



**MA in Construction and Representation  
of Cultural Identities**

**Call Me Home to Leave:  
Jay Gatsby's Mansion and Tears of Trauma**

Nico Mena Amat

Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and of English Studies

Faculty of Philology and Communication

University of Barcelona

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Dr Gemma López Sánchez



UNIVERSITAT DE  
BARCELONA



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## Abstracts

### English

**TITLE:** Call Me Home to Leave: Jay Gatsby's Mansion and Tears of Trauma

This research paper explores the role of Jay Gatsby's mansion as a location of trauma in Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*. The aim is to examine the mansion as both a physical location and a metaphorical space where various traumas converge and find a fertile ground for manifestation. The study adopts Cathy Caruth's trauma theoretical framework, drawing upon her insights and reflections on Sigmund Freud's seminal work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The mansion, situated on Long Island, is depicted as an idyllic setting for parties and opulence, yet beneath its glamorous façade lies a deep undercurrent of trauma. Through a comprehensive analysis of all the chapters in which the mansion is present, this research illuminates how the mansion functions as a utopian space for trauma. It becomes the perfect breeding ground for the flourishing of various traumas, serving as a magnet for characters haunted by their past experiences.

By applying Caruth's theoretical lens, this study sheds light on the intricate dynamics between trauma and its physical surroundings. It reveals how the mansion symbolically encapsulates the unresolved traumas of Gatsby and other characters, functioning as a site of both refuge and torment. The research delves into the complexities of Gatsby's own traumatic experiences and the ways in which the mansion becomes a location for his desperate quest to transcend his past. Through a meticulous analysis of key passages and events, this research highlights the mansion's significance in the narrative, not merely as a backdrop but as an integral component that shapes the characters' trajectories and emotional landscapes.

This study contributes to the field of literary analysis by providing a deeper understanding of the psychological implications of physical spaces in literature. It demonstrates how the mansion serves as a potent symbol of trauma and its enduring impact on individuals. Ultimately, this research offers new insights into the intricate interplay between location, trauma, and human experience, prompting further exploration of trauma studies within the realm of literature and beyond.

**Keywords:** The Great Gatsby, Long Island mansion, utopia, post-war trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), dreams and nightmares, psyche.

## Català

Aquest treball explora el paper de la mansió de Jay Gatsby com a localització de trauma a la novel·la de Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, *El Gran Gatsby*. L'objectiu és examinar la mansió com a lloc físic i com a espai metafòric on convergeixen diversos traumes i troben un terreny fèrtil per a la seva manifestació. L'estudi adopta el marc teòric sobre trauma desenvolupat per Cathy Caruth, recollint les seves idees i reflexions sobre l'obra seminal de Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. La mansió, situada a Long Island, es presenta com un escenari idíl·lic per a les festes i l'opulència, però sota la seva extravagant façana s'amaga un profund sentiment de trauma. Mitjançant una anàlisi exhaustiva de tots els capítols en què la mansió és present, aquesta recerca il·lumina com la mansió funciona com un espai utòpic pel trauma. Esdevé el terreny de cultiu perfecte per a la representació de diversos traumes, convertint-se en un imant per als personatges afectats per les seves experiències passades.

Mitjançant l'aplicació de l'enfocament teòric de Caruth, aquest estudi posa de manifest les dinàmiques entre el trauma i el seu entorn físic. S'evidencia com la mansió encapsula simbòlicament els traumes no resolts de Gatsby i altres personatges, funcionant com a lloc de refugi i turment. La recerca s'endinsa en les complexitats de les pròpies experiències traumàtiques de Gatsby i les maneres en què la mansió es converteix en un lloc per a la seva desesperada cerca de transcendir el seu passat. Mitjançant un anàlisi meticulós de passatges clau i esdeveniments, aquesta recerca posa de relleu la importància de la mansió en la narrativa, no només com a fons sinó com a component integral que dona forma a les trajectòries dels personatges i als seus paisatges emocionals.

Aquest estudi contribueix al camp de l'anàlisi literària al proporcionar una comprensió més profunda de les implicacions psicològiques dels espais físics en la literatura. Demostra com la mansió serveix com a símbol potent del trauma i del seu impacte durador en les persones. En última instància, aquesta recerca ofereix noves idees sobre la interacció entre la ubicació, el trauma i l'experiència humana, fomentant una exploració més profunda dels estudis sobre el trauma dins del camp de la literatura.

**Paraules clau:** El Gran Gatsby, mansió de Long Island, utopia, trauma de la post-guerra, síndrome d'estrès post traumàtic (PTSD), somnis i malsons, psique.

## 1. Preliminaries

This research project takes place one hundred and five years after the conclusion of World War I, a pivotal historical event that had far-reaching effects on global society. The aftermath of the war was characterised by a period of crisis, financial instability, and emotional turmoil. The impact of the war extended beyond physical wounds, as individuals also suffered from psychological trauma, which reshaped their lives in significant ways. The war marked a turning point in history, creating a distinct divide between the time before and the time after. It served as a reminder of the devastating consequences of conflict and the need for healing and recovery. Subsequent wars that followed further reinforced the understanding of the lasting impact of such events on individuals and societies. In contemporary times, the awareness of the potential for experiencing similar conflicts is present in our societies. The memory of past wars and the recognition of the ongoing conflicts in the world serve as a reminder of the enduring effects of trauma and the importance of striving for peace and stability.

Indeed, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, holds a significant place in the literary canon, offering a compelling exploration of a changing society in the 1920s. Published in 1925, the novel captures the essence of the Jazz Age and delves into themes such as wealth, love, and the pursuit of the American Dream. Fitzgerald's work has sparked extensive discussion and analysis across various disciplines, shedding light on its traumatic undercurrents. Some relevant adaptations include Richard Larkham's handbook, published in 2011, which aims to provide readers with a comprehensive and immersive experience of Fitzgerald's timeless text. By employing both digital and printed formats, Larkham invites readers to engage with the story from different perspectives. The handbook delves into the historical context of the novel, exploring elements such as the impact of war, the Jazz Era, and Fitzgerald's



personal life, including his relationship with Zelda Sayre. These adaptations and scholarly works contribute significantly to enhancing our comprehension of *The Great Gatsby* and its enduring significance. They provide readers with valuable opportunities to delve into the intricate nuances of the narrative, its multifaceted thematic layers, and its intricate ties to the broader social and cultural milieu of its era.

Another noteworthy adaptation of the narrative is dated back to 2013. Baz Luhrmann's cinematic rendition of *The Great Gatsby* is acclaimed as one of the most triumphant adaptations of the novel, effectively immersing viewers in the portrayal of the downfall of the American empire (Foundas). The film possessed all the necessary elements to secure nominations for the prestigious Oscars, even though it did not emerge as the victor in any of the proposed categories during the award ceremony<sup>1</sup>. The film boasted a stellar cast, featuring acclaimed actors such as Leonardo DiCaprio in the role of Jay Gatsby, along with Tobey Maguire, Carey Mulligan, and Isla Fisher, among others. Notably, the soundtrack was skilfully curated by Craig Armstrong, who orchestrated the musical production. Additionally, the film benefitted from the special participation of American singer and songwriter Lana Del Rey, who contributed the captivating main theme titled "Young and Beautiful."<sup>2</sup> This composition garnered critical acclaim, earning a Grammy nomination. Through its exceptional soundtrack and talented cast, the film impeccably captured the essence of the era's society and its ultimate downfall, magnifying the prevailing sentiments of disillusionment and despair that persisted.

The analysis of Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* has indeed encompassed various perspectives, with a particular emphasis on the events and aftermath of World War One (WWI).

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<sup>1</sup> The film was nominated in many different film competitions and was awarded 25 out of 46 nominations.

<sup>2</sup> Currently, and since its release, "Young and Beautiful" is Del Rey's most streamed song in music services such as Spotify or Apple Music (March 25, 2023).

Extensive research has been dedicated to exploring the specific topic and examining the repercussions of the war on both the characters and society as a whole. Consequently, the novel has already been scrutinised through the lens of Trauma Studies, with a deep analysis of the characters Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway, the narrator. However, upon examining the existing literature available in digital libraries, it becomes apparent that while the trauma resulting from the war and the systemic failure have been extensively discussed, there seems to be a gap in considering the location of trauma. This realisation has prompted me to delve deeper into the novel and present my perspective through Cathy Caruth's Trauma Studies theory, focusing on the Long Island mansion of Jay Gatsby, the lavish setting for extravagant parties. From this standpoint, I have come to recognise the potential for applying additional theories within this paper, with a particular emphasis on how the mansion symbolises a utopian space where trauma finds its place.

## **1.1 Contexts**

### **1.1.1 *The Great Gatsby* in the Roaring Twenties.**

*The Great Gatsby* is set in the United States during the 1920s, a period that is often referred to as the Roaring Twenties or the Jazz Age. Some scholars state that this period is precisely considered to be “an arbitrary sequence of years with some very few personages and events plucked to center-stage to perform their star-turns, while, behind them, shrouded in darkness and effectively ignored, is the Preterite, the Passed over, the persons and events and achievements held to be of little or no significance” (Rovit 116). In this sense, the lingering memory of WWI and the impending onset of the Great Depression emphasise that the events occurring during this period are far from being inconsequential. On the contrary, they embody a characteristic feature of traumatic events

– they are often overlooked or go unnoticed. Indeed, the 1920s in America were characterised by significant social and cultural transformations, encompassing economic growth, the emergence of new forms of entertainment and popular culture, and a burgeoning sense of social and political liberation. This period witnessed a surge in consumption, a thriving stock market, and an overall atmosphere of optimism and anticipation for the future, with the memories of WWI gradually fading away. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this era of prosperity was not universally shared, and there were considerable disparities within society. Many individuals, particularly those living in rural areas or working in certain industries, did not benefit from the same economic growth experienced by others. Consequently, a sense of division existed, stemming from the uneven distribution of wealth and opportunities during this time. The novel effectively portrays this inequality by depicting Gatsby's parties in Long Island as exclusive gatherings reserved for the upper class<sup>3</sup>. This setting exemplifies the stark divide between the privileged and the less fortunate. Moreover, *The Great Gatsby* captures the cultural shifts that occurred during the 1920s. The emergence of new forms of entertainment, including jazz music, dance clubs, and cinematic productions, signified a transformation in popular culture. These vibrant expressions of art and entertainment were predominantly embraced by the younger generation, who actively rejected conventional social norms and values, embracing a more progressive and liberated outlook.

Despite the societal advancements following the irruption of war and the global hostilities, political discourse continued to echo war rhetoric. This was mirrored in society, where tensions between citizens and politics remained prevalent. The Roaring

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<sup>3</sup> Although it is not mentioned in the novel, the fact that attendees were dressed in expensive and extravagant dresses and were driven to the party by a chauffeur in a uniform (Fitzgerald 34) evidences the type of attendees who were allowed to party at Long Island's Gatsby mansion.

Twenties, in particular, witnessed a division between rural and urban areas, which, in turn, fuelled the rise of organised crime and bootlegging<sup>4</sup>. The excessive behaviour of the upper class became a cause for concern among the working classes, and the corruption prevalent during the Jazz Era served as an evident portrayal of privilege and disregard for those in need. The underlying message was, and still is, unmistakable: those in power are afforded the liberty to flout societal norms without repercussions.

### 1.1.2 American Writers in a European Conflict<sup>5</sup>

The United States officially announced its participation in the First World War in April 1917. However, numerous writers had been closely observing the conflict since its outbreak in 1914. In this sense, as the country was still debating its positioning, a war of words<sup>6</sup> had already started in society. In Hazel Hutchison's words, who focused on writers during the war, "the nation's neutrality had been a key topic of debate in the press and among the academic and literary classes since the war began in August 1914" (7). According to Ian A. Isherwood, "this focus on American writers *during the war* changes our perceptions on the war's impact as it has been traditionally interpreted *after the war*" (263). In this sense, Hutchison also offers Ellen La Motte's visions of the war, especially the traumatic consequences of it, evidencing that trauma had a consequence on American society: "*The Backwash of War* (1916), an eyewitness account of several months spent working in Mary Borden's hospital, offered few political opinions, but unflinchingly presented the traumatic human cost of the conflict in all its pathetic absurdity:

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<sup>4</sup> This is known as the Prohibition Era, a period in United States history between 1920 and 1933, during which the production, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages were prohibited by law. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which was ratified in 1919, established Prohibition as a nationwide policy.

<sup>5</sup> This title comes from the subtitle of Hazel Hutchison's book *The War That Used Up Words* (2015).

<sup>6</sup> This expression comes from Hazel Hutchison's book *The War That Used Up Words* (2015).

dehumanising injuries, military complacency, gangrene, and shell shock” (10). This type of discourse disturbed the American government, so I would suggest that there was an interest to omit the reality of the war to the citizens. As a result, the book was withdrawn by the publishing house, and, according to Hutchison, La Motte claimed that “Truth, it appears, has no place in war” (10).

American writers during that period indeed had the opportunity to witness the war both *in situ*, meaning being physically present in the war zones, and *ex situ*, through reports, accounts, and the experiences of others. This division led to the classification of writers into two main groups: those who directly addressed the war in their works and those who explored the war indirectly by focusing on the societal struggles of American life. It is within the latter group that we can place Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald and his notable novel, *The Great Gatsby*. Indeed, as a representative of the “Lost Generation,” Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, despite not experiencing the frontline first-hand, skilfully incorporates the presence of war and the traumas associated with it into his novel. *The Great Gatsby* explores the lingering aftermath of the war, including the impact of post-war experiences and shell shock, intertwining them with other struggles prevalent in American society. These elements serve as the ingredients of the novel, alluding to the profound influence of the European war and delving into the vulnerabilities of a society that were further exacerbated by the conflict. Through their literary works, writers of that era transported readers to the war, even if indirectly, preparing society for future global incidents and emphasising the shared participation in the conflicts through their commentary and observations. In this way, they played a crucial role in shaping the collective understanding and response to the war. In Fitzgerald’s case, for instance, war made an impact on his personality, and his experiences in the army aimed the creation of post-war imagery where trauma was present:

F. Scott Fitzgerald was drafted into the army and sent for training to Camp Leavenworth [...]. Fitzgerald was a reluctant soldier, to say the least, although when he was relocated to Camp Sheridan at Montgomery, Alabama, he was glad to make the acquaintance of one of the local girls, Zelda Sayre, whom he would marry in 1920. Fitzgerald's unit was getting ready to sail from New York when the Armistice took place. (Hutchison 206)

Due to the Armistice, Fitzgerald did not have the opportunity to actively engage in World War I. However, it is worth noting that the possibility of participating in the war did exist, and Fitzgerald's stance towards military service was one of reluctance. This aspect resonates with Cathy Caruth's perspective on post-war trauma, which will be further explored in a subsequent section. Caruth poses that individuals do not choose to take part in war; rather, their involvement is imposed upon them. In Fitzgerald's case, he was obligated to undergo training and prepare for potential participation, which, according to Caruth, can engender a form of trauma termed post-war trauma – the anguish arising from the desire not to participate in the war. According to her, this led individuals to experience a “repetitive intrusion of nightmares and relivings of battlefield events” (Caruth 59), basing her arguments on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which will be explored later on in this work.

