



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Identity and Ethnicity in *The Great Gatsby*: A Reflection of 1920s Societal Dynamics

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the notion of identity and its manifestations in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, focusing on social context, ethnicity, and racism as main components for identity formation in American society in the 1920s. To support this observation, a focus is made on identity formation, ethnicity, and social acceptance in an elite, racially categorized society that the characters have experienced. The portrayal of American identity within its complexity indicates to several hidden manifestations of societal, cultural and ethnic complexities. This paper employs analytical, inductive, and deductive approaches to compose the analysis. The analysis critiques characters' physical characteristics and prejudiced attitudes, feeding a culture of racism, social belonging, and prejudicial morality. Identity in *The Great Gatsby* interacts environmentally, demonstrating how identification sets social roles regarding stratification, ethnicity, and acceptance. The analysis examines how forces generate identity prejudice through discriminatory practices and how the characters respond to those forces by emphasizing their cultural and social context. Ethnic and racial prejudices are deeply embedded in the narrative, reflecting biases of American identity in the 1920s. Also, the analysis reveals how fragmented American identity when American Dream conquered the entire critiques about the novel. Finally, this study concludes with valuable insights into identity's complexity, emphasizing moral, social, ethnic, and racial factors shaping American identity in Fitzgerald's work.

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1. Introduction

Regarding the contradictory language of some characters and their personal attitudes, Zora Neale Hurston^[1], an African American author, anthropologist, and key figure of the Harlem Renaissance, once said, “It seems to me that every individual is a unique being.” Her statement is particularly relevant in the context of^[2] Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, as the characters grapple with their own sense of identity, social context, and ethnicity. The exploration of identity and ethnicity in *The Great Gatsby* serves as a reflection of the larger societal issues of the time, shedding light on the complexities of race, ethnicity, and social hierarchy in the 1920s. This paper examines the various ways in which Fitzgerald explores these themes and the implications for understanding the characters’ identities and ethnic backgrounds.

Due to the pretentious behavior of the social environment, all the characters fear their elitist group’s rejection, and stop unveiling their true identity and racist character. This pretentious spirit exacerbates the traumatic desire for a racist world, where only a privileged few are allowed to act on the stage. The few main topics that will illustrate how *The Great Gatsby* portrays social issues will first be analyzed and investigated. The study uses the inductive and deductive methods, and the analytical approach, regarding the literary function of identity. It explores how identity is employed as a literary tool in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*^[2], and why it became a significant structural component in it.

Moreover, cultural identity has become an increasingly questioned issue in the identity context. As physical appearance is a fundamental element of a person’s identity, the absence, mutation, or modification of any of these characteristics can lead to identity confusion. The present paper focuses on how a country’s dominant identity can violently control, as well as shape, a person’s ethnic identity. It criticizes *The Great Gatsby* through the study of some characters’ physical characteristics and bad attitudes to examine how discrimination can nurture a racist attitude in a person. Although most of the characters’ and the writer’s opinions demonstrate

that they all abhor discrimination, the ethnicist nature of the individuals is cunningly displayed when Fitzgerald studies the physical appearance of the colored personnel in the novel. The exploration of identity and ethnicity in^[2] *The Great Gatsby* provides valuable insights into the societal dynamics of the 1920s.

The novel’s center lies at the heart of a crucially vague conception - the American Dream, subtly rewritten for existence in an ever-dynamic America. The constituents of this new nationality are more likely conventions rather than genetics, religion, national history, culture, common values, and, most significantly, memories and loyalties, which differentiate American natives from other people^[3]. *The Great Gatsby*’s narrative unravels the emergent tensions characterizing the contradictory portrait of Americans navigating the often-turbulent waters of national pretension and national reality. Successors suited up for the obligatory tackles in the continuing ascent of American enterprise. The novel provides a glimpse into the Jazz Age and the Roaring Twenties, reflecting the social and cultural changes of the time^[4]. The setting of the novel is in the affluent Long Island towns of East and West Egg, where characters are immersed in the pursuit of wealth and status.

