we drove over to Fifth Avenue, so warm and soft, almost pastoral, on the summer Sunday afternoon that I wouldn't have been surprised to see a great flock of white sheep turn the corner.  

Later, while driving to New York with Gatsby, Nick finds it "in its first wild promise of all the mystery and beauty of the world". In that great centre of the world, summer is the harbinger of dreams of love and its fulfilment. That romantic possibility is everybody's dream. Thus in Nick's

54. Ibid., p. 3.
55. Ibid., p.
mind seasons are the turning wheels of nature, life preserved and life destroyed just as the circle of his journey East is his Columbus-like voyage to the new world of glittering splendour, and the voyage home to his new perception of truth and a return to where he must belong.

Nick encounters Nature in those rich wealthy surroundings as almost a casual visitor evoking perceptible "natural curiosities", with almost cinematic trickery of images, as the "great burst of leaves" growing on the trees as "in fast movies"; the kind of mark that "the thin beard of raw ivy" provides to Gatsby's "spanking new" imitation French villa thereby slightly diminishing the false rich appearance by that natural camouflage, the way nature manifested its acrobatic running, as the lawn of Tom's house:

The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sun-dials and brick walks and burning gardens -- finally when it reached the house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the momentum of its run.56

56. Ibid., pp.5-6.
Such playfulness of nature around the mansions of opulent rich was the taming and trimming of Nature that gives to Nick his strong sense of moral certitude, as it excites in him the sense of infinite almost magical possibilities of money. This is the intoxicating entrancing nature at the Buchanan's house:

The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other.... making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea. 57

It makes Nick more conscious of his uprightness. Against Buchanan's life of profligacy and easy virtue he must look back on his past, the life and values of the West. Even Tom's adultery, when it is exposed, provokes an overtly conscious response in Nick in order to keep his moral vision unimpaired. The air of moral decay at the Buchanans repels Nick though he is fascinated and awed at the power and pride conferred by wealth.

57. Ibid., p.6.
In contrast to nature as found in the rich mansions of Long Island, in its abandon wastefulness, there is total absence of nature in the Valley of Ashes, the "desolate wasteland... contiguous to absolutely nothing" where George Wilson has his garage and dwelling place. It appears as if nature mocks itself and leaves the land barren and desolate:

This is 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.  

Nature thus holds up to mockery both the land and the efforts of men to create harmony in human relations. George Wilson sums up what those wasteland grey-ash figures have been reduced to, sapped of all life-giving blood, energy and spirit, even fading into the cement colour of the garage wall. Though Myrtle Wilson seems to possess that "immediately perceptible vitality about her", and is thereby able to escape the fate of living death that palls the dweller of the wasteland. It symbolises the chaos and

58. Ibid., p.18.
embosoms the poverty-stricken people living in hell-hole, a limbo of dehumanised energy presided over by the eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg:

blue and gigantic -- their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the Borough of Queens and then sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes, dimmed a little by many paintless days under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground.59

While nature is absent, the power that reigns is the "inscrutable power resident in the brooding, persistently staring eyes". In terms of human relevance, the significance reaches beyond the American urban setting to the "plight of man in an age of disorder" as in T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland.

59. Ibid., p.18.
Thus in the houses of the rich nature exposes its full green heaving breast consonant with extravagance while it is conspicuous by its absence in impecunious desolation; the distinction is obvious. Myrtle, in this sense becomes a symbol of that oozing vulgarity while her money-role, see thing in actual corruption, helps her to escape her destiny. But her background of "drifting wreckage of the spiritless and defeated" binds her inextricably to the tangled web of her fate. The ironic symbolism of her positive vitality points to the ever-widening gyre of life's perversity and vulgarity, finally culminating in becoming the instrument of her ultimate ruin and death. The hinge of fate moves relentlessly.