## **1.2 State of the Art**

The release of Baz Luhrmann's film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* in 2013 sparked a surge in discussions surrounding Fitzgerald's novel. This heightened attention has significantly contributed to the analysis of the characters' traumatic experiences within the book from various perspectives. Helen Pretorius (2021) explored the female

experience of war in the novel, focusing on the character of Daisy Buchanan, a beautiful and charming wealthy socialite American woman who is the object of Gatsby's affection. Other articles draw on how the WWI remembrance influences the whole culture of the society of the time (Beidler), and some others focus on the unreliability of a traumatised narrator (McCarthy & Marchalik). Indeed, some researchers try to focalise their studies on the mansion as the representation of the American dimension (Cain) without locating trauma in that specific space but on the societal structure, whereas other scholars consider that structure because of the failure of a white-privileged and stereotyped society (Will). Ultimately, a study on post-war trauma in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* focuses "on the representation of the First World War [...], embedded in the subfield of trauma studies" (Goublomme 9). This dissertation has been pioneering in analysing the novel through the lens of trauma studies, as previous research did not explore in-depth this approach.

Considering the previously cited studies, it is intriguing to observe that none of them directly associates the mansion as the source of trauma. Within the novel, however, the visible emergence of trauma coincides with the initiation of parties, and the characters undergo significant transformations upon their engagement with Gatsby's mansion. To provide a clear trajectory for this research, it can be asserted that individuals who participate in *The Great Gatsby* and establish a connection with the site of trauma are, to some degree, affected by the ensuing traumatic experiences, attributable to the symbolism embodied by the mansion. In light of this observation, it becomes evident that the mansion, rather than representing legendary extravagance or the affairs of the upper class, functions as a utopian space for trauma, encapsulating various manifestations of trauma within its walls. Moreover, the mansion can be regarded as an embodiment of the American Dream, albeit a distinct interpretation thereof, ultimately revealing itself as mere propagandistic rhetoric once again. These are the motivations of this research paper,

and the exploration of the mansion allows us to depict even more the of well-known identities in Fitzgerald's novel. Exploring the characters through their behaviours at Gatsby's mansion might provide further explanations of how locations influence an individual's traumas. The fluidity of trauma is also interesting for this research. Trauma is not a fixed or static experience, but an evolving one, and Carraway is able to overcome some traumatic experiences, as the novel is presented as a manuscript that the narrator has written after the events he has experienced.

The motivations of this research paper encompass the exploration of the mansion, which allows for a more comprehensive depiction of the well-known identities presented in Fitzgerald's novel. By examining the characters' behaviours within the context of Gatsby's mansion, I aim to provide additional insights into how specific locations can shape an individual's traumas. Notably, the novel's narrator, Nick Carraway, recounts the story from a distinct place of trauma – from a site that is not mentioned in the novel, but ultimately, his memoir. In this regard, Carraway has been influenced by two separate locations of trauma, raising the question of whether the mansion served as the initial catalyst leading him to the subsequent one. The fluidity of trauma presents itself as a captivating element in this research. Instead of being a rigid or unchanging encounter, trauma undergoes transformation and development over time. Carraway's capacity to surmount specific traumatic experiences becomes apparent through the portrayal of the novel as a manuscript, authored by the narrator following the events he personally experienced. It is worth noting that *The Great Gatsby* is often considered to be autobiographical fiction, and that Nick Carraway mirrors Fitzgerald: "Much of the best American fiction is also first-person narrative, in which the persona often seems strongly autobiographical" (Buell 265). Thus, the available information on the author and his novel will be also taken into consideration for this research.



### 1.3 Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby*

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940), named as his distant cousin,<sup>7</sup> was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1896. He is widely regarded as a prominent figure of the literary Lost Generation, a term denoting a collective of writers who matured during the First World War and expressed their disillusionment with conventional values and societal norms. This literary movement emerged in the aftermath of the war and was profoundly shaped by its influence. Fitzgerald pursued his education at Princeton University, where he submitted his work to the university's literary magazine and formed friendships with numerous affluent and influential young men from his era. These experiences would later leave a lasting imprint on the creation of his renowned masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*.

Similar to the novel's protagonist, Jay Gatsby, the author himself, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, was captivated by the allure and vibrancy of the Jazz Age. However, he also held a critical perspective on its excesses and moral decay. Fitzgerald displayed a particular fascination with delving into themes of wealth, social status, and the American Dream, which form the core of the novel's narrative. Notably, the author's personal life exerted a profound influence on *The Great Gatsby*, with the character of Nick Carraway considered to be somewhat autobiographical. In this regard, Fitzgerald relocated to New York during the early 1920s and immersed himself in the social circles of the city's elite, much like Carraway does in the novel. Additionally, Fitzgerald experienced a tumultuous marriage with Zelda Sayre, whose persona inspired elements of the female characters depicted in the novel.

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<sup>7</sup> Francis Scott Key, the lyricist of the American anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner" is supposed to be his distant cousin.

Fitzgerald's personal struggles with alcoholism and financial instability significantly influenced both the writing process and the plot of the novel. Consequently, his own battles with alcohol find reflection in the character of Jay Gatsby, along with his aspirations for wealth and social standing. As is widely known, this character meets a tragic fate as a result of the environment in which he exists. Moreover, concerning Fitzgerald's personal experiences, the initial published version of *The Great Gatsby* included a dedication immediately after the cover page – a simple yet poignant message from Fitzgerald to his wife: "Once again, to Zelda." Numerous theorists and researchers have explored the role of Zelda Sayre in the creation of the novel, with some even suggesting that Fitzgerald appropriated his wife's thoughts and composed a work with unoriginal imagery. However, this theory lacks substantial support when considering the novel's dedication to her and the fact that many of the story's characters draw inspiration from Sayre's own experiences and behaviour. Thus, it can be asserted that Sayre served as Fitzgerald's primary muse, driving the creation of this fictional masterpiece.

## **2. Methodology**

As mentioned in the preceding section, a comprehensive reading of *The Great Gatsby* requires an exploration of various aspects such as the setting, characters, contexts, and the author. Building upon this, Caruth's (1996) work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, provides a valuable framework to delve into the traumatic perspective of the characters and the significance of the mansion as a site of trauma, particularly within a post-war scenario. In the novel, the mansion serves as a tangible representation of the fluid nature of trauma, evolving in tandem with the characters and reflecting their respective traumatic experiences. By analysing the interplay and dialogues

established within the Long Island mansion, it is possible to ascertain how this environment influences the characters and to what extent it drives the plot of the novel. Consequently, it becomes imperative to recognise the mansion as a pivotal location for understanding the traumatic encounters of the various agents depicted in *The Great Gatsby*.

In line with the title of this paper, *Call Me Home to Leave: Jay Gatsby's Mansion and Tears of Trauma*, the objective is to examine the mansion in *The Great Gatsby* as the location of trauma, where individual traumas converge within a shared space. The analysis aims to explore how the mansion becomes a paradoxical sanctuary for trauma, where individuals find themselves in a home they yearn to escape, as traumatic experiences prove inescapable and beyond their control. As previously discussed, the mansion serves as a metaphor for the post-war context and is vividly portrayed in the novel. While characters may physically depart from the mansion, symbolising leaving home as suggested by the dissertation title, the traumas they carry persist. Consequently, the focus will be on scrutinising the mansion as the site of trauma and examining how trauma manifests itself within the various gatherings orchestrated by Jay Gatsby.

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

In this section, I will delve into the theoretical frameworks that will inform my detailed analysis of the Long Island mansion as a utopian space for the development of trauma. Firstly, I will draw upon Cathy Caruth's theory on trauma, as elucidated in her work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, specifically focusing on Chapter Three, "Traumatic Departures: Survival and History in Freud." By incorporating Caruth's insights, I will bolster my arguments in alignment with her assertions. Additionally, I will

explore the key aspects highlighted by Florette Goublomme in her work *Echoes of War: Trauma and Ineffability in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1925) and Tender is the Night (1934)*. Goublomme's analysis examines the influence of trauma and war on the narratives of the 1920s, shedding light on their significance. Furthermore, I will emphasise the concept of 'utopia' and its connection to the mansion as a utopian site for trauma. By delving into this notion, I aim to underscore the unique characteristics of the mansion that make it an ideal space for the manifestation and exploration of traumatic experiences.

## 2.2 Cathy Caruth's on Post-War Trauma

Caruth initiates her discussion on post-war trauma by introducing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), "which describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 57-58). Caruth posits that PTSD is commonly understood as the imposition of horrifying events by an external force that one cannot control. This particular form of stress disorder, deemed highly destructive, establishes a connection between the mind and external violence. By acknowledging the existence of traumatic experiences, it becomes possible to establish a link between destruction and survival, ultimately identifying a catastrophic event that has profoundly impacted an individual. Caruth's examination focuses on World War I and World War II within the context of Freud's trauma theory, providing a foundational perspective.

Indeed, Caruth delves into Freud's understanding of PTSD as described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud characterises it as a disorder resulting from historical events

that have been imposed upon individuals within their specific contexts. During World War I, the participants were not merely called into action; instead, they were compelled to participate and make a conscious choice regarding the faction or side they would support. The willingness not to participate in such events led individuals to experience a “repetitive intrusion of nightmares and relivings of battlefield events” (59), thus considering these nightmares as symptoms of an accident neurosis. The reliving of these events, according to Freud, can be compared to the nightmare of an accident:

The dream life has this peculiarity: it continually takes the patient back to the situation of his disaster, from which he awakens in renewed terror. [...] But I am not aware that the patients suffering from traumatic neuroses are much occupied in walking life with the recollection of what happened to them. [...] To regard it as self-evident that the dream at night takes them back to the situation which has caused the trouble is to misunderstand the nature of dreams. (Freud 8-9).

In this context, the recurring traumatic dream represents the resurgence of a distressing event against the volition of the individual who undergoes it. These manifestations manifest as agonising repetitions of a sequence of flashbacks that the mind cannot exert control over or evade. According to Freud, this phenomenon plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual’s life and identity. Caruth, drawing inspiration from Freud’s theory of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, delves into the significance of dreams and flashbacks experienced by traumatised individuals, particularly in relation to the sense of survival.

Caruth establishes a relationship between trauma and survival “through the very paradoxical structure of *indirectness* in psychic trauma” (60). Caruth recognises that there exists no direct correlation between the physical injury sustained by the body and the

psychological state of that body. Hence, trauma does not primarily affect individuals through its physical damage. Instead, she posits that the consciousness of an individual plays a pivotal role in the development of trauma. By drawing a clear distinction between physical and psychological wounds, Caruth embarks on an exploration of the concept of survival within the realm of traumatic experiences:

If a life threat to the body and the survival of this threat are experienced as the direct infliction and the healing of a wound, trauma is suffered in the psyche precisely, it would seem, because it is not directly available to experience. The problem of survival, in trauma, thus emerges specifically as the question: What does it mean for *consciousness* to survive? (61)

To delve into this inquiry, it is crucial to explore Freud's conception of consciousness as a notion intertwined with the body, yet capable of exerting influence beyond its physical boundaries. Freud posits that consciousness emerges as a result of the innate human drive for self-preservation and protection: "For the living organism protection against stimuli is almost a more important task than the reception of stimuli; the protective barrier is equipped with its own store of energy and must above all endeavour to protect the special forms of energy-transformations going on" (20-21).

However, the physical body poses a barrier to the integration of consciousness, thereby safeguarding its integrity. Consequently, any attempt by consciousness to exert influence is inherently repelled, as the body and consciousness are regarded as distinct entities within an individual. Trauma, then, challenges the aforementioned ideas, as it is a "shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time" (Caruth 61). In this context, the traumatic experience depicted in the dream transforms into an enduring nightmare, wherein the survivors are incessantly

confronted by their fears and anxieties. In simpler words, survivors *have to* survive, and this is the “repeated confrontation with the necessity and impossibility of grasping the threat to one’s own life. It is because the mind cannot confront the possibility of its death directly that survival becomes for the human being [...] an endless testimony to the impossibility of living” (62). In this sense, the survival of traumatic experiences consists of an “endless *inherent necessity* of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction” (63) by governing an individual’s life. According to contemporary theories, it is postulated that such traumatic events have the potential to retraumatise individuals, resulting in the degeneration of the cerebral structures. It is important to note that trauma is not solely confined to horrifying experiences but also encompasses those events that persistently recur, ultimately conditioning an individual’s life indefinitely. These experiences become indelibly etched in one’s psyche, rendering them impossible to eradicate from one’s lived reality.

### **2.2.1 Post-War Trauma in *The Great Gatsby***

The act of reading *The Great Gatsby* offers a delightful experience owing to the novel’s inherent characteristics. It presents a captivating narrative, interwoven with a romantic love story that captivates readers from beginning to end. Additionally, the construction of Nick, the narrator of the story, enriches the reader’s exploration of the novel on multiple levels, allowing for a nuanced understanding of its themes and messages. Moreover, upon delving into a more profound analysis of the novel, one can discern the pervasive influence of war as a driving force within the story. Set in 1922, merely four years after the culmination of the Great War (WWI), the implications of war and its enduring impact emerge as crucial elements in comprehending the novel’s essence.

As aforementioned, scholars have undertaken thorough examinations of the character of Nick Carraway, who assumes the role of an intradiegetic narrator<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, due to the pivotal nature of his testimony within the novel, he can be classified as a homodiegetic narrator<sup>9</sup>. In a succinct manner, Nick delineates his personal encounter with World War I, and right from the outset of the novel, he employs irony to provide readers with contextual understanding, specifically regarding the war experience which he has witnessed:

I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the war center 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 so I supposed it could support one more single man (Fitzgerald 2-3)

Within this passage, Nick establishes the context for his decision to relocate to New York City, attributing it to the presence of war. Consequently, readers are immediately made aware, from the very first chapter, that war assumes a central role in the novel, acting as a driving force for both the storyline and the characters whose lives have been profoundly impacted since the outbreak of the conflict. In this regard, it becomes apparent that while Nick's personal experience is significant, the plot of the novel revolves around the enigmatic figure after whom the story is titled: Jay Gatsby. His motivation is depicted as being intricately linked to a woman named Daisy Buchanan, with whom he had an affair

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<sup>8</sup> An intradiegetic narrator consists of a narrator who is directly involved in the novel. In other words, it is the type of narrator that is a main character at the same time.

