

**A Critique against Social Class in Jay Gatsby and Charles Smithson: An Oscillation between Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman***

نقد ضد الطبقة الاجتماعية في جاي غاتسبي وتشارلز  
سميثسون: ما بين "غاتسبي العظيم" لفيتزجيرالد و"امرأة الملازم  
الفرنسي" لفاولز

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**Abstract:**

A comparison between Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and John Robert Fowles's *The French lieutenant's Woman* under Marxist lenses exhibits the similarities in the class struggle that Jay Gatsby and Charles Smithson endure in their societies. Gatsby is a character of low birth who acquires a fortune, but still feels the need to purify his money with a title. Charles, on the other hand, is a character of high birth who loses his chance of inheritance and needs the money to remain a Victorian gentleman. Both of these protagonists go through forms of social consciousness in order to understand the social constructs and the Capitalist economy that control them. Yet,

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unlike Fitzgerald who condemns Gatsby for idolizing the Capitalist social order, Fowles conveys that Charles has the choice to free himself from the social constraints.

**Key Words:** Gatsby, Charles, , class struggle, Capitalism, Marxism.

الملخص :

تُظهر مقارنة "غاتسبي العظيم" لفرنسيس سكوت فيتزجيرالد و "امرأة الملازم الفرنسي" لجون روبرت فاوولز تحت العدسات الماركسية أوجه التشابه في الصراع الطبقي بين جاي غاتسبي وتشارلز سميثسون في مجتمعاتهما. يكتسب غاتسبي ثروة طائلة، ولكن لا يزال يشعر بالحاجة إلى تطهير ماله باكتساب لقب مرموق لأنه ولد من الطبقة المتدنية. تشارلز من ناحية أخرى ، شخصية تنتمي للطبقة العليا، لكنه يفقد فرصته في الميراث ويحتاج إلى المال ليظل رجلاً فيكتوريًا نبيلًا. يمر هذان الطرفان بأشكال من الوعي الاجتماعي من أجل فهم البنى الاجتماعية والاقتصاد الرأسمالي الذي يسيطر عليهما لكن، على عكس فيتزجيرالد الذي يُدين جاتسبي لخضوعه للنظام الاجتماعي الرأسمالي، يُوضح فاوولز أن تشارلز لديه خيار تحرير نفسه من القيود الاجتماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: غاتسبي ، تشارلز ، الصراع الطبقي ، الرأسمالية ، الماركسية.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Fitzgerald and Fowles inculcate a message behind the creation of their protagonists who appear to be romantic heroes. Gatsby and Charles are consumed by the pressure of their social order that requires both money and a noble blood to feel accepted. This pressure makes these protagonists alienated from reality as it is the social construct that dictates their actions. Hence, Fitzgerald and Fowles write their novels with the intention to raise awareness against the society's rules and how destructive they can be. Because Marxist thinking of literature is based on examining class struggle, Marxism mirrors the reality of Gatsby and Charles's societies. These protagonists embody a critique against their societies' rules, which operate under Capitalism economically. Fitzgerald and Fowles's commitment

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to use their protagonists as a critique against social class is perceived in the ways they reveal the society's constraints and horrors not only in their characters' development but also in their downfall. Nevertheless, Marxism is denounced by Fowles for the way it views emancipation in the way he conducts Charles's path towards freedom. Substantially, Gatsby and Charles serve as an inspiration to view society critically and understand the origins of its constructs that can lead either to ruin or to missing the opportunity to live life fully.

### 2. Marriage as an Exchange of Value

Jay Gatsby is a man who comes from a working class and makes his way to the upper class. However, being a *nouveau riche* is not enough for Gatsby who wants to be an old rich and purify his blood. Gatsby who seems madly in love with Daisy, might not be in love with her but with her title. The fact that Gatsby does not even care about getting to know Daisy's depths raises the speculation of whether he is really in love with her. Gatsby does not care that Daisy is married and cares less that she has a daughter. He does everything in his power to have his queen and become king until it leads him to ruin. To Gatsby, Daisy is the last piece of the puzzle that he needs to validate his idealized identity as an elite in society. Gatsby's love is not authentic because he was determined to rise socially way before he knew Daisy. Thus, Gatsby's romanticism is so much more than a love for a woman; his real love affair is with the promises of the American dream, which requires Daisy to obtain full power in society. Seemingly, the nature of Gatsby's love towards Daisy lies in