The symbolism of nature seems to harmonise with the theme of betrayal which is basic to the image pattern of the novel. This theme had its origin in the personal experience of Fitzgerald who was deeply wounded by his wife's infidelity during their sojourn in Europe while the novel was going through its final draft. In *Save Me The Waltz*, Zelda recounts her affair with the French aviator, Edouard Jozan. After a quick violent climax they parted with Zelda having no way to hold onto that summer dalliance. It was this complete surrender to that moment of intense experience that made Fitzgerald write to his daughter:
never in her whole life did she have a sense of guilt, even when she put other lives in danger -- it was always people and circumstances that oppressed her. 60

This motif is underscored by colour symbolism in the novel. The "whiteness" tends to symbolise purity of appearances, of belonging to the established, moneyed upper class. It has the same ironic significance as does the whale in *Moby Dick*. The "white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water" just across the Courtesy Bay which Gatsby must inevitably traverse in order to step closer to his dream. The brilliance of gleaming gold as appearances of procured money is the very image of New York City "rising across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money". The whiteness in this sense represents those who have made the grades to the upper echelon of society. Daisy and Jordan always appear in the cool, white elegance of the immensely rich living in the moonlight dream world of brightness and glamour. To Gatsby that illuminated glittering world, which he aspires for, is the whiteness of evil, corruption and vulgarity which are the realities embodied in the Valley of Ashes, and is suggestive of the once brilliant dream, now withered. The culmination of that dream was Daisy who even in her younger

days, when she was the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville, dressed in white and had a little white roadster parked outside her big white house; as she tells Nick, "Our white girlhood was passed there... . Our beautiful white...."

The first things that Dan Cody buys Gatsby when he is first launched into the new world are six pairs of white duck trousers to wear on the white yacht. Daisy's house is "beautiful and cool" and the "sidewalks was white with moonlight. Gatsby weds Daisy to his dream among the silver stars "as Daisy's white face came up to his own". When Gatsby and Daisy meet again, Daisy's:

porch was bright with the luxury of bought starshine.... and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above hot struggles of the poor.61

It is the world of money, silver and gold, that is the characteristic image of Daisy in Gatsby's imagination. Even

61. The Great Gatsby, p.119.
in that perfect moment of love when Gatsby says goodbye as he's going to the war, Daisy escapes into her Fay House, her world where "a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust" at society tea dances. At the lavish party that he gives to attain a glimpse of Daisy, he dons the colours of money that give a gloss of respectability emphasising that he belongs to the upper class: "An hour later the front door opened nervously, and Gatsby in a white flannel suit, silver shirt and the gold-coloured tie, hurried in".62

The Demaine house too has white windows gleaming against the green that surrounds the fantastic Buchanan mansion. Under the "frosted wedding cake of a ceiling" the girls inside were both in white. White symbolises a conscious effort to give a respectable hue to the dubious means through which wealth has been acquired. All these characters thriving on tainted wealth are so punctilious about the white colour which is traditionally symbolic of purity, piety and the like. Obviously, it is a deliberate, desperate bid to white wash evil. In other words, they are driven to resort to this with a view to making their reputation and appearance blameless and innocent by covering up their black deeds. Such a dominance and power is implied in Tom's so called ethnic superiority. The fear of the white race being

62. Ibid., p.66.
submerged by black and coloured is ingrained in the economic
and social fear of losing the dominant position in American
society where money is the safest guarantee of social status
and respectability. Tom accuses Gatsby of being "colored"

I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere
make love to your wife. Well, if thats the idea you can count me out....
Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and
next thing they'll throw everything over-board and have inter-marriage
between black and white.

"We're all white here," murmured Jordon.63

Except for the "colored" Gatsby, who is in fact pure and innocent, all other "whites", "whole rotten 'crowd" is corrupt and impure. The irony never fails in its impact. If white is a symbol of purity then atleast Tom needs to be excluded from that term and has the least right to deprecate the "colored" Gatsby or the Jew, Wolfsheim. While Tom asserts white supremacy, "if you're white you're all right",

63. Ibid., p.103.
as the song goes, the symbolic strains of Mendelssoh's Wedding March sound loud and clear from the ballroom below reverberating memories of the white trains, white veils, and the white vows of matrimony that Tom and Daisy had made. At that moment Daisy is already in the process of separating, being "divorced" from Gatsby. Even the virginal glowing white dresses of Daisy and Jordan proclaim not their purity and innocence but their essential social "rightness" and symbolise a life of luxury, leisure and security, as equally the futility of their existence. Such pointless rambles of their lives show moral vacancy. Whiteness is simply a ruse and pertains to their own self-deception of which they pretend not to be aware. The significance of white extends to all levels of contact.