<sup>9</sup> A homodiegetic narrator consists of a narrator whose emotions, feelings and opinions are relevant to the understanding of the story they are narrating.



during the war in 1917, back in Louisville. Over time, the lovers lose contact, and Daisy eventually marries Tom Buchanan, an American businessman. However, Tom eventually discovers the enduring love and clandestine encounters between his wife and Gatsby. This revelation ultimately leads to Gatsby's assassination by Wilson, whose wife had an affair with Tom. Scholars have extensively debated Nick's position within this complex scenario, examining his role and stance in relation to the events that unfold. As Goublomme argues, "Nick does not control nor provoke the situation, he is not a direct agent of harm, but his actions, and his inactions too, contribute to producing some positions of perpetrators and victims" (29-30). Following that statement, Goublomme draws an interesting relation between Nick's position within the novel and the war experience. In this sense, she states how Nick's unconscious participation in the dramatic ending of Gatsby's life is key, leading to irreversible consequences:

In the war too, like in his narration, his position is perhaps similar to one of the implicated subjects. He indeed did not choose to fight during the war, he is not a soldier by profession but once again, he contributes to the violent situation that war is, without controlling it. That is how he presents himself. In Gatsby's story, he is not the one killing Gatsby at the end, and he never directly creates conflicts. But in a way he also encourages Gatsby and Daisy's love affair that leads to dramatic consequences. Moreover, he seems to often follow the others who decide what they will all do, but Nick does not often make decisions. As the other characters – perhaps unconsciously – force Nick to do some things, Nick indirectly takes part in the events that lead to the triple death at the end of the story, which can perhaps be compared with his forced involvement in war. (30)

Therefore, trauma is a visible notion within the main characters of the novel. Philip D. Beidler (2013) argues that "The two main characters, [...] Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway,

are both combat veterans [...], it turns out, and having served in the same major battles. They return from the war visibly unwounded; still, both remain prisoners of their memory of having looked out on the landscape of death.” In this sense, both characters suffer from their memory and experiences, and they are “memory culture’s walking wounded” (Beidler 2013). This resonates with Caruth’s theory on trauma as the “repetitive intrusion of nightmares and relivings of battlefield events” (59), as these thoughts are unavoidable, and they are condemned to experience them repetitively.

That said, the nature of survival is necessary for traumatised individuals. In Caruth’s words, these life experiences will haunt individuals, as trauma is an abstract, inherent term that escapes our comprehension or assimilation (4). Trauma is an abstract concept that eludes definitive localization within an individual’s physical being or a specific geographical space. Its manifestation lies primarily within the cultural fabric shared by a particular group, wherein the distinctive characteristics facilitate the collective impact of traumatic events, such as those occurring during times of war. Consequently, the very act of survival engenders the emergence of what we refer to as “trauma narratives,” which encompass the exploration of both individual and collective traumas. In the context of war, readers are often exposed solely to a single perspective – the account of the victorious side. However, the inclusion of traumatic experiences and the voices of survivors adds depth to the winners’ narrative, offering an unfamiliar point of the same event, one profoundly influenced by the irreversibly profound psychological consequences. Moreover, trauma, as a fluid notion that cannot be controlled by individuals, contaminates society as a whole. In this sense, soldiers who participated in the war will suffer from trauma due to the experiences they lived on the frontlines, and individuals who did not experience war from this specific location can be influenced by the other’s traumas. This can be representative of the figure of Fitzgerald’s Jay Gatsby,

who can be claimed as the representation of the traumatic experiences of a generation. In Balaev's words, Gatsby can be considered an "everyperson figure, [...] a significant purpose of the protagonist [that] is often to reference a historical period in which a group of people or a particular culture, race, or gender, have collectively experienced massive trauma" (155).

In examining the presence of trauma within the novel, it is essential to identify the instances where it becomes discernible. Concerning the narrative structure employed in *The Great Gatsby*, there is a fragmented composition. While the novel's events unfold in a chronological manner, the narrative undergoes intermittent disruptions, such as flashbacks, which challenge the linear progression of the story. An illustrative instance of this fragmented structure can be found in the following scene:

I turned toward Mr Gatsby, but he was no longer there.

One October day in nineteen-seventeen – (said Jordan Baker that afternoon, sitting up very straight on a straight chair in the tea-garden at the Plaza hotel) – I was walking along from one place to another, half on the sidewalks and half of the lawns. (Fitzgerald 61)

Within this passage, Jordan tells Nick about Gatsby and Daisy's love affair. By being interrupted by the narrator, the emphasis on the fragmentation of the story is present. Also, the gap when Nick turns towards Jay, and realises he is no longer there, represents the mysterious aura surrounding the character of Jay, and he leaves the scene right before Jordan is about to tell Nick the love story. Moreover, readers can realise this given the nature of the narrator, as we can have access to Nick's experiences, thoughts, and reflections. Fragmentation, thus, as a modernist feature, represents at the same time the fragmentation within the society, which is affected by the trauma of WWI. In this sense,

“the novel [...] therefore echoes war and its consequences on the society but also the characters’ failure” (Goublomme 32). Within the novel, Nick’s narrative serves as a conduit for exploring the overarching theme of trauma and its connection to the significance of war. Notably, the identification of Nick and Jay as characters afflicted by shellshock – a term originating from the soldiers themselves, encompassing symptoms such as fatigue, tremors, confusion, nightmares, and sensory impairments<sup>10</sup> – proves crucial in framing the novel as a work steeped in traumatic experiences. Consequently, the pervasive sense of trauma permeates the characters within the narrative, exerting varying degrees of influence upon them. Their individual encounters with trauma shape their identities and contribute to the post-war landscape, which, as per my hypothesis, finds representation in the mansion – a symbolic utopian space encapsulating the presence of trauma.

When addressing the concept of utopia in theoretical terms, it is important to consider its portrayal in literature. A utopia is often depicted as existing in various dimensions, but for the purpose of this discussion, I will primarily focus on the dimensions explored by Dennis Hardy (2019) in his article titled “Places of Peace: Utopia and a World without War.”: “1. those places that are portrayed in almost dreamlike terms; 2. those that take the form of practical experiments, with a view to making the progress in the “here and now”; and 3. those which are based, pragmatically, on an absence of the tools of war” (10). Starting with the definition of the term, “utopia” derives from ancient Greek, and is about “an alternative place where life is better than what exists” (11). In this context, numerous political leaders have made promises of utopian societies to their citizens, particularly in the aftermath of periods marked by war and devastation. For instance, the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco pledged a prosperous Spain to its

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<sup>10</sup> Definition according to the American Psychological Association.

inhabitants upon conquering the country during the Spanish Civil War. Ironically, he refrained from Spain's involvement in World War II, citing the grave repercussions that the nation was still enduring<sup>11</sup>. Another fitting example is the Cold War, which is considered to be an endless conflict according to some historians, and its cause was the promise of, yet again, another utopian country. In this sense, as Hardy argues, "utopias have never been fulfilled" (13), and individuals of a concrete society are destined to "create utopia on earth but, without exception, they have fallen short of their ideals" (13).

Thus, the notion of utopias, contrary to their dreamlike reputation, is characterised by a lack of order and harmony, evoking a sense of desperation in the pursuit of an ideal time and place. This concept resonates within Fitzgerald's novel, as the grand mansion depicted in the story invites readers to momentarily disregard its post-war setting. However, it remains unclear whether the absence of war is truly present within the novel, given the characters' enduring experiences of war trauma. Hence, by adopting Henry's perspective, one can identify a utopian semblance within the novel, existing in a dreamlike, descriptive location where characters navigate through their identities, serving as a sociological experiment in these nascent societies adjusting to a post-war world overshadowed by trauma. Within the narrative, this place can be found in Jay Gatsby's opulent mansion situated on Long Island.

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<sup>11</sup> See Moradiellos (2016). The researcher explores how the Franco regime considered up to three times participating in WWII, but delayed deciding to the extent that the war was over, and Spain was still deciding its military involvement in it.

### 2.3 The Mansion: A Utopian Space for Trauma

In this section, the aim is to delve into the mansion as a utopian space for trauma and to present arguments that establish its relevance within the novel. The mansion serves as a representation of the broader society, which has been subjected to trauma at various levels. Consequently, trauma permeates this particular location. This section will provide a theoretical analysis of the mansion in order to ascertain its significance in relation to the themes of war and, consequently, trauma.

As mentioned in preceding sections, my hypothesis centres on the mansion as a utopian space for trauma, where individuals congregate in an emerging environment that is influenced by the Jazz Era and the evolving societal ideals of modernity. Initially, Gatsby's mansion appears to epitomise wealth, luxury, and extravagance. At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator describes it as "a factual imitation of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (Fitzgerald 4), where the owner throws extravagant parties with unlimited alcohol, music, and entertainment, embodying the American Dream and its contradictions. However, the novel suggests that the mansion also serves as a source of sadness, isolation, and longing for both the main character, Jay Gatsby, and its owner. The Long Island mansion symbolically represents the psychological trauma experienced by Gatsby and the other characters in the novel. Readers can discern within the mansion not only the presence of trauma, but also various psychological and emotional states associated with it, such as emptiness and isolation. In this regard, the portrayal of this location aligns with Hardy's concept of utopia. First, the narrator's description of the mansion merely scratches the surface, resembling the notion of an ethereal place the author proposes. Second, it can be interpreted as a representation of a place that functions as a practical experiment, aiming

to achieve progress in the “here and now,” considering the mansion’s symbolism as the failure of a society still grappling with the traumas caused by its involvement in World War I. Gatsby’s extravagant parties, for instance, superficially convey a sense of social cohesion. Finally, the mansion is constructed on the absence of the tools of war, yet war looms prominently throughout the novel. It becomes the convergence point for all the characters’ traumas, manifesting through their respective identities and evident in their flashbacks and post-traumatic stress disorders. However, these elements do not manifest overtly in the novel but rather underlie the attitudes, ideas, and vulnerabilities of the characters who continue to suffer the consequences of the war.

### **3. The Location of Trauma in *The Great Gatsby***

“You can’t live forever;  
you can’t live forever.” (Fitzgerald 30)

This section aims to delve into the Long Island mansion in *The Great Gatsby*, positioning it as a site of trauma. By thoroughly examining the various events that unfold within this setting, I will meticulously illustrate the impact of war on trauma and the mansion’s function as a utopian space for exploring the characters’ narratives. The creation of this traumatic space is not solely derived from the memories of those who gather at the mansion but also from their attitudes and behaviours. Building upon Caruth’s theoretical framework, I will explore how Gatsby’s mansion serves as the location of trauma in the novel. To facilitate a comprehensive analysis, I will begin by providing a concise summary of the chapter, precisely situating the mansion, and subsequently discuss how this location manifests as a utopian space for exploring and addressing trauma.

### 3.1 Chapter Three

“It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life.” (Fitzgerald 40)

On Saturday nights, Jay Gatsby hosts extravagant parties at his grand mansion. The inaugural of these gatherings takes place in the third chapter of the novel, where Nick receives his invitation. Upon his arrival, he experiences a sense of displacement amidst uninvited guests who keenly perceive the affluence and lavishness of the setting. The conversations permeating the party revolve around various rumours regarding Gatsby's identity, ranging from allegations of being a German spy to claims of an Oxford graduate student, or even suggestions of involvement in murder. Amidst the revelry, Nick crosses paths with Jordan Baker, and together they venture into Gatsby's library, where they chance upon Owl-Eyes, who is duly impressed by the vastness and authenticity of Gatsby's literary collection. Later on, Nick engages in dialogue with a man who recognises him from their shared experiences in the Great War. This individual introduces himself as Jay Gatsby, piquing Nick's fascination with his enigmatic demeanour and his restrained participation in his own festivity. Ultimately, Nick departs from the celebration and stumbles upon an accident involving Owl-Eyes and his car. Reflecting upon his own life outside the location of these extravagant gatherings, Nick underscores his professional commitments and personal connections, particularly his entanglement with Jordan. Despite his attraction to her, he harbours disapproval towards her deceitfulness and inclination towards infidelity, positioning himself as one of the few individuals characterised by their unwavering honesty that he has encountered.

Chapter Three marks the readers' first encounter with Gatsby's mansion in Fitzgerald's novel. At the beginning of the chapter, readers are once again presented with



a description of the mansion as a dreamlike location, devoid of the tools of war, as Hardy (2019) suggests, echoing the description of an Hôtel de Ville in Chapter One (Fitzgerald 4). Rather than being associated with war, the mansion represents the antithesis of it. It becomes a symbol of the Jazz Age, where the music takes centre stage, transforming the mansion into an almost-perfect place: “The orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums.” (33). The concept of utopia is further solidified by a distinctive yet analogous description, serving as an introduction to the location as a space where traumas find expression. After depicting the preparations for the party, the initial manifestation of post-war trauma is embodied in the women who endured isolation during the Great War: “The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten in the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other’s names” (33). In this passage, the description is significantly influenced by the memories of war, specifically as perceived by the narrator, Nick Carraway, who experiences profound post-war trauma<sup>12</sup>. This contrasts with a newfound sense of pleasure and enjoyment, which characterises the emerging society. Consequently, the garden<sup>13</sup>, adorned with tables laden with food and beverages during the parties, undergoes a transformation from a site of hostility to a space for communal gathering and the celebration of new possibilities, all while being mindful of the prevailing disillusionment brought about by the war. In this context, the something “in the air” does not allude to dust or bombs, but rather signifies a release from preoccupations, where conversations flow spontaneously, and individual identities become less prominent, reminiscent of the

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<sup>12</sup> See McCarthy, Matthew W., and Daniel Marchalik (2021).

<sup>13</sup> American posters regarding food production after WWI allude to the garden as a place for victory. See Appendix, fig. 1.

experiences on the battlefield. Although the gardens no longer bear the scars of war, there remains a lingering post-war sentiment. Aligned with this notion, the mansion in the novel functions as an open invitation for action, as formal invitations are not required for entry: “People were not invited – they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow, they ended up at Gatsby’s door.” (Fitzgerald 33-34). The absence of personal invitations extended to individuals attending Gatsby’s parties serves as evidence for the role of the mansion as a receptacle for traumas. Attendees enter these gatherings with the intention of escaping their own troubles and indulging in a pleasant facade, assuming different identities. This particular pattern of behaviour aligns with Caruth’s observations regarding individuals afflicted by PTSD who become unwilling participants in war, unwilling to align with any side, and subsequently, their memories become eternally affected (Caruth 59). Consequently, these references to war infiltrate the narrator’s storytelling and effectively convey a discourse on trauma, which in turn affects the individuals at the party who have endured similar experiences during the Great War (Goublomme 24).

