



FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA
UNIVERSIDAD DE LA LAGUNA

The Great Gatsby: A Queer Approach

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

Alumno: Francisco Yeray Estévez Cabrera

Tutor/a: Eva Rosa Darias Beautell

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Abstract

The purpose of this final project is to enlighten a possible gay theory underneath the pages of Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). There is a lot of content that has been produced about Fitzgerald's text, but it has not been until relatively recently, when critics have started to look upon it contemplating the Queer Theory. The theory itself could be considered a topic "under discussion" by many critics today, because of its relative newness and the alternative perspective it may offer. Part of that instability is due to the topic itself, homosexuality, the ultimate taboo for many, and also a new area of study in literature (and in other many fields) that is becoming increasingly essential to understand many texts. Queer Theory was born from gay/lesbian studies, a discipline which itself is very new, existing in any kind of organized form only since about the mid-1980s. Gay/lesbian studies, in turn, emerged from feminist studies and feminist theory. While gay/lesbian studies focus on questioning normative sexualities, Queer Theory goes beyond and challenge sexual identities. A few representatives of Queer Theory can be found in the figures of Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick, both inspired by Michel Foucault and his studies of sexualities in the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, my goals when working with this topic are to investigate, first, what branch of literary criticism includes the study of homosexuality and define it, as well as adapt and work with the critical tools that are used in these types of analysis. It is necessary to consult the historical context and how homosexuality was perceived or treated at the time of the publication of Fitzgerald's novel. My purpose is to read the text from that different angle so that new interpretations may be possible. In the larger context, I also intent to achieve greater visibility in addressing queer issues in English literature and gain comprehension to further application it in other works.

Key-words: *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald, Queer Theory, Sexuality, Homosexuality, the 1920s.

1. Introduction

One can say a thousand things about *The Great Gatsby*, as well as about its author, Francis Scott Fitzgerald. However, among those thousands of things, it is not always the most interesting that are emphasized, and details may be overlooked in a single reading of the novel or in a superficial knowledge of the writer. Readers who have familiarity with this story may know that Jay Gatsby is more than an eccentric millionaire slave of a chimerical love. The book is a meditation full of symbolism about the United States as a whole in the 1920s, and particularly on the disintegration of the American Dream in an era of unprecedented prosperity and material excess. Fitzgerald was able to show with the great detail and accuracy of a person living in his time, many aspects of the United States.

It is a novel in which sexuality is present in many forms: passionate love, lust, adultery... Sexuality has been a theme in literature since the origins of literature itself. Its function on it is undoubtedly a reflection of how various cultures view sexuality and what its role is in those cultures. Sexuality can be as important and prevalent as money, power and time, or it can be so suppressed as to consider it a taboo. Authors across time have explored the ideas of sexuality and expressed their own beliefs, often contrary to the culture in which they live, on its importance, advantages, and disadvantages. Fitzgerald showed a sexual ecosystem in the novel in the form of infidelity, love triangles, promiscuity and, under the eye of a few scholars, homosexuality. Nick Carraway is the voice of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and for a few decades, pundits and scholars asserted he was gay or bisexual, and likely in love with the wealthy and troubled Jay Gatsby. Definitely, a narration coming from a gay character could have shaken the attitude of the general public and critics towards hostility during the Twenties.

It is just needed a brief look at the history of homosexuality to understand why in some cases, the study of certain works and their theories are obscured or abandoned. Many moralists and different religious groups believe that this orientation is a sexual deviation and a sin. Homosexuality has been banned in many countries and cultures, punishing this sexual orientation itself or some associated practices. This clearly had implications when it comes to deal with the topic. For a long time, the trend has been homophobia, whether active or silent.

The perception of homosexuality changed greatly between societies and times. In ancient Greece, for example, it was considered normal for a boy (often during puberty) to be the lover

of an older man, who was in charge of political, social, scientific and moral education of the beloved. However, homosexual acts in the 16th century England were punished with death (Buggery Act 1533). Consequently, it is necessary to work within the framework and context in which the work of Fitzgerald was developed.