The name Daisy itself suggests the flower image with the golden centre and the white radiance around. It is the "day's eye", and represents the sun, the golden sunlight. Her maiden name Fay implies the sense of fate, faith or the world of fairyland expectations that had made Jay Gatsby pin his hopes on, under the impression that the rock of the world was founded secretly on a fairy's wing. She is thus, to Gatsby's imagination, an object that evokes faith in the "heightened sensitivity to the promise of life" and romantic possibilities, and her reversion is his "huge incoherent failure." Daisy is thus America, the faith and hope that
inspired the pioneers; Gatsby's desire to possess her is symbolic of the possession of white and gold as emblems of universal desire and longing; his fall implies the structure of moral values that must crumble when the dream has vanished.

Gatsby's longing for Daisy is associated with light and coolness, night, starlight and moonlight, pale moons and silver stars. His entertainment of his guests recalls cool evening hours "as the earth lurches away from the sun". Twilight and darkness are moments of romantic excitement. However, in the swift transition of events when Gatsby's dreams turn into disillusionment with the changing seasons, he still remains cool even in his death, using the "pool" for the last time which he had left unused all summer. Ironically, he died not of the cool silver white of his hot pursuing dream that burnt his desire to over-reach himself in recapturing "the warm, old world" but of the indifference of this new raw world's coldness in which he "must have .... shivered" before that moment of death. The symbol of whiteness comes into full view in the death of Myrtle Wilson; all that cool silver whiteness that had once been the elegance of the wealthy now symbolises the betrayal of the starlit dome of dream and moonshine of Gatsby's imagination.
The other money colour image is gold, and in its glow and grandeur it matches silver though as a sun colour, with its warmth and solidity, it is an opponent to Gatsby's moon dream and its cool silver light. However, the moral implications of both the money colours are the same. The most obvious gold imagery is the "golden, girl", Daisy at the centre of Gatsby's universe, symbolising the "incorruptible dream". The gleaming windows and golden garden for his parties has a multi-coloured background for all shades of gold: the station wagon that brought guests from the railroad to the mansion "scampered like a brisk yellow bug"; there were "crates of oranges and lemons", and "pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold" were served to "yellow cocktail music"; "two nameless girls in yellow" talk to Jordan, their "slender golden arms resting on Nicks arm". When Daisy meets Gatsby at Nick's house, she glows into the "twinkle-bells of sunshine" after the rains, and "the two brass buttons on her dress gleamed in the sunshine". In Gatsby's garden which rivals Tom's burning and pungent lawns, the flowers include "sparkling jonquils .... and pale gold odor of kiss-me-at-the gate". Even Gatsby's own bedroom is "the simplest room of all --- except where the dresser was garnished with a toilet set of pure dull gold." At the party Daisy offers "her little gold pencil" in case her address is needed; she is the golden girl and is susceptible to corruption of gold-crusted evil, Gatsby's car
is a "nice yellow one", the "Yellow Rolls Royce". When the front of his house catches the light it is filled at earliest dawn with "gray-turning, gold-turning light". Then Wilson's garage is concretised in the yellow brick and ashen gray; the pale colour of his skin and his blond, yellow-gold hair all symbolise debasement.

The symbolism of the golden sun as a thread running in the motif of the novel is noticeable in that compact Hotel Plaza scene on the hottest of that brutal summer day from where the convoy leaves on its murderous journey. Gatsby's dream of the golden moment has no chance of lasting as the premonitions are obvious;" it is a moment of regeneration, of beginning again portended by a natural symbol of fertility, the pouring rain". The gold underscores the motif of betrayal and is synonymous with the fierce blazing sun representing the brutalisation of the power of money, Gatsby's meeting with Wolfsheim and Nick's first introduction to him takes place on a "roaring noon", and as the sun's heat increases Gatsby's moon dreams start to melt and he heads for death and ruin. Daisy's marriage with Tom is associated with summer heat and sunshine, and their honeymoon is a three months trip to the South Seas. Gatsby is a moon person but he accepts the sunlight world and plunges into it. At the Plaza Hotel, when Jordan, in

response to the floating sound of the Wedding March says, "Imagine marrying anybody in this heat". Daisy's perfectly timed rejoinder identifies her completely with Tom and the glaring heat that typified their honeymoon, "Still... I was married in the middle of June". That reminiscence strips away the veil of Gatsby's world of white silver moonshine dream in which Daisy was the golden girl.

