

## **Initial Research: April 1**

CONTEXT: In preparation for my Gatsby Redefinition Essay, I decided to vaguely delineate my topic and type up at the quotes that could apply.

My word I chose is consumption. Few other characteristics are as uniquely American as the concept of consumption, but in no era is it more prevalent than the Jazz Age. In this paper I will explore the effect of consumption on character. In this book, beyond consuming the booze and cigars at the Speakeasies, these characters consume each other and ultimately consume themselves.

“I wanted the world to be in uniform” (2)

“Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.” (2)

“All right... I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.” (17)

“Now I was going to bring back all such things into my life and become again that most limited of all specialists, the “well-rounded man”. This isn't just an epigram—life is much more successfully looked at from a single window, after all” (4)

“Superficial tag” (5)

“They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together” (6)

“ Everybody thinks so - the most advanced people. And I know. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything.... Sophisticated - God, I'm sophisticated!” (17) Daisy

“But we heard it... We heard it from three people, so it must be true” (19) Daisy

Mr. Gatsby himself, come out to determine what share was his of our local heavens (20)

All I kept thinking about it, over and over was “you can't live forever; you can't live forever” (36) myrtle

People disappeared, reappeared, made plans to go somewhere, and then lost each other, search for each other, found each other a few feet away (37) speakeasies

Every Monday the same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulp less halves ... The bar is in full swing, and flooding rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names (40)

People were not invited - they went there...

Once they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came to the party with the simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission. (41) gatsby = commodified

Go to parties they've been to talk about parties they've been before.

"Endowing with complete isolation the host" (55)

Young clerks in the desk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life (57)

"Suppose you meet somebody just as careless as yourself"

"I hope I never will," she answered. "I hate careless people that's why I like you" (58) Jordan baker

He was balancing himself on the dashboard of his car with that resourcefulness of movement that is so peculiarly American - that comes, I suppose, but the absence of lifting work or rigid sitting in youth and, even more, with the formless grace of our nervous, sporadic games. (64)

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder (69)

We gave her spirits of ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress, and half an hour later, when we walked out of the room, the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at 5 o'clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver (76)

Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay... He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor (78)

Americans, while occasionally willing to be service, have always been obstinate about being peasantry (88)

He had been full of the ideas so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, add an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock. (92)

Daisy crying about shirts - 92

Compared to the great distance that it separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. Now it was again a greenlight on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one (93)

No amount of fire or freshness can challenge when a man will store up in his ghostly heart. (96)

Gatsby's notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who accepted his hospitality and so became authorities upon his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news. (97)

The truth was Jay Gatsby of West egg, Long Island, spring from his Platonic conception of himself. He was the son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a 17-year-old boy would be likely to an event, and to this conception he was faithful to the end. (98)

A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticking on the washstand and the moon soaked with wet like his tangled clothes up on the floor... for a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, I promise that the rock the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing. (99)

The vague contours of Jay Gatsby had filled out the substantiality of a man (101)

There were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same perfusion of champagne, the same many colored, many keyed commotion, but I felt in an unpleasantness in the air (104)

She was pallid by West egg... Appalled by its raw vigor she chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a shortcut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand (107) Daisy

Perhaps some unbelievable guest would arrive, a person infinitely where and to be marveled at, (109)

Can't repeat the past? 110

Daisy and Jordan lay up on an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans (115)

Gatsby "Her voice is full of money" he said suddenly. That was it. I've never understood before. It was full of money - that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals song of it... high in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl...(121)

She only loved me!! 130

They weren't happy, and neither of them had touch the chicken or the ale – and yet they weren't unhappy either.