the direction he takes from her, what he sees beyond her; and that has, despite the immaturity intrinsic in Gatsby's vision, an element of grandeur in it. For Gatsby, Daisy does not exist in herself. She is the green light that signals him into the heart of his ultimate vision. Why she should have this

evocative power over *Gatsby* is a question Fitzgerald faces beautifully and successfully as he recreates that milieu of uncritical snobbishness and frustrated idealism—monstrous fusion—which is the world in which *Gatsby* is compelled to live (Bewley, 2008, p8).

Therefore, *Gatsby* needs Daisy only to refine his *new money* and make it *old* in order to make it to the top.

Unlike *Gatsby*, Charles Smithson is a gentleman of noble blood who never had to work to prove himself and his status. Yet, as much as *Gatsby* depends on Daisy to make himself a noble, Charles also depends on the inheritance of his uncle, or else he won't be able to keep his title. Nevertheless, by being a Victorian noble, he can only marry a rich woman who respects the Victorian codes. Charles is the one who is king, a Victorian king. His society considers him superior to his servant, to Sarah, and the bourgeoisie Ernestina because he is deemed higher due to his birth. He needs a wife who would fit his Victorian kingdom, and that person is Ernestina. She makes the perfect Victorian queen because she is rich, submissive and careful about the social codes. However, he also needs her to fulfil the social pact of the upper class with new rich industrial class, which means that his marriage to Ernestina was going to be an exchange of value just like *Gatsby's*. Thus, social status is a lie that can lead to ruin as the authors of these novels expose how marriage, which is one of the foundations of society became a social fabrication used for social mobility. Furthermore, when Charles learns that he might lose the inheritance of his uncle who plans to marry and may have a heir, he announces the news to his bride-to-be. Ernestina's bad reaction towards the fact that Charles is missing out on reaching nobility expresses the notion of vulgar materialism in the Victorian society. Just as Charles, Ernestina was planning to rise socially by buying the name of prestige she lacks. As a bourgeoisie, she needs Charles to

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overcome her sense of inferiority that is shown in the way she tries to imitate the aristocrats. This is favorable for Charles who instead of thinking about working, he starts contemplating on how he can found his project on her money. Hence, Fowles deconstructs the notion of social class by offering us a character from a noble decent who is dependent on others to keep enjoying his title. Gatsby has the money and needs the blood, but Charles has the blood and needs the money. This means that both characters are deeply influenced by the social ladder and can feel their worth only if they reach the top. Therefore, both of these characters serve Fitzgerald and Fowles to criticize how absurd social mobility through marriage can be both in Modern and Postmodern literature.

### **3. Gatsby and Charles in Suits**

One of the most significant similarities between Gatsby and Charles is the way they dress themselves to call for attention as an upper class. Gatsby has no limits when it comes to showing off as an aristocracy and uses his extravagant suits to communicate this. Yet, Gatsby emphasizes further that he is not an old rich; he does not have it in him. The idea of being an Oxford man raises speculations according to the way he dresses himself: “An Oxford man!” He was incredulous. ‘Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit’” (Fitzgerald, 1987, p128). Moreover, in his first reunion with Daisy, he wears a “white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold-colored tie” (Fitzgerald, 1987, p91), which shows that Gatsby is not a natural; he was trying too hard and did not realize that he was failing. Even the choice of his yellow car is mocked by Tom Buchanan who describes it as a “circus wagon” (Fitzgerald, 1987, p127). In the same manner, Charles is always overdressed no matter what the occasion is. He is mocked by Fowles for his obsessiveness to always having to look like an aristocrat. This author laughs at Charles and wonders how he failed to “not have seen that light clothes would have been more

comfortable? That a hat was not necessary? That stout nailed boots on a boulder-strewn beach are as suitable as ice skates?” (Fowles, 1970, p28). This indicates, in fact, that Charles wants to hide the fact that he has no money and depends on his uncle’s inheritance. By overdressing, he does not only try to communicate his superiority, but he also tries to hide his insecurity for not having money and being dependent on his uncle and his fiancé. Thus, the reason why Fitzgerald and Fowles choose to deploy the exaggerated suits that their protagonist wear is to emphasize their insecurities, and how much pressure they feel to look and sound aristocrats in their societies.