This final work will be divided into 4 sections. In the next part the idea is to give a little overview of the historical context in which Fitzgerald lived and in which the novel is set. The second part will be focused on explaining how the gay community lived during the first half of the century, including the twenties and debating why is usually forgotten among people and scholars. In the third section, I will define more specifically what the Queer Theory is, and what makes it different from gay/lesbian studies. It is in the fourth and final section that I will proceed to discuss *The Great Gatsby* under a queer scope.

2. Contextual Framework

It is important to look at society in the time frame of Fitzgerald's work, since this was a true reflection of what was lived at the time.

After World War I the United States entered a period of economic prosperity thanks to the money they got from the European debt after the years of war. The now largest and richest in per capita terms US economy was undergoing a phase of expansion following the widespread diffusion of innovations resulting from the Second Industrial Revolution, both in the production (cheap and quality steel, electricity self-propelled agricultural and industrial machinery, etc.) and household consumption (automobile, appliances, telephone, etc.). Moreover, Europe had a half-destroyed industry, which brought the United States to become the largest exporter of products. All this made the US economy grew quick, causing a more than considerable increase in consumption, something similar to what happened during the last decade that led to the creation of the speculative bubble. Unfortunately, everything exploded on Thursday, October 24, 1929 kicking off the Great Depression

In 1919 it was born the Prohibition, which prohibits the manufacture, sale and transportation of alcoholic beverages that led to the creation of a whole black market that was trafficking with them, whose main representatives were Italians that moved to the big cities of the United States: Al Capone, Salvatore Maranzano, the Gambino, Genoves... (Fitzgerald would use this issue of tremendous attention in his time as one of the secret aspects of Gatsby)

If there was something iconic from Mr. Gatsby era, that were the flappers. The “flapper” expression first appeared in Britain and was introduced in the United States by Fitzgerald himself (he called his wife, Zelda, the first flapper of the United States). Flappers were usually young and unmarried urban middle class girls who had a job in the changing US economy, especially as secretaries, telephone operators or sellers in department stores. They were born during the very beginning of the Roaring Twenties, or the Jazz Age as Fitzgerald baptized this time, after the First World War and before the Great Depression.

The birth of flappers could not have been possible without the gestation of a shy sexual revolution that took place in the twenties. During those moments of exploration of sexuality it is when it could be perceived a greater presence of gay activity.

In the early twentieth century the gay community was secretly frequenting underground places specialized in bringing together the homosexual clientele, as well as socially segregated clientele (blacks, prostitutes, etc.), in cabarets, bathhouses, dance clubs, jazz clubs and speakeasies. This same culture allowed the development of codes of conduct, slang and specific keys on the clothing that permitted the identification of targeted gay or transgender people. For most Americans these subcultures were mostly invisible as noted by historian George Chauncey, in this first decades of the twentieth century there was a gay world more populated and varied than the one in the half-century.

3. The gay community in the Jazz Age Era/ First decades of the 20th century

The iconic Empire State Building lights up blue, lavender and white at the end of June. The reason for this riot of colors is due to the anniversary of a historic event for the New York gay community, and also for the rest of the planet. In June 1969 took place the rebellion of Stonewall, the first in which actively involved members of the LGBT community defend against a homophobic attack. Since then, the world would never be the same.

In those years the police raids were an everyday thing. The physical and psychological violence was validated by the government and society in order to stop the homosexual men and women; job uncertainty was large since the state dismissed off workers who were "accused" of homosexuality. Hundreds of gays and lesbians were locked up in mental institutions, which suffered various treatments seeking to reintegrate into social normalcy. Electric shocks and even lobotomy -that absurd procedure, in which the brain was sliced, were popular at the time. The altercation at the Stonewall Inn sharpened the action of a group that had been gaining awareness of their identity, their need for unity due to the mandatory exclusion, conviction and the legal abuse they were subjected. The rising tide of protests and social movements in the late 60's, favored the re-awakening of the homosexual movement.

It was necessary to awaken something that was really always there. However, what happened before that? One way or another, it is like the gay world started after Stonewall (indeed) but there was always a gay world out there, which presence (or not) was based on the context in which it was found. I would like to focus on the early decades of the twentieth century, which is where the novel I analyze occurred and in which there are a number of interesting things to say about the gay community.