(145)

How glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penny less young man without a past, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his soul shoulders. So he made the most of his time. He took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously – even Chuli he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand (149)

For Daisy was young in her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life and new tunes. (151)

Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season... She wanted her life shaped now, immediately – and the decision must be made by some force - of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality – that was close at hand (151)

Has a pool he has not used all summer (152)

“God sees everything” repeated Wilson. “That’s an advertisement “ Michaelis assured him (160)

He bought a sandwich he didn't eat 160

If that was true he must've felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for a living too long with a single dream... 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” (161)

However, that was my fault, for he was one of those who used to sneer most bitterly at Gatsby on the courage of Gatsby's liquor, and I should've known better than to call him (169)

He had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house itself (172) gatsby dad

We drew in deep breaths of it as we walked back from dinner through the cold vegetables, on a terribly aware of our identity within this country for one strange hour, before we melted indistinguishably into it again (176)

The east... even then it had always for me a quality of distortion. (176)

It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money and their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made (179)

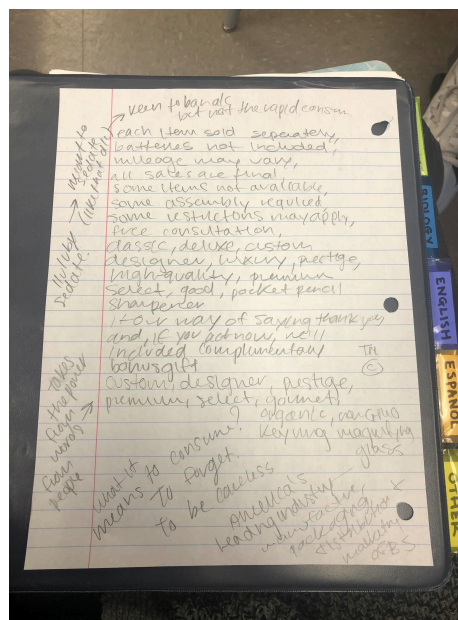
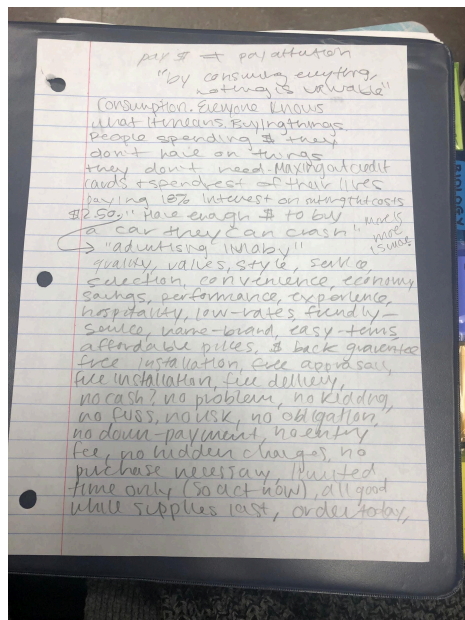
He must've come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must've seem so close that he could hardly feel to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vest of security

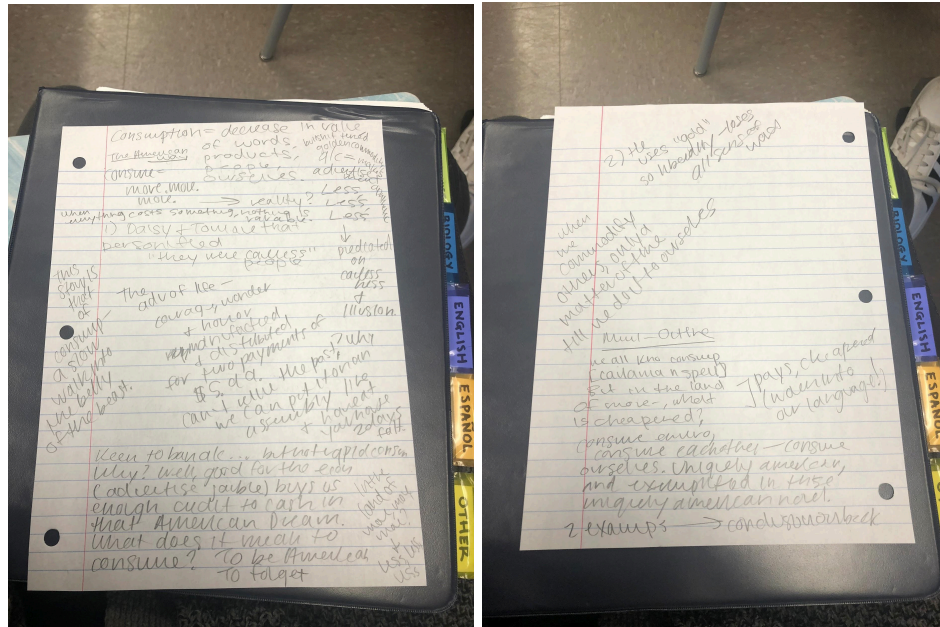
be on the city, but the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night. Gatsby believed in the greenlight, the orgastic future that year-by-year receipts before us. It's a little less then, but that's no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms for either... And one fine morning – so we beat on, boats against the current, born back ceaselessly into the past (180)