#### **4. Gatsby and Charles through a Marxist Lens**

Indeed, both Gatsby and Charles struggle to survive socially in a Capitalist world. According to Marxism, transformation in society does not occur randomly; it is a result of class struggle, which enables people to free themselves from oppression. This means that Marxism can be deployed to reveal the history and economy prevailing in the time and place of the novels and to expose whether these characters had a chance to break free from their social order. In *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, the British contemporary Marxist critic, Terry Eagleton, explores literature as a product of history. Through his Marxist perspective, he maintains that history molds the work of literature and induces its meanings while insisting that “[t]he originality of Marxism [. . .] lies not in its historical approach, but in its revolutionary understanding of history itself” (Eagleton, 2006, p2). Marxism achieves this understanding through tracking down “forms of social consciousness” produced at a certain period in history to reveal the predominant ideology (Eagleton, 2006, p2). In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams explores ideology as historically determined through establishing the relationship between the author and his society. He uses the terms “alignment” and “commitment” to allude to

the writer's social relations that present themselves in the text. Williams uses "alignment" to refer to the ideology that ties the writer unintentionally to his experiences, and commitment to denote the ideology that the writer consciously commits himself to promote. Through these terms, he explains how history prevails in literature saying that, "[t]he key question, in the matter of alignment and commitment, is the nature of the transition from historical analysis, where all the alignments and commitments are in active question" (Williams, 1977, p200). In that manner, Marxism can show that a work of literature is not a banality; it is rather a product of a particular society in a particular time and place, and *Gatsby* and *Charles* are products that serve to denounce their societies through literature.

### 4.1. *Gatsby*, a Critique against Capitalism

Understanding the struggles of a society, according to Marxism means understanding the economy that presides it since the latter is responsible for the welfare of the people. The economic system that America adopted during the period in which *The Great Gatsby* was set is Capitalism. This system, actually, invented the ideology of the American Dream, promising equal prosperity. However, the claims of this new economy that *Gatsby* trusted and its outcomes on him in the novel suggest that Fitzgerald was not very happy with Capitalism. The contemporary American novelist, John Green, says that "we [are] a nation that believes in the American dream: we pride ourselves on our lack of aristocracy and the equality of opportunity, but *Gatsby* is a novel about our *de facto* aristocracy and the limits of American opportunity" (Green, 2012, "Like Pale Gold"). Indeed, Fitzgerald reveals how the new economy was seriously affecting the fundamental nature of his society by making his central character in the novel, *Gatsby*, a tragic capitalist ideal. Thus, this author depicts Capitalism as a dangerous economic system by drawing a fine line between

dream and tragedy in the character of Gatsby, and the crash of the stock market in 1929 was full proof of this writer's vision (Green, 2012, "Like Pale Gold").

A great deal of analytical essays have been written about the American dream in *The Great Gatsby* since the protagonist, Gatsby, is regarded as the ideal embodiment of the rise and fall of this dream that marked the American history of the 1920s. Gatsby's materialistic society gave him the idea that he can buy a social status through the love of Daisy. When Daisy first reunites with Gatsby and gets blown away with his wealth, we guess that she might leave her husband for Gatsby. But, she soon pulls herself away as she realizes the source of Gatsby's fortunes and prefers to endure Tom's dishonesty in return of the shallow life he provides her. This point can be justified by Eagleton's statement, which says that "[t]he social relations between men [. . .] are bound up with the way they produce their material life" (Eagleton, 2006, p2). Owing to this fact, Gatsby can acquire and spend all the money he wants to attract his society, but he can never reach East Egg. In this sense, one can grasp the irony behind the American Dream in this novel as nothing Gatsby could have done would have won him the kind of social rank he aspired for. Therefore, Fitzgerald's indictment of this dream can be detected as he reveals that social mobility is a myth that Gatsby keeps romanticizing and idealizing throughout the novel.