On the surface, *The Great Gatsby* is simply a modernist novel reverberating with rhythms of the American 20s and 30s. A diffuse conception of the American Dream, in pursuit of undefined success, is prominent. Additionally, the novel’s setting, characters, and symbols evoke a profusion of dualities, narrating the national emergence of an identity crisis in a burgeoning melting pot filled with emergent tensions^[5]. Through the panoramic narrative and insightful characterization, the novel’s volatility rests upon the emergence of these essential dualities: national pretensions versus national reality, nationality, versus religion, ethnicity, identity, and class. The novel’s exploration of identity and ethnicity is grounded in the portrayal of societal tensions and individual struggles^[6]. Fitzgerald’s vivid descriptions and intricate character development highlight the complexities of navigating between different cultural and social spheres.

2. Reviewing Identity and Ethnicity

The literary exploration of representations of identity formation and relational meanings in cultural experiences has become a major focus in recent critical and theoretical treatments. From a political perspective^[7], in *Nation and Nationalism*, states: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national units should be congruent.” Similarly, Susser^[8], states: “Nationalism fosters the idea that legitimate government rests on the will of the national public, hence activating the masses.”

However, from a social angle, an important consideration among different analyses is the effects of the voices that articulately reflect different perspectives on ethnic and personal identity as they are disseminated to the reading audience^[9]. This collective representation and validation of a variety of ethnic voices is a primary necessity in today’s multicultural society^[10]. Through literature, different voices can hopefully confront and counteract the narrow or skewed perceptions of the ethnic ‘Other’ that are initially established and subsequently perpetuated by a majority’s chosen heroes and their celebratory exploits^[11], Ramasubramanian et al., 2020. By presenting a wider range of experiences and encouraging alternate perspectives, already widespread but often damaging ignorance could raise the level of informed understanding requisite for full social interaction and improvement among various ethnic groups^[12]. These interactions could help to form identity in general, and to understand the manifestations of identity in the novel.

Thus, identity and ethnicity are deeply connected concepts explored by many theorists. Stuart Hall^[13], a cultural theorist, argues that identity is not fixed but constructed through cultural practices and shared experiences. He emphasizes that identity is shaped by the historical and social contexts in which people live. This means that ethnicity, as a part of identity, is also formed by cultural traditions, language, and shared history. Similarly, Frantz Fanon^[14], a postcolonial theorist, discusses how colonialism creates identity prejudices. He explains that oppressed groups are often forced to see themselves through the eyes of the dominant culture. This leads to a distorted sense of identity, shaped by stereotypes and racial prejudice. In addition, Edward Said^[15], in his theory of Orientalism, highlights how Western cultures have historically defined their identity by contrasting themselves with “the Other,” often people of dif-

ferent ethnicities. This process reinforces power dynamics and creates cultural prejudices. It can be noticed that these theories help explain how Fitzgerald’s work reflects the identity and ethnic prejudices of 1920s America. The novel’s portrayal of privilege and racial attitudes mirrors the broader societal issues of the time, showing how identity is shaped by cultural and historical forces. This aligns with Hall’s and Said’s ideas about identity being constructed and influenced by power and cultural dynamics.

Identity and Ethnicity in *Gatsby*

In addition, Withers^[16] argues for the importance of teaching identity through literature. He presents a thorough examination of identity as a multifaceted theme intricately tied to personal and cultural dimensions within the American societal framework. His article aptly highlights how different groups experience and interpret their identities. His emphasis goes to the complexities that arise from intersections of race, class, and gender. This perspective is particularly relevant when analyzing *The Great Gatsby*, where identity formation is central to the narrative. Gatsby’s quest for identity serves as a cautionary tale about the perils of social mobility based on external expectations.

Moreover, few scholars have utilized symbolism to explore identity in *The Great Gatsby*. Symbolism is crucial for understanding the narrative’s exploration of identity. As noted by Mohammad Hasan Ismael and Farah Sulieman Samardali^[17], Fitzgerald’s rich imagery reveals the American Dream’s superficial allure juxtaposed with underlying emptiness. Characters’ pursuits, analyzed by Mohammad Anoosheh and Hussein Oroskhan^[18], illustrate identity’s fluidity, revealing internal contradictions mirroring societal tensions.

3. Social Context and Identity

Nick first describes himself as someone who does not judge others, although he is character-driven, emotional, and hardened. The quote below reveals Nick Carraway’s deep connection to his ancestry and identity. He narrates his belonging to clarify his identity, primarily distinguishing himself from others by establishing his rootedness in a legacy of tradition and privilege.