Having said that, another element that can be taken into consideration is gossip about Gatsby’s participation in the war. These conversations occur within the utopian location of trauma. Attendees assert that “he was a German spy during the war,” “he was in the American army during the war” and “I’ll bet he killed a man” (36). Gossip can also be rationalised as a by-product of trauma. Had the attendees not been situated within the mansion, they would not partake in conversations regarding Gatsby’s involvement in the Great War. Such gossip serves to contribute to the formation of an identity marked by trauma. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that women are the ones engaging in discussions concerning these matters, with one of them even mentioning “I heard from a man who knew all about him, grew up with him in Germany” (36). It is important to acknowledge

the significance of women's involvement in gossip within the context being discussed. During the war, women were often isolated, and their understanding of the post-war experience relied heavily on the narratives provided by others, such as their lovers or husbands. Gossip, in essence, becomes a pivotal factor leading survivors to harbour mistrust towards others and struggle with both social and intrapersonal relationships, as supported by research (SAMHSA 49-50). Thus, gossip conversations play a crucial role in shaping these outcomes. To further underscore the sense of loneliness experienced by women, it is noteworthy that they continue to enjoy Gatsby's parties, even after the war has ended: "a great number of single girls dancing individualistically or relieving the orchestra for a moment of the burden of the banjo or the traps" (38). The emphasis on the idea of individuality that Fitzgerald impregnates in this passage suggests that women have been dancing alone for so much time, and therefore, their memory is unreliable. Also, it is remarkable how this idea is always related to music, and Fitzgerald draws on the intimacy of music through women's experiences:

The tears cursed down her cheeks – not freely, however, for when they came into contact with her heavily beaded eyelashes they assumed an inky colour, and pursued the rest of their way in slow black rivulets. A humorous suggestion was made that she sing the notes on her face, whereupon she threw up her hands, sank into a chair, and went off into a deep vinous sleep (42).

In this passage, a woman is captivating the audience with her piano performance at the party, completely engrossed in the melody she plays. The rapid transition from sheer joy to profound sorrow within a fleeting moment provides compelling evidence that women, despite their indirect involvement in the battlefield, endured the lasting impact of traumatic experiences. This contagious transmission of trauma serves as a poignant

reminder that one's proximity to the battlefield is not a prerequisite for being deeply affected by its consequences (Goublomme 24).

Chapter Three introduces Gatsby for the first time in the novel (39), within the opulent setting of a Long Island mansion, which carries connotations of past traumas. Gatsby's initial dialogue resonates with his war experiences, suggesting a haunting memory that incessantly replays within one's mind, symptomatic of PTSD. Following a conversation between the narrator and Gatsby about their reflections on the Great War, Gatsby promptly extends an invitation to Nick for a hydroplane excursion. Again, it can be seen the immobility of memory due to traumatic experience, as the hydroplane<sup>14</sup> transitions from a weapon to a leisure activity. Then, Gatsby first refers to Nick as 'old sport,' an expression that will be consistently used to address him throughout the novel. This phrase originates from Gatsby's time spent in Oxford after the war, where he adopted it from British gentlemen (Asakawa 30-31). The usage and misplacement of this expression are thus a result of Gatsby's experiences and his role during the war. Regarding Gatsby's speech, the narrator acknowledges how he meticulously chooses his words, further adding to the enigmatic nature of his character:

He smiled understandingly – much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced – or seemed to face – the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favour. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that

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<sup>14</sup> Hydroplanes were widely used during the Great War. See Wakefield, E, and Waterbird (undated), and Knighton, A. (2018).

point it vanished — and I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care. (Fitzgerald 40).

In this passage, Gatsby's behaviour suggests that he is a vulnerable individual, conscious of the gossip surrounding his identity and the potential lack of trustworthiness attributed to him ("It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey). Consequently, his memory and the way he conducts himself, speaks, and presents himself in the novel are influenced by an unstable sense of identity stemming from his experiences in the war ("I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care"). This serves yet another indication of Gatsby's inability to overcome the impact of traumatic experiences on his memory.

By the end of Chapter Three, the idea of the mansion as the location of trauma is reinforced. When the party is over, "a sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and great doors, endowing with complete isolation of the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell" (46). In this passage, the role of the mansion in the novel can be perceived. The mansion does not change individuals since it is the location of trauma. All guests and attendees leave the party once it is over, and they go back to their lives, except for Gatsby. He stays at the mansion, he remains in the location of trauma, a comfort zone, although he has been absent during the party. This works as a metaphor for how PTSDs work. Memory has the ability to temporarily suppress traumatic events but escaping them entirely is impossible. As Caruth and Freud argue, memories impacted by trauma tend to resurface repeatedly, leaving uncertainty as to whether they can ever truly vanish. One can only strive to endure such

experiences, and even then, survivors must learn to coexist with the perpetual recurrence of memories deeply etched into their subconscious. Also, the mansion thus becomes the utopian location for trauma: “‘Anyhow, he gives large parties,’ said Jordan, changing the subject with an urban distaste for the concrete. ‘And I like large parties. They are so intimate. At small parties there isn’t any privacy’” (41). In this passage, Jordan defines this utopian space for trauma. Privacy is key in the mansion, thus the absence of tools of war is evident. On the one hand, privacy is a dreamlike place for people who want to enjoy and de-stress their lives, but on the other hand, not everyone is able to enjoy privacy in the mansion, as evidenced by Gatsby and all the gossip surrounding him, in spite of the fact that he is in his own house. In this sense, the mansion, after the first party, has claimed its title: it is a location of trauma, it is a utopian space for trauma, and for Gatsby, it is a “Home to Leave”<sup>15</sup>. And he will leave.

### 3.2 Chapter Four

“I usually find myself among strangers  
because I drift here and there trying to forget  
the sad things that happened to me.” (Fitzgerald 55)

After the party, Nick observes inebriated women on Gatsby’s lawn engaging in discussions about his enigmatic identity, as well as commenting on the rumours and gossip that surround him. Subsequently, Nick decides to compile a comprehensive list of the most notable attendees at Gatsby’s parties who remain oblivious to his true nature. Following this, Gatsby invites Nick to join him for lunch in the city, and they embark on

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<sup>15</sup> “Home to Leave” is the title of this dissertation.

the journey in Gatsby's car. Gatsby assumes the role of the driver, and during the drive, he divulges his personal narrative, recounting his origins, accomplishments, and adventures during World War I. Notably, he presents Nick with a war medal, asserting that behind his enigmatic facade lies an exceedingly tragic tale waiting to be heard. Upon reaching their destination, they encounter a businessman by the name of Meyer Wolfsheimer, who implies that Gatsby's identity may not align with the assumptions held about him, hinting at possible involvement in organised crime. Later on, they cross paths with Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, as Nick introduces Gatsby to him, albeit Gatsby discreetly withdraws from the scene. Following their lunch, Nick encounters Jordan, an athlete, and they engage in a conversation regarding Gatsby's life and his romantic relationship with Daisy prior to the disruption caused by the war. Subsequently, Jordan kindly requests that Nick consider Gatsby's plea to arrange a meeting with Daisy, thus reuniting them after a five-year separation.

In Chapter Four, the mansion serves as a backdrop rather than the central setting, providing readers with contextual information about the location of trauma. The chapter commences with the introduction of two inebriated women who engage in discussions about Gatsby's past, including rumours about his involvement in criminal activities and war accomplishments. It is worth noting that these conversations take place within the mansion, following a party, and involve female characters. This further reinforces the notion that women symbolise the embodiment of others' trauma, representing the universal figure affected by collective experiences of trauma, which need not necessarily involve direct involvement in frontline battles (Balaev 155). Consequently, these two women also serve as representatives of that very trauma by remarking upon a survivor's life and accomplishments, regardless of the veracity of their comments. Their remarks contribute to an atmosphere of inevitability in Gatsby's life, taking place within the

confines of his own residence. This lack of empathy and sympathy towards Gatsby, their host, once again underscores the portrayal of the emerging society of the Roaring Twenties. This post-war society pursues hedonism and indulgence, attending lavish parties and utilising Gatsby for his wealth, generosity, and hospitality.

Regarding Gatsby's wealth, for which there is currently no definitive evidence of its origin within the context of the novel, when Nick asks about his financial resources, Gatsby responds by stating that he has procured it through a lucrative arrangement with an undisclosed individual. Nick analyses Gatsby's reaction to this question, and states that "His voice was solemn, as if the memory of that sudden extinction of a clan still haunted him. For a moment I suspected that he was pulling my leg, but a glance at him convinced me otherwise." (Fitzgerald 54). In this passage, Gatsby suggests in a serious tone to be affected by the memory of a clan being completely wiped out or eradicated. The phrase "sudden extinction of a clan" suggests a tragic event where an entire group of people ceased to exist. The following sentence, "For a moment I suspected that he was pulling my leg, but a glance at him convinced me otherwise." means that initially, Nick thought that Gatsby might be joking or teasing him about the extinction of the clan. However, after looking at his expression or demeanour, Nick realised that he was serious and genuinely affected by the memory. Again, Gatsby's trauma is depictable, and meets the scheme of Freud's PTSD regarding the notion of memories as a nightmare that return over and over again (Freud 8-9).

By the conclusion of the chapter, Jordan and Nick have an insightful conversation about Gatsby's wealth, which is representative of the mansion he bought next to Nick's house and close to Daisy's residence. In brief, the mansion is the result of Gatsby's trauma and the consequences of it. In contrast to the romantic narrative surrounding Gatsby and Daisy, the mansion stands as the most evident testament to the cyclical nature of his



memories, haunted by events that replay incessantly (Caruth 59). These events, one could argue, would have never transpired had Gatsby not been summoned to the war. With regards to the mansion, Gatsby acquired it with the intention of being closer to Daisy, fostering the hope that she would eventually grace his extravagant gatherings. However, as time elapsed, Daisy never made an appearance, rendering the mansion void of its intended purpose: “‘Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay’ [...] ‘He wants her to see his house’ [...] I think he half expected her to wander into one of his parties some night’” (Fitzgerald 65). In this sense, Gatsby asked Jordan to talk to Nick and invite Daisy to have tea, so the location of trauma will host for the first time ever Gatsby’s major consequence of trauma as a war survivor.

### 3.3 Chapter Five

“‘I thought you inherited your money.’  
‘I did, old sport, [...] but most of it in the big  
panic – the panic of the war.’” (Fitzgerald 75)

After a day spent in the city, Nick returns to the comfort of his home. Within the serene confines of his garden, he unexpectedly encounters Gatsby, who fervently attempts to persuade Nick to join him for a refreshing swim or engage in a discreet business venture. In response to Gatsby’s persistence, Nick politely expresses his willingness to extend an invitation to Daisy and encourages Gatsby to orchestrate their meeting. The meeting is scheduled for the following day. Gatsby appears visibly anxious yet resolute, assuring Nick that every detail will unfold according to plan. In pursuit of this objective, Gatsby dispatches an individual to meticulously tend to the trimming of Nick’s garden, ensuring Daisy’s arrival to a flourishing and vibrant space. Unfortunately, the weather proves capricious, with torrents of rain pouring down. Initially, Gatsby and Daisy interact in a

formal manner, punctuated by moments of uneasy silence. Recognising the need to afford the lovers some privacy, Nick decides to temporarily leave the house for an hour. As the rain subsides, Gatsby and Daisy gradually find themselves engaging in casual conversation, their words flowing effortlessly. Gatsby extends an invitation for both Daisy and Nick to visit his opulent mansion. Inside those grand walls, the lovers revel in their long-awaited reunion, while Nick contemplates the perplexing circumstances surrounding Daisy's loveless marriage, undertaken solely to secure her social standing, juxtaposed with Gatsby's unwavering affection for her over the years and his enduring belief in their eventual reunion. Subsequently, Gatsby reveals to Daisy the significance of the ethereal green light emanating from the dock near her residence, realising that this symbol has lost its meaning now that Daisy herself has graced his mansion. Finally, Nick, who is now unnoticed by both lovers, leaves the house. It is raining again.

In Chapter Five, the mansion assumes a central role in the narrative of the lovers, Gatsby and Daisy. At the beginning of the chapter, as Nick is instructed to extend an invitation to Daisy to have tea, the mansion becomes a poignant reflection of Gatsby's emotions. Consequently, it serves as a symbolic mirror, elucidating Gatsby's profound introspections and musings:

When I came home to West Egg that night I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o'clock and the whole corner of the peninsula was blazing with light, which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner, I saw it was Gatsby's house, lit from tower to cellar. (Fitzgerald 67).

In that particular setting, trauma permeates the atmosphere, thereby mirroring the emotions experienced by those in attendance. Within this passage, it is solely Gatsby who occupies the confines of the grand mansion. Consequently, the mansion reflects his

happiness and his enormous desire to meet Daisy again via Nick. Furthermore, the narrator's depiction of the mansion's exorbitant illumination conveys the notion of an idealistic space, reminiscent of a utopia. At first, Nick believed that his own house was engulfed in flames, only to later realise that it was, in fact, Gatsby's mansion that appeared ablaze, "lit from tower to cellar." In this context, the absence of war-related implements becomes evident. Subsequently, Nick emphasises the concept of utopia and trauma interweaving within the mansion, implying that while the setting may exude grandeur, the haunting spectre of trauma has indelibly permeated Gatsby's mansion. This enduring presence suggests that the location might be splendid, but the phantom of trauma has invaded the mansion forever, as Gatsby's dreams and nightmares resulting from the Great War: "But there wasn't a sound. Only wind in the trees, which blew the wires and made the lights go off and on again as if the house had winked into the darkness." (67).