In *The Great Gatsby*, history can be found in almost every page as Fitzgerald demonstrates how his society roared against the social norms by worshiping money instead of religion and embracing illegal businesses to rise socially. According to Marxism, these new attitudes towards the social codes in the twenties denote a development in society marked by class struggle in a particular period in history. Since class struggle makes up history, Eagleton contends that "we must analyze the precise relations between different classes in a society [,] and to



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do that means grasping where those classes stand in relation to the mode of production” (Eagleton, 2006, p3), which is Capitalism in *The Great Gatsby*. In great detail, *The Great Gatsby* draws the realities of the 1920s Capitalist society, exposing the weaknesses in the greatness that men achieved in that era. Fitzgerald was writing with the agenda to criticize his modern age, proving that the economy plays a major role in human destruction. Despite the fact that this writer’s modes of experience play out throughout the novel, Fitzgerald is committed more than he is aligned as his predatory reaction to the realities of his time reveals his awareness. This author displays a materialistic society *par excellence*, insisting on negativity in every aspect that he sets out to portray. By limiting himself to denote the drawbacks of Capitalism in his society, Fitzgerald makes a responsive decision against the predominant ideology of his time and, thereby, this novel was produced out of “commitment”.

*The Great Gatsby* depicts the clash in the American society as Fitzgerald demonstrates an absolute difference between the two Eggs and the Valley of Ashes to show the superiority and authority of the elite over the lower classes. From the very first lines, this author gives the impression that the novel explores social struggles as Nick recalls his father’s advice: ““whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,’ [. . .] ‘just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had’” (Fitzgerald, 1987, p7). Despite the prominent prosperity in America during the 1920s and the promises of the American Dream, only the upper classes benefited, while the working class remained poor. Fitzgerald seems to sympathize with the lower levels of society because while the rich were celebrating moral decadence at Gatsby’s parties, the poor were looking for God’s mercy in the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleberg that were watching over the Valley of Ashes. By

showing a sharp contrast of lifestyle between the American classes in the twenties, “we may conclude that the writer has chosen to reveal the world and particularly man to other men” (Sartre, 1948, p24). In other words, Fitzgerald acted out of “commitment” and meant to engage the reader to understand the causes and consequences of such a stratification.

The 1920s Capitalist economy is an unfair system not only because it divides the society, but also for encouraging moral decay underlying the American Dream. In her book *Critical Theory Today*, Lois Tyson perceives that *The Great Gatsby* is a mocking critique of Capitalism that miscondacted a whole society and pushed it away from its values (Tyson, 2006, 96). Indeed, Gatsby is seduced by this system as his fascination with money has nothing to do with Daisy; he always refused to accept his background and circumstances even as a child. As a matter of fact, “it [is] hard to understand whether Gatsby is falling for Daisy or for her mansion” (Green, 2012, “Like Pale Gold”) when they first meet. All what Gatsby aspires for is wealth and position, and he can make it happen only through the corrupt Capitalism that allows illegal business, and through the old money, Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby is aware that his illegal new money cannot win him a respected social status, and only the “[p]ossession of Daisy, the ultimate commodity sign, would [. . .] ‘launder’ his ‘new money’ and make it ‘old’” (Tyson, 2006, p74). Yet, the falseness of Capitalism gets exposed as Gatsby remains obviously excluded from the upper class despite his efforts to hide his background and his firm determination to change his social status. Marxism, however; does not praise Gatsby’s efforts to rise socially because it would only boost the Capitalist economic system, and thereby class stratification. Gatsby unravels the darker aspects of the 1920s American economy that recognizes the wealthy who make money through criminal affairs such as bootlegging over the poor hardworking class. Moreover, this character’s inability to attain the most

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respectable status in society – despite his persistent attempts – reveals that the promises of Capitalism are lies. In this sense, identifying the romance with personal interest – Daisy being a tactic to attain the highest social position rather than a romantic goal – is Fitzgerald’s way to make the reader understand that everything is allowed to retain power in a capitalist society.