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this middle western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on today. (p. 2)

By narrating his family's history, Nick situates himself within a framework of stability and continuity, contrasting sharply with other characters' struggles for identity and social position. His reference to the Dukes of Buccleuch and his grandfather's entrepreneurial beginnings illustrates a sense of pride in his heritage, with great emphasis on his secure place in the social hierarchy.

Hall's theory of identity as a social construct^[13] can illuminate Nick's position. Hall suggests that identity is shaped by historical and cultural forces, and Nick's identity is clearly defined by his family's long-standing prominence and values. Unlike Jay Gatsby, whose identity is fluid and self-fashioned, Nick's identity is anchored in tradition and lineage, granting him a perspective that allows him to observe and critique others more clearly. Fanon's^[14] idea of identity being influenced by power structures also resonates here. Nick's rooted identity is a product of his privileged social context which allows him to navigate the narrative with confidence and moral detachment. This privilege, however, blinds him to certain systemic inequalities, as his position within the hierarchy is unquestioned and unchallenged.

Moreover, in Edward Said's concept of "the Other," while Nick observes characters like Gatsby and Tom struggling to aspire to or defend their social positions, he remains an insider. His identity is affirmed by cultural and historical ties. His ancestral connection provides a sense of belonging lacking in Gatsby, an outsider striving to fit into the elite. Thus, Nick's rooted identity defines his perspective and shapes his narrator's role. His initial narrative focus on identity formation highlights its significance in 1900s America. This clarity enables him to explore others' complexities while connected to his own. This duality makes Nick both a participant and observer of societal dynamics Fitzgerald critiques.

He evaluates his cousin Daisy and Tom Buchanan as a snobbish couple indifferent to others^[19]. Although harsh, his description contrasts with his eventual draw to them. Nick sympathizes with Gatsby's demise, while his feelings toward the Buchanans remain complex, valuing their presence at times. He maintains friendly terms with Jordan Baker, whom he initially admires^[20], yet later struggles to connect with.

Jay Gatsby's tragic pursuit of wealth and status, as seen in his love for Daisy and morally questionable actions, illustrates the powerful role of social class in shaping identity. Gatsby's attempts to transform himself into a member of the upper class reflect the tension between aspiration and reality in the rigid social hierarchy of early 20th-century American society. This struggle is central to his identity and ultimate downfall. Hall's theory^[13] posits that identity is constructed through social and cultural practices and shaped by historical and social forces. For Gatsby, his environment, which values wealth and privilege as markers of success, heavily influences his identity. Despite accumulating wealth, Gatsby remains an outsider to the old-money elite, highlighting the limitations of social mobility and the entrenched nature of class-based identity. Fanon's discussion^[12] on identity under oppressive systems also applies. Although Fanon focuses on colonial contexts, his idea of identity being distorted by the dominant culture can be extended to Gatsby's plight. Gatsby internalizes the values of the upper class and attempts to reshape his identity to fit their mold, but his efforts ultimately expose the exclusionary nature of these societal structures. The path to self-knowledge, as noted by Zhou^[6] and David^[21], can be seen in Gatsby's realization of his place in the social hierarchy. This aligns with the archetype of the fictional hero's journey, where the quest for identity often involves confronting harsh truths. Unlike Hall's modern conception of identity^[13], Gatsby's identity is trapped by static, exclusionary class definitions, leading to tragic demise.

On the other side, Daisy has adapted herself to her new identity after her marriage. Her cousin Nick describes her as "she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged" (p. 13). Her new social class belonging helped her wear a new identity, not her ethnic identity, supported by Hall^[13], conceptions of non-fixed identity constructed through cultural practices. Therefore, her identity is shaped by the new social contexts

she lives. However, there are complexities within these adaptations of new society. Tom rejects Daisy's attitudes sometimes and focuses on her civilized attitudes. He states, "You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy," I confessed on my second glass of corky but rather impressive claret. "Can't you talk about crops or something?" (p. 10). The quote reflects a critical disintegration between two distinct social contexts in Fitzgerald's narrative. This dialogue underscores the tension between old and new social structures in the early 1900s. It reveals rigid class and cultural boundaries shaping American society at the time. Also, forming an identity independent of ethnic bonds was nearly impossible during this period, aligning with Hall's theories on identity. Hall argues that identity isn't fixed but shaped by cultural and social forces. However, early 20th-century American identity contradicts Hall's modern conception of fluid identity. Instead, identity tied deeply to ethnicity, class, and social status reflects American society's complex, exclusionary nature. This complexity suggests American identity evolved slowly, grappling with prejudices and societal norms resisting change.