“Everyone wanted enough money to buy fancy cars and enough whiskey to crash them” (John Green)

### Outline Process: April 3

CONTEXT: After writing the quotes, I decided to hand-write the outline and language associated with consumer culture (as I knew I would be using this language throughout the paper to reinforce my thesis). While it may be illegible, it might be helpful to see my process to understand how my brain works.





## Outline Process: April 4

CONTEXT: I typed up my outline and tried to further refine it. With so many ideas that don't immediately connect to each other, I knew my challenge as a writer would be in organizing my thoughts in a coherent way.

{contradict}

Contravene

Repudiate

Consumption. Everyone knows what it means. Buying things. People spending money they don't have on things they don't need. It's the quality-convenience-low-rate-money-back-guarantee-no-risk-no-down-payment-batteries-not-included-so-me-assembly-required-all-sales-are-final ethos that that has bewitched the American experience. But in the land of more is more is more, what is the hidden fee? The rise of American consumerism has cheapened the moral value of the world. The value of people inevitably becomes commodified in this environment. This uniquely American philosophy of excess is exemplified in the Great Gatsby—the characters of which, beyond consuming the booze and cigars at the Speakeasies, eventually extend to consuming each other, and ultimately consuming themselves, this process predicated on a culture of

carelessness and illusion. More is more is more; Consumption is the accumulation of “stuff” by definition, but perhaps in its revaluation, it can be redefined: More is less. Consumption is a self-contradicting process.

- 1) Objectification of each other
- 2) Illusion and carelessness and self deception
- 3) Hidden fee: result of this culture. Objectification of self

Repetition of words= like supermarket shelves

Consumption. Consumerism in America. Everyone knows what it means. Buying things. It's the quality-convenience-low-rate-money-back-guarantee-no-risk-no-down-payment-batteries-not-included-so-me-assembly-required-all-sales-are-final ethos that has bewitched the American experience. But in the land of more is more is more, what is the hidden fee? *Gatsby* exemplifies that. A theme. The culture of consumption not only informs how they treat their environment, but how they approach each other, and how they treat themselves. Objectification of one another. Commodify each other. End up living a life predicated on illusion and carelessness. This culture of consumption and excess only hinders and loses. Even though leaves them w. In search of more stuff they lose what makes them human. In getting more they lose so much. Value of relating honesty. Society loses its moral framework. That's the great tragedy. Uniquely American tragedy.

However, that was my fault, for he was one of those who used to sneer most bitterly at *Gatsby* on the courage of *Gatsby's* liquor, and I should've known better than to call him (169). Aware of the ramifications of its extreme.

What is value? Consumerism consumes itself. It's very American. American dream is about ambition, but restlessness.

vacant

Consumerism. Everyone, especially Americans, knows what it means. It's the buying of things. It's the quality-convenience-low-rate-money-back-guarantee-no-risk-batteries-not-included ethos that has bewitched the American experience. But in this land of more, more, and more, what is lost? In *The Great Gatsby*, the ramifications of consumption and excess thereof are explored through the tragedy of Nick, *Gatsby*, and the Buchanans. This book explores the culture of consumption specific to the Jazz Age and America at large; specifically, how the commodification of goods inevitably saturates the social fabric of society, leading people not only to objectify the world into a series of dollar signs and zeros, but to commodifying each other by status and wealth, and ultimately, leads one to consuming themselves by virtue of losing touch with reality. This way of living can only be predicated on a convention of self-illusion and carelessness seen countless times throughout the book. What is antithetical about this brand of consumerism is that in search of more stuff—accolades, image, love, wealth—the characters lose what is value about being human: honest connection. That's the great tragedy, and an uniquely American tragedy at that.