Capitalism meant that Gatsby could use all kinds of illegal means to make his fortune and gain the highest status in the social ladder. However, he radically refuses to admit where his money comes from even to himself. The interesting thing about his denial is not his fear of punishment, but his fear to be revealed as a *nouveau riche*. He creates a story about himself that he is of a noble blood and even starts to believe it. Gatsby is a character in denial who creates an entire new persona for himself, which determines his insecurities and his obsession to be part of the elite. Therefore, Daisy serves as an “emotional insulation from himself, from James Gatz and the past to which he belongs” (Tyson, 2006, p48). In fact, his love for Daisy is put to question from the very first time he reunites with her as he proposes a tour at his mansion where he tries to impress her with his extravagant possessions just as he senses that she might consider being with him again. This indicates that Gatsby believes that money is key to everything in life, trusting that it is the only means to be admired and certainly if it was inherited. Fitzgerald, in fact, makes sure that the only thing that strikes Gatsby about Daisy is her money as Gatsby uses a strange *arbitrage* between her voice and money (Green, 2012, “Like Pale Gold”). In fact, “Fitzgerald’s shallow description of Gatsby’s love for Daisy directly correlates with Gatsby’s shallow feelings for Daisy [who] fits right into one of Gatsby’s core values: wealth” (Woof, 2013). Thus, Daisy is revealed to be an enchanted object to Gatsby who has the ability to legitimize his ill-gotten money and grant him a place in the highest rank in

society. Moreover, His inability to compromise anything to have that kind of old money social status is the reason why he refuses to escape and save himself, waiting for Daisy to show up after the accident. Thus, Gatsby is a fragile creation who innocently believes that he can restructure the world on his own terms. Subsequently, Fitzgerald writes about a character who is flawed by his own idealism and his character becomes identified as a corrupt product of Capitalism.

At one episode in the novel when Gatsby tells his story to Nick Carraway, the latter sympathizes with the former, telling him “[y]ou’re worth the whole damn bunch put together” (Fitzgerald, 1987, p160). Here, Fitzgerald demonstrates the danger of Capitalism on his society as the most honest character in the novel becomes fascinated with Gatsby, the product of this system, although he knows what Gatsby did is wrong on many levels. This indicates that this author was committed to warn the reader as he deals with the meaning of his words because he understood that literature has the power to make a change (Eagleton, 2006, p5). In fact, Fitzgerald seems to have fully grasped the menace of the Capitalist ideology by making Gatsby a megalomaniac character who devotes himself to become part of the nobility, making profit on the expense of the lower classes. As a matter of fact, the way Fitzgerald condemns his main character shows that he was conscious that Capitalism will only lead to eventual ruin. Relatively, it becomes clear in the climax that comes as a result of a car accident that this writer was disillusioned by the technological inventions offered by the Capitalist economy. Therefore, it is difficult to argue that the connection between the automobile and death in the climax is random; if the golden color of Gatsby’s car symbolizes wealth throughout the novel, it becomes a symbol of death after the accident (Green, 2012, “Like Pale Gold”). On that account, “it [is] really important to understand that Fitzgerald is using [the] gold[en color] to decouple the ideas of wealth and greatness, and

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instead he [is] associating richness with corruption and immorality and finally death (Green, 2012, "Like Pale Gold"). Therefore, Fitzgerald seems to understand the impact and the danger of the power of money offered by the Capitalist economy as he employs it to build up Gatsby's tragedy.

*The Great Gatsby* does not only condemn its protagonist for being a Capitalist tyrant, but it also criticizes the unjust capitalist society that Gatsby is part of. Before being a victim of his own choices, Gatsby is a victim of his careless society that made him invest his life in pursuit of the American Dream. Gatsby was blinded by the glamour that his capitalist society offered him, and he did not realize the emptiness of his dream although the only possible way that Capitalism recommended him to rise socially was through illegal means. The irony in Gatsby's tragic end for something that he did not do suggests that Gatsby's dream demolishes ruthlessly "just because he lives in a social order that [is] happy to drink illegal alcohol, but condemns a sober bootlegger (Green, 2012, Was Gatsby Great?). Moreover, the fact that nobody attends Gatsby's funeral shows that social mobility from the lowest class to the highest one, which Capitalism encourages is an illusion, as the whole society still sees Gatsby as "MR. Nobody from Nowhere" (Fitzgerald, 1987, p136). In this light, Fitzgerald demonstrates his "commitment" by making Gatsby the ideal Capitalist model that unravels the falsehood and egoism of Capitalism as both a victimizer and a victim.