The interlaced imagery of colours, the patterns of gold, white and red become manifestations of gold, silver and copper that are linked to the names of great American fortunes built out of exploitation of these metals: the Western success story of Dan Cody who was:

a product of Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five. The transactions in Montana copper that made him many times a millionaire.65

Fitzgerald's preoccupation with names associated with great American fortunes formed part of his own background. It was the financial success of his grandfather, McQuillan that became a fact of immense social and economic significance to Fitzgerald's own latent urge to achieve success of the same

65. The Great Gatsby, p.79.
measure and an impetus to work his way upward and find a niche in the American aristocracy. Even the names of Montana, Nevada, Cody recall the aroma of romance of money linked to the hunger of the American dream. The money and romance become associated with its betrayal by women, invariably Westerners; Ella Kaye in the case of Dan Cody and Daisy in the case of Jay Gatsby. In the end Gatsby is left "watching over --- nothing"; he doesn't receive part of the inheritance Dan Cody had willed him; Ella Kaye maneuvered it that way; Daisy too deprives him of the "gold hat" he should never wear. The dream he had woven round Daisy was to be sold to Tom Buchanan's three hundred and fifty thousand dollar pearl necklace. The choice is before her on the night before her marriage: Tom and his money symbolised by the necklace and Gatsby with nothing but his delicate dream of love and vague expectation of the future. She spurns the latter with its unpromising ethereality and chooses solid earthliness i.e. Tom who stands for American materialism, security and convenience that enticed the whore, America, that has sunk to the quagmire and grossness. That night when she was drunk, she summoned her dreams and could go back to the blazing glory of the dream of love which would soothe her frayed nerves. But once sober, she bargained for a future of certainty. She holds up Gatsby's letter in the bath and once it is reduced to pulp it loses its tenacity and spell on her. Thus the love vision of Gatsby melts, once
the cold fact of money smashes her dream, and reality is opened up for her. Gatsby is left once the dramatisation is over.

Gatsby's father had believed that had Gatsby lived he would have been great; "Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves" of building up the country like great names in American fortune, names associated with the colours of money James J. Hill, Dan Cody and Ulysses S. Grant. But that was an illusion. Owl Eyes had known Gatsby closer and reserved an epitaph for his implicit belief in the magic of money and immense possibilities inspired by his dream that read, "The poor son-of-a-bitch". All Gatsby's dreams had their equivalents in the American past wrapped up in the inestimable corruption of great American fortunes; they would be clothed in the "gorgeous pink rag" of a suit that he wore as an insignia of the tribe of the rich and corrupt; he had been enticed as a youth by the vision of Dan Cody's yacht which represented beauty and glamour:

reveries provided an outlet for his imagination, they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing. 66

66. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
Once Dan Cody takes Jimmy Gatz under his wings, Gatsby's education in American wealth and its acquisitions with its sinister economic possibilities has begun. He must go Fast where his driving imagination, with his given pluck and luck, would tide him over well beyond the cheap vulgar crowd that flocks to his mansion:

I disapproved of him from the beginning to end.... His gorgeous pink rag of a suit made a bright spot of colour against the white steps, and I thought of the night when I first came to his ancestral home three months before. The lawn and drive had been crowded with faces of those who guessed at his corruption -- and he had stood on those steps, concealing the incorruptible dream, as he waved them goodbye.67

That world had found its summation in Tom's pearl necklace that Daisy had married. She was eager and panting for the show of wealth: "They're such beautiful shirts..... It makes me sad because I've never seen such -- such beautiful shirts before." Symbolically, the silken folds of the shirts

67. Ibid., p.123.
epitomise the substantiality of wealth that irritably allures and dazzles Daisy into betraying Gatsby for lack of such "fins and wings". However, after his splendid success, the past which he had made his determined bid to win was the backdrop to his future aspirations. Symbolically such a demand of Gatsby's upon her, was nothing but the inexorable demand of American imagination upon an America that lacks the strength to bear the burden of the ideal:

He talked alot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all; slowly he could find out what that thing was. 68

His allurement is the uncompromising idealism, irreconcilable to the prevailing actualities which are characteristic of American society.

