

# A Psychoanalytic Attitude to The Great Gatsby

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**Abstract—** Considering to some eminent literary works, declare a severe relevance between psychoanalysis and writer's method. The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald classic twentieth century story of Jay Gatsby's quest for Daisy Buchanan is different from other American Writer's which also describe the corruption along with failure of the American Dream. Psychology is an academic and applied discipline that involves the scientific study of mental functions and behaviors. Psychologists attempt to understand the role of mental functions in individual and social behavior. This study is mainly concerned with the psychological method of writing in the Great Gatsby. Attempt to understand the role of Gatsby's mental functions in individual and social behavior. Practically it is an analysis of wealth, power and lust in some segments of the story. Notifying how much wealth can help to obtain the power and how much the power can help to obtain the lust. The root of someone's motivations to create an evolution in spite of having an appropriate life situation. And associate the story with psychological points by some psychologist's theories.

**Index Terms—** F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sigmund Freud, Alfred W. Adler, Feelings of Inferiority, Unconscious Mind, Sexual Sublimation (psychology)

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since Sigmund Freud, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald have approximately lived in a same era, Hence the Freud's attitude could explicitly impressed the Fitzgerald's literary work. In many ways in his stories he expressed the frustration of the young generation with the American dream along with some disillusionment. On the other hand how disillusionments can be effective in someone's attitude.

Kaharuddin (2000) discussed "James Gatz defense Mechanism in Fitzgerald the Great Gatsby" using psychoanalytic Approach. In his problem he focused on Gatsby's defense mechanism in relation with his problem. In this opportunity the researcher decides to conduct a research on the major character's way on struggle for getting his ex-girlfriend's love, and the influence that he gets because of it. Here the researcher uses an individual psychological approach.

This paper mentioned that a dichotomy exists in the form of The Great Gatsby and engages in a psychoanalytic approach to the story with the application of Freudian theory to support the interpretations. Without psychoanalytical criticism, we could not understand how the repression of Gatsby's unhappy moments of life actually drives his character. And talked about a movement which called Modernism; rebellion against religion. This paper addressed

and explained one of the main factors of the movement: Psychology. Mentioned that the psychological ideas were new and embraced by especially the youth, and adults too, all sick of the strict norms and rules in the 1920. The Great Gatsby define a dream of having a perfect and most affluent life in which seeking prosperity, gratification and sexuality is in the first priority by eradicating human evolution and corrupt the social morals. The role of Gatsby's past in his dreams of the future can change the definition of prosperity in human conception. What happened in The Great Gatsby has a psychological reason. This is the main purpose which has been mentioned in the paper.

## II. DISCUSSION

The Great Gatsby is an example of the American Dream in which people begin to seek out pleasure and power instead of individualism. Wealth is easy to come and it is used as a tool to obtain other desire.

According to the father of psychology Sigmund Freud, the unconscious mind (or the unconscious) consists of the processes in the mind that occurs automatically and is not available to introspection, and include thought processes, memory, affect, and motivation. Gatsby's unconscious mind led him towards something he could never have, but wanted so badly.

Alfred Adler talk about the term "feeling(s) of inferiority" which refers to a group of representations and affects that reflect an individual's self-devaluation in relation to others that it can have a positive or negative impact on self-esteem. This feeling stimulates Gatsby's motivation to create a situation to obtain wealth and use it as a power to reach Daisy as she was his first and only love. Since Gatsby was off at war, Tom Buchanan who was a rich and influential man used his power and social standing to convince Daisy into marries him. Later on Gatsby tries to do the same. Gatsby does everything in hid power to get Daisy back and amasses a fortune to be used as a tool for Daisy's love. Catching Daisy's attention and proving his social status was the cause of all Gatsby did. As Gatsby tries to reach her, the current is drawing him back into the past. This is repression, the fact that Gatsby cannot move forward without his past guiding him.