### 4.2. Charles, a Critique against Victorian Society

Eagleton explains that history has much to do with society in which the latter is fostered by material production. In other words, literature mirrors the relationship "between the capitalist class who owns [t]he means of production, and the proletariat whose labour-power the capitalist buys for profit"

(Eagleton, 2006, p3). This implies that “[t]o understand literature means understanding the total social process of which it is part” (Eagleton, 2006, p5). Thus, the social reality is grounded in history and economy, shaping literature. This makes the literary creation, for Eagleton, far more complex than it is assumed to be as it is determined by specific historical and ideological conditions in which the writer translates social facts into literary ones. In the case of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, the Marxist reading reveals that Fowles illustrates the Victorian social classes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through his pages. Marxism analyses society through revealing the economic mode that presides it. In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Fowles represents the old money aristocrats who are rich through inheritance in the characters of Charles and his uncle. He introduces the middle class through the character of Mr. Freeman, the businessman who is a product of the industrial age, which brought a new addition to the social hierarchy. The last class of the social order is the working class who has always suffered from the exploitation of the upper class, and it is represented in the characters of Sarah and Sam who are looked down on by Charles.

Through Marxism, Fowles’s piece of literature is analyzed in terms of the historical conditions which produced it. By situating the social and historical frameworks of this novel, the shape of Charles’s social reality can be revealed by being grounded on history and economy. Charles, is a Victorian gentleman who belongs to the old money class, and he is not expected to work to acquire his money. Thus, being of noble blood who loses the inheritance that would allow him to keep his aristocratic status, Charles is outraged to hear Mr. Freeman’s proposal to work with him in commerce. Although he refuses to admit it, Charles feels insulted as this would mean that he would fall off the ladder and lose his position in society. Being a Darwinist who is introduced to business, Charles is expected to

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accept the offer and adapt himself. However, he turns down the offer and chooses to remain an aristocratic man. This is due to the fact that the aristocrats never talk about money in the Victorian society; they do not work to get money but inherit it instead, which allows them to spend their time doing aristocratic activities such as racing and hunting. Charles does not only get humiliated by the business offer, but also by being forced to sign a statement of guilt: "Charles flushed red. Mr. Freeman's eyes bored into him. He could only lower his head; and curse Sam (Fowles, 1970, p176). The interesting part about Mr. Freeman's proposal is the fact that Fowles wants to convey the shift in power; Mr. Freeman looks down on Charles, thinking that the latter is a pathetic man who adds no value to society. This is, in fact, the Marxist affirmation that the relations between classes are always related to the system of economic production. However, David W. Landrum states that

Freeman, the pompous industrialist, the quintessence of capitalistic Victorian propriety, is the facilitator for this liberation. Though their plight has been characterized in Marxist terms by the epigraph referring to servants, slaves, and lackeys, their liberation is not that of workers rising up and casting off their chains in a flowering of violent revolution. It is facilitated by means of the very system Marx alleged caused economic discrimination and oppression (Landrum, 1996, p109).

In other terms, this manifests Fowles's challenge and critique of Marxism in the path of liberation. Even the name that Fowles chooses for Mr. Freeman stems from the adjective "free" to further emphasize his perspective.

*The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a Marxist progressive work because it denounces Capitalism through making Charles confront the working class that he used to despise. Charles does not yet realize that the world is changing, but the revolt of Sam,

his servant, against him emphasizes the change in social order even more. Sam is the working class member whom Charles is used to scorn just because his society allows him to. It does not make sense to Charles that Sam would try to rise socially and liberate himself. Through a Marxist lens, we can grasp that Sam understood that liberation comes from an economic restructure. But, Fowles makes sure that his liberation, in reality, is an outcome of moral decay as “human emancipation is accomplished not by any authoritative impositions, but by the uncovering of possibility and by a dissolution of certainties that permits genuine liberation to come about (Landrum, 1996, p113). Given these facts, Charles starts to suffer from the evolution that he believed in; “it was such an age of change! So many orders beginning to melt and dissolve (Fowles, 1970, p140). Hence, it is true that the bourgeoisie class makes Charles doubt his self-worth, but the working class completely breaks Charles’s social ego. This suggests Fowles’s criticism of the absurdity of social class that Charles believes in as well as the Marxist ideology of emancipation as Charles perceives Sam’s liberation through dissolution.