- 4) Objectification of each other
- 5) Predicated on Illusion and carelessness and self deception
- 6) Hidden fee: result of this culture. Objectification of self

-no one comes to his funeral

However, that was my fault, for he was one of those who used to sneer most bitterly at Gatsby on the courage of Gatsby's liquor, and I should've known better than to call him (169). Aware of the ramifications of its extreme.

## Outlining II: April 4

CONTEXT: Even further along my outlining process.

- Writing it learned how much American vernacular is consumer words
- Parallel in repetitive language to supermarket
- Want the most expensive item? Use most expensive language
- Call myself out - I am as much in the hamster wheel as you

Consumerism. Everyone, especially Americans, knows what it means. It's the buying of things. It's the money-back-guarantee-no-risk-batteries-not-included ethos that has bewitched the American experience. But in this land of more, more, and more, there is a cost. In *The Great Gatsby*, the ramifications of excessive consumption are explored through the tragedy of Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, and the Buchanans in the context of the Jazz Age and America at large. Specifically, this story exemplifies how the commodification of goods inevitably saturates the social fabric of society, leading people not only to objectify the world into a series of dollar signs and zeros, but also to commodify each other by status and wealth, ultimately, leading the characters to consume themselves by virtue of self-alienation. This way of living can only be predicated on a convention of self-illusion and carelessness seen countless times throughout the book. What is antithetical about this brand of consumerism is that in search of more—accolades, image, love, wealth—the characters lose what is valuable about being human: honest connection. That's the great tragedy of this classic, and a uniquely American tragedy at that.

### 1) Objectification of each other and the self

*Daisy is an object to Gatsby, Tom, and is treated as such.*

Daisy and Jordan lay up on an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans (115)

Gatsby "Her voice is full of money" he said suddenly. That was it. I've never understood before. It was full of money – that was the in exhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals song of it... high in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl...(121)



Own her, own her love (nothing is ever enough) She only loved me!! 130

*At large, especially women are treated as commodities to be marvelled 'at' and never a whole person unto themselves . ESP DAISY*

"All right... I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." (17)

Perhaps some unbelievable guest would arrive, a person infinitely where and to be marveled at, (109)

*As much as Gatsby commodifies others, he commodified himself. He manufactures 'jay gatsby'*

People were not invited - they went there...

Once they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came to the party with the simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission. (41) gatsby = commodified

"Endowing with complete isolation the host" (55)

Gatsby's notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who accept his hospitality and so became authorities upon his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news. (97)

The truth was Jay Gatsby of West egg, Long Island, spring from his Platonic conception of himself. He was the son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty . So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a 17-year-old boy would be likely to an event, and to this conception he was faithful to the end. (98)

## 2) **Predicated on Illusion and carelessness and self deception** and fultitlity

*A life of commodification inevitably falls prey to false advertising*

The east... even then it had always for me a quality of distortion. (176)

"But we heard it... We heard it from three people, so it must be true" (19) Daisy

*Enchanted objects*

*Compared to the great distance that it separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one (93)*

A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticking on the washstand and the moon soaked with wet like his tangled clothes up on the floor... for a while these reveries provided an

outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, I promise that the rock the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing. (99)

#### *Futility and Hypocrisy of their actions*

- bootlegger that doesn't drink
- pool that he hasn't swam in (Has a pool he has not used all summer (152)
- "Everyone wanted enough money to buy fancy cars and enough whiskey to crash them" (John Green)
- bought a sandwich he didn't eat 160

Go to parties to talk about parties they've been before.

