

The theme of human corruption, its sources and consequences, is a common concern among writers from Shakespeare through J.D Salinger. Some suggest that it attacks from outside, while others depict corruption occurring from within the individual. In the case of *The Great Gatsby* and its protagonist's fate, Fitzgerald shows both factors at work. The moral climate of the Roaring Twenties, Daisy Fay Buchanan's pernicious hold on him, and Jay Gatsby's own nature all contribute to his tragic demise.

First, the loose morality of Dan Cody, Gatsby's unfortunate role model, and superficial people who flock to Gatsby's parties contribute to Gatsby's downfall. Their examples encourage Gatsby's interpretation of The American Dream- his naive belief is that money and social standing are all that matter in his quest for Daisy. The self-absorbed debauchees and their drunken escorts are among those who "crash" his extravagant soirees. As Nick Carraway tells us, "People were not invited- they went there." (pg.40) Shallow, corrupt people like Jordan Baker gossip with reckless abandon about their mysterious host. Their careless, superficial attitudes and wanton behaviour represent Fitzgerald's depiction of the corrupt American Dream.

Another force of corruption responsible for Gatsby's fate is his obsession with a woman of Daisy's nature. Determined to marry her after returning from the war, he is blind to her shallow, cowardly nature. He is unable to see the corruption which lies beyond her physical beauty, charming manner and playful banter. That she is incapable of leaving her brutal husband, Tom, of committing herself to Gatsby despite his sacrifices, escapes him. As Nick observes, Gatsby's expectation is absurdly simple: "He only wanted her to tell him [Tom] that she never loved him." (pg.91) Daisy is not worthy of the pedestal on which she is placed. Since she is hollow at the core, so is his dream which is based on a brief flirtation, nothing more.

Finally, Gatsby's own character-especially his willful obsession-contributes to his fate. Despite his naivete about Daisy and her friends who "are rich and play polo together," he, too, has been seduced by the lure of money and fame. Unable to control his obsessive desire to have Daisy, he cares little about the means by which he acquires the money to marry her. He associates with known criminals such as Myer Wolfsheim, appears to be involved with bootlegging, and is rumored to have killed a man. Finally, he lies about himself and his family to enlist Nick's support of his grand quest. The means he uses to achieve his goal pervert his sacred dream. He prefers the pretty illusions he concocts to the harsh reality of the obsession he allows to corrupt his life.

Gatsby's character is probably the single most important factor in the story of his life and death. But Daisy and a society which rewards corruption play a part as well. F. Scott Fitzgerald's depiction of the soured American Dream dramatizes the internal and external forces at work in a modern tragedy about human potential for corruption