Fowles writes the character of Charles out of “commitment” rather than “alignment” as he does not belong to the Victorian society he writes about. This author writes the character of Charles to reveal the atrocity of social class, but also serves to draw the path towards liberation. Indeed, Charles starts as an empty egocentric character who seeks to humiliate the vulnerable lower class just because society allows him to. Charles’s development starts when he perceives Sarah who does not go by the rules; he begins to understand how much his life is restricted just because of rules that people like him made in his society. Charles reaches the realization that his life is controlled by the Victorian social order that makes him feel ashamed to fall down the social ladder on the expense of his freedom and happiness. He reaches this realization thanks to Sarah, the rebel,



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who is used by Fowles to open Charles's eyes on the reality of social class. She teaches him about courage and the absurdity of society when she says that "they will never understand the reason for [her] crime" (Fowles, 1970, p75). She also says: "I think I have a freedom they cannot understand (Fowles, 1970, p75). Sarah shows Charles that he was never free, he is bound to the society's rules and codes that would condemn him if he tries to denounce them. He feels confused as he "understood very imperfectly what she was trying to say in that last long speech [...] but this talk of freedom beyond the pale, of marrying shame, he found incomprehensible. And yet in a way he understood" (Fowles, 1970, p75). Thus, Charles surrenders to Sarah and allows her to show him the path of liberation.

Charles's path of liberation is further induced with the statements and perceptions of Mr. Freeman and Sam. When Charles is faced with Mr. Freeman's judgment, he experiences what Eagleton terms as a "form of social consciousness" for the fact that Mr. Freeman treats him like a hollow unproductive creature just like the fossils he is fascinated with. Charles begins to realize that Mr. Freeman is rising the social ladder while he is falling from the top. In due course, he is also faced with Sam's revolt against him, and starts to perceive how his servant is actually freer than him in expressing his ideas, feelings and sexuality with Mary. Charles becomes aware that his society prevented him from exhibiting any kind of feelings or lust, or he would be condemned for disregarding his social standing. Just as Nick in Fitzgerald's novel, Charles starts to perceive the cruelty of his society and its lack of humanity against titles, money and power. He was not even allowed to communicate freely:

Whereas Sam and Mary progressively reveal their souls to one other, Charles and Ernestina hide and conceal their inner selves. The quality of their communication is symbolic of the lack of genuineness in their relationship. The halting

attempts of Sam, however, to communicate, and Mary's non-judgmental encouragement of his talk, are in sharp contrast to conversations of their social and economic superiors. This factor is paralleled by the lack of physical expression between Charles and Ernestina and the presence of it with Sam and Mary (Landrum, 1996, p108).

Charles's realization was a long and distressing process, but he finally understood that he was never free and never happy.

Eventually, despite of being difficult and at times saddening, Charles's development leads to freedom and social ostracism by deciding not to marry Ernestina and proposing to Sarah, the social outcast. Charles's conventions do not allow him to be with a superficial woman. Charles who is shocked when he first meets Sarah for her behavior, he then learns that she has more values than him and his society for the honesty and complexity she exhibits. He, therefore, chooses her and lets her save him from his society's absurd constraints and lead him to his existential freedom. This makes him an authentic character as he listens to his own conventions. Another key point that Fowles uses in Charles's path towards freedom is in the use of playfulness; Charles does not obey the narrator, and the narrator, in fact, does not want Charles to obey him. Accordingly, the writer is free and wants his characters to be free. Given these points, Charles's development is used by Fowles to denounce the Marxist path of emancipation. Although it takes him too long to finally understand what he was missing in his life, and that he was stuck in the society's social order and rules, he chooses his freedom in the end and lets go of Ernestina and her money. Despite of the fact that Charles becomes an outcast like Sarah and loses status, money and love, I would argue that he does not experience a downfall as Fowles wanted him to reach freedom and the truth about social mobility and class. Fowles says that

there was one noble element in his rejection: a sense that the pursuit of money was an insufficient

