

Heathcliff's American Cousin: A Comparative Analysis of Heathcliff and Gatsby from a Marxist Perspective

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Abstract

This study aims to compare Heathcliff and Jay Gatsby from Wuthering Heights and The Great Gatsby from a Marxist perspective. This examination includes the British Victorian class system and the early 20th century's American capitalist-consumerist society. Heathcliff and Gatsby, being from humble backgrounds, try to acquire wealth to win over their love interests—Catherine Earnshaw and Daisy Buchanan, who belong to a privileged class. Mysteriously, Heathcliff and Gatsby, overnight, get rich, although the sources of their newly acquired wealth are unknown. Through attentive reading the targeted queries in this analysis are supplemented with textual evidences that answer how and why these protagonists try to employ economy as a ladder to change their respective positions in society. Literary analogies like this will provide a considerable insight to literary readers to facilitate comprehension of the interlinked British and American societies.

Keywords: Marxism, American Dream, Victorian class system, American Capitalist-Consumerist Society

1. Introduction

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) could be juxtaposed through a Marxist perspective. Both books seem to highlight the importance of economics in their respective societies, in which the economy plays a shaping role. Bronte wrote the novel in a time of great social, economic, political and cultural transformation in England. Felicia Ervin in her article "*Wuthering Heights - Marxist Criticism*" explores Emile Bronte's intention to create the novel "as a social commentary about the disparages between the rich and the poor" (*Wuthering Heights - Marxist Criticism*). Similarly, the autobiographical novel, *The Great Gatsby* voices the Post WWI America in the light of capitalism, consumerism, and the American Dream². The American Dream, in itself, is a product of American capitalism. The

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² The ideal by which equality of opportunity is available to any American, allowing the highest

backgrounds and plots reveal that these novels are also products of their times and societies in which they were created. Karl Marx helps confirm that literature reflects the struggle within classes as well as the materialism prevalent in the society in which an author lives. Even though the two books are products of two different milieus, our study chooses a clear and precise focus on the economic analogy of these novels through Marxism.

The dawn of the nineteenth century sets the scene for the Industrial Revolution in England. English society, which was once thoroughly governed by a strict class system and conventions, was challenged by the new models of the Industrial Revolution around the mid 19th century. The Industrial Revolution played a pivotal role in shattering English economic and societal hierarchies bringing drastic changes to the “Victorian class consciousness and ‘unnatural’ ideal of gentility” (Leavis 237). According to Chris Williams, “[the] industrial revolution has modified, the social change fostered by industrialization and urbanization certainly brought opportunities and uncertainties” (254). Heathcliff’s treatment by Hindley Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights* highlights some of those traditional ways which were still in practice in the mid-19th century England. He was facing persecution at the hands of a “rigid class system” and was denigrated as ‘imp’ or ‘fiend’” for his low-born social status (“*Wuthering Heights* as Socio-Economic Novel”). Being maltreated, Heathcliff struggles to elevate his economic position for his vengeance. Arnold Kettle in “Arnold Kettle (1916-1986): Taking Responsibility” states that, “the treatment of *Wuthering Heights* in terms of class and English history is one of the many fine Marxist readings of Emily Bronte’s monumental novel” (147).

Like in any other progressive society such as America, money has always occupied a decisive role. ‘The Roaring Twenties (1920s)’, introduced many changes to the American consumerist³ society but the worship of economy was the most notable one. It was the post WWI era, in which great economic and social changes were taking place. This boom period attracted new waves of immigrants from different parts of the world, especially Western Europe, which had already been devastated by WWI (Ware 3). Sebastian Falth in his essay, “Social Class and Status in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*”, quotes Thomas Streissguth from his book *The Roaring Twenties*, “the American Society went

aspirations and goals to be achieved.

³ Consumerism is a social and economic order and ideology that encourages the acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts.

through many changes during the 1920s. For the first time in history the United States became an urban society, with more than half of the population living in cities” (qtd. in Falth 4). People were buying the same goods, and listening to the same songs; business was booming and life seemed great for the Americans. Technical innovations gave rise to industrialization resulting in a significant increase in employment. The standard of living kept on rising with technological advancement. Eclipsing the European powers, America was rising as a new economic and military power house of the world. It was receiving the fruits of the struggles that started in the aftermath of American Civil War. Women were granted the right to vote after a lengthy struggle and they started appearing on the scene with their newly acquired identity. Labor laws were fixed and child labor was banned. America was using the influence of economy both inside and outside the U.S. planting the modern day capitalist-consumerist society (Evans 145).

