

The concept of american dream portrayed in the great gatsby

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," later adapted by Baz Luhrmann, involves many complex themes that alter an audience's interpretation of the story, however this is not only due to the change in form but Luhrmann's vision and the 2013 context. The hollowness of the upper class is a repetitive concept that the audience sees in the film, and the meaning portrayed through this central preoccupation comes down to the context and Luhrmann's vision for the piece. Their attitudes are also interwoven through the concept of love, and the omissions and adaptations of certain aspects modify this due to the change in form and the context in which the film was created. Encompassed in the theses of love and the hollowness of the upper class is the American Dream that is frequently yet indirectly referenced. The change in form and the context emphasises and therefore exaggerates this ideology due to the directorial choices of Luhrmann and his extravagant filming style.

In "The Great Gatsby," the upper class are depicted as short-sighted to what is important in life and Luhrmann highlights their vacuity to be due to their fixation on the tangible items they possess. Luhrmann shifts the focus from the hollowness of the upper class to their obsession with material possessions and utilises the visual advantage to place emphasis on this. The couple and other members of their class have a certain expectation of people (that perhaps do not hold as high a stature), to be at their command, and Luhrmann calls upon Daisy to represent this. Gatsby states that Daisy relies on a "force of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality" for her life to run so smoothly and effortlessly, and Luhrmann makes Daisy a character that the audience can physically see to be an embodiment of this

using colours of yellow and white to illustrate this expectation. The ambiguity in this instance reflects how open to interpretation her character is, despite there being a common thread that she is completely surrounded by money. Some believe her to be shallow and centred around decadence, and others believe her to be the innocent and naïve “golden girl,” however later revealing her unhappiness despite the prosperity that surrounds her. The repetition of the indirect use of the word “force” juxtaposes the idea of love, and implies that Daisy’s relationship with Tom is forced when in fact, love should be natural and positive. The rapidly changing camera angles in the introduction of Tom and Daisy (and in particular, low angle shots) dramatise the belongings of the couple and has the effect on the audience that makes the subject (often an item) look more striking and eloquent than usual. Luhrmann uses the 2013 context to inspire his version in the way that much of the hollowness that can be seen in the upper classes today is seen in the attitudes of the Buchanan’s, Gatsby and the like. Not only does a modern audience see the pompous attitudes of people simply holding a high status but pay witness to everything they own. Luhrmann benefits from the visual aspect of film to dramatise the extravagant possessions of the members of the wealthy stature, therefore altering the meaning of this central preoccupation from the hollowness of the upper class to their desire for material goods.

The connotations that come with the notion of love are altered under Luhrmann’s direction, and the theme transitions from being harshly denounced to holding a highly idealised alternative meaning in the film

version. The thesis moves away from being scathingly critiqued to a romantic indulgence that a film audience enjoys. The relationship between Nick and Jordan is also omitted. This is due mainly to the change in form. The omission of Nick as the narrator in the novel (due to the change in form) means that it becomes difficult to include his own love story, let alone the primary one. This is because Luhrmann places specific emphasis on the main love story of Gatsby and Daisy and uses film techniques including editing, camera and sound (non-diegetic and diegetic) to romanticise their love and make it more of a laudatory idea than readers see it to be in the novel. The strategic editing of the montage between Gatsby and Daisy is the first scene that the audience sees the scale of their relationship and furthermore, their love. The meaning has been transformed as it is also here that the audience holds a positive association with love as opposed to it being largely criticised in the novel. The montage stresses the love (even under unfortunate circumstances) between the pair as it constantly reiterates the infatuation that they have for each other. The money that they are both conspicuously in possession of acts as an added incentive to be together and makes everything look even more "splendid," as described by Gatsby about Daisy. The soundtrack of the film equilibrates between the film's opulent period context and the preoccupations of the shallowness of materialism and the complexity of the American dream. Coinciding and challenging the relationship between Daisy and Gatsby is the unbalanced relationship between Tom and Myrtle. The "shrill, metallic urgency" of the telephone modifies the audiences interpretation of love and therefore love as a central preoccupation, as Luhrmann utilises this relationship to make the

relationship between Gatsby and Daisy appear indulgent and romanticised. Myrtle isn't just a one night stand, she is mentioned several times as 'the other woman'. Luhrmann again accentuates the lack of morals in the wealthy class, presenting a prevalence of the concept that people marry for money rather than love. The elusiveness of love that the audience views in the film is modified to suit the film version, and love becomes complimentary as opposed to the condemnation that Fitzgerald accentuated in the novel.

Luhrmann creates a highly stylised version of the American Dream using elements of film which therefore reconstruct the underlying principle. The American Dream is frequently referenced and the audience observes this through the director's manipulation of colour and sound and other film techniques that we wouldn't otherwise see in the novel. The American Dream is showcased in Gatsby's parties. Everything about his parties express vast amounts of money; the people who attend, what they wear, the house in which the parties are held etc. Luhrmann judiciously utilises film techniques to reinforce the image of the American Dream. He strengthens this image by symbolising specific colours to characterise certain motifs. The parties that Gatsby hosts every Friday in his "blue gardens" appear to depict an illusory state in which people get to leave the real world and drink away their grievances. This reference to his garden portrays the sadness that his house holds when his guests leave and calls attention to the melancholic connotations of the colour blue. Most things that surround Gatsby are gold. The association with Gatsby and the colour gold is used so much so that it brings with it a sensation of ominousness. Gatsby's car, his

tie, and more literally, his money is gold. Furthermore, the boldness of it means that even subtle uses of the colour stay with the audience, such the twin girls wearing yellow dresses. The green light is the most colour symbol in the film as it is referenced explicitly several times and is affiliated with this “unattainable dream.” This is an ambiguous idea for many as the audience is torn between the idea of the “dream” being Daisy or a quest for more wealth and affluence. When Gatsby spends the day with Daisy and she becomes an object that is now within reach, “the colossal significance of that light had vanished forever.” Fitzgerald uses this vagueness and mystery of the light as a method of underscoring the fact that this light depicts the paradox of enchantment. This elucidates the theory that once an object that has been an object of desire becomes attainable, it loses its allure. The American Dream is reinforced through the utilisation of colour and sound which alters the original significant of the thesis.

“The Great Gatsby,” includes numerous perplexing subjects that modify an audience's inference of the novel due to the change in form, the year of production and the vision of the director. The superficiality of the high society is reinstated in Luhrmann's use of their decadent belongings and lifestyles, and this is reflected in the relationships between characters that have been adapted to a film version. Surrounding the upper class is their belief in the American Dream, and Luhrmann draws attention to this belief system through the use of symbolic colours and sounds. The Great Gatsby is a novel that scathingly condemns the actions and attitudes of the upper

class, and Luhrmann utilises his visual advantage to alter the elucidations of each contention.