In this chapter, the consequence of Gatsby's trauma visits the location of trauma. Daisy and Nick receive an invitation to explore the grand mansion, prompting the narrator to inquire about Gatsby's source of wealth. At this juncture in the novel, the origin of Gatsby's affluence remains elusive, yet he divulges that his fortune stems from an inheritance. Gatsby argues on money that "lost most of it in the big panic – the panic of the war." (75). The inclusion of this brief excerpt as the epigraph for this section invites an interpretation of the text as a narrative centred around trauma. The author's choice to employ the phrase "big panic" and provide further clarification that it refers to "the panic of the war" holds particular significance within the novel, given its thematic context influenced by traumatic experiences. The Big Panic can be a reference to the monetary crisis in the United States in 1907, "when the failure of the Knickerbocker Trust Company brought the whole banking structure to the point of collapse" (Davidson 8). This, however, was not the first financial panic experienced in the country. The Panic of 1873,

known as “Large Depression”, affected Europe and North America and weakened the country’s financial leadership (Furstenberg). A third crisis, the Panic of 1893, affected the country’s economy due to bank speculation in Argentina, South Africa, and Australia (Whitten). Indeed, the usage of the term ‘panic’ by Gatsby to describe the period when he amassed his wealth, coupled with his immediate clarification that it occurred during the “panic of the war,” reinforces the notion that his memory remains fixated on wartime experiences. This association with periods of panic occurring during or after a war<sup>16</sup> suggests that Gatsby’s identity, as a survivor of the war, is deeply intertwined with the memories and repercussions of that time. Furthermore, his accumulation of wealth can be attributed to his survival during the war, making it possible for him to amass his fortune. Consequently, the lingering presence of “the panic of the war” haunts Gatsby, as it implies the looming risk of another upheaval where he could potentially lose everything he has worked so hard to acquire.

As the chapter draws to a close, Gatsby’s trauma reaches a heightened level, realising that all his efforts since the war to reconnect with Daisy have ultimately dissipated. During Gatsby’s deployment overseas in the midst of the Great War, his relationship with Daisy came to a halt. Now, after a span of five years, Daisy finds herself in Gatsby’s opulent mansion, and what was once Gatsby’s cherished dream has transformed into a haunting nightmare. The symbolism of the dock’s green light, which Daisy can now perceive from Gatsby’s side, serves to reinforce this idea:

‘If it wasn’t for the mist we could see your home across the bay,’ said Gatsby.

‘You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock.’

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light

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<sup>16</sup>After and during the Spanish-American War (1898-1902) the Panic of 1907 and the Panic of 1893 took place and the Panic of 1873 after the Civil War (1861-1865).

had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. (Fitzgerald 77).

Within this passage, a pivotal climax of the novel is reached, marking the initial stage of the narrative's eventual downfall. Gatsby's cherished dream of reuniting with Daisy has abruptly dissipated, and it is likely that the very essence and purpose of his life have been shattered. This turn of events intensifies Gatsby's traumatic experiences from the war, trapping him eternally in the anguish of losing Daisy, with no hope of fulfilment. In this sense, Gatsby's voice towards Daisy has changed, and it is "over-dreamed – that voice was a deathless song" (80). The suggestion that the perpetuity of his voice signifies the perpetuity of his memory indicates that any traumatic experiences he has endured cannot be altered, thus leading to the persistence of his trauma. Moreover, the recurrence of the over-dreamed voice can be related to Freud's concept of recurring traumatic dreams (8-9), as Gatsby's traumatic dream forcefully infiltrates his memory once again. Undoubtedly, it becomes apparent that Gatsby is afflicted with PTSD, with all his manifestations of trauma occurring within the confines of his mansion. The fact of Gatsby's voice being eternal implies the eternal nature of his memory, reinforcing the inescapability of his trauma. Additionally, the resemblance between the over-dreamed voice and Freud's notion of recurrent traumatic dreams highlights the intrusive nature of Gatsby's traumatic experiences. These observations unequivocally establish the presence of PTSD within Gatsby, with the mansion serving as the backdrop for the manifestation of his traumatic symptoms.

### 3.4 Chapter Six

“‘You can’t repeat the past.’ ‘Can’t repeat the past?  
[...] Why of course you can!’ (Fitzgerald 92)

Reporters have started to appear at the mansion, eager to interview Gatsby, as rumours about his enigmatic past continue to circulate. This emerging situation prompts Nick to provide an explanation to the readers, shedding light on the true identity of Gatsby in order to dispel these rumours. Gatsby, originally born as James Gatz in North Dakota, took the momentous decision to adopt the name Jay Gatsby when he was just seventeen years old. His life took a transformative turn when he encountered Dan Cody, a wealthy tycoon with expertise in mining precious gems and metals. For a period of five years, Gatsby served as Cody’s devoted assistant. However, Gatsby’s aspirations of inheriting Cody’s vast fortune were thwarted by legal constraints following Cody’s untimely demise. Faced with this setback, Gatsby resolved to dedicate his life to the relentless pursuit of wealth and notoriety. In a surprising turn of events, Gatsby reappears at Nick’s residence several weeks later, rekindling their acquaintance. To Nick’s astonishment, Tom Buchanan, accompanied by a group of friends, also pays an unexpected visit to Nick’s abode. Seizing the opportunity, Gatsby extends a generous invitation to his opulent mansion, but his proposal is met with polite declines. Nonetheless, Gatsby is invited to join Tom and Daisy for dinner, an invitation he readily accepts. On the following Saturday, another lavish party unfolds at Gatsby’s grand estate, with the notable presence of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Despite the lively atmosphere, there is an underlying sense of unease. Gatsby and Daisy dance together, their actions observed by Tom, who accuses Gatsby of amassing his wealth through bootlegging – an illicit activity. The festivities come to an end, leaving Gatsby consumed by profound sadness and an overwhelming feeling of Daisy’s increasing emotional distance. Determined to recapture the past,

Gatsby resolves to alter the course of events to how they were five years ago, prior to his departure overseas. In response, Nick forcefully asserts that the past cannot be altered, a sentiment Gatsby vehemently contests. Ultimately, Nick concludes that Gatsby's fixation on a tragic event has led him to idealise Daisy, viewing her as an unattainable paragon of perfection. This unwavering attachment to a romanticised memory drives Gatsby's actions and shapes his pursuit of an elusive dream.

In Chapter Six, the mansion once again becomes a subject of rumours as reporters make their appearance at Gatsby's residence in an attempt to ascertain the source of his wealth. This occurrence reinforces the notion that these rumours contribute to Gatsby's persistent and unshakable memory. Subsequently, Gatsby, along with Tom and some of their acquaintances, engage in a conversation, expressing contrasting viewpoints. Tom, in his self-assured manner, firmly believes that Gatsby is not the person he portrays himself to be. While conversing, Mr. Sloane, one of Tom's companions, poses various inquiries to Gatsby, aiming to uncover his true identity. At this juncture in the novel, almost everyone acquainted with Gatsby and present at his extravagant parties engages in gossip regarding his background, with the exception of Nick and Daisy. Consequently, the majority of individuals express scepticism regarding Gatsby's purported involvement in the Great War. In light of this, Gatsby consistently endeavours to provide persuasive explanations, as evidenced by his conversation with Mr. Sloane, where he mentions, "used to ride in the army" (Fitzgerald 86).

Later in this chapter, the primary argument revolves around Tom's initial visit to the mansion during a Saturday night party. Interestingly, Gatsby appears to be conspicuously absent at these gatherings, despite being the subject of everyone's conversations. This observation further strengthens the notion that survivors are often individuals who harbour a general scepticism towards others, influenced by the pervasive

nature of gossip (SAMHSA 49-50). At the party, Tom accuses Gatsby of bootlegging<sup>17</sup>, “the legal prohibition of the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages in the United States from 1920 to 1933 under the terms of the Eighteenth Amendment” (Britannica), and deliberately claims that he is involved in diverse illegal activities. Again, these arguments specifically occur within the confines of the mansion, and Tom, who does not trust Gatsby since they first met, only spreads misinformation on him in the mansion, the location of trauma. Plus, Nick assumes the responsibility of correcting others’ misconceptions about Gatsby, as they both fought in the same division during the war. However, the fact that none of the party attendees can definitively verify their knowledge of Gatsby only serves to perpetuate the swirling rumours, thereby contributing to the notion that the mansion acts as a space where individuals with fragmented and traumatised identities converge.

Expanding upon this notion, a pivotal shift occurs in the narrative subsequent to Daisy and Gatsby’s dance. It becomes evident that the relationship between the two lovers remains stagnant, mirroring Gatsby’s enduring memory of their past connection. They both come to the realization that their love is no longer as it was five years ago, prior to the disruptive influence of the war. The mansion, acting as a backdrop for their encounters, plays a significant role in bringing forth this heightened awareness of their present reality:

When [Gatsby] he came down the steps at last the tanned skin was drawn unusually tight on his face, and his eyes were bright and tired.

‘She didn’t like it,’ he said immediately.

‘Of course she did.’

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<sup>17</sup> Given the prohibition, a lot of illegal activities were held during this period. Bootlegging was also often related to organised crime. In the novel, parties at Gatsby’s house and the behaviour of the attendees serve as a metaphor for this prohibition.



‘She didn’t like it,’ he insisted. ‘She didn’t have a good time.’

He was silent, and I guessed at his unutterable depression. ‘I feel far away from her,’ he said. ‘It’s hard to make her understand.’ (Fitzgerald 91)

Within this passage, Nick has become increasingly cognizant of Gatsby’s PTSD as additional symptoms manifest themselves, exacerbating Gatsby’s condition and leading to the onset of depression: “Although depression does not belong to the category ‘Trauma and stressor-related disorders’, trauma and stress history is often implied in etiology. Depression is co-morbid to PTSD in approximately half of the PTSD sufferers” (Knežević et al. 3). This is yet another consequence of his participation in the Great War, and all these traumatic manifestations manifest themselves within the confines of the mansion. In this context, Gatsby’s memory, instead of experiencing recovery, remains fixated on the repercussions of his involvement in the war. Nevertheless, he persists in attempting to alter everything within his reach and relive the past. However, Nick endeavours to make him comprehend that this is beyond his capabilities: “‘You can’t repeat the past.’ ‘Can’t repeat the past? [...] Why of course you can!’ (Fitzgerald 92). In this regard, Chapter Six establishes a new dialogue between the mansion and the concept of trauma, exemplified through Gatsby’s narrative, by positing that traumas reside within a dreamlike place, where once-pleasant dreams gradually metamorphose into harrowing nightmares.

### 3.5 Chapter Seven

“So we drove toward death through the cooling twilight” (Fitzgerald 114)

Gatsby no longer hosts parties, as his intention to impress Daisy with opulence and grandeur has diminished. In response to the rumours surrounding his reputation, Gatsby has dismissed most of his servants and replaced them with workers associated with Wolfsheim. As a result, Gatsby's mansion, once a bustling hub, now stands as a secluded and tranquil abode. The joyous summer atmosphere that once permeated Gatsby's parties has vanished, replaced by a succession of regrettable decisions that cast a shadow on the radiant skies. In a hasty manner, driven by disregard for the consequences, Gatsby agrees to have lunch with Daisy, Tom, Nick, and Jordan. Anticipating that this gathering will mark their final encounter, Gatsby believes Daisy is on the verge of confessing to Tom that she has never loved her husband. Prior to the lunch, Gatsby invites Tom to his mansion, hoping to impress him. However, this gesture only serves to reaffirm that a connection exists between Tom and Daisy, one in which Gatsby cannot intervene. The lunch unfolds as one of the most uncomfortable scenes depicted in the novel. Adding to the series of ill-fated choices, Daisy, overwhelmed by anticipation, suggests that all attendees venture into the city. Gatsby, once again, acquiesces to her request. In this pivotal moment, Daisy compares Gatsby to an advertisement, and Tom realises that they are in love. As they embark on their journey to the city, Tom, not Gatsby, drives Gatsby's yellow car, while Gatsby takes the wheel of Tom's coupe, accompanied by Daisy. During their journey, Gatsby's car runs out of fuel, necessitating a stop at a gas station located in the desolate Valley of Ashes, at Wilson's garage. While Tom purchases gasoline from Wilson, the latter divulges his imminent departure with Myrtle, his wife, expressing their aspirations for the future. To facilitate their plans, Wilson urges Tom to purchase his other

car and subsequently resell it, enabling him to amass additional funds to relocate to the western region. In this moment, Tom's decline is complete, as he stands to lose both his wife and his lover. Although Wilson acknowledges Myrtle's affair, he remains oblivious to Tom's involvement. Eventually, they reach the city and arrive at the Plaza Hotel. An intense argument ensues as Tom questions Gatsby's claim of having attended Oxford University, triggering a barrage of accusations. For the first time in the narrative, Daisy admits her love for Gatsby while confessing her own dissatisfaction. Gatsby, utterly shocked, bears the brunt of Tom's verbal attacks, who insinuates Gatsby's participation in organised crime and bootlegging<sup>18</sup>. Daisy becomes terrified by these accusations and implores to return home. Amidst the chaos, Nick casually recalls that it is his thirtieth birthday. Upon departing from the Plaza Hotel, the lovers, Daisy and Gatsby, return to Long Island, with Daisy behind the wheel of the yellow car. While passing through the desolate Valley of Ashes, an altercation between Myrtle and her husband ensues. Myrtle descends the stairs and recklessly ventures into the middle of the road, where she meets an untimely demise, struck instantly by a light green car, as recounted by Michaelis, a Greek labourer residing in the valley. Subsequently, Tom arrives at the scene in his own vehicle, only to discover the lifeless body of his mistress. By the conclusion of the chapter, Tom, Nick, and Jordan retreat to Tom's residence, where Tom arranges for a taxi to transport Nick home. While waiting outside the house, Nick catches sight of Gatsby, who confides in him that Daisy was the one driving the car that struck Myrtle, and that his efforts to prevent the collision were in vain. Despite this, Gatsby willingly accepts full responsibility for the accident out of fear that Tom may inflict harm upon Daisy. Nick implores Gatsby to return home, yet Gatsby adamantly insists on remaining outside the house, hopeful that Daisy might choose to leave Tom. However, Daisy ultimately decides

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<sup>18</sup> Wolfshiem is alleged to be involved in these kinds of businesses.

to stay with Tom, and the two reconcile their differences. Nick informs Gatsby of this development, but Gatsby remains steadfast in his decision to stay outside the house.

Chapter Seven deviates from the mansion as the central setting and instead positions it as the catalyst for the unfolding events, which dominate a significant portion of the narrative. The chapter begins with a depiction of the mansion's lights failing once again: "the lights in his house failed to go on one Saturday night" (Fitzgerald 94). This recurrent malfunction serves as a metaphor, representing the mansion's symbolic connection to trauma and anticipating the events that will later occur. As the story progresses, the malfunctioning lights take on a deeper significance, symbolising the mansion's resonance with the protagonist, Jay Gatsby, and his experiences. Consequently, the intensity of Gatsby's suffering is intricately intertwined with the mansion's embodiment of emotional turmoil, fostering a profound relationship between the location and the persona. Mainly, in Chapter Seven, most of the representations of trauma will occur outside the mansion while still revolving around it.