Fitzgerald, being a part of this society, seems to color his characters and plot in *The Great Gatsby* with the economic models of American society. Mirroring Fitzgerald's personal life, the book offers a comprehensive socio-economic insight into the early twentieth century American society, creating distinct social classes — old money, new money, and no money.⁴ Fitzgerald's protagonist, Jay Gatsby, is the nucleus of the novel, and portrays the life of an upper class American, which he achieved after a strenuous struggle. The novel, through Gatsby's unique character, has had a lasting influence on American society (Bloom 5). Malcolm Cowley in his article, “The Class Consumerism of Fitzgerald's Life”, details that Gatsby's creation aims to represent the mass movement to cities from rural settings in the early 20th century America (32).

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the striking similarities between Heathcliff and Jay Gatsby?
2. Why and how do Heathcliff and Gatsby use economy as a principle source to win back Catherine and Daisy?
3. What were the respective socio-historical contexts of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Great Gatsby*?

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Heathcliff and Gatsby belong to humble backgrounds of British and American societies, who develop passionate feelings for highborn Catherine and Daisy.

⁴ These names were the symbols of the contemporary American society, describing different economic statuses.

Being rejected and dejected by their low-born status, Heathcliff and Gatsby desire to have a huge amount of wealth to be at equal footing with Edgar Linton and Tom Buchanan to win back their objects of love.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The study intends to explore Heathcliff and Gatsby's struggle through the vitality of economic power to lure back Catherine and Daisy. The study also mirrors the actual contexts of the novels to supplement the analogy with socio-historical facts.

1.5 Significance of the Study

For the first time, this study parallels two classics of British and American literatures on the basis of a Marxist perspective. The correlation also investigates two dominant cultures, literature and capitalist societies of the world and shows how economy dictates in society. Literary analogies like this will provide a considerable insight to literary readers to facilitate comprehension of the interlinked British and American societies.

2. Literature Review:

Wuthering Heights and *The Great Gatsby* have been studied, critiqued, interpreted and analyzed through various themes, symbols and lenses. There are certain aspects that are still unexplored, like the overlapping of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Great Gatsby* through Marxism. The following literary survey narrows down the discussion to Heathcliff and Gatsby's Marxist pursuit.

Beth Newman exclaims “*Wuthering Heights* provides a vision of what life in 1847 was like” (25). David Alderson explores both natural and social ties that lay the base for Marxist explanations in *Wuthering Heights*:

Heathcliff is associated with nature, in the sense that he is on the ‘outside’ of society, but the various relations between Heathcliff, nature and society are complex, since nature appears to subsume society: the novel also presents social relations as an extension of natural appetites — in other words, they are invoked ideologically to account for the aggressively acquisitive behavior promoted by capitalism. (31)

Terry Eagleton is an expert researcher on the Bronte sisters. In his essay, "Wuthering Heights", Eagleton writes that, “Heathcliff is an indirect symbol of the aggressive industrial bourgeoisie of Emily Bronte’s own time, a social trend extrinsic to both classes [yeomanry and large-scale agrarian capitalism] but

implicated in their fortunes” (41). Commenting on Eagleton's scholarship, Zuzanna Jakubowski in *Moors, Mansions, and Museums: Transgressing Gendered Spaces in Novels of the Bronte Sisters* confides that Terry Eagleton's *Myth of Power* entails paramount significance, “reading Heathcliff as a member of the dispossessed and decultured working class and his progress as social mobility through the acquiescence of property” (55). *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* is also a valuable commentary on the British class system:

In Britain, the industrial middle class had been deeply stamped, ideologically speaking, by a traditionalist landowning order. But that landowning class was itself the oldest *capitalist* formation in Europe, modern in its economic rationality whatever its neo-feudalist spirit. And its middle-class underlings, the spearhead of the world industrial order, were to prove a powerfully progressive force within British society as a whole. (Eagleton 277)

Equally, Ruby-Grace Moore in, “Marxist Reading of *Wuthering Heights*”, uses Marxist angle to picture the socioeconomic situation of the nineteenth-century Britain:

Heathcliff's lack of any defined place within the social and economic structure of the Heights makes him Catherine's ‘natural companion’, since she, as the daughter who doesn't expect to inherit, is ‘the least economically integral person in the family’. However [. . .] it is this position that inevitably leads her to marry Edgar Linton over Heathcliff, as he ‘will be rich’ and she should ‘like to be the greatest woman of the neighborhood’. In addition, Catherine's transformation after her stay at Thrushcross Grange confirms the Marxist idea that ‘we are not separate from the socio-economic condition we live under.’ (qtd. in Moore 1)

In the same vein, a presentation on “Marxist Criticism of *Wuthering Heights*” by Aubrey Smith et. al look at the text through a Marxist perspective, examining Heathcliff's denial of the conventional restriction and obsession with Catherine, which glorifies his character throughout the novel. They think, “Heathcliff, the outsider, has no social or biological place in the existing social structure, but he offers Catherine a non-social or pre-social relationship, an escape from the conventional restrictions and material comforts of the upper classes, represented by the genteel Lintons” (21). The essay, “Marxist Criticism and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte” elaborates that “the novel is not simply the tragic love story as it may appear on the surface, but is an example of class differences and

the role of capital in eighteenth century Victorian England". Seeing the text as a material product, Ross C. Murfin and Supriya M. Ray in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* apply Marxist criticism to *Wuthering Heights*, "a literary work is first viewed as a product of work and hence of the realm of economics" (282).

Many critics have examined themes in *Wuthering Heights* as well as in *The Great Gatsby* from a Marxist perspective. Ashley Kannan, for example, in his article, "How can Marxist theory be applied to *The Great Gatsby*?" proclaims that Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* carries Marxist entities, writing that "All art arises from its socio- economic condition (...) a depiction of the social and economic excesses of the 1920s"(How can Marxist theory be applied to *The Great Gatsby*). Santosh Neupane in "A Marxist Reading of *The Great Gatsby*" notifies the historical scenario in which the novel was set and written. Fitzgerald's novel stands as a mocking critique of American capitalist culture and the ideology that promotes it. Another article, "*The Great Gatsby* through a Marxist Literary Criticism Lens" also perceives the novel from Marxist perspective that people do not satiate with the position, money or things they own because they always want more: "The theme of materialism and fascination with always 'possessing' more things filters through a lot in *The Great Gatsby*, and in the end, although people earn, or simply have a lot of things, nobody is truly satisfied." Sebastian Fälth's essay, "Social Class and Status in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*," implies that through a Marxist approach, the text echoes the changing economic moods, norms and values in America during the 1920s. Fälth believes that "the novel includes characters from several different socioeconomic classes and this essay aims to study the relationship between these social classes and its effect on the relationships between the different characters" (5). Robert Emmet Long elaborates in his novel *The Achieving of the Great Gatsby* that the idea of class consciousness seems evident throughout the novel. He believes that "the concept of class is a more important theme in Fitzgerald's novels than in the works of any other writer in the American tradition" (180-181). Lois Tyson notes that "Written and set during the post-World War I economic boom of the 1920s, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) can be seen as a chronicle of the American Dream at a point in this nation's history when capitalism's promise of economic opportunity for all seemed at its peak of fulfillment" (66). Similarly, Harold Bloom seems to support the idea of American Dream in the novel—"There are few living Americans, of whatever gender, race, ethnic origin, or social class, who do not have at least a little touch of Gatsby in them. Whatever the American Dream has become, its truest contemporary remains Jay Gatsby" "What is

best and oldest in Gatsby cannot die but returns to the living fullness of the American Dream, itself undying despite all of its cancellations and farewells, which prove never to have been final” (5-8). Unlike Bloom, James E. Miller Jr in his essay, “Boats against the Current” reveals the shallowness of American Dream— “Tom and Daisy find the American Dream in a dreamless, visionless complacency of mere matter. They represent substance without form” (52).

3. Research Methodology

The commonalities between the protagonists of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Great Gatsby* are explored in the selected texts and secondary sources: critical essays, reviews, magazines, research papers, presentations, letters, etc. The study codes data using attentive reading as an interpretive research tool. With a lens of Marxism, the study reviews the actions and approaches of both the protagonists that they share more or less the same challenges of class and economics and undergo the same struggle to achieve their dreams.