Another pervasive colour having gold-power is green. The "green breast of the new world" in its lush luxuriance

68. Ibid., p.88.
parallels the rose in its bursting of new life symbolised in the bristling new leaves of summer. Nick had gone Fast in search of that new life, leaving the lushness of the green West behind but had found the promise of a burgeoning money-summer instead. Green is also like the other colours a symbol of the betrayal of the dream. As a symbol, it is invariably the "green light" at the end of Daisy's dock. When Gatsby and Daisy are to meet at Nick's, house, Gatsby wants the grass at Nick's clipped to the same "well-kept expanse" as his own glowing gardens and emerald lawns. He starts talking of money, corruption, favours for pecuniary gains and Wolfsheim in the same breath as he talks of the green lawns. He is wearing a "torn, green jersey" when he sights Dan Cody's yacht. At his party when Daisy is thrilled with the promise of excitement, she whispers:

"If you want to kiss me any time during the evening, Nick, just let me know and I'll be glad to arrange it for you. Just mention my name. Or present a card. I'm giving out green". 69

The soft summer heat enlivens deep green shades and foliage, sprigs of mint and cool fresh long drinks, something like a fresh green promise of a new world. Thus the colours are

69. Ibid., p.
surface appearances which sizzle underneath, seething with corruption and treachery; even green is simply a surface allurement. When George Wilson discovers betrayal and is sick and without money, "in the sunlight his face was green". In keeping with Gatsby's mistaken identity, his golden white car, after the murder, is given out as light green by a witness. Gatsby's own sense of betrayal comes through in the thinness of "the scarcely created grass", not the lush green lawns. His dream is wrapped up in the true pure green not to be mistaken for the colours of the corrupting force of money; it is the green of the past now enshrined in memory of Nick's "long green tickets" of the thrilling returning trains of his youth; the green of the American promise "that flowered once for Dutch sailors eyes -- a fresh, green breast of the new world". This shows how even colours have imbibed the taint breathed out by the pervasive corruption. The green light at the end of Daisy's dock is the signal for him to pursue his perennial quest and it leads him on to the "orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us"; the past cannot be recaptured but the future holds out the promise of tomorrow being another day; "tomorrow we will run faster stretch out our arms further .... And one fine morning --". The symbol serves as the connective element between Gatsby's personal tragic fate and the larger historical sense in which American civilization itself is perilously close to the national tragedy. The
green light is the enchanted object so long as Gatsby's illusions are intact but as the symbol inexorably moves to the novel's conclusion its full implications as "the historically corrupted religious symbol" become clear. Fitzgerald had realised that the conscious repudiation of the abstracting and inhibiting tradition of the American past, the historical necessity, moral and social accountability entailed self-delusion and ended in tragic waste. This is perhaps what T.S. Eliot had in mind when he wrote to Fitzgerald, complimenting him on his achievement in The Great Gatsby:

Such a remarkable book. In fact it seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James.70

The golden moment had slipped away from his grasp forever, the never-to-be second chance was over, the inevitable lay beyond the veil of illusion, and time was slipping back to its inexorable point of no return. Gatsby was aware that he:

had passed visibly through two states and was entering upon a third. After his embarrassment and unreasoning joy he was

consumed with wonder at [Daisy's] presence. He had been full of the idea for so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable peak of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock. 71

This, time imagery is significant in effecting a symbolic transcendence of the dream that might have been but which was snapped before its orgiastic moment, and what could be "almost remembered was uncommunicable forever". It is the old America that keeps returning in memory to what this young America might have been, the America which in its nostalgic recall was the best main chance and the best hope when:

for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent.... face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. 72

71. The Great Gatsby, p.73.
72. Ibid., p.144-145.
Gatsby in himself symbolises that golden moment. In the final act of self-realisation, as he "disappeared among the yellowing trees" he must have felt an acute sense of betrayal:

He must have looked up at the unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing arose is and how raw the sun-light was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about.73

Fitzgerald makes flower imagery stand in relation to colours of gold and silver, sun and moon, heat and coolness, reality and dream, seasons of arid summer and fallow autumn. The rose too connotes the rosy colour and richness of the world of wealth. Red of the rose has money associations, Montana copper red, red and gold bindings of Nick's readings of Morgans, Mycaenas, Midas. Tom's mansion is a red and white Georgian, colonial; his garden is red and gold; it has a sweep of deep pungent roses". There is a wine coloured rug and crimson carpet. In this "bright, rosy coloured space" everybody takes on to the colour; even Nick reminds Daisy

73. Ibid., p.129.
"of a -- of a rose, an absolute rose," though he admits that he's not even faintly like a rose. In this world, appearances are all, reality is nothing. The rosy setting conceals the sinister reality of Tom's adultery. The house is like a full-bloomed rose and it brightens when the lights are turned on at dusk, but the canker worm is prowling about between the soft, fragrant petals, gnawing away at the innocence and beauty. This is also the world of Gatsby's gaudy dreams where he "lived like a young Rajah... collecting jewels, chiefly rubies". Nick thinks, "I saw him opening a chest of rubies to ease, with their crimson-lighted depths, the gnawing of his broken heart." 74