The initial signs of decay in the mansion and, by extension Gatsby himself, are alluded to early on: "The grocery boy reported that the kitchen looked like a pigsty" (Fitzgerald 94). This reaffirms the fact that the failure of the mansion's lights anticipates a sense of decay, now visible in the facilities of Gatsby's house. This can be also a consequence of the set of changes that he is implementing, such as dismissing his servants and replacing them with workers associated with Wolfsheimer. Plus, he justifies these changes in order to keep his image intact, which has been distorted throughout the novel due to gossip and rumours: "I wanted somebody who wouldn't gossip" (95). It becomes evident that Gatsby is deeply preoccupied with the gossip that has surrounded his persona, aware of the speculations concerning his wealth, wartime experiences, and business ventures. Furthermore, the notion of gossip as a potent force impacting the trauma

experienced by survivors is further reinforced (SAMHSA 49-50). Particularly, war gossip plays a destabilising role for individuals who have participated in war, even if the consequences of such gossip may not be immediately apparent to readers until the culmination of the story being narrated.

During the lunch scene, significant revelations occur, despite the mansion not being the physical scenario for these revelations. Nonetheless, the symbolic representation embodied by the mansion remains central to each of these revelations. In a sudden moment, Gatsby tells Nick that Daisy's voice is "full of money" (Fitzgerald 100). The implications of this statement extend beyond the narrative, as Gatsby finally comprehends that Daisy's love is directed towards his wealth and not towards the man who has endured suffering and changed his image to align with Daisy's desires. Gatsby's realisation reveals the shallowness of Daisy's affections and reinforces the theme of wealth and social status as a driving force in their relationship. Subsequently, as the characters travel to the city, Tom attempts to undermine Gatsby's past by questioning his life achievements. Gossip once again permeates Gatsby's life, as he faces comments on various past events (Fitzgerald 108-12). Tom's inquiries encompass Gatsby's alleged time at Oxford, prompting Gatsby to clarify that he spent only five months there, and the origins of his wealth, which remain ambiguous but are linked to Wolfsheimer's business ventures. Consequently, Gatsby's public image undergoes a transformation, tarnished by Tom's investigations. These assertions, however, are rooted in gossip and rumours, as Gatsby has not yet presented his own version of events. His persona and possessions come under question, and his identity is cast in the light of a criminal. In this manner, the mansion, as a site of trauma, exerts an influence that distorts reality, mirroring the events that transpired within its walls back in Chapter Three. This progression highlights the notion that one need not physically be present in the location of trauma to suffer its

consequences. Gatsby's trauma stems not only from his participation in the war but also from the aftermath, as gossip becomes his most severe repercussion. The loss of his former life and the war experience itself are intrinsically tied to his decision to go overseas during the Great War, an act that reverberates throughout the narrative.

Building upon this notion, it is important to recognise that other characters are also affected by the trauma of others, as exemplified by Balaev's concept of the "everyperson figure" (155). This concept suggests that collective trauma can be embodied and represented through a single individual:

But there was Jordan beside me, who, unlike Daisy, was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age. As we passed over the dark bridge her wan face fell lazily against my coat's shoulder and the formidable stroke of thirty died away with the reassuring pressure of her hand. So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight (Fitzgerald 114).

In this passage, Jordan acknowledges Daisy's trauma resulting from the loss of her beloved Gatsby, who transformed from a dream-like figure to a nightmarish presence when he departed to participate in the Great War. This connection between nightmares and dreams echoes Freud's theory of recurring events that persistently haunt one's mind. Moreover, Nick, also bearing the burden of his own trauma, highlights how these persistent thoughts can lead to fatal consequences, metaphorically represented by the accidental killing of Myrtle, ultimately caused by Daisy herself. Ultimately, Gatsby's response to Myrtle's tragic resonates with the detached attitude towards killings experienced during war: "It's better that the shock should all come at once. She stood it pretty well" (120). Although the novel does not explicitly state whether Gatsby was directly involved in taking lives during the war, his reaction serves as an illustration of how death can be treated with indifference, where the value of human life diminishes.

What becomes significant is the individual's response to such events, as it can potentially corrupt one's psyche, as Caruth argues (61).

Considering the arguments presented, the mansion, even in a chapter where it is not the primary setting, symbolises Gatsby's rebirth following his experiences in the war, marking the creation of a new persona. It serves as a tangible manifestation of the consequences of his wartime involvement, which entailed the loss of his former self and previous life. Consequently, the mansion, as Caruth suggests, can be interpreted as Gatsby's returning dream, a motif that permeates the entire novel, evident in the cyclic nature of the mansion's events such as the Saturday night parties and the latter failure of its lights. However, as trauma infiltrates one's consciousness, it also infiltrates the mansion itself, forever altering it and rendering it beyond Gatsby's or anyone else's control. This transformation becomes notably pronounced from Chapter Seven onwards, where the utopian location abandons the idea of a dreamlike place to become a 'here and now' experiment, making progress to the total absence of the tools of war (Hardy 10).

### 3.6 Chapter Eight

“‘They are rotten crowd,’ [...] ‘You are so worth the whole damn bunch put together’” (Fitzgerald 129)

The morning after the fateful events, Nick and Gatsby meet for breakfast to reflect on the previous night. Gatsby remains convinced in his decision to remain in Long Island, as he strongly believes that Daisy will call him. In their conversation, Gatsby recounts the story of his first encounter with Daisy, emphasising his initial wonder of her wealth, her opulent home, and the other men who had loved her. He recounts the passionate night they shared,

only to be abruptly separated by Gatsby's departure for World War I. Daisy, assuming Gatsby's demise, eventually married Tom Buchanan. Also, Gatsby takes the opportunity to tell Nick who is the person behind Jay Gatsby and confesses him the truth for the first time ever. After breakfast, Nick and Gatsby have a walk through the mansion's garden. A servant approaches Gatsby, requesting that he would drain the swimming pool, but Gatsby dismisses the request, as he had not used the pool throughout the summer. He extends an invitation to Nick to stay, but Nick insists on leaving. Before departing, Nick bestows upon Gatsby the only compliment he has ever given him: "'They are rotten crowd,' [...] 'You are so worth the whole damn bunch put together'" (Fitzgerald 129). Back at work, Nick receives an unexpected call from Jordan, but their conversation takes an unpleasant tone, solidifying Nick's decision to leave behind the world he had become entangled in. Then, memories of the events at Wilson's garage resurface in Nick's mind, including Wilson's unwavering determination to uncover the identity of the owner of the yellow car. The following morning, Wilson heads to Gatsby's mansion, where a tragic turn of events unfolds. Gatsby, immersed in a swim and awaiting a phone call, is fatally shot in the pool, with Wilson's dead body lying nearby in the grass. Nick, along with Wolfshiem's men, discovers the grim scene, marking the culmination of the devastating tragedy that has unfolded.

Chapter Eight of the novel presents a tragic turn, encompassing the pivotal events in Gatsby's life and the fate of his mansion. This chapter serves as a focal point for the discussion of the location of trauma within the narrative, consolidating the various references explored in preceding sections. The convergence of Gatsby's personal trauma and the profound significance of the mansion's location contributes significantly to this assertion. Symbolically, the mansion becomes an inescapable site, mirroring the indelible nature of trauma within the human psyche. At the beginning of the chapter, Nick offers



an extensive depiction of the mansion, portraying it as an unfamiliar and disquieting place, evoking a sense of unease comparable to Nick's own discomfort in departing Long Island. It becomes evident that while the grandeur of Gatsby's home remains unchanged, it has undergone a transformation from the venue that once hosted extravagant Saturday night parties. The replacement of servants and the encroaching layer of dust gradually shrouding the opulent elements of the house further underscore its impending decline. As the lights anticipated events in previous chapters, now the mansion is starting to anticipate forthcoming calamities:

His house had never seemed so enormous to me as it did that night when we hunted through the rooms for cigarettes. We pushed aside curtains that were like pavilions, and felt over innumerable feet of dark wall for electric light switches – once I tumbled with a sort of splash upon the keys of a ghostly piano. There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere, and the rooms were musty, as though they hadn't been aired for many days. I found the humidor on an unfamiliar table, with two stale, dry cigarettes inside. Throwing open the French windows of the drawing-room we sat smoking out into the darkness. (Fitzgerald 123)

The passage portrays the mansion as a symbol of the inevitable decline that accompanies even the grandest of things. Once a crowded extravagant place in Saturday nights in Long Island, the mansion now exudes a pervasive sense of isolation, nostalgia, and even carelessness. It serves as a reflection of Gatsby's inner thoughts, particularly his realization that the past is unalterable, and Daisy will not return. In this manner, the mansion becomes a manifestation of Gatsby's hidden emotions – an embodiment of his profound isolation and desperation, which elude his control. This notion resonates with Caruth's perspective on the inability to escape intrusive thoughts within the mind. Gatsby finds himself trapped by his destiny, marked indelibly by the war that had a profound

impact on his life five years ago. The loss of Daisy resulting from the war continues to influence him, as his newly acquired wealthy identity has become Gatsby's ultimate failure. The mansion, therefore, symbolises this decay and serves as a physical space that Gatsby cannot escape – much like his haunting thoughts and flashbacks of the past. This notion is further reinforced by Gatsby's admission that he will neither leave nor evade the mansion, emphasising his entrapment within its walls: “‘You ought to go away,’ I said. ‘It’s pretty certain they’ll trace your car. ‘Go away *now*, old sport?’ ‘Go to Atlantic City for a week, or up to Montreal.’ He wouldn’t consider it.” (Fitzgerald 123).

During their final conversation, Gatsby confides in Nick, revealing his true identity and dispelling the gossip and rumours that have surrounded him since the beginning of the narrative. He recounts the story of how he first met Daisy and the profound captivation he felt towards her wealth, beauty, and social standing. He was at Daisy's house “by a colossal accident” (124), and following an October night they spent together, he embarked on a life plan aimed at providing Daisy with a sense of security and stability. However, these aspirations were thwarted by the war. Before Gatsby was deployed overseas, he and Daisy shared their most intimate moment as a couple, on their last afternoon together. Gatsby did “extraordinarily well in the war. He was a captain before he went to the front[line], and following the Argonne battles he got his majority and the command of the divisional machine-guns” (126). Throughout his participation in the war, Gatsby harboured a singular dream – to return to his former life and marry Daisy. They exchanged letters during this period, but upon the war's conclusion, Gatsby encountered complications: “After the armistice he tried frantically to get home, but some complication or misunderstanding sent him to Oxford instead. He was worried now – there was a quality of nervous despair in Daisy's letters.” (126). In this sense, Gatsby's trauma was reinforced with the rupture of his future project with Daisy. During the war,

Gatsby clung to the hope of returning home, which served as a reminder that someday he would reunite with Daisy. This sentiment of unwavering resilience was something he sought to convey to Daisy through his letters. However, unforeseen circumstances redirected Gatsby to Oxford, leaving Daisy feeling hopeless: “She didn’t see why he couldn’t come. She was feeling the pressure of the world outside, and she wanted to see him and feel his presence beside her and be reassured that she was doing the right thing after all. (126). Consequently, Daisy began to “move again with the season” (126), meeting half a dozen men every day to, finally, meet and marry Tom Buchanan. Daisy tried to reach Gatsby and wrote him a letter, but he was still at Oxford.

The revelation dispels any lingering misconceptions surrounding Gatsby’s persona, highlighting the detrimental impact of gossip on the survivor’s trauma. Love and trauma intertwine closely in Gatsby’s narrative, with each concept fuelling the other. On one hand, Gatsby’s active involvement in the war – now it is known he was in the frontlines –, and his subsequent obsession with Daisy – a love that remains unfulfilled for five years – contribute to his trauma. He is unable to be with the woman he deeply loves. On the other hand, love becomes Gatsby’s lifeline during the war, sustained by the exchange of letters between him and Daisy. However, the circumstances that lead Gatsby to Oxford and his subsequent reconstruction of self after the war result in yet another failure, as Daisy ultimately chooses someone other than him. Both characters, Gatsby and Daisy, experience trauma, demonstrating that the consequences of war extend beyond mere participation. Nevertheless, Daisy appears to recover from the trauma to some extent, even though memories of Gatsby invade her thoughts during his time overseas. These manifestations of trauma occur within the mansion, which gradually loses its splendour and magnificence, serving as a reinforcing backdrop for the notion that the

mansion functions as a utopian setting where trauma flourishes within the narrative's characters.

Another notable symptom of the impending tragedy that will unfold is Nick's farewell with Gatsby. He confesses that "didn't want to leave Gatsby" (129), but in the end, he would have preferred to stay. Nick stands out as the sole character who deeply empathises with Gatsby and shares a sense of identification with him. Though they both participated in the war, albeit in different divisions, Nick comprehends the profound impact it had on their lives. Furthermore, Nick himself bears the weight of trauma and exhibits signs of PTSD. His decision to depart can be seen as a result of this trauma, as he is unable to escape his haunting memories, with Gatsby being a part of his recurring nightmares. In this regard, as the narrative progresses, Nick harbours a lingering suspicion that his return to Gatsby may be delayed, if not too late altogether. That said, Nick tells him that "'They are rotten crowd,' [...] 'You are so worth the whole damn bunch put together'" (Fitzgerald 129). It is Nick's farewell with Gatsby.

Finally, by the end of the chapter, Nick reflects again on Gatsby, and states that he "paid a high price for living too long with a single dream." (136). Freud's concept of the returning traumatic dream finds representation in Gatsby's own dream of attaining wealth to reclaim the love of his life, Daisy. Gatsby's dream revolved around the resurfacing of the traumatic event that kept him apart from Daisy – the Great War. This recurring thought, taking the form of a dream, plagued Gatsby, yet it was more akin to a haunting nightmare that he could not exert control over. Consequently, for Gatsby, a new scenario is approaching: "A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about ... like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees." (136). In this brief excerpt, Nick anticipates Gatsby's uncertain and elusive future, which has become indistinguishable

from reality due to the profound influence of trauma on his life since the eruption of the war. Gatsby died five years ago, when he had to go overseas and lost Daisy, so in this “new world”, Gatsby will find his “poor ghost” and continue “breathing dreams like air”. Even dead, trauma continues to persist in his psyche. Trauma leaves an everlasting impact on survivors, and as Nick aptly observes, “the holocaust was complete”<sup>19</sup> (136), emphasising the all-encompassing nature of Gatsby’s traumatic experiences.