The industrialization allowed the continuous improvement of the living conditions of the middle class in the nineteenth century, which produced a profound change in lifestyles. Gay men were especially benefited as they could easily leave their families to form communities in which they worked and lived with other men. In the 1890s, New York had its first gay district: the Bowery. Places like the Columbia Hall, the Manilla Hall, the Little Bucks and Slide were the preferred spot for male homosexuals meetings. Due to their flamboyant appearance and fashion, they were often called "fairies".

In the black neighborhood of Harlem, also in New York, which since the end of World War can claim the title of Capital of Black Culture in the United States, appeared in the 1920s bars

where two men could be seen dancing and where there were transvestites. During that time, the so-called Harlem Renaissance offered a very liberal and open environment, conditions that were used to create a gay atmosphere. Gay and bisexual artists such as Langston Hughes, Richard Bruce Nugent, Countee Cullen, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Gladys Bentley, Alberta Hunter and Ethel Waters developed a thriving subculture, which was not necessarily visible from the outside and gathered many gay activities. According to the book *Gay Voices in the Harlem Renaissance (2003)* “The efforts of anti-vice movements in white areas of New York led to the closure of numerous establishments that offered or tolerated same sex sexual entertainment; as such places closed down in, for instance, the Tenderloin area, Harlem’s entertainment and sex industry prospered” (9). For some reason, Harlem was oblivious to the prosecution of places in which “indecent” took place.

In Manhattan, Greenwich Village also had a gay area in which both male and female transvestites were involved in masked balls at Webster Hall. Gay and lesbians were also received in private clubs, such as Polly Holladay. In the early 1930s, Times Square became a gay district, where gay men lived together peacefully in boarding houses. Flirting area was, among others, the harbor that had bars where it was possible to find contacts, including sailors. Also there were other American cities which also had meeting places, as in San Francisco, where the Black Cat Bar opened in 1933.

Since the late nineteenth century, lesbian women could decide on their own life for the first time. The creation in the United States of the first colleges for women opened the possibility for them of studying. Because the decision to study, with the economic independence that this meant, was often a decision against marriage, many women lived in groups and couples lasted beyond the end of the studies. In settlement houses, lesbians could live undisturbed, often throughout their adult lives. How many of the first academic were lesbians is difficult to assess and it is still debated among scholars. A cultural and social niche was also found in organizations like the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) or the radical feminist Heterodoxy club, founded in 1912 in Greenwich Village. A first icon that lesbians could identify was the writer Willa Cather (1873-1947), who lived 40 years in Greenwich Village with her partner and whose novels, as many critics could see, had a gay subtext. However, there were American lesbians that preferred to live abroad. One of the most famous was the writer Gertrude Stein (the one who baptized the Lost Generation), which lived nearly forty years in Paris with her companion Alice B. Toklas. Since the late nineteenth century also lived there the dancer Isadora Duncan, openly bisexual, and poet Natalie Clifford Barney,

who had a relationship with Renée Vivien. In Rome lived from the mid-nineteenth century homosexual sculptor Harriet Hosmer and actress Charlotte Cushman, the latter with her partner Matilda Hays.

Most black Americans and the lower classes had neither the opportunity to emigrate or go their own way and lived at subsistence level in which, on the one hand, young people could not go without the support of the family and secondly, families could not survive without the work of young people. Especially women, also lesbians, that could not afford to remain childless in such circumstances, since child labor was necessary for survival. In such circumstances the creation of gay subcultures was virtually impossible and remained a privilege only available to the wealthy classes.

Gay people could also meet in cities like New York in the thirties and early forties (when actions against homosexuality hardened), as long as they belonged to the upper classes. Famous meeting points were the Metropolitan Opera, the Sutton Theater and stylish bars as the Oak Room at The Plaza hotel and the bar of the Hotel Astor. Similar points were found in other major cities. Unlike the meeting places for the disadvantaged, some of this upper class gay meeting points did not receive police pressure. In the thirties and forties, lesbians in New York were usually at the Howdy Club.

In the book *Gay New York*, Chauncey discusses why this gay world that was established before the Second World War has been ignored and forgotten in both popular memory and professionals of history and literature. He says that there are three main myths about the gay community before the uprising that may light an answer: the myths of isolation, invisibility and internalization.