Even the main decor of his room takes on the gaudy resplendent colours of his dreams; "his period bedrooms swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers". As Gatsby and Daisy look out from the bedroom window, "there was a pink and gold billow of foamy clouds above the sea", and she wanted to put him in "one of those pink clouds". Gatsby must live by appearances so wears the colours of money, but pink symbolises the innocence he retains in a decadent society. Once the incorruptible dream is shorn of its rosy, white and silver glow, he realises that the rose is a grotesque thing. This is the price he pays for his fatal destiny, of "living too long with a

74. Ibid., p.53.
single dream". However, Gatsby, inspite of his surreptitious covering is not unaffected. Rose, like white and gold, symbolises the shirking of moral responsibility that would have preserved his identity. As casual rumours float:

One time [Gatsby] killed a man, says one of the young ladies, moving somewhere between his cocktails and his flowers... He killed a man who had found that he was nephew to Von Hindenberg and second cousin to the devil. Reach me a rose honey, and pour me a last drop into that there crystal glass.75

Thus flowers too like cars, clothes and the cuff links of Wolfsheim are symbols of rich appearances. Colours not only camouflage Gatsby's mysterious past, shroud his dream and make viable the certainty of his identifiable present but they (red, green, white, silver and gold) become national emblems of America symbolising the promise and golden moments.

In America the summer moments linger as a prolonged Christmas, cheerfulness. The association of Gatsby's summer parties with the gorgeous Christmas tree symbolises the

75. Ibid., p.48.
continuing promise of the perennial American festival of summer, of bursting exuberant fresh new life with all the attendant gaudy colours of wealth. But Daisy betrayal smacks of the destruction by wealth of the identity he has tirelessly built and the falsity of the dream. Then "the pouring rain [which is] a moment of regeneration, of beginning again, portended by a natural symbol of fertility", at Gatsby's funeral becomes the autumn rain of death. Similarly, flowers had symbolised the life of his illusions in Daisy but when she marries Tom, she passes into the "dying orchids on the floor beside her bed". He had sent her heaps of flowers but she hadn't flowered for him. At his funeral Nick sends flowers and "could only remember .... that Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower".

Fitzgerald modelled Gatsby after several actual shady characters for whom he had unmistakable fascination. He gave Edmund Wilson a description of one such character:

Hes a gentleman bootlegger: his name is Max Fleischam. He lives like a millionaire. Gosh, I haven't seen so much drink since Prohibition.... Well, Fleischam was making a damn ass of himself bragging about how much his tapestries were worth and how much his
bathroom was worth and how he never wore a shirt twice and he had a revolver studded with diamonds.\textsuperscript{76}

Fitzgerald had the keenest eye for people, places and things, and he had lived in the Jazz Age not without the knowledge that illustrious people were invariably connected with dubious business dealings. To get money was the only aim of the Twenties, and men were esteemed according to what they were worth, that is the money they possessed. Even the Church sanctioned this passion for wealth and clergymen assured their 'flock' that God approved business callings and rewarded virtue with wealth, and prosperity was a gift of God. In such a milieu, Moses was conceived as a real-estate promoter and Christ himself as the founder of modern business. This doctrine was taken to an absurd extreme whereby contemporary gangsters and business tycoons such as Arnold Rothstein were celebrated and made into heroic figures. Rothstein fascinated Fitzgerald too; not only his glamour but his capacity to move with equal ease in the worlds of the rich and shady; infact his shady enterprises did not affect his social standing and he was seen in the company of respected society figures whom he entertained in his Park Avenue apartment. He was "a walking bank", the

\textsuperscript{76} Quoted, Arthur Mizener, \textit{The Far Side of Paradise}, p.128.
pawnbroker of the underworld, the fugitive, "the unhealthy man who sidled along doorways". He dealt in racing, bootlegging, baseball, boxing, gambling, selling stolen gems, and brothels. He was "the Morgan of the new plutocracy, its banker and master of economic strategy". Then there was Fuller who had, under the pretext of bankruptcy, embezzled, six million dollars of public money. Fitzgerald told Perkins he had studied the case thoroughly. Another, Larry Fay legend of the new plutocracy was who had a passion for Bond street creations.