4. Data Analysis

Among the high gentry of Victorian manners: Lintons and Earnshaw, Heathcliff is described as a “gypsy boy”, “dirty” and is treated terribly by Hindley in the beginning of the novel. His social status is nothing more than a slave, a status that becomes his identity with the progression of the novel. Hindley Earnshaw considers Heathcliff, no more than a farm animal and calls him various degrading names—“Take my colt, gipsy, then! said young Earnshaw,” and “I pray that he may break your neck, take him, and he damned, you beggarly interloper!” and “wheedle my father out of all he has: only afterwards show him what you are, imp of Satan ...” (4.35). Isabella Linton also associates Heathcliff with criminal imagery, when Catherine is bitten by a Lintons' dog and Heathcliff is caught as an intruder at the Thrushcross Grange, “Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa. He's exactly like the son of the fortune-teller that stole my tame pheasant. Isn't he, Edgar?” (6.44).

Heathcliff grows vengeful against Hindley and Lintons. Being jealous of Edgar, Heathcliff utters to Nelly, “I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed, and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!”, this truly reflects his humble origin and his aspiration to change it (7.50). Though Catherine loves Heathcliff and wants to be with him, she chooses Edgar instead, knowing Hindley will not approve the match. Besides, she herself fancies the title, “Catherine Linton” that will earn her a more respectable position in society. She exclaims to Nelly, “Did it never strike you that if Heathcliff and I married, we

should be beggars? Whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power" (9.72). She further elaborates, "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff" (9.71). For Janet Gezari, "Catherine's refusal to marry Heathcliff is his social inferiority to Edgar as "the pivotal event of the novel" and the catalyst for Heathcliff's transformation from rebellious outsider to champion of the values of capitalist social relations.... Heathcliff turns himself into a capitalist oppressor "in caricature form"" (26). Heathcliff's love for Catherine commences the primary cause of his transformation. Being tortured and degraded, he yearns to make himself powerful and chooses wealth as a weapon to fight for his love whom he loses due to his humble birth. His love for Catherine, instead of fading, keeps on blooming. He is gone for three years and returns with a sound fortune as a transformed man with a changed social grace and groomed demeanor. Nelly Dean confides about him, "I remember her hero had run off, and never been heard of for three years: and the heroine was married" (10.80). This is how Heathcliff writes his destiny with his own hands and changes his social and economic position. Terry Eagleton's remarks are commendable about Heathcliff:

Since Heathcliff is not literally an industrial entrepreneur; but the double-edgedness of his relation with the Lintons, with its blend of antagonism and emulation, reproduces the complex structure of class-forces we found in Charlotte's fiction. Having mysteriously amassed capital outside agrarian society, Heathcliff forces his way into that society to expropriate the expropriators; and in this sense his machinations reflect the behavior of a contemporary bourgeois class increasingly successful in its penetration of landed property. He belongs fully to neither Heights nor Grange, opposing them both; he embodies a force which at once destroys the traditional Earnshaw settlement and effectively confronts the power of the squirearchy. (39-40)

His appearance compels people whether to address him as plain 'Heathcliff' or 'Mr. Heathcliff'. Eagleton writes in *The Bronte*, that, "Heathcliff symbolizes the dispossessing bourgeoisie, he links hands with the large capitalist landowner Linton in common historical opposition to yeoman society; in so far as he himself has sprung from that society and turned to amassing capital outside it, still sharing its dour life-style ..." (40-41). His dominant position is beautifully crafted by Emily Bronte in the text:

He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man; beside whom, my master seemed quite slender and youth-like. His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton's; it looked intelligent,

and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though too stern for grace. (10. 92)

Impressed by his catchy persona, Isabella falls in love with Heathcliff and marries him, which later proves Edgar's worst nightmare. As children, Edgar and Isabella might have mocked Heathcliff but now Isabella views him adoringly. Sensing Heathcliff's passionate potential for Cathy, who still loves him, Edgar still treats him as his inferior —“His new source of trouble sprang from the not anticipated misfortune of Isabella Linton evincing a sudden and irresistible attraction towards the tolerated guest” (10.88). Smelling the familiar degrading attitude, Heathcliff uses his marriage with Isabella as a lasso to strangle Edgar with: “Marriage, then, as Heathcliff seems fully aware, is the quickest way to usurp a woman’s position in the line of inheritance and thereby claim her inherited property. This is his all-but-stated purpose in marrying Isabella’s son, Linton, to Catherine and Edgar’s daughter, Cathy” (Lamonica 115). Heading further on the road of his unquenchable revenge, he uses his own son, Linton Heathcliff merely as a pawn in his grand design to make him the sole owner of Thrushcross Grange:

My son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. Besides, he's mine, and I want the triumph of seeing my descendant fairly lord of their estates —my child hiring their children to till their fathers' lands for wages. That is the sole consideration which can make me endure the whelp —I despise him for himself, and hate him for the memories he revives! (20.181)

In her book, *Reading the Bronte Body: Disease, Desire and the Constraints of Culture*, B. Torgerson explores, “Heathcliff manipulates the inheritance and property laws to gain illegal access to lands. In addition to gaining control over land and property, Heathcliff uses his knowledge of the law to gain control over people” (102). After gaining control of both Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is able to transcend his background:

Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman; that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire; rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose, possibly some people might suspect him of a degree of under-bred pride. (1.5)

His dramatic socio-economic rise in society remains a dilemma puzzling people around, who witnessed the miseries of his childhood. Carol M. Davison thinks: “Emily Bronte’s portrait of Heathcliff is especially provocative in this respect as he comes to emblemize the grotesque transforming power of capitalist enterprise. Originally a penniless orphan, Heathcliff rises to the status of gentlemen- a landlord and ‘capital fellow’. . . .” (131). His newly acquired position makes people revisit his past with a favored lens of investigation:

Now continue the history of Mr. Heathcliff, from where you left off, to the present day. Did he finish his education on the Continent, and come back a gentleman? Or did he get a sizar's place at college, or escape to America, and earn honors by drawing blood from his foster-country? Or make a fortune more promptly on the English highways? (Bronte 10. 105)

Heathcliff's social transformation through the ownership of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange provokes the researcher to argue that *Wuthering Heights* tailors a Marxist perspective to its audience. He grows into a wealthy capitalist dwarfing the social position of Linton and Earnshaw families (Garofalo 145). Money empowers him to exercise his powers over both the properties as well as the individuals associated with them like Linton, Catherine, Isabel, Nelly Dean and Hareton.

Like *Wuthering Heights*, where the societal representation is encapsulated between Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, *The Great Gatsby* takes place between East Egg and West Egg— the two settings of New York's glitterati on the basis of the old and new money. The former symbolizes the American elites, whose ancestors stepped into the new land for investment and expanding their economy or estates like Buchannan. Whereas the latter stands for the pursuers of American Dream like Jay Gatsby, who built their mansions with unremitting toil in the new land.

In the 19th and early 20th century, most people moved to urban settings in America for better prospects, who, sometimes, like Andrew Carnegie, became wealthy tycoons. Horatio Alger's novels (the stories from rags to riches), like *Rugged Dick*, were quite instrumental in publicizing the idea of American Dream. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* also seems to fulfill the core ideals of American Dream, whose hero, Gatsby, is restless in his economic pursuit. He is born as a dirt poor, John Gatsby and becomes Jay Gatsby, one of the richest persons in America: “James Gatz – that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the

beginning of his career – when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior” (4.6). Like Heathcliff, Gatsby's thirst for extreme wealth is sparked by Daisy, with whom he falls in love when he was serving in the army but Daisy marries Tom Buchanan instead, a decedent of one of the established American families:

By the next autumn she was gay again, gay as ever. She had a debut after the Armistice, and in February she was presumably engaged to a man from New Orleans. In June she married Tom Buchanan of Chicago, with more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before. He came down with a hundred people in four private cars, and hired a whole floor of the Seelbach Hotel, and the day before the wedding he gave her a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. (4.135)

Tom sees marriage as a socio-economic contract. He "buys" Daisy with his status. That very reason intensifies Gatsby's obsession for abundance of wealth. Gatsby wants to grow richer than Buchanan in order to convince Daisy that he is better than the man she has chosen. He disappears and makes an appearance after five years with an enormous amount of wealth. His return introduces a new Gatsby with a new background to the audience—“his place looks like the World's Fair” (5.3-8). His refinement of materials and status quo even shock Daisy—“They're such beautiful shirts,” she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. “It makes me sad because I've never seen such – such beautiful shirts before” (5.118-119). He remains obsessed with Daisy and her come-back, “He had been full of the idea so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an over-wound clock” (5.111-114). Believing in the same dream for years, “Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter –tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther and one fine morning” (9.149), Gatsby certainly grows wealthier and more powerful than Tom: “It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart” (5.152). His achieving of the American Dream does not go in vain because for a while it brings him so close to Daisy that he is about to touch and feel his American Dream— Daisy (5.121-122). Being the ideal achiever of the American Dream, Gatsby becomes a renowned capitalist since “capitalism promotes the belief that you are what you own – that our value as human beings is only as great as the value of our possessions” (Tyson 67). Gatsby symbolizes the emerging