### 3.7 Chapter Nine

“So we beat on, boats against  
the current, borne back ceaselessly  
into the past” (Fitzgerald 152)

Two years later, Nick recounts his final memories of Gatsby while he was still alive. He reflects on the rampant rumours circulating about Gatsby’s supposed affair with Myrtle, which ultimately led to Wilson’s act of killing him. Nick recalls how reporters flocked to Gatsby’s mansion, eager to uncover the truth behind these rumours, perpetuating the story of Gatsby’s life again and again. When Gatsby passed away, it was Nick who organised the funeral ceremony, as nobody else showed any willingness to attend. He reached out to Daisy and Tom, but they were said to be forever unreachable. Nick then contacted Gatsby’s main associate, Meyer Wolfshiem, only to learn that he was preoccupied with pressing business and unable to attend. Later, after sending a telegraph, Gatsby’s father, Henry C. Gatz, arrived at the mansion. He was devastated by the loss of his son, who had

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<sup>19</sup> Though the novel is set after the World War I, it is interesting that Nick uses the term ‘holocaust’ to refer to Gatsby’s death, which will be used referred to the Nazi genocide of European Jews during the World War II. The novel presents many anticipatory elements and, in this case, Wolfshiem was Jew, and Gatsby was very influenced by him.

once held such promise for achieving great things. On that same day, Klipspringer called, and Nick took the opportunity to inform him about the funeral. However, Klipspringer declined to come and instead requested that Nick send him a pair of tennis shoes he had left behind at the mansion. The following day, Gatsby's funeral took place, but no attendees seemed to show up. In a final attempt, Nick travelled to New York to personally invite Wolfsheimer, but his efforts were in vain. Disheartened, Nick returned to the mansion, where Owl Eyes unexpectedly appeared and referred to Gatsby as a "poor son-of-a-bitch." (147). Apart from Henry Gatz and Nick himself, no one else came to pay their respects. After the funeral, Nick confesses that the East has become a haunted place for him. In October, Nick encounters Tom Buchanan on Fifth Avenue in New York. Declining Tom's handshake, Nick discovers that Tom was the one who informed George Wilson that Gatsby was responsible for Myrtle's fatal accident. Tom admits to shedding tears when he gave up the apartment where he carried out his affair with Myrtle. However, Nick refrains from revealing to Tom that Daisy was the one driving the car. Instead, he portrays Tom and Daisy as thoughtless individuals who wreak havoc and seek solace in their wealth. Finally, on Nick's last night in West Egg, he walks down to Gatsby's beach. He ponders how the Dutch sailors must have felt when they first caught sight of the "green breast" (152) of the new continent, drawing a parallel with Daisy's dock and the green light. Nick characterises Gatsby as an eternal optimist, unwavering in his belief in the possibilities of the future. He visualises Gatsby and others standing with outstretched arms, akin to boats ceaselessly navigating against the current, simultaneously looking forward to the future while longing for a past that has slipped away.

The final chapter of *The Great Gatsby*, which takes place two years later, serves as further evidence of the persistent impact of trauma throughout the narrative. Nick, the narrator, continues to vividly recall the events that deeply affected him: "After two years

I remember the rest of that day, and that night, and the next day, only as an endless drill of police and photographers and newspaper men in and out of Gatsby's front door." (Fitzgerald 137). Nick, as an individual who suffers from PTSD resulting from his involvement in the war, exhibits symptoms consistent with trauma following Gatsby's death. He experiences intrusive flashbacks and images of that fateful day, which continue to haunt him, altering the trajectory of his life. The enduring impact of trauma is evident, as it has the power to permanently shape and transform lives if not properly addressed or resolved.

Following Gatsby's demise, gossip continued to circulate, clinging to a now vanished persona: "Most of those reports were a nightmare – grotesque, circumstantial, eager, and untrue." (137). Nick remains unwavering in his defence of Gatsby, fully aware that he is the sole individual who stood by him and provided unbreakable support: "[In the mansion] I found myself on Gatsby's side, and alone." (137). Nick has found himself alone in the battle to defend Gatsby, much like soldiers fighting on the frontlines of war without the emotional support of their loved ones. In the face of relentless gossip, Nick has courageously fought to preserve Gatsby's true identity, striving to maintain his friend's humble essence. This sense of isolation and the weight of responsibility parallel the experiences of survivors on the battlefield, highlighting the emotional strain and determination required to protect Gatsby's legacy. Nick has fought in the frontlines of gossip and has been implacable in defending Gatsby.

After Gatsby's death, another character who contributes to the spread of gossip is Meyer Wolfshiem. Nick travels to New York to meet with him immediately after Gatsby's funeral. Wolfshiem affirms that his "memory goes back when [he] first met him." (143). He claims to have contributed to Gatsby's wealth and his mansion, and to "have raised him up out of nothing." (144). However, it is important to note that Meyer

Wolfshiem acknowledges Gatsby's commendable work in the American Legion, effectively dispelling the rumours and speculations surrounding Gatsby's wartime experiences. By recognising Gatsby's contributions and achievements in the American Legion, Wolfshiem undermines the baseless gossip that had surrounded Gatsby's involvement in the war. The acknowledgment of Gatsby's genuine contributions serves as a counterpoint to the gossip and misrepresentations that had surrounded his name, further highlighting the complexity of his character and the importance of discerning truth from speculation and the impact it has on the survivors' psyche.

The funeral was a mirror of Gatsby's journey in life. "Nobody came" (146) to the cemetery to farewell him. "Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower." (147). The theme of loneliness is palpable throughout the novel, particularly in Gatsby's journey. He went to war alone, facing the horrors and challenges of battle without the support of loved ones. Upon his return, he transformed himself into someone new, striving for success and wealth, but ultimately remaining isolated in his pursuit. Gatsby's death further highlights his profound solitude, as no one comes to offer their condolences or pay their respects. This pervasive sense of loneliness resonates throughout the narrative, mirroring the isolation and longing experienced by Gatsby himself:

Gatsby's house was still empty when I left – the grass on his lawn had grown as long as mine. One of the taxi drivers in the village never took a fare past the entrance gate without stopping for a minute and pointing inside; perhaps it was he who drove Daisy and Gatsby over to East Egg the night of the accident, and perhaps he had made a story about it all his own. (Fitzgerald 151).



In this passage, the emergence of gossip concerning the deceased Gatsby serves as an illustration of his life experiences. Moreover, it reinforces the fact that gossip navigates in the location of trauma, as these rumours are always “pointing inside” the mansion.

Finally, Nick finds himself back at the mansion, marking his ultimate visit. In Chapter Nine, he recollects having returned to the site multiple times following Gatsby’s demise. This serves as compelling evidence of how the location of trauma functions as a powerful mechanism that ensnares individuals affected by trauma. With each subsequent visit, Nick observes the gradual deterioration and fading grandeur of the mansion: “I went over and looked at that huge incoherent failure of a house once more.” (151). With loneliness at Nick’s feet, he defines the mansion as a site for trauma and failure, comparing it to the Dutch sailors that landed in America in 1624:

[Long Island’s] vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (151)

Freud’s understanding of dreams as the cause of nightmares aligns with the experiences of trauma, particularly within a war context. The impact of traumatic events on individuals can give rise to recurring dreams and flashbacks, which manifest as nightmares in their psyche. While dreams in general can be unpredictable and whimsical, the dreams of survivors are often marked by distressing content that reflects their traumatic experiences. These nightmares persistently intrude upon their consciousness, making it difficult for them to escape or ignore the psychological effects of their trauma.

The presence of such nightmares underscores the profound and enduring nature of trauma on an individual's psyche. "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." (Fitzgerald 152).

#### 4. Conclusions

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a novel ahead of its time, akin to the remarkable narratives found within its pages. In terms of trauma, the argument serves as a never-ending discussion, so that scholars will find themselves deeply engrossed in a constantly evolving setting, owing to the whimsical nature of trauma. Within the novel, the mansion serves as a utopian space where trauma is situated, offering endless possibilities for exploring its significance. Indeed, the mansion beckons readers to delve into the exploration of additional literary devices within the novel. Furthermore, supplementary suggestions have been included in the appendix.

From Chapter Three to Chapter Nine, the mansion undeniably undergoes transformations and adjusts to the narratives crafted by Fitzgerald. It becomes the canvas of a burgeoning post-war society, with the author employing a range of vibrant and sombre colours that symbolise trauma. The initial two chapters, which serve as contextual groundwork, captivate readers, compelling them to immerse themselves in a novel that will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark. Through empathising with a character who is considered reprehensible by the social elite and is a subject of gossip regarding his identity, readers are drawn into the story's profoundly compelling narrative.

Gatsby's mansion represents the "complete isolation of the figure of the host" (Fitzgerald 46) and the fact that "[he] bought that house so that Daisy would be across the bay" (65). The owner of the location, where the traumatic events occurred, suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of his involvement in World War I. The sudden outbreak of the conflict compelled him to embark on a journey overseas, abruptly interrupting his romantic relationship with the young Daisy. A series of unfortunate circumstances further complicated Gatsby's return home, ultimately leading to Daisy

marrying the wealthy businessman, Tom Buchanan. Upon Gatsby's arrival in Long Island, he strategically acquired the mansion adjacent to Daisy's residence, patiently awaiting her presence. By chance, Daisy found herself at Gatsby's house, thanks to the intervention of Nick. However, even at Gatsby's funeral, Daisy failed to make an appearance. Gatsby's trauma finds its embodiment in the form of Daisy, as the war severed their connection, while the mansion serves as a tangible representation of the elusive concept that pervades the novel's narrative.

Furthermore, the mansion serves as a utopian space where manifestations of trauma become evident. From the outset, Fitzgerald provides compelling evidence of how Gatsby's house exerts a magnetic effect, drawing in individuals who bear the scars of post-war trauma. We encounter ladies dancing in solitude, their tears flowing under the influence of alcohol, while the descriptions of their isolation and the abundant tables laden with food and beverages in the garden contribute to the depiction of their profound loneliness. These succinct portrayals enable us to explore the unacknowledged traumas experienced by various characters within the novel.

In a more evident manner, the mansion serves as Gatsby's location of trauma. His past, present, and future are interpreted through the lens of his house. The walls of the mansion narrate the tale of Gatsby's life, his involvement in the war, and the relentless echoes of memories that incessantly resurface, transforming once-cherished dreams into haunting nightmares. This "repetitive intrusion of nightmares and relivings of battlefield events" (Caruth 59) resonates within the novel and tells the story of a man that "join[ed] the American Legion and [...] used to stand high there" (Fitzgerald 144). Gatsby exhibited exceptional prowess during the war, and his battlefield experiences left an indelible mark on his discourse. From this perspective, his present reality assumes the form of a war narrative, an unending struggle to alter the past. His relentless endeavour

to persuade Daisy and achieve their reunion ultimately results in Gatsby's failure. Hence, Gatsby fought on two fronts: the Great War and his pursuit of reclaiming Daisy's affections. These dual conflicts unfold within the confines of his mansion, intertwined in a singular yet potent narrative as narrated by Nick. As Gatsby's war involvement is portrayed, the mansion foreshadows in the present the influence of war on his pursuit. The grand parties, the mansion's luminosity, the swirling dust, and the staff's constant renovations – all these elements anticipate the events that follow. The mansion subtly tries to convey to Gatsby that his quest is destined for failure, yet he remains unable to control these manifestations. Hindered by post-traumatic stress disorder, Gatsby struggles to maintain control over his own life. Looking towards Gatsby's future, the mansion serves as the culmination of his tragic fate. One of the consequences of Gatsby's wartime involvement was the resulting gossip that contributed to his status as a victim of PTSD. Gatsby would open the doors of his house on Saturday nights, inviting people to revel without the need for formal invitations. However, these gatherings often became breeding grounds for malicious rumours about Gatsby, with little effort made to corroborate the information. When Gatsby met his demise, none came to the mansion to offer condolences or pay their respects. From the beginning until the end, Gatsby remained alone, with Nick serving as his sole solace. The mansion, as a physical embodiment of trauma, symbolised Gatsby's profound sense of isolation as a survivor of war. His residence became a repository for uncontrollable memories that haunted him incessantly.

*The Great Gatsby* utilises an extensive range of terminology to depict a dreamlike setting. The emergence of a new society driven by the pursuit of the American Dream, widely regarded as a grand illusion, is portrayed in a utopian manner. This is exemplified through the description of the mansion, which is often characterised as a location of dreamlike qualities (Fitzgerald 4), symbolising the pinnacle of the post-war society.

However, its ostentatious display of wealth ultimately leads to its downfall, while the extravagant Saturday nights act as a euphemism for the diverse individuals with troubled pasts who attend Gatsby's parties. Fitzgerald's deliberate use of such terminology aligns with his personal experience of war, subtly weaving his own introspective thoughts into the novel's imagery. Through the work, he offers a critique of these emerging societies. Furthermore, the mansion itself serves as a powerful symbol, representing the absence of the tools of war and reinforcing the notion of an idealistic space. Consequently, the exploration of trauma and utopia as intertwined concepts adds a profound layer of meaning to the seemingly unnoticed Long Island mansion, which nevertheless acts as a driving force within the narrative.

The exposure of these arguments has not only contributed to a deeper understanding of the primary source but has also had a significant impact on this dissertation. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the research conducted thus far, particularly concerning the concept of a "location of trauma" or a utopian space where traumas converge. There has been scarcity of research in this area, further underscoring the pioneering nature of this study. The absence of contrasting perspectives on this notion fails to capture the multifaceted nature of trauma and its profound influence on both individuals and the spaces they inhabit. Furthermore, the primary source itself has received scant attention in terms of its portrayal of trauma, further emphasising the aforementioned point. This research gap creates an opportunity for scholars to present their counterarguments or alternative interpretations of the novel, with a specific focus on trauma studies and post-war imagery. By delving into these areas, researchers can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter at hand.

Finally, the mansion becomes the title of this dissertation, as it embodies the idea *Call Me Home to Leave*. The mansion's design symbolises a formidable entity that ruins everything, much like the way trauma affects individuals. Metaphorically, it represents a home that survivors must leave behind for the sake of their mental well-being. However, the persistent recurrence of memories in their psyche makes it seemingly impossible to escape its grasp. In a literal sense, the mansion compels various individuals to depart: the party attendees, Daisy, the servants, Nick, Wilson, and ultimately, Gatsby. Nobody remains within its walls, and by the conclusion of the novel, it stands as an empty space, albeit one still exuding luxury, now infused with rage and darkness. As F. Scott Fitzgerald poignantly writes, "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." (152). Regrettably, we lacked the opportunity to fully appreciate how great *The Great Gatsby* was.