The social world is not so much represented by Gatsby and Daisy, as by Nick Carraway, whose less grotesque involvement with the other characters allows him to be an effective narrator of the story, despite his own biases. He is a more sympathetic character that engages the reader's empathy on a different level, as described by Ascher^[22]. Nick's position as an outsider to the extravagant world of the rich allows for a more objective observation of the social dynamics at play. This outsider perspective gives him a unique insight into the complexities of social class and identity in the novel, as explained in Daisy's case above.

Moreover, the separation between East Egg and West Egg is important to the subtlety of American identity. The Buchanans are from East Egg, which is old money—inherited and accompanied by an already established social authority. On the other hand, West Egg, where Gatsby resides, signifies new money, typified by flashiness and a self-made philosophy. Gatsby's mansion, described as "a colossal affair by any standard" (p. 4), speaks to his wealth and ambition. However, he is still an outsider in East Egg. This shows the strong social stratification within society at that time. Fitzgerald seeks to find the truth about social foundations in America. He is conscious of the role of the setting and thus adopts a locational social divide in his novel to signify Amer-

ican identity, but it is still hinged on division created by class membership. The efforts of Gatsby to penetrate East Egg represent the rigid social stratification that shuts off real access. Actually, this divide defines American identity, isolated with only the simple attainment of wealth or achievement; it actually deals with societal structure defining belonging. Fanon's insights^[14] into identity and exclusion also resonate here. Fanon explains how dominant groups create barriers to maintain power and status, marginalizing those attempting to integrate into their spaces. Gatsby's efforts to penetrate East Egg reflect this struggle, as he faces rejection despite his wealth, highlighting rigid social stratification defining American identity.

Another evidence can illustrate social class and its connection to identity formation is seen in Myrtle Wilson. She comes to epitomize the drive for social mobility and the American Dream gone horribly wrong. Her affair with Tom reveals her ambition to rise above the lower class from which she comes. Myrtle's downfall is a grim reminder of the price one may pay for such ambitions. This shift in her attempt to mimic the wealthy lifestyle ultimately kills her, illuminating how flimsy her classist identity is. Once more Fitzgerald is stressing the classification of identity to the class and social. But transcend identity, is one that Myrtle fell into. Her aim is to replace the lower-class identity with an upper class one. As a member of the elite Myrtle must adopt a new identity. Therefore, the American identity is not formed yet and has to develop more. Sarah Churchwell^[23] argues that "as an anonymous victim of a rich man's carelessness, Myrtle serves as the proof and emblem not only of how dangerously flimsy any identity constructed in relation to capital may prove but also tells us much about what happens when such aspirations lead flatly into annihilation" (p. 186). Possession of a life larger than ordinary, Myrtle encapsulates the aspirational culture striving for upward mobility; yet also her tragic journey reflects back all too grimly on class divides. To regard her identity formation from Hall's conception^[13], it appears that identity is constructed within societal frameworks, aligned with Myrtle's story. Myrtle attempts to reshape her identity through her association with Tom and the mimicry of upper-class behaviors, but her efforts expose the rigid boundaries of class and social structure. Her inability to transcend her lower-class origins reflects the limitations imposed by society on those seeking to redefine their identities.