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purpose in life. He would never be a Darwin or a Dickens, a great artist or scientist; he would at worst be a dilettante, a drone, a what-you-will that lets others work and contributes nothing. But he gained a queer sort of momentary self-respect in his nothingness, a sense that choosing to be nothing—to have nothing but prickles—was the last saving grace of a gentleman; his last freedom, almost. It came to him very clearly: If I ever set foot in that place I am done for (Fowles, 1970, p125).

Indeed, this is Fowles's way to reject the way society creates slaves by refusing to constrain his characters from freedom. By making Charles hit rock bottom, Fowles communicates that social mobility is a dangerous social construct, and that we can fail to actually live life if we let ourselves be controlled by it.

By using Charles's development, Fowles seems to investigate freedom of choice in a society that is both constrained by constructed moral values and codes under the Capitalist rule. As Charles succeeds to break free from his Victorian society's ideals and going from being an upper class gentleman to a free man, it suggests that Charles experiences the Darwinist evolution eventually. As a matter of fact, Charles's development serves Fowles to deconstruct all notions of the upper class superiority:

Further evidence also suggests that Fowles does not subscribe to social Darwinism, a process described as possessing the same rapidity of occurrence. Social Darwinism describes a vertical progression and implies that an intelligent behavioural trait is necessary for this kind of evolution. It suggests that the upper class is superior to the lower classes and that social mobility is desirable. Yet, Fowles illustrates that, far from being victims of a Spencerian social Darwinism, the lower classes are not as prone to cultural extinction as the upper. Cultural selection

is harshest with the upper class, where convention reigns with a firm grip (Pohler, 2002, p60).

Therefore, Fowles manifests his commitment to reveal that both history and society were changing. Moreover, He denounces what was considered to be wrongful, by showing what was wrong is actually right and *vice versa*. But most importantly, this author condemns Marxism for drawing limits on human freedom, affirming that genuine liberation occurs when the certainties are put to an end.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Both Gatsby and Charles resume their life around one thing, and that is being at the top of the social ladder. Through them, their writers denounce the great importance that society puts on status as people can become hollow by making their lives revolve around an evil social construct. Gatsby is a blind character who is unable to understand the manipulations of Capitalism and the lies underneath social mobility. He embodies the promises of the Capitalist ideology, which make him a selfish hypocrite who needs Daisy just to rise socially. His society sacrifices him before he gets to realize the conspiracy that he was living in. He dies blind, but his death serves to reveal this conspiracy to the new generations. Accordingly, Fitzgerald makes a conscious choice of condemning Capitalism as he condemns Gatsby, his main Capitalist manifestation, who gets dismissed by the same ideology that he values to rise socially. Just like Gatsby, Charles starts as a blind character who gives a lot of importance to his Victorian society's rules and sees himself as somebody whom he is not as he refuses to go by the Darwinist ideas he believes in at first. However, Charles succeeds to liberate himself by choosing freedom over social status. This is Fowles way to unravel the fact that there is always a choice as Charles chooses not to ignore the reality that Sarah

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shows him about his society, which exhibits this writer's indictment of the Victorian society.

The agendas that Fitzgerald and Fowles write their novels with are produced out of "commitment" as they are meant to criticize the social orders that are ruled by Capitalism. Their criticism stems from their conviction that the Capitalist social order resulted in an unfair social struggle that can lead to human destruction. In a Marxist mode of thinking, it can be said that their works of literature not only reflect class struggle, but also become a significant social element as they reflect these writers' ideas about social class. Decidedly, by translating social facts into literary ones, these authors offer us a decent glimpse at social reality of the societies they write about. Gatsby and Charles's struggles allow us to have a critical thinking that would enable us to better understand the manipulations of society. Indeed, Gatsby and Charles perform as a critique against social class, calling our attention to how the social constructs can be a barrier against reality and how life is meant to be lived.

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