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## Appendix

### i. Unveiling Secrets: Beyond the Mansion's Walls

#### Chapter One The Green Light

The green light, positioned at the end of Daisy's dock, assumes a profound symbolic role in Gatsby's aspirations and desires. It encompasses a multitude of concepts that simultaneously allure and haunt Gatsby: the physical and emotional trauma separating him from Daisy, the divide between past and present, and how time has captured him, the allure of future possibilities, and the captivating temptation of wealth. It is worth noting that the colour green pervades the entirety of *The Great Gatsby*, manifesting itself in various contexts. Long Island sound is depicted as "green," George Wilson's fatigued countenance is described as "green" under sunlight, the automobile that kills Myrtle Wilson is referred to as "light green" (despite being yellow), Gatsby's impeccably manicured lawn boasts a lush green hue, and the New World envisioned by Nick, inspired by Dutch explorers, is portrayed as a "fresh, green breast." The symbolism of green in the novel demonstrates its multifaceted and contradictory nature. Moreover, a deeper analysis of this literary device as a representation of Gatsby's trauma can be offered.

#### Chapter Two The Anticipations of the Mansion

Throughout the narrative, Gatsby's opulent mansion assumes the role of a symbol that foreshadows significant events and explores prominent themes. The mansion's illuminating lights to the extent that Nick thought it was on fire serve as a prelude to Gatsby's highly anticipated reunion with Daisy Buchanan. The magnificence of these lights mirrors Gatsby's hope and excitement as he readies himself to reconnect with his

long-lost love. However, the occurrence of two instances where the lights fail during crucial moments, anticipating that Daisy and Gatsby's love will not succeed this second chance, suggests an impending failure in their love and their future. These occurrences symbolise the fragility of Gatsby and Daisy's relationship, offering glimpses of the eventual demise of their romantic aspirations. Furthermore, the conclusion of Gatsby's extravagant parties serves as an additional foreshadowing element within the mansion. By terminating the employment of his servants and ceasing to host lavish gatherings, Gatsby endeavours to prevent the dissemination of gossip or rumours about his life. This decision signifies a shift in Gatsby's priorities, underscoring his desire to safeguard his recently acquired social status and shield his secrets. It anticipates the imminent downfall and isolation that Gatsby will encounter as his illusory world begins to crumble.

Lastly, the accumulation of dust throughout the once-majestic mansion alludes to Gatsby's tragic fate. As the novel progresses, the presence of dust serves as a metaphor for the passage of time and the decay of Gatsby's dreams. It symbolises the inevitable consequences of his reckless pursuit of wealth and the ultimate price he pays for his obsessive pursuit of the past. Ultimately, Gatsby's demise, foreshadowed by the prevalence of dust within his residence, reflects the tragic repercussions of his illusions and the impossibility of reclaiming the past.

In these ways, the mansion in *The Great Gatsby* emerges as a dynamic symbol that reflects and anticipates the unfolding events throughout the narrative. It conveys both the grandeur and the eventual disillusionment that lie at the core of Jay Gatsby's ill-fated quest for love and wealth. Exploring the mansion through this perspective could offer a deeper analysis of a literary device that has been barely explored in research.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **The Valley of Traumas**

The Valley of Ashes as the Valley of Trauma could be depicted as an alternative location of trauma for working classes. It serves as a poignant representation of the profound trauma endured by the working classes in the aftermath of the war. This desolate and industrial wasteland, positioned between the opulence of East and West Egg, mirrors the stark contrast between the privileged elite and the impoverished masses. The working classes, burdened by the hardships of post-war life, find themselves entrapped in this barren place where aspirations wither away. The Valley of Ashes embodies the shattered hopes and disillusioned dreams of those who were left behind in their pursuit of material success.

The trauma experienced by the working classes directly stems from the impact of the war. The return of soldiers from the frontlines brought not only physical scars but also profound emotional and psychological wounds. The disillusionment felt by those who fought in the war, witnessing the horrors and futility of it all, left an enduring mark on their lives in the shape of PTSD. The working classes, already marginalised, bore the brunt of the economic and social consequences of the post-war era. Their sense of loss, alienation, and despair finds its embodiment in the Valley of Ashes – a place that reflects the remnants of their shattered dreams and the bleakness of their existence.

The tragedy of Wilson's mistaken belief that Gatsby was responsible for Myrtle's death encapsulates the culmination of this trauma. Wilson, a member of the working class, already devastated by the loss of his wife, Myrtle, becomes consumed by grief and seeks revenge. His desperate act of killing Gatsby is driven by a combination of love, betrayal, and a profound sense of injustice that permeates the lives of the working classes. In Wilson's eyes, Gatsby represents the callousness of the wealthy, who can easily disregard lives and manipulate others without consequence. Wilson's act, tragic and misguided as

it may be, serves as a manifestation of the deep-seated trauma suffered by the working classes – a trauma that fuels his fervent quest for justice and retribution.

Ultimately, the Valley of Ashes stands as a powerful symbol of the collective trauma endured by the working class, representing their struggles, shattered dreams, and the societal injustices they face. The cycle of despair and tragedy, exemplified by Wilson's act, underscores the lasting impact of trauma on the lives of those burdened by social inequality and economic hardship. Fitzgerald's portrayal of the Valley of Ashes serves as a poignant reminder of the hidden costs of the American Dream and the profound consequences it imposes on the marginalised and forgotten members of society. The soldiers who once fought for the American Dream are now living in a nightmare.

#### **Chapter Four**

##### **James Gatz**

The transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby brings forth a series of significant differences, including a distinct shift in his traumatic identity. James Gatz, born into a humble background, represents a young man yearning for something more in life. His early experiences and encounters with wealth and luxury during his time with Dan Cody lay the foundation for his aspirations and dreams. However, it is Jay Gatsby, the persona he creates, who becomes the embodiment of those desires and strives to attain the unattainable. While James Gatz might have harboured his own share of traumas and struggles, it is Jay Gatsby who assumes a more complex and emotionally burdened identity. Gatsby's obsession with wealth, status, and Daisy Buchanan stems from a deep-rooted trauma related to his impoverished upbringing and his separation from his first love. The traumatic experience of losing Daisy becomes the catalyst for his transformation into the enigmatic and elusive Jay Gatsby.

The funeral of James Gatz, rather than Jay Gatsby, paints a poignant picture of the solitary nature of his existence. The attendance limited to only his father and Nick Carraway, the latter being one of the few individuals aware of his true identity, underscores the loneliness and isolation Gatsby experiences throughout his life. The absence of a multitude of mourners and the lack of public acknowledgment highlights the stark contrast between Gatsby's glamorous façade and the reality of his inner world. In this sense, nobody attends Jay Gatsby's funeral, not even Nick. The two attendees pay tribute to James Gatz, the real persona. As both his father and Nick attend the funeral, it symbolises the presence of individuals who truly knew James Gatz, the person behind the extravagant persona. It reflects the importance of authentic connections and genuine understanding amidst the superficiality and illusion that Gatsby created around himself. The intimate gathering becomes a solemn reminder of the complexities of identity and the struggle to reconcile one's true self with the constructed image projected to the world.

In essence, the transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby signifies a profound evolution in both identity and trauma. Gatsby's pursuit of wealth and the idealised version of Daisy stems from the wounds of his past, ultimately leading to his isolation and an emotionally complex existence. The funeral scene focused on James Gatz emphasises the significance of genuine connections and authentic understanding, shedding light on the depth of Gatsby's inner struggles and the complex layers of his identity that remained hidden to the world due to his traumatic experiences.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Nick's birthday**

Nick's birthday holds great significance in one of the climaxes of the novel, and the fact that he remembers it within the chaos is worth the discussion. The connection between his birthday and his trauma becomes evident when considering the significance of memory and its role in shaping his understanding of events.

On that particular day, Nick was turning thirty, a milestone age that often prompts reflection and self-evaluation. However, Nick's memory fails him, and he is unable to recall that it was his own birthday. This memory lapse points to the extent of his trauma and its effect on his psyche. His inability to remember such a personal and significant detail underscores the depth of his emotional turmoil and the dissociation he experiences from his own life.

The chaos that ensues on Nick's birthday becomes a symbolic representation of the chaos and destruction that surrounds him throughout the novel. It serves as a climactic moment where the culmination of conflicts and revelations intertwines with his personal journey. The intensity of the events on that day heightens the impact of the trauma he carries.

Nick's forgotten birthday aligns with his broader struggle to make sense of the world around him and his place within it. His memory lapses and the disorientation he experiences reflect the overwhelming nature of the events and the weight of the secrets and betrayals he witnesses. The trauma he endures clouds his ability to fully grasp his own personal milestones and celebrations, overshadowed by the chaos that engulfs his surroundings. Furthermore, the significance of Nick's forgotten birthday underscores his role as a passive observer and narrator throughout the novel. He becomes a vessel through which the stories of others are told, absorbing their traumas and struggles while neglecting his own emotional well-being. His memory lapse serves as a stark reminder of the toll

this role has taken on him, suppressing his own personal experiences and blurring the lines between his own trauma and the traumas of others.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Gatsbynian Dream**

“The Gatsbynian Dream” encapsulates the essence of an alternative interpretation, one that emphasises the extravagant and elusive aspirations embodied by Jay Gatsby. Gatsby’s unwavering pursuit of his personal rendition of the American Dream, revolving around amassing wealth and reclaiming his lost love, Daisy Buchanan, reflects the opulent lifestyles and materialistic values prevalent during the Roaring Twenties. In contrast to the conventional notion of the American Dream, which prioritises hard work, meritocracy, and upward social mobility, “The Gatsbynian Dream” is characterised by the pursuit of wealth through questionable means and an obsession with social standing and excess. Gatsby’s extravagant parties, his grandiose mansion, and his carefully crafted persona all exemplify the extreme lengths individuals would go to in order to fulfil their ambitions during this era of prosperity and indulgence.

Moreover, the concept of “The Gatsbynian Dream” sheds light on the darker side of the American Dream in the 1920s. Beneath the veneer of affluence and glamour lies a profound sense of emptiness and disillusionment. Gatsby’s relentless pursuit of material success, driven by his traumatic past and his longing for acceptance by Daisy’s social class, ultimately leads to his downfall. This highlights the perils of an unrestrained pursuit of wealth and status, as well as the inherent fragility and emptiness of such endeavours. Furthermore, “The Gatsbynian Dream” unveils the inherent contradictions and disparities within American society during the Jazz Age. While a privileged few enjoy their excesses, the working class, and marginalised groups, exemplified by characters like Wilson, endure the harsh realities of economic inequality and social exclusion. The stark contrast

between the opulence of Gatsby's world and the desolation of the Valley of Ashes serves as a poignant reminder of the dark underbelly of the American Dream during this era.

In addition to the complexities and contradictions of the Jazz Age, the incorporation of a trauma perspective into the concept of "The Gatsbynian Dream" further illuminates the profound impact of personal and societal traumas during that era. The pursuit of the American Dream in the 1920s was not immune to the scars left by World War I and the profound societal changes that ensued. It can be perceived as a coping mechanism for individuals such as Jay Gatsby, who had experienced trauma and sought solace in the pursuit of material success. Gatsby's unwavering drive to accumulate wealth and recreate the past reflects his endeavour to overcome the traumas of his impoverished upbringing and lost love. It becomes a desperate quest to regain control and find meaning in a world characterised by uncertainty and upheaval. Furthermore, the disillusionment and emptiness associated with "The Gatsbynian Dream" can be viewed as a collective trauma response. The extravagant lifestyles, excesses, and hollow pursuits of wealth and status can be seen as societal attempts to conceal the underlying traumas of the era. The pursuit of material success becomes a means to escape the realities of war, social change, and personal disappointments, constructing a facade of happiness and fulfilment.

"The Gatsbynian Dream" also underscores the interplay between personal trauma and societal trauma. The characters in the novel, propelled by their individual traumas, collectively contribute to the establishment of a culture that perpetuates superficiality and the adoration of wealth. Their personal struggles intertwine with the broader traumas of the post-war era, culminating in a society that values materialism and appearance over genuine connections and emotional well-being. By examining "The Gatsbynian Dream" through a trauma lens, we gain a deeper comprehension of the characters' motivations

and actions. Their pursuits are not solely a result of societal pressures but are also propelled by unresolved traumas and a yearning for healing and redemption. This perspective adds a layer of empathy and complexity to the characters' choices and underscores the enduring impact of trauma on individuals and society as a whole.

## ii. Summary of the Novel

*The Great Gatsby* is a tragic story that unfolds through secret love affairs and hidden truths among wealthy characters. The story is narrated by Nick Carraway, a young man who is almost thirty years old when he moves to West Egg, Long Island in 1922. Nick becomes neighbours with the enigmatic and wealthy Jay Gatsby, who is known for his extravagant parties. While living in West Egg, Nick's cousin Daisy Buchanan lives with her husband Tom, who is having an affair with a woman named Myrtle Wilson. One day, Nick is invited to Tom and Daisy's luxurious mansion where he meets Jordan Baker, a famous golfer. Later, Nick receives an invitation to one of Gatsby's parties, where he meets the enigmatic Gatsby and they become friends.

The novel explores the relationships between the characters, and it becomes apparent that Gatsby and Daisy had a love affair before the war in Louisville. Gatsby's love for Daisy continues, even after five years of separation. With Nick's help, Gatsby and Daisy begin a secret love affair. Tom eventually discovers their relationship and confronts Gatsby, revealing his past as a bootlegger. Daisy, torn between her love for both men, leaves with Gatsby and travels to New York. In a fit of rage, Tom follows them and confronts them at the Plaza Hotel, where he forces Daisy to choose between him and Gatsby. During the tense confrontation, Tom reveals that Gatsby's past is not as squeaky clean as he presents it to be. Gatsby earned his money through illegal activities, including bootlegging alcohol.

The story takes a tragic turn when Daisy drives Gatsby's car and accidentally hits and kills Myrtle. Instead of stopping, Daisy and Gatsby drive away, but people see Gatsby's car. Nick, Jordan, and Tom arrive later at the scene of the accident and realise that Myrtle was killed by a car like Gatsby's. The tragic ending unfolds when Myrtle's

husband, who thinks that Gatsby was driving the car, goes to Gatsby's mansion and kills him before committing suicide. The novel ends with Gatsby's funeral, with Nick leaving the wealthy society of the East Coast and returning to the Midwest.

Throughout the novel, the war is present in the background, even though it is not explicitly referred to the plot. Gatsby and Nick participated in the war, which shows how the war impacted the society of the time. Moreover, the war's aftermath, including its effect on the economy and the cultural shift in values, is subtly portrayed in the novel. The characters are seen trying to fit into the new societal norms, with some clinging to the old values and others embracing the new. *The Great Gatsby* remains a timeless classic that explores complex themes and characters that still resonate with readers today.

### iii. Figures



Fig 1. Montgomery, J. (1918) Columbia (female allegorical personification of the United States of America) broadcasts seeds in a ploughed field. Source: Wikicommons (see References).