Identity formation in ‘*The Great Gatsby*’

Nick Carraway’s problem is that he is unlike the other characters in that he has a true sense of self and a moral center and therefore is unable to acquire a part of the artificial social environment, as much as he longs for. From the first time Nick meets Gatsby, he is taken in by the strange mask that is Gatsby’s identity^[24]. It isn’t until much later in the novel that Nick realizes it is the façade which Gatsby has made for himself that has caused Tom and Daisy’s careless destruction, public dishonesty and sense of entitlement that in the end leads to their superficial happiness. While Daisy chooses a firm sense of self over everything else, and while Tom clings solidly to his assured sense of himself throughout the novel, it is the flighty, ethereal Gatsby who redeems himself from being a one-dimensional sympathetic villain to attain the status of an idealized martyr, his intuitive disregard for dishonesty and corruption, in the end, helping Nick to reinstate his sense of self^[25]. In the novel, the characters’ identities are closely tied to their social status and wealth. Gatsby’s pursuit of wealth and status ultimately leads to his downfall, while Tom and Daisy’s sense of entitlement allows them to escape the consequences of their actions. This exploration of identity and ethnicity reflects the societal values of the time.

Identity is the primary preoccupation of most of the novel’s characters, and it becomes particularly crucial to the action of the novel. Moge^[26] mentioned that the character who has the strongest sense of identity and determination in the whole novel, Gatsby, transforms himself from a poor Midwest farmer into a mysterious wealthy socialite. He could form his identity as a new-money identity based on the materialism concept. On the other side, Daisy’s change is also substantial, albeit not self-initiated. She has taken flight from her confused, spirited teenage self into the demure, aristocratic class. She is at the time the novel begins and slipping into an indefinable grayness as she approaches her judicial responsibilities nine years later. However, her identity formation does not take a final shape. Similarly, Myrtle Wilson changes her identity entirely, matched by her husband’s change in the opposite direction, and the only thing that remains constant about Tom Buchanan is his complete complacency with his identity and position in society. Predicted next words: In contrast, as Gordon^[27] states that Jay Gatsby’s identity is built on a facade of wealth and success,

masking his true background and heritage.

This theme of identity is further explored through Tom and Daisy Buchanan, representing the old-money aristocracy of East Egg^[28]. Their identities are rooted in social status and privilege, highlighting the contrast between old and new money. This identity and ethnicity theme is central to understanding 1920s America’s social dynamics. Understanding Fitzgerald’s identity formation requires examining the intermingled social and ethnic bonds. Character portrayals reveal ethnic background, social status, and other aspects.

Examining Daisy’s character as a young girl and daughter of a wealthy family brings the formation of identity as an essential aspect in the novel. Although she is Nick’s “second cousin” (p. 4), she seeks to move her status to the old-money class, different from her original. She is opposite to Nick, who identifies himself as rooted in ethnic third-generation from the beginning of the story. Daisy, as Tom Buchanan’s “wife” (p. 4), adapted herself to a new identity to be part of the new American identity formation in the 1900s. Before she married Tom, she was in love with Gatsby. Despite their young daughter and huge house, Daisy isn’t in love with Tom and never has been, which reflects her connection to her roots more than her new identity adaptation. She seems to be a woman who can exist only with a man’s love, and even Gatsby cannot give her the assurance she needs, where her identity is not independent or even attached to her ethnic or cultural bond. In a way, she helped create Gatsby’s self-development and identity-formation by rejecting him in the past. However, she cannot live up to the expectations she set for Gatsby at that time either. Daisy is a feeble soul unable to make her own decisions or accept the consequences of those decisions. This reflects the conclusion that she has no belonging and never been on the solid ground of self or identity. In fact, her world is like the American Dream, beautiful and rotten at the same time. The more Nick knows about her, the more failures he finds in Daisy’s personality and identity as well. Therefore, she is a representation of that part of the world where American society lies.

4. Ethnicity and Race in the Novel

Some critics believe that the novel should be repositioned from the category of literature that privately concerns itself with self-absorption and wastage, to literature that

loudly, aggressively, and publicly challenges racism, racial purity, and those inequalities that make a society insist on racial purity. Such ideas challenge the central focus on jazz and flappers because they are direct warnings^[29]. Discrimination and lack of opportunity in the 1920s might threaten civil disturbance in the future, and these are also illicit ideas. According to the legal perspective, Rose^[30] states that they challenge the belief that the white wealthy elites cannot and should not be upset or opposed, and subvert the nostalgic return to a white, privileged America as the golden age in which social tranquility reigned. In connection to the novel, it is obvious that Fitzgerald's references to black and semi-black people throughout the novel may seem minimal, but they have maximum impact. So minimal and casual are these references that it seems they really are his experience of his world that his world really did accept and articulate such distinctions.