America, which is industrial, resourceful, athletic, restless young nation striving to compete with the European powers as he outsmarts his contemporary businessmen. The implications of his extreme wealth enables him to rinse off the stains of his former wretched life emerging as a mighty capitalist transforming himself into an ideal that he envisioned for himself (a “Platonic conception of himself”) as a youngster:

He was a son of God – a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that – and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end. (6.6-7)

His inclinations for removing the sense of class within society is amenable— “He was never quite still; there was always a tapping foot somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a hand” (4.12-13). Fitzgerald spotlights his protagonist's new life style:

He was balancing himself on the dashboard of his car with that resourcefulness of movement that is so peculiarly American—that comes, I suppose, with the absence of lifting work or rigid sitting in youth and, even more, with the formless grace of our nervous, sporadic games. This quality was continually breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness. (4.12-13)

Like the villagers in *Wuthering Heights*, New Yorkers provide different explanations for his newly acquired wealth. Some believe, he is a murderer, while others take him for a German spy. But one thing is certain—he is believed to be richer than God. The text details that, “He was in the American army during the war... You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody's looking at him. I'll bet he killed a man” (3.30-35). Nick Carraway asks him “I thought you inherited your money” (5.97-103), and his explanation to Nick Carraway reveals that he is a true self-made man— “I did, old sport, but I lost most of it in the big panic – the panic of the war” (5.97-103). He is perceived to be “An Oxford man!” He was incredulous. “Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit” (7.130-132). It seems like Al Capone, Gatsby earns his money through a bootlegging business in which some Americans made millions during prohibition. In self-defense, for example, Al Capone famously declared: “I’m just a businessman. I’ve made my money supplying a public demand ... why should I be called a criminal?” (qtd. in Munby 211). Gatsby details to Carraway his other means of income, “I've been in several things,” he corrected himself. “I was in the drug business and then I was in the oil business. But I'm not in either one now” (5.97-103). Whatsoever is the source of

his wealth, he had an aim in mind for which his new status quo causes roar in society forming a major conflict of the plot. After carving a new identity for himself, he behaves his social superiority. He maintains his social position among elites with opulent lifestyle and extravagant parties at his mansion in the East Egg whose gates he brings from the castle of Normandy, “Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay” (4.137-140). Everyone knows that, “The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names” (3.4). M. Keith Booker quotes Malcolm Bradbury that *The Great Gatsby* is “the story of a gross, materialistic, careless society of coarse wealth spread on top of a sterile world; on it is cast an extraordinary illusion, that of ex-Jay Gatz, the self-created Gatsby. A man whose poor past and corrupt economic supports are hidden in his own glow, Gatsby likewise decorates his entire world through his love for Daisy Buchanan” (qtd. in Booker 41).

The titanic struggle of Gatsby plainly displays the genuine elements of Capitalism. Gatsby's journey from rags to riches or James Gatz to Jay Gatsby—“Americans, while occasionally willing to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry” (37)—lays a notable base for Marxist explanation in the novel in the disguise of American Dream. Nick Carraway compares Gatsby to Jesus Christ, who achieves wealth, power, status and an honorable death illuminating his own identity, “I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people—his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself” (6.6-7).

5. Conclusion

Both a historical and literary exploration support the claim that a Marxist exploration of the books reflect core aspects of capitalism, which Heathcliff and Gatsby imply to transcend their humble backgrounds. After attaining stable socio-economic positions, the protagonist have access to power, a changed lifestyle, grandeur, comfort and favored public opinion in society, where they were once cursed as burdens on it. Though Heathcliff and Gatsby fail in achieving their terminal objectives—Catherine and Daisy, they almost become successful at facing their immediate challenges. They change their destinies and place themselves at equal footing with Edgar and Buchanan and experience the power

of capital. Their failure to have Catherine and Daisy back in their lives maybe attributed to the larger design of nature that works independent of human struggles and wishes. Capitalist analogies like this may provide contemporary literary students with nuanced explanations rooted in historical reflections of British and American fiction.

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