There were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same perfusion of champagne, the same many colored, many keyed commotion, but I felt in an unpleasantness in the air (104)

until the air is alive chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names (40)

Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay... He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor (78)

#### *Partly stems from Self-deceive in their conceit*

"Everybody thinks so - the most advanced people. And I know. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything.... Sophisticated - God, I'm sophisticated!" (17) Daisy

#### *Largely, Carelessness*

It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy - they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money and their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made (179)

"Suppose you meet somebody just as careless as yourself"

"I hope I never will," she answered. "I hate careless people that's why I like you" (58) Jordan Baker

### **3) Hidden fee: result of this culture. Self alienation.**

Americans, while occasionally willing to be service, have always been obstinate about being peasantry (88). However, rethink consequences of our 'progressive' social order that is really as archaic as any other

*In an ambition driven culture, one is never satisfied. Goal setting takes away from the now.*

Gatsby believed in the greenlight, the orgastic future that year-by-year receipts before us. It's a little less then, but that's no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms for either... And one fine morning – so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past (180)

*When everything costs something, nothing means anything.*

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder (69)  
In consuming everything, the value of stuff has gone

*Self alienation in inevitable by-product of a 'more, more, more' culture*

The vague contours of Jay Gatsby had filled out the substantiality of a man (101)

*In the midst of ambition, one forgets the value of honest relationship (only partaking in the pageantry, the acting of it) No real connection*

For Daisy was young in her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life and new tunes. (151)

-no one comes to his funeral

Daisy crying about shirts - 92 - cannot connect on real level

He had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house itself (172) gatsby dad

*If one does not actively control their lives, the culture will take hold and shape them*

Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season... She wanted her life shaped now, immediately – and the decision must be made by some force - of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality – that was close at hand (151)

*Illusion and wild ambition attempts to shade the real truth:*

No amount of fire or freshness can challenge when a man will store up in his ghostly heart. (96)

If that was true he must've felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for a living too long with a single dream... 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" (161)

## CONCLUSION

However, that was my fault, for he was one of those who used to sneer most bitterly at Gatsby on the courage of Gatsby's liquor, and I should've known better than to call him (169). Aware of the ramification of its extreme.

-Manufactured 'jay gatsby'

The chase, but to no end -

He had been full of the ideas so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, add an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock. (92)

She hated simple human connection - She was appalled by West egg... Appalled by its raw vigor she chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a shortcut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand (107) daisy

He must've come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must've seem so close that he could hardly feel to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast sea of security he had on the city, but the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

**\*\*orange=cut out**

## First Draft: April 5

CONTEXT: Even further along my outlining process.

Consumerism. Everyone, especially Americans, knows what it means. It's the buying of things. It's the money-back-guarantee-no-risk-batteries-not-included ethos that has behooved the American experience. But in this land of more, more, and more, there is a cost. In *The Great Gatsby*, the ramifications of excessive consumption are explored through the tragedy of Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, and the Buchanans in the context of the Jazz Age and America at large. Specifically, this story exemplifies how the commodification of goods inevitably saturates the social fabric of society, leading people not only to objectify the world into a series of dollar signs and zeros, but also to commodify each other by status and wealth, ultimately, leaving the characters consumed by culture where enough is never enough. This way of living can only be predicated on a convention of illusion, hypocrisy, and futility as seen countless throughout the book. What is antithetical about this brand of consumerism is that in search of more—accolades, image, love, wealth—the characters lose what is valuable about being human: honest connection. That's the great tragedy of this classic, and a uniquely American tragedy at that.

In a culture of consumerism, nothing is safe from commodification, not even people themselves. In *The Great Gatsby* and America historically, women especially are objectified as something to be 'marvelled at' and hardly a whole person unto themselves (109). This perspective seeps into the every-day vernacular, with Fitzgerald often drawing parallels between women and objects in his language: "Daisy and Jordan lay up on an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses" (115). Because women are

treated as commodities, it only stand to reason the entitlement men feel to seek their ownership. For Gatsby, this takes the shape of owning Daisy; namely, Gatsby implores that Daisy must revoke her love of Tom, as Gatsby must be the sole owner of her heart for it to be a worthy bargain (130). Having been inundated in this culture, Daisy seems to have internalized her position, and is prepared to pass it on to the next generation. Regarding her daughter, Daisy once famously said: “ ‘All right... I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool’ ” (17).