To what extent does *The Great Gatsby* engage with the politics of its time? The Jazz Age is remembered for its excesses, its decadence, and the death of the American Dream. But it was also a deeply racist period, even before the heightened racism that followed immigration from the Caribbean after the First World War. The novel perfectly depicts how white America sees itself and must preserve itself by walling out the social and racial havoc caused by Prohibition, with countless theories put forward to point the way to renewed racial purity. For some critics, these lines of inquiry should be central to any understanding of the novel. Consequently, 1920s America is a country of gloriously wealthy bastards with stupid levels of grandeur, and Tom Buchanan personifies the worst aspects of its racism and social prejudice. There is an undercurrent of a white patriarchal mindset that refuses to evolve, clashing with minority cultural norms. An example is Tom's statement, "The white race... being forced to its knees by the rise of colored empires"^[2], implying anxiety over losing privilege due to changing racial demographics. This expression captures common fears about race and self-identity. Tom conveys societal themes, referencing Smith^[31], who asserts that Tom's sentiments reflect a larger racial concern: American identity, especially among elites, may depend on exclusion and dominance. Tom states, "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things" (p. 10), asserting white supremacy. Yet

this supremacy extends to conquering fellow whites, like Gatsby, deemed non-elite. This racial discourse complicates the idea of a single American identity, exposing hidden anxieties accompanying social advancements.

In contrast to Tom, Gatsby's transformation from James Gatz to Jay exemplifies the intricate nature of American identity and individual self-reinvention. "Just why these inventions were a source of satisfaction to James Gatz of North Dakota, isn't easy to say" (p. 70). The fluidity of identity within an American landscape is fleshed out in his character. Thus, Gatsby's exclamation:

"I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see." He talked a lot about the past and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly... (p. 80).

He exposes his yearnings for an unsullied history, showing that one is always a product of where they come from^[2]. This serves as a sobering reminder of the absolute folly of the American Dream. This aligns with Scott Haller^[32], who contends that Gatsby's tragedy involves his delusion about changing identity and reclaiming a lost history. His endeavor reflects the struggle to find self within a society equating worth with assets, contradicting his true nature. His tragic end is shaped by his identity formation as an upper-class American.

4.1. Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities

Jews "bulging like sausages from their prison suits" is a recurring description in the novel, signifying the presumed Middle-European look of foreigners portrayed by Fitzgerald as different^[33]. This phrase carries an undertone of jealousy toward those ignored yet possessing comparable wealth to original white Americans. Fitzgerald's portrayals may mimic stereotypes circulating about socio-ethnic groups at the time. Characters like Vlitch, with non-Jewish names and appearances, are identified as lower-class society members. Wolfsheim, labeled "The Jew," embodies the sinister, un-

known, and “undesirable” underworld that disrupts Gatsby’s life^[34]. The vivid, uncritical use of clichés brings to life portrayals that otherwise wouldn’t exist, crafting complex figures like Wolfsheim, both anti-hero and villain.

The Valley of Ashes symbolizes moral and social decay resulting from pursuing or maintaining wealth, as seen in Tom’s case. This setting highlights working-class struggles, presenting a more attainable yet bleak side of the American Dream. Nick’s description, “a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens”^[2], evokes desolation. George Wilson represents those left behind in an aspirational era. Fitzgerald exposes the Valley’s bleakness, revealing the underside of American identity hidden beneath nationalistic ideals. He underscores changes in American identity and existing inequalities. In this capitalist context, Nancy Bentley^[35] argues that the environment betrays moral rot seeping beneath the visible social strata, echoing unchecked capitalist ethos. The Valley serves as a synecdoche for the disenfranchised, illustrating that America encompasses diverse experiences marked by social inequalities, often obscured by presidential elections and similar spectacles.

4.2. Stereotypes and Racism

The Great Gatsby’s portrayal of racism significantly explores identity formation challenges within a racially divided society. The novel highlights post-war narratives featuring diverse characters from various classes, countries, statuses and races, contributing to American identity’s complexity. However, this multicultural ideal is undermined by excluding Black characters and other marginalized groups, like Gatsby and Myrtle. This exclusion underscores difficulties in forming an inclusive identity within systemic racism, hindering unified American identity^[13]. Hall’s conception of identity as culturally and socially constructed helps explain this dynamic. The novel depicts American identity as predominantly aristocratic white (Tom), with racial hierarchies marginalizing non-white groups and lower-class whites. The all-white cast neglects 1920s social and cultural structures, erasing Black contributions and presence. Thus, American identity formation appears inherently complex and crisis-prone. This contradicts notions of a “tribeless America”^[36].

