

At Gatsby's funeral, Nick remembers "without resentment, that Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower." [174]. Should Nick's attitude surprise us, and how might it illuminate the world that Gatsby, Nick, and Daisy inhabited, and the value of Gatsby's "incorruptible dream" (154)?

Kristin Chan

F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic American novel *The Great Gatsby* illuminates the disillusionment of the American Dream. Engulfed in the American Dream, the protagonist Jay Gatsby only finds tragedy in his pursuit of the extraordinary Daisy Buchanan. The story is shown through the perspective of Nick Carraway, a Westerner who is "subtly unadaptable to Eastern life" (p. 176). Through the eyes of Nick Carraway, we recognize the world that Gatsby, Nick, and Daisy Buchanan inhabit and the value of Gatsby's "incorruptible dream." At Gatsby's funeral, Nick recalls "without resentment, that Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower" (p. 174). Nick's attitude towards Daisy's lack of concern about Gatsby's death does not surprise us as his attitude sheds light on the wasteland world of Gatsby, Nick, and Daisy.

Throughout the novel, Nick Carraway awakens to the aimless society of West Egg and East Egg. After spending time with the West Eggers and East Eggers over one summer, Nick realizes that Daisy and Tom Buchanan are "a rotten crowd" (p.154) and that Gatsby is "worth the whole damn bunch put together" (p.154). Because Nick recognizes the thoughtlessness of Daisy and Tom, he feels no bitterness towards Daisy when she does not send any message or flower about Gatsby's funeral. Nick's attitude does not surprise us as he learns that Tom and Daisy are careless people –"they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they made..." (p. 179). He understands the reasoning behind Daisy's negligence. After Gatsby's death, "the East was haunted for [Nick] like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction" (p. 176). After spending his whole summer in the glamorous and flashy life of West Egg and East Egg, he is glad to move back West to avoid the careless people of East

Egg. As shown through everyone's disregard of Gatsby's funeral, Gatsby, Nick, and Daisy inhabit a world that values image over substance. Each aspect of life in West Egg and East Egg is an imitation, an object that appears showy on the surface but without any substance underneath. Gatsby's mansion was "a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy" (p. 5). From the beginning we perceive Gatsby's lifestyle to be showy and flashy. In addition to his imitation mansion, Gatsby holds lavish and colorful parties on the weekends during the summer that Nick Carraway spends on West Egg. Although Gatsby is famously well-known only by name, everything in his life is sad since his life, like his mansion, is so empty and void of life. Similar to Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan and others living on East Egg are living empty lives. Mirroring Jay Gatsby's de Ville in Normandy, the East Eggers across the bay live in "white palaces" (p.5). Both West Eggers and East Eggers live extravagant lives but none of them have substance, as they lack in virtues and live distorted lives. Because of the lack of virtue and sincerity in the world of West Eggers and East Eggers, Nick Carraway feels no resentment towards people as they show no grief towards Gatsby's tragic death.

Likewise, the value of Gatsby's "incorruptible dream" is flawed and disillusioned as Gatsby's American dream turns into an American tragedy. Jay Gatsby comes a long way to West Egg and his dream to have Daisy in his arms "must [seem] so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it" (p. 180). Gatsby "believes in the green light" (p. 180) at the end of Daisy's dock --his

“American Dream” --but it eludes him. Gatsby “does not know that [his dream is] already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the public rolled on under the night” (p. 180). Because of his disillusionment, Jay Gatsby experiences a great shock when his “American Dream” is dismantled and stripped to nothing. Gatsby's dream shatters as he can only open and close his eyes to Daisy's profession that she did love Tom Buchanan, her husband. Gatsby is too disillusioned that he “himself didn't believe it [Daisy's rejection of him] would come and perhaps he no longer cared” (p.161). Throughout his life, Gatsby commits himself “to the following of a grail [Daisy]” (p. 149). Daisy's rejection of Gatsby and Gatsby's tragic death reflects that one loses “the old warm world [and] pays a high price” (p. 161) for living too long with a single dream, a disillusioned “incorruptible dream.”

Nick shows no resentment towards Daisy at her lack of concern over Gatsby's death because he realizes the flashiness and lack of substance of West Egg and East Egg and more importantly, the American Dream. The world that Gatsby, Nick, and Daisy more accurately reflects the valley of ashes, “a desolate area of land” (p.23) and a “solemn dumping ground” (p.24). Their world is a wasteland, a wasteland as depicted in T.S. Eliot's well-known poem “The Wasteland.” All the West Eggers and East Eggers living in this world lack substance spiritually and morally that they cannot show any emotion and concern towards Gatsby's tragic death.