From a psychological perspective, Gatsby's invented past is more than just a strategy to pass himself off as a member of an upper class; it's also a form of denial, a psychological defense to help him repress the memory of his real past. And his claim that his desire to psychologically kill the parents whose wounding influence still inhabits his own psyche and receive from those parents the psychological sustenance.

Sexual sublimation, also known as sexual transmutation, is the attempt, especially among some religious traditions, to transform sexual impulses or sexual energy into creative energy. In The Great Gatsby, sublimation is the transference

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of sexual energy, or libido, into a physical act or a different emotion in order to avoid confrontation with the sexual urge, which is contrary to the individual's belief or ascribed religious belief. It is based on the idea that sexual energy can be used to create a spiritual nature which in turn can create more sensual works, instead of one's sexuality being unleashed raw.

What is obvious in Gatsby's behavior and some characters of the story like Daisy and Tom, is Id, ego, and superego. These are the three parts of the human psyche. According to the Sigmund Freud "The id is the impulsive (and unconscious) part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts. The id is not affected by reality, logic or the everyday world. The idea that every wishful impulse should be satisfied immediately, regardless of the consequences" (McLeod) Superego is the part of the mind-set that appeals more to pathos and emotion. "The conscience tells what is right and wrong, and forces the ego to inhibit the id in pursuit of morally acceptable, not pleasurable or even realistic, goals." (Stevenson) In the middle, the ego will serve as a mediator between the two opposite parts of the mind. "The ego is part of personality that mediates the demands of the id, the superego and reality. The ego prevents us from acting on our basic urges (created by the id), but also works to achieve a balance with our moral and idealistic standards (created by the superego)." (Cherry)

Internal motivations are one of the strongest powers that drive the characters in the Story to act as they do and to place them behind particular occurrences. Freud's tripartite of mind structures id, ego and superego serve as the mobiles which the characters inevitably drive down to their own demises. Gatsby is driven by his desire for Daisy Buchanan on the id level. As Edwin Fussell marks, his pursuit of materialism is based on the belief that "all the magic of the world can be had for money." On the ego level, he develops a conflicting personality on the super-ego level, paradoxically moral and immoral at the same time. Nick Caraway, the narrator, is mainly acting as Gatsby's super-ego, continuously giving judgments and warnings to him; he also ends his relationship and get back home before starting a new one, evidently, just for Gatsby. Tom Buchanan is on the id level, as he lives for "instant gratification without caring for any type of consequence." (Cherry) He cheats on Daisy, punches a woman, and is blatantly racist and sexist, as Fitzgerald elaborates and proves that "Tom's commodity psychology is not limited to his relationships with women." (Tyson 42) Similarly to her husband, Daisy is also on the id level, caring only about money and materialism, being able to live with all the hurt that she has caused Gatsby, and even allowing Gatsby to take the blame for her fault in killing the same woman that her husband was having an abusive affair with. Money is associated with excrement in psychoanalysis and becomes evident with the progression of my study as one of several anal images that form a part of the fictional thread. Daisy's voice is "full of money" and Daisy herself is referred to as the "golden girl".

As Caraway narrates, the other three characters continuously clash with these motives, as "Tom, Daisy and Gatsby all reveal the psychological politics of the American dream's commodification of identity." (Tyson 41) Because all of the characters have an inconsistency in their three mind

structures, each are so flawed beyond repair because either id or superego are so unbelievably overmatch, that ego is drowned out and cannot mediate between the clashing two.

The relationship between Tom and Daisy Buchanan also has some problems, psychological. Daisy Buchanan displays symptoms of an inferiority complex (An inferiority complex, often used to mean low self-esteem, is a feeling of intense insecurity) due to the belittling treatment she endures from her husband.