Grmusa and Oklopčić^[36] observe that Nick Carraway’s “generalized curiosity” about Black people reveals his detach-

ment from their experiences and struggles. This detachment reflects Fitzgerald’s portrayal of a racially homogeneous society, ignoring Black Americans’ contributions and existence. Tom’s reference to “intermarriage between black and white” (p. 94) exposes his deep-seated racism and anxiety over perceived threats to racial and social order. This conflation reflects societal fears of challenging established hierarchies based on class or race. Frantz Fanon’s analysis^[14] illuminates this struggle, arguing racism distorts identity formation by imposing limiting stereotypes and excluding marginalized groups. *The Great Gatsby* exemplifies this, preoccupied with whiteness as a defining feature, omitting or marginalizing Black individuals. The novel critiques American identity’s fragmented, exclusive nature during the 1920s. Racial exclusion underscores how ingrained racism hinders achieving a collective identity reflecting America’s multicultural heritage.

On the other side, when considering the question of whether *The Great Gatsby* is an exploration of the diversity of different racial and ethnic social groups and the problems of their relation with racial first waves, this is an oddly difficult concept to grapple with. There are very few mentions of multiple racial or ethnic groups in the novel, as stated by Steenis^[37]. Furthermore, most of these mentions are unflattering stereotypes, primarily in the case of “Meyer Wolfsheim” (p. 50), a Jewish character who aligns himself with major organized crime. Generally speaking, a reading of *The Great Gatsby* as an exploration of anything representative of the diversity of America could be very hazardous. But the novel becomes deeply more interesting when this is examined more closely^[38]. There is a larger question of what our choices of context are for considering *The Great Gatsby* a universal text that signifies a deeper truth about America.

Henceforth, Tom’s misguided prejudice and snobbish attitude present the reader with the author’s view, which is negative, on the core of his characters’ and, subsequently, America’s society in the 1920s. Tom’s fear and hostility indicate how much race formed the basis of preserving class and privilege. However, Gatsby’s vision of social mobility can be compared to the utopian impossibility of creating an American identity inclusive of individuals like Tom. These racist scenes can be best described as symbolizing how race, class, and power work together and how failure to represent a great American identity is one ingredient of the American Dream.

5. Conclusions

Fitzgerald questions the possibility of the American Dream, with great focus on the themes of identity, ethnicity, and identity formation via class differences. It's hence clear that Fitzgerald only gives a twisted American identity as a layered dream based on aspiration, inequality, multi-layered racism, and a perpetual search for acceptance. The novel tells its readers that primarily American identity is a dream nation; however, one's race, class, color, and ancestry play major determinants in who one is and where one belongs. Moreover, the exploration of identity and ethnicity in *The Great Gatsby* reveals complex interrelations between social class, race, and personal identity. Through the characters' interactions and aspirations, the novel critiques broader societal constructs, in order to form the American identity in a stratified society^[13, 14]. For example, Tom Buchanan's assertion of racial superiority and Gatsby's relentless reinvention of himself to gain social acceptance illustrate how identity operates as a literary device to expose societal norms and biases^[2]. In conclusion, the literature reveals that novel intricately weaves themes of identity and ethnicity into its critique of the American Dream. Theories on the construction of identity provide resilient evidence that the complexity of identity is shaped by societal power structures that enforce divisions rather than unity. Therefore, the American identity in the 1900s remains an evolving construct grappling with issues of race, class, and belonging.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study is a qualitative and focuses on texts and theories. Therefore, there is no committee or names of institutions. Articles in literature are out of this named ethical considerations.

Informed Consent Statement

This study has nothing to do with experiments, patients or data collection from respondents.

Data Availability Statement

This article doesn't rely on data collection. All references indicate the source of information. All data can be found via the links in the references. Also. The articles, theories and the novel used in the paper can be traced from internet and bookshop.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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