As much as women are commodified in American culture, few other characters are quite as manufactured as the Great Gatsby himself. James Gatz, unable to stomach the shame of his birth, repackages himself with all the glory and splendor known as “Jay Gatsby”: “The truth was Jay Gatsby of West egg, Long Island, springs from his Platonic conception of himself... [he was consumed by] the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty...and to this conception he was faithful to the end” (98). His status, spread by the hundreds who attended his parties, created Gatsby as a caricature that “ fell just short of being news” (97). Despite his infamy, his parties served not as a point of celebration, but of advertisement, providing “a universe of ineffable gaudiness... for a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock the world was founded securely on a fairies wing” (99).

However, a life of commodification inevitably falls prey to false advertising. As Carraway once noted: “The east... even then it had always for me a quality of distortion” (176). The futility and hypocrisy of the consumerist lifestyle was peppered in oxymorons throughout the book. Gatsby himself is bootlegger that doesn't drink, “has a pool he has not used all summer”, and is famous in complete isolation (152). The people who attend his parties are not free from this trope either; they go to parties to talk about parties they've been to before, keep “the air...alive [in] casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names” (40). The mass manufacture of connection has a shelf-life, however, as Carraway notes: “there were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same perfusion of champagne, the same many colored, many keyed commotion, but I felt in it an unpleasantness in the air” (104). Yet it is from this futile embryo that Gatsby “came alive, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor” (78). As John Greene brilliantly encapsulates, in the Jazz Age, “everyone wanted enough money to buy fancy cars and enough whiskey to crash them.”

Amidst all this pageantry is a tragic underpinning, a hidden fee of sorts: the loss of honest connection with others. Social alienation is the duplicitous by-product of a consumerist culture, because in the land of “more, more, and more”, one can never be enough. Gatsby, despite his rebranding as a man of every conceivable achievement by society's standards, dies a man of complete isolation, a man whose parties were attended by the hundreds and whose funeral was attended by three. Even his own father loses the connection to his son in favor of the advert of ‘Gatsby’. When showing a picture of his son's home at the funeral, Fitzgerald notes that he “had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house itself” (172). This is the folly of consumerism: one is not who they are or who they know, but who they seem to be and who they seem to know; individuals, devoid of the dimensions of a full character, become a commodity like any other, used up until they've been worth their price, then thrown away to be replaced by what is

shinier and newer, a “planned obsolescence” that is rooted in the capitalist ethos of American culture. A Fitzgerald encapsulates, “ If that was true he must’ve felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream... A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about” (161).

If one does not actively control their lives, this culture will take hold and shape them nonconsensually. This is the tragedy of Daisy, “for Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasantries, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year...Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season... She wanted her life shaped now, immediately – and the decision must be made by some force - of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality – that was close at hand” (151).

But no amount of advertisement, manufacture, or product could mask the simple truth Gatsby and Daisy refused: “No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart” (96).

## **CONCLUSION**

However, that was my fault, for he was one of those who used to sneer most bitterly at Gatsby on the courage of Gatsby’s liquor, and I should’ve known better than to call him (169). Aware of the ramification of its extreme.

“But we heard it... We heard it from three people, so it must be true” (19) Daisy  
“ the vague contours of Jay Gatsby had filled out the substantiality of a man,” (101)

“Endowing with complete isolation the host” (55)

-Manufactured ‘jay gatsby’

## **Final Drafts: April 8**

CONTEXT: Finishing touches before submission April 9th

Amelia Wyatt

Mrs. Eury

AP US History

4/10/2019

The Cost of Consumerism

Consumerism. Everyone, especially Americans, knows what it means. It's the buying of things. It's the money-back-guarantee-no-risk-batteries-not-included ethos that that has behooved the American experience. But in this land of more, more, and more, there is a cost. In *the Great Gatsby*, the ramifications of excessive consumption are explored through the tragedy of Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, and the Buchanans in the context of the Jazz Age and America at large. Specifically, this story exemplifies how the commodification of goods inevitably saturates the social fabric of society, leading people not only to objectify the world into a series of dollar signs and zeros, but also to commodify each other by status and wealth, ultimately, leaving the characters consumed by culture where enough is never enough. This way of living can only be predicated on a convention of illusion, hypocrisy, and futility as seen countless throughout the book. What is antithetical about this brand of consumerism is that in search of more—accolades, image, love, wealth—the characters lose what is valuable about being human: honest connection. That's the great tragedy of this classic, and a uniquely American tragedy at that.