Daisy's inferiority lies within her relationship, described as "faulty... where abilities and attitudes are denigrated or rejected by other people. The inferiority complex is a need to validate one's self by others." (Laing) Here, 'others' is equivalent to her husband Tom. Daisy Buchanan's constant disoriented disposition is an outcome of the emotionally and physically abusive relationship with her husband. The character does not try to break out of the norms that her husband and society has put upon her; instead, she elaborates with those stereotypes due to the continuous inferiority complex she develops. Daisy Buchanan is a psychologically strong character who ends up submitting to the ignorant dominance of her husband, Tom, due to her realization of the place of a woman in the 1920's upper class society.

In fact features of The Great Gatsby are almost all of its prominent characters, along with the less significant: Myrtle, Jordan and George, in some romantic and sexual relationships in various strengths. Such relationships in psychoanalytic terms are actually believed to be the re-enactment of initial unresolved conflicts that once occurred in the family and were repressed at an early age. These conflicts that operate between id, ego, and superego, remain always unresolved and tend to be checked primarily by defense mechanisms while at other times they arouse anxiety and dredge up the repressed, thus being repressed again on both occasions. The repressed, hence, must be negotiated by ego so they may release themselves in non-destructive behavioral patterns lest they evolve into a crisis.

almost all romantic bonds in the novel, even Tom and Daisy's, either manifest a hollow emotional attachment or have worn out miserably since the characters fail to relieve the painful experience of the unconscious, break down all defense mechanisms to release the repressed, and exploit the scopes of gratification offered by ego, the world of reality. The unresolved conflicts in the characters' psyche in the novel, in this sense, therefore, bespeak the work's consideration as a psychological drama of dysfunctional love

### III. CONCLUSION

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* impresses on the readers as a story on a youth with poor beginnings who is in a headlong pursuit of the American Dream and through it love and social standing. And the affection of Unconsciousness mind, feeling(s) of inferiority, Sexual sublimation Id, ego, and superego obviously have seen in the story. .Despite this capacity, however, the work fascinates its readers more by its characters' intriguing romantic and sexual relationships doomed ultimately by a tragic outgrowth. In this light, therefore, the appeal of the story seems to ensue not from its mere narrative progression but largely from the dramatization

of the psyche of the characters who are engaged in the relationships devoid of genuine emotional attachments and loyalty at times. This emotional dysfunction in fact seems to be ascribed implicitly to the characters' inability to survive and outgrow the unresolved conflicts latent in them, thus making way for tragedy to surface. And, it is for this reason why many critical readers especially those rejoicing at psychoanalytic reading of the novel view *The Great Gatsby* as a psychological drama of dysfunctional love.

#### APPENDIX

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald: (September 24, 1896 – December 21, 1940) was an American author of novels and short stories, whose works are the paradigm writings of the Jazz Age, a term he coined himself. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest American writers of the 20th century. Fitzgerald is considered a member of the "Lost Generation" of the 1920s.

Sigmund Freud: (6 May 1856 – 23 September 1939), Sigmund Schlomo Freud, was an Austrian neurologist who became known as the founding father of psychoanalysis.

Sublimation: In psychology, sublimation is a mature type of defense mechanism where socially unacceptable impulses or idealizations are consciously transformed into socially acceptable actions or behavior, possibly converting the initial impulse in the long term. Freud defines sublimation as the process of deflecting sexual instincts into acts of higher social valuation, being "an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life".

Unconscious Mind: The unconscious mind (or the unconscious) consists of the processes in the mind that occur automatically and are not available to introspection, and include thought processes, memory, affect, and motivation.

Alfred W. Adler: (February 7, 1870 – May 28, 1937) was an Austrian medical doctor, psychotherapist, and founder of the school of individual psychology. His emphasis on the importance of feelings of inferiority - the inferiority complex - is recognized as isolating an element which plays a key role in personality development.

Feeling(S) Of Inferiority: The term "feeling(s) of inferiority" refers to a group of representations and affects that reflect an individual's self-devaluation in relation to others that it can have a positive or negative impact on self-esteem.

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