The myth of isolation is based on the fact that the homophobic attitudes keep off the development of an extensive gay subculture and forced gay people to live lonely lives during the decades before the gay liberation movement, but contrary to common belief the gay world before Stonewall was much bigger than is generally realized. Truly, gay people had to take precautions, because they might end up arrested for violating decency laws. Police, vigilantes and any kind of authority always tried to marginalize them from society. It is not the case with many New Yorkers which showed indifference or even curiosity during those pre-war years. Despite the odds, the gay subculture flourished and gathered in hoods like the Bowery,

Harlem, Times Square and Greenwich Village, hence, demystifies the idea of isolation. Many people embrace the idea of grouping with homosexual partners, while others just pass through ephemerally, but the thing is, that the fact of being grouped provided a sense of togetherness, a bonding that will even help them in their work, to find romances, long-lasting friendships or to find the support that they couldn't find outside.

The myth of invisibility it is based on the fact that the gay scene was invisible and extremely untraceable even for other gay people. However, the gay presence before the war was much more visible than it was after it. Many gay men had distinct codes in order to be noted (red ties, hair bleached), they went to speakeasies, salons and bars, they appeared in the newspapers and even starred some spectacles (pansy craze, drag balls, movies). The most visible ones were the drag queens parades and the entire effeminate and flamboyant homosexual that participate on it.

The myth of internalization is the one that states that many homosexuals were internalizing the anti-homosexual attitude that society gave to them, so they can felt different and alien from everybody. Certainly, many hid their true self because of that while many others, on the other hand, celebrated that difference even if that meant being arrested or worse.

Another thing worth remarking is the fact that, during the twenties more specifically, people was not bound to be label so much. . Overall, about homosexuals and bisexuals in the early twentieth century there was less pressure to be defined in terms of their sexual orientation and defined as homosexual, and therefore had more freedom to move between different environments. , the binary homosexual/heterosexual was not the only one that was governing the perception of sexuality. Various and different kinds of same-sex contacts coexisted, quoting Christa Schwarz: “ gay-identified men lesbian-identified women; men and women who explored the realm of sexuality and in the process also experimented in a homosexual context but did not identify as gay or lesbian; men and women who engaged in both hetero – and homosexual relationships without viewing these in the context of homo/heterosexuality; and men an woman who represented “inverts” and displayed gender inversion [...] which could also extend to cross-dressing.” (Schwarz, 12)

4. Queer Theory

After the fight for liberation of lesbian, gay and transgender people during the seventies in Western countries, members of these groups came to light with a certain degree of freedom and gradually conquered rights. In the eighties, the ravages of AIDS were used by a conservative reaction against lesbians and homosexuals, particularly strong reaction in the American and British companies. The queer movement can be interpreted as the response to the attacks on lesbians, gays, transsexuals and transvestites. It is a social phenomenon, a political stance and a theoretical reflection that brings together members of many different groups.

The appearance of the queer studies owes its birth not only these fights for rights, but also thanks to the studies that began to be held in universities and the growing interest shown by figures like Michel Foucault

But what brought the use of the word queer, a homophobic word per excellence, to be the main word consort of the collective?

Queer is an answer. It was used as an insult against those who were relegated to the margins of the dominant sexuality but has been recovered by those receiving this insult. Thus, they have become the ones in producing the discourse on sexuality (sexual minorities have always been the object studied, the "other"). Now they are, as Paul B. Preciado says, "the subject of enunciation." (Parole the Queer 2009)

The term was first coined by the gender theorist Teresa de Lauretis in a special edition of the feminist journal *Differences* titled *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*, published in 1991. Since the beginning, queer theory tried to demolish the conception that a person's identity is stable or fixed at birth. One of the most important values of the term is that is not fixed, but in constant evolution, like people. And that is also one of the ideas in which everyone using queer theory agrees: identity is not an essence but a continuum. And what does this mean? It is not easy to explain, neither to limit its extent. Taking a look at a paragraph from *Queer Theory: An Introduction*:

While there is no critical consensus on the definitional limits of queer – indeterminacy being one of its widely promoted charms- its general outlines are frequently sketched and debated. Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability- which claims that heterosexuality

as its origin, when it is more properly its effect – queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Institutionally, queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross – dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Whether as transvestite performance or academic deconstruction, queer locates and exploits the incoherencies in those three terms which stabilize heterosexuality. Demonstrating the impossibility of any “natural” sexuality, it calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as ‘man’ and ‘woman’.