Fitzgerald modelled the pet phrases which give distinct identity to Gatsby after contemporary underworld jargons. So that Gatsby shouldn't remain "blurred and patchy", he gave him a twentieth-century British "upperclass slang term, "old sport".

The very name Gatsby amalgamates several motifs. The change of name Jimmy Gatz to Gatsby becomes a significant pointer to the motif of violence. Alexander R. Tamke has noted:

'Gat' was widely understood as a common underworld synonym for pistol, apparently derived from the similar appellation of the Gatling gun (a forerunner of the machine gun): 'gat' began
to be applied to the revolver, became thoroughly established slang during the teens and 20s. When the prevalence of 'gat' is remembered, Fitzgerald's choice of name for his gorgeous gangster emerges as ideal for his literary purposes, in view of the unmistakable if ill-defined connotations with the criminal elements which Fitzgerald's crook-hero possesses as the lieutenant of the racketeer Wolfsheim.\textsuperscript{77}

The name has further symbolic overtones. Recent critics have seen another significance in Gatsby keeping the "business as religion" motif in view. David F. Trask has argued that while it is known that the inspiration for the novel came from Fitzgerald's chance encounter with a Jewish bootlegger, the change of name gives intimation of "Jewishness" in the hero, a view supported by the frequency of the name Jay among Jews. Trask further says, "Could it be, however, unlikely, that he was rendering the literal 'Jesus, God's boy' in the name Jay Gatsby", (In ordinary pronunciation, the 't' easily changes to 'd' as in 'God'). This conjecture might appear hopelessly far-fetched were it not for

\textsuperscript{77} "The gat in Gatsby: Neglected Aspect of a Novel", \textit{Modern Fiction Studies} xiv, pp.443-5.
Fitzgerald's discussion of Gatz's 'Platonic conception of himself' and his direct use of the phrase 'son of God'*.
Thus through a brilliant cultural and semantic blend, Fitzgerald points out that God's boy is at the mercy of the violent.

However, Fitzgerald confessed with regard to Gatsby, "I never at any time saw him clear myself -- for he started as one man I knew and then changed into myself -- the amalgam was never complete in my mind". As such "Gatsby is revised not so much into a real person as into a mythical one: what he is not allowed to distract the reader from what he stands for."^78a He became an over reacher, a twentieth-century version of Icarus so that the American dream became a metaphor for the essential human ambition to transcend limitations.

In the brave new world, "the colossal vitality of [Gatsby's] illusion" implies dreams of the romantic self which could be realised only in the America of his imagination. Fitzgerald summed up the essence of this dream and expectation in his short story "The Swimmers":

The best of America was the best of the world.... France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still that quality of the idea, was harder to utter.... It was a willingness of the heart.80

The idea and the vision of America was greater than even the possibility and promise of American actuality; greater than the gaudy splendours of its riches, lavish possessions and plenitude. It is in this "magical glory" of Gatsby's world wherein lies the meaning of his self-surrender and sacrifice to his secret hope, aspiration and dream -- the re-enactment and retrieval of the past -- that allures and destroys. The heightened expectations of the promise of life, with which the book begins, is maintained to the last, even to the ultimate vanishing of illusions. The process of the novel's main action however, tends towards energising the vision of triumphant glory. It moves towards that emotionally surcharged moment when Gatsby's loss of illusions creates the haunting ambience of the loss of the glory and the dream. This lingering sense of loss of a past is the pervasive nostalgic ethos of the novel that

Fitzgerald wrote about to Roger Burlingame, an editor at Scribners:

I was tremendously pleased that it [The Great Gatsby] moved you in that way -- 'made you want to be back somewhere so much' -- because that describes, better than I could have put it myself, whatever unifying emotion the book has either in regard to the temperament of Gatsby himself or in my own mood while writing. 81

The vision of glory ends in disenchantment and shattering of the veil of illusions. In a deeper vein it was Fitzgerald's summation of his own feelings and "wise and tragic sense of life". In its ultimate form the novel:

indicates how compellingly and cohesively Fitzgerald had finally merged his vision, his memory, and his materials into a moral history of the meaning of America. 82

The playboy of the Jazz Age, the exemplar of the lost generation had written a universal fable which records with unerring insight the basic existential dilemma:

The courage of despair, the experience of meaninglessness, and the self-affirmation inspite of them. 83