In a culture of consumerism, nothing is safe from commodification, not even people themselves. In *the Great Gatsby* and America historically, women especially are objectified as something to be 'marvelled at' and hardly a whole person unto themselves (109). This perspective seeps into the every-day vernacular, with Fitzgerald often drawing parallels between women and objects in his language: "Daisy and Jordan lay up on an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses" (115). Because women are treated as commodities, the subsequent entitlement men feel to seek their ownership stands to reason. For Gatsby, this takes the shape of owning Daisy; namely, Gatsby implores that Daisy must revoke her love of Tom, as Gatsby must be the sole owner of her heart for it to be a worthy bargain (130). Having been inundated in this culture, Daisy seems to have internalized her position, and is prepared to pass it on to the next generation. Regarding her daughter, Daisy once famously said: "'All right... I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool'" (17).

As much as women are commodified in American culture, few other characters are quite as manufactured as the Great Gatsby himself. James Gatz, unable to stomach the shame of his birth, repackages himself with all the glory and splendor known as “Jay Gatsby”: “The truth was Jay Gatsby of West egg, Long Island, springs from his Platonic conception of himself... [he was consumed by] the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty...and to this conception he was faithful to the end” (98). His status, spread by the hundreds who attended his parties, created Gatsby as a caricature that “fell just short of being news” (97). Despite his infamy, his parties served not as a point of celebration, but of advertisement, providing “a universe of ineffable gaudiness... these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock the world was founded securely on a fairies wing” (99).

However, a life of commodification inevitably falls prey to false advertising. As Carraway once noted: “The east... it had always for me a quality of distortion” (176). This ‘distortion’ manifests itself in futility and hypocrisy of the consumerist lifestyle, a trope peppered in oxymorons throughout the book. Gatsby himself is bootlegger that doesn’t drink, “has a pool he has not used all summer,” and is famous in complete isolation (152). The people who attend his parties are prey to this distortion; they go to parties to talk about parties they’ve been to before, keep “the air...alive [in] casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other’s names” (40). The mass manufacture of connection has a shelf-life, however, as Carraway notes: “there were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same perfusion of champagne, the same many colored, many keyed commotion, but I felt in it an unpleasantness in the air” (104). Yet it is from this futile embryo that Gatsby “came alive, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor” (78). As



John Greene brilliantly encapsulates, in the Jazz Age, “everyone wanted enough money to buy fancy cars and enough whiskey to crash them.”

Amidst all this pageantry is a tragic underpinning, a hidden fee of sorts: the loss of honest connection with others. Social alienation is the duplicitous by-product of a consumerist culture, because in the land of “more, more, and more”, one can never be enough. Gatsby, despite his rebranding as a man of every conceivable achievement by society's standards, dies a man of complete isolation, a man whose parties were attended by the hundreds and whose funeral was attended by three. Even his own father loses the connection to his son in favor of the advert of ‘Gatsby’. When showing a picture of his son’s home at the funeral, Fitzgerald notes that he “had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house itself” (172). This is the folly of consumerism: one is not who they are or who they know, but who they seem to be and who they seem to know; individuals, devoid of the dimensions of a full character, become a commodity like any other, used up until they’ve been worth their price, then thrown away to be replaced by what is shinier and newer, a “planned obsolescence” that is rooted in the capitalist ethos of American culture. A Fitzgerald encapsulates, “If that was true he must’ve felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream... A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about” (161).

But no amount of advertisement, manufacture, or product could mask the simple truth Gatsby and Daisy refused: “No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart” (96). The simple truth is consumerism consumes, not only the environment and ethos of a culture, but most poignantly, the humanity of people. Upon reflection, a culture off “more, more, and more” can be more truthfully redefined by its antonym: less, less, and lost.

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