Although not abandoning an analysis of homosexuality, queer studies are more inclusive than gay and lesbian studies, analyzing, discussing, and debating sexual topics that are considered queer – that is, odd, abnormal, or peculiar. Similar to feminist social constructivists, queer theorists posit that our identities and our sexuality are not fixed; rather, they are unstable. No set of prerequisites exists that defines our human nature or our sexuality. From queer theory's point of view, it is pointless to discuss what it means to be male or female because our sexual identities are all different, each being socially constructed. (Bressler 227)

Queer theory in particular has been involved in the so called culture wars in academia, as such postmodern concepts as gender ambivalence, ambiguity, and multiplicity of identities have replaced the more clearly defined sexual values of earlier generation (Guerin 239). Due to the very abstract content of the theory, critics have been very hard on it. Many disagree with its social constructivism position and don't think that the sexual identity can be fluid and that its basis is too theoretical. Others says that it only tries to give notoriety and elitism to a minority (LGBTQIA)

However, for the upcoming analysis of *The Great Gatsby*, I will focus more on the part of queer theory that seeks and tries to rediscover any trace of possible homosexual context that could be studied and which escapes the heteronormativity that apparently covers it all, when actually a homosocial and homosexual context was and could be viable.

5. The Great Gatsby– Queer approach

Many queer theorists assert that a lot of apparently heterosexual narrative texts are likely to be analyzed from a queer scope. *The Great Gatsby* is going to be the subject of study. I myself noticed while reading the book (during the second time, however) that there was something behind, subtly suggested; and that is a sexually ambiguity present in the novel.

While reading the book *Critical Theory Today: An User- Friendly Guide* (2003) her author Lois Tyson asks herself this:

If personal information about writers' heterosexual lives is relevant to our appreciation of their work, why is personal information about writers' non straight lives often excluded from the realm of pertinent historical data? If the experience of gender and/or racial discrimination is an important factor in writers' lives, then why isn't it important to know about the oppression suffered by gay, lesbian, and other no straight writers? Clearly, in many of our college classrooms today, homosexuality is still considered an uncomfortable topic of discussion. (Tyson, 318).

Anyone who has ever been curious about Fitzgerald's life may know that he was slightly linked to some founded suspicions about his sexuality. He dealt with homosexuality directly in *Tender is the Night* (1934) but he was uncomfortable to be labeled as homosexual. Nevertheless, his own wife Zelda accused him of being in a relationship with Hemingway. Both writers had a close relationship since they met in a bar (of course) in Paris, after the publication of *The Great Gatsby*. In the book *Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald: The Rise and Fall of a Literary Friendship* (1999) For the biographer, one of the most famous stories of the couple, narrated by Hemingway in *A Moveable Feast*, it never happened. Ernest Hemingway told that Fitzgerald came to him when his wife, Zelda, told him that his penis was too small. Hemingway (the scene was set in a Parisian restaurant) then accompanied his friend to the service and there, after comparing, told him not to worry, it was no big deal. Then the two together would have gone to the Louvre, where they would spend the afternoon measuring sizes of Greek statues. (Donaldson, Chapter 5)

For Donaldson, this story is invented. The author of *Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald* tiptoes about the possible erotic substance of the relationship between the two writers. Fitzgerald's sexuality was not ambiguous but debatable. For a time, the writer defined himself as "half feminine"(he once dressed as a showgirl, in another occasion he bantered with the possibility of being gay)

but his penchant for women was always strong. His last companion, journalist Sheila Graham, wrote a book about him in which devoted several paragraphs to his qualities as a lover. Around Hemingway-which his mother dressed him as a girl for years- roamed the rumors that after his exaltation of male values, a strong repressed homosexuality was locked. Ava Gardner even hinted that delicately in her memoirs. Arguably the homophobic attitude of Fitzgerald began shortly after starting his relationship with Hemingway.

Turning now to the novel itself, we should be aware of certain aspects to be taken into account when assessing this queer look at Fitzgerald's novel and that is the gathering of some textual evidence that supports the view in this topic. Using the criteria that Tyson exposes seemed quite valid, regarding the fact that “nor can a small number of such cues support a lesbian, gay, or queer reading. But a preponderance of these cues, especially if coupled with other kinds of textual or biographical evidence, can strengthen a lesbian, gay, or queer interpretation even of an apparently heterosexual text” (Tyson, 339)

The following are the patterns used by Tyson in order to find a gay subtext:

- Homosocial bonding : One or more relationships whose emotional ties are very strong between two people of the same sex, that is likely to fall in the homoeroticism
- Gay or lesbian “signs”: We can find two types. The first would be features mostly imposed by heterosexism e.g.: the sissy, pansy/ butch. The second type will include all the coded signs used by the gay and lesbian subculture as well. The very own “gay” word, could have been used by Gertrude Stein as a “in group” sign, that was unaware for heterosexual readers. However, as Tyson remarks, it should be analyzed carefully when something was used as gay sign or not because, depending of the situation and context, that may have been put there in purpose, or even unconsciously. (In *The Great Gatsby* the word gay may possibly have double meaning.)
- Same sex “doubles”: A sign that can certainly fall in the abstract, which consists of a pair of characters of the same sex who dress the same, move the same or act the same. Serve as a mirror image and may share a relationship or not.
- Transgressive sexuality: A text that shows a transgressive sexuality, which mostly questions heterosexual monogamy, can be analyzed under the thought about other types of sexuality beyond the heterosexual. This theme set a perfect stage for queer interpretation.

Following this features we can start with the analysis itself. I will give a short summary of the story in order to catch up quickly with the novel:

Nick begins his narrative with a dinner in East Egg at the home of his cousin Daisy Buchanan and her husband Tom, with whom Nick graduated from Yale. A Midwesterner working on Wall Street, Nick has taken a home in the less prestigious summer destination, West Egg (home of some of the nouveau riche), where his neighbor Jay Gatsby, hosts extravagant parties. At the Buchanan home, Nick meets Daisy's girlhood friend, golf champion Jordan Baker, with whom he carries on an amiable involvement throughout most of the novel. Sometime later, as Tom and Nick are driving into New York, they pick up Myrtle Wilson, who turns out to be Tom's mistress. Following one of Gatsby's parties, Jordan reveals to Nick that Daisy and Gatsby were engaged before the war, and together she and Nick mediate a renewal of that courtship.

Over the next few weeks, Gatsby and Daisy continue seeing each other, their feelings for each other returning and deepening. At one point, Daisy makes those feelings clear to Tom who, despite being shocked by what he has learned, insists that he, Daisy, Gatsby, Nick and Jordan do as Daisy has asked and go to New York. While there, Tom confronts Gatsby, who insists that Daisy never loved him. Daisy, however, says that she did, upsetting Gatsby. The high level of emotion becomes so uncomfortable that Tom insists that it's time to return home, and that Daisy ride with Gatsby in Gatsby's car: the car that, as Nick's narration reveals is involved in the hit-and-run death of Myrtle Wilson. The very own Wilson, after traced the car (with the help of Tom) went Gatsby's home and killed him; he shoots himself afterwards. During the funeral, only his father, Henry C. Gatz, came for the grieving.

Even though in the past, some are the voices who care enough to show the queer or homosexual subtext of the novel (Keath Fraser, Edward Wasiolek) at the end, critics and readers always end up directing their attention to the main heterosexual love triangle; as Maggie Froehlich describes "Southern belle/flapper Daisy Buchanan caught between two lovers; Tom, husband and father of her child; and her first love Gatsby – renders Nick's sexuality irrelevant"

It could be irrelevant, if not because we can draw some conclusions by analyzing parts of Nick's discourse (or lack thereof).

Without a doubt, I believe that we should begin to analyze the theory considering a particular scene located at the end of Chapter 2, but before, some context is demanded. Tom Myrtle and Nick went to a party in New York. In that party, Nick met the McKee's; the wife was "shrill, languid, handsome and horrible" and claims to be proud that his husband is at the artistic game (a photographer); he was a 'pale, feminine man' that had a 'white spot of dry lather on his cheekbone' which later that evening Nick will remove from his cheek when McKee was asleep. Later at night, after the incident between Tom and Myrtle, McKee decided to go, leaving his wife helping Myrtle:

"...McKee turned and continued on out the door. Taking my hat from the chandelier, I followed. 'Come to lunch some day,' he suggested, as we groaned down in the elevator. 'Where?' 'Anywhere.' 'Keep your hands off the lever,' snapped the elevator boy. 'I beg your pardon,' said Mr. McKee with dignity. 'I didn't know I was touching it.' 'All right,' I agreed. 'I'll be glad to.' ...I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio in his hands. 'Beauty and the Beast...Lonliness...Old Grocery Horse...Brook'n Bridge.' Then I was lying half-asleep in the cold lower level of the Pennsylvania Station, staring at the Morning Tribune, and waiting for the four o'clock train."

Fitzgerald's use of ellipses in this scene is powerfully suggestive of the omission of something that Nick does not feel comfortable relating openly and directly, and given the circumstances, a sexual encounter between the two men is a highly plausible suggestion.

If we bear in mind the patterns that were listed before, we have a lot of gay signs: McKee's feminine aspect, the masculine ("handsome") quality of his wife, Nick's attention to the spot of lather on McKee's face (in other words, Nick's fastidious attention to McKee's grooming), Nick's "following" him out of the room, the lunch invitation, the phallic symbol of the lever, Nick's following McKee into his bedroom, McKee's sitting in bed attired only in his underwear, and Nick's remembering nothing else until he wakes up at four o'clock in the

morning on the floor of the train station. As Tyson stated this is a homoerotic subtext that no queer critic would miss (345).

Besides, looking closely to Nick, there are tons of gay signs. He turned 30 years old (“a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of young men to know...”), never been married or engaged, and his stories with women never got to culminate or settle. Nick is telling the reader that he has absolutely no plans on marrying a woman when he accepts the idea that the next ten years of his life will be spent alone. Also, Nick tells the reader that he prefers having only single males as friends, which raises concerns about his heterosexuality. Nick knows and accepts that he is trapped for the next ten years between his plan to not marry because of the fact that he is not sexually attracted to women and his inability to act on his homosexual inclinations toward men; however, the purpose of keeping a “thinning” list of single men to know shows that perhaps he is still desperately searching for a suitable partner. He returned from the First World War, where many soldiers discovered their sexual identity and many hid it because of fear. Important fact is that he moved to New York of the 1920s, a place where transgressive sexuality was at its best (the infidelity of Tom/Myrtle plus the one Daisy/Gatsby), and also, a place where a “silent and forgotten” gay community established: “by the 1920s gay people had created three distinct gay neighborhood enclaves, Greenwich Village, Harlem, and Times Square, each with a different class and ethnic character, gay cultural style, and public reputation” (Gay New York, Chauncey). His way of speaking and describing Gatsby is full of homoeroticism: “I must have felt pretty weird by that time because I could think of nothing except the luminosity of [Gatsby's] pink suit under the moon” (TGG,150). He remarks his feminine features, his gorgeous appearance and limitless romanticism, which compensate any shady business (bootlegging)

In Chapter 7 we can situate Nick in another scene with homosexual implications, while he was at the train:

The straw seats of the car hovered on the edge of combustion; the woman next to me perspired delicately for a while into her white shirtwaist, and then, as her newspaper dampened under her fingers, lapsed despairingly into deep heat with a desolate cry. Her pocket-book slapped to the floor. ‘Oh, my!’ she gasped. I picked it up with a weary bend and handed it back to her, holding it at arm’s length and by the extreme tip of the corners to indicate that I had no designs upon it—but every one near by, including the woman, suspected me just the same.

‘Hot!’ said the conductor to familiar faces. ‘Some weather! Hot! Hot! Hot! Is it hot enough for you? Is it hot? Is it...?’ My commutation ticket came back to me with a dark stain from his hand. That anyone should care in this

heat whose flushed lips he kissed, whose head made damp the pajama pocket over his heart! (TGG, 120-121)

First Nick returns the purse with a “weary bend” and indicating that he “had no designs upon it”. Because of the concern about prostitution in the Victorian period, the female genitalia were connected metaphorically with “purse”. Then he fantasizes with the possibility of kissing the driver because, with all that heat, why should anyone care whose flushed lips kiss?

Following the textual cues given by Tyson, the same sex doubles make an appearance in the form of the “twin yellow girls” in Chapter 3. They dress the same, talk alike, and they seem to go without any man. But I would like to go further in the same sex doubles theory. Reading Wasiolek in “*The Sexual Drama of Nick and Gatsby*” I could be able to connect something he quoted from a fellow colleague, Patricia Pacey Thornton, into the same sex doubles. She calls Nick and Jordan “androgynous twins.” They “cannot properly be called opposite sex since they seem to have equally divided between them masculine and feminine genes. They are, in fact, androgynous twins, and their attraction-repulsion results from their shared and divided natures” (Wasiolek, 16)

Nick has features considered feminine: his ability to listen to others, his providing food and nourishment to Daisy and Gatsby, his human warmth...

Jordan Baker, analogously, is a golf player (male dominant sport by that time) and is always described in masculine terms: “She was a slender, small-breasted girl with an erect carriage which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet” (TGG, 15), she has a “hard, jaunty body” (TGG, 63) even though she usually dress in very feminine way, her “mannish” side beats her female side. Or at least, this is we perceive through Nick’s eyes.

This makes Jordan also a character full of lesbian signs. Indeed, she is also labeled as a lesbian by Maggie Froehlich, in her essay “Jordan Baker, Gender Dissent, and Homosexual Passing in the Great Gatsby”:

“Aside from her relationship with Nick, all of Jordan’s relationships and interactions are with women, and it is in women – Daisy, the girls at Gatsby’s parties – that she takes an active interest; Jordan is, at least, a woman-oriented and woman-identified woman. Tom disapproves of Daisy’s and Jordan’s intimate friendship. As a professional athlete, Jordan is a

transgressive figure, the phallic golf club liberating her from a patriarchal capitalist economy that is the subject of Nick as a bonds man.” (Froehlich, 91).

This is how we can determine that the couple Jordan/Nick is basically two queer characters that act as doubles and under their both “shared and divide nature”.

We mention before that the New York of the 20s was also an example of transgressive sexuality, and *The Great Gatsby* is an example of it. The novel portrays the adultery of Tom with Myrtle, as well the extra-marital affair that Daisy have with Gatsby after reconnecting with him again. However, we can find more beyond the main characters. Just by taking a quick glimpse at the ambience in the many parties that took place in the book, Nick realized that anything can happen in New York: “Most of the remaining women were now having fights with men said to be their husbands [...] One of the men was talking with curious intensity to a young actress his wife was [...] broke down entirely and resorted to flank attacks” (TGG, 52). Interestingly, when Gatsby and Nick met at that same party, the attractive host with “tanned skin attractively tight on his face” asked him if he would like to go in the morning to try out his new acquisition, a hydroplane. Jordan, smiling, asked Nick if he was “having a gay time now”. *Gay* was a code word. Gay people could use it to identify themselves to other gays without revealing their identity to those not in the wise, for not everyone knew that it implied a specifically sexual preference. His early use as a code word is unknown. It was originally used to describe things pleasurable, but its usage by the “flaming faggots” dated the start mostly in the 1920s. (Chauncey, Introduction)

6. Conclusions

From the beginning of this humble analysis, the main idea was to support with evidence, the fact that make a queer analysis of *The Great Gatsby*, would not be far-fetched. There are numerous and varied analysis of one of the most important novels of the past century in American literature. However, the one made from a queer perspective it always remains forgotten and without enough credit, exactly like that big gay world that was there in the first steps of the twentieth century, years in which F. S. Fitzgerald wrote this story. Determine or discuss the sexual orientation of Fitzgerald would be futile at this point (even leaving aside the common tattle of his persona with Hemingway), but it cannot be denied that he always showed a certain degree of interest and attention for those people he called "fairies". So taking into account the data relating to the real presence of the gay community in those years it is not unreasonable at all to think that the novel may contain a gay subtext, whether his author was consciously about it or not. However, Fitzgerald was part of the modernist tendency of the time and *The Great Gatsby*, as well as many of his work, was full of deep symbolism and subtleties. This could reinforce the theory of introducing a gay narrator, hidden enough that it did not present problems when publishing what would be his masterpiece, in a time when gay people were viewed with curiosity, but also with a lot of rejection. This leads me to say that, without a doubt, queer studies are necessary nowadays when it comes to analyze literature because it shows and expose what escapes the rule. Leaving aside how abstract some of its theories can be, I grasp the central (at least under my own criteria) aim of it: no matter if man, woman, straight or gay; we are, above all, people.

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