

## THE GREAT GATSBY: A NEW YORK SUBLIME

Dana Bădulescu, Assoc. Prof., PhD, "Al. Ioan Cuza" University of Iași

*Abstract: Starting from Harold Bloom's observation that "If there is an American sublime, going beyond irony, in modern American fiction, then it is located most centrally in The Great Gatsby" (Bloom 2010:4), this study purports to look into Fitzgerald's most accomplished novel as an epitome of the most glamorous decade in American history. Set in New York – the epicentre of the 'youthquake' of the roaring 1920s, the novel reveals a city of lavish parties and dazzling artificial lights. As early as 1925 when he wrote the novel, Fitzgerald already knew that "the party was over", but he wanted to capture both its glamour and the bitter taste of its immediate aftermath, at the same time putting the undying splendour of New York into the perspective of a mystical "enchanted moment", when it compelled the first man beholding it to "aesthetic contemplation." Like a camera lens, the narrative takes in the rich colours of financial bliss, ruthless consumerism and waste, elegant cars, the ecstasy of communication, the luxury of technological modernity, the new arts of cinematography and photography, but also the "interzone" of the "valley of ashes" under the strange surveillance of "the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg." Referencing the most fashionable tunes of the early 1920s and redolent of jazz and tango rhythms, glowing with scenes in which songs bring back the past, exhaling exquisite whiffs of perfume and powder, the narrative moves its readers from one gem of emotion to the next against a velvety backdrop enveloped in the hues of the twilight. This sense of an American sublime, which resides in a renewable self-devouring vitality and an intangible promise of the American Dream, is a legacy that Fitzgerald himself inherited from Henry James and passed on through his fiction to Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo and to a writer of no fixed abode, Salman Rushdie, whose protagonist Malik Solanka echoes Gatsby's "bouncing" in **Fury**. Whether that bouncing may be an allusion to New York's motto "Excelsior" is ultimately for the readers of the American sublime to decide.*

*Keywords: New York sublime, party, twilight, "valley of ashes", "green light", artificiality / fabrication, money, technology, illusion, delusion, the Roaring 1920s, The American Dream, quest*

Making his debut with *This Side of Paradise* as the chronicler of the jazz age – also called "the roaring twenties" - with its flappers, their looks and their ways, F. Scott Fitzgerald was determined to write a book that would capture not only the *laissez-faire* ethos, but also the most painfully disturbing sides of the new *Zeitgeist*. Of all places in America in the 1920s, New York fascinated and attracted like a magnet through its glamour and its "spectacle of disorder and energy on such a profuse scale." (Homberger in Bradbury and McFarlane 1978: 151)

Although he was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and made several excursions to Paris and the French Riviera, which surely influenced his development as a writer, Fitzgerald was familiar with New York since his early childhood. So fascinated was he with the grand opportunities and lavish life style offered by New York's consumer culture, money and technology that both in real life and in fiction, he glorified the rich and their glamorous world

of parties, fancy hotels, elegant dresses and suits, glittering jewels, perfumes, fragrant powders and luxury cars, and he abhorred the other side of the coin, i.e. poverty, and its disastrous impact. *May Day*, a novella written and published in 1920, is set in a post-World War I New York welcoming its “conquering people” “with triumphal arches and vivid with thrown flowers of white, red, and rose.” (Fitzgerald 1999: 43) Fitzgerald’s fine eye for luxury and consumerism pictures “the great city” abandoning itself to “lavish entertainments.” (Fitzgerald 1999: 43) Indeed, New York becomes the centre of a glorious New World, where “more and more spenders had gathered from the provinces to drink the wine of excitement” and “to buy for their women furs against the next winter and begs of golden mesh and varicoloured slippers of silk and silver and rose satin and cloth of gold.” (Fitzgerald 1999: 43) However, this new Rome<sup>1</sup> of circus and bread, feast and merriment, mercilessly crushes its poor and hopeless under its golden high heel. In sharp contrast with the glamour of the city, Gordon, a key character in the text, has “absolutely gone to pieces” (Fitzgerald 1999: 45), having “made a hell of mess of everything” (Fitzgerald 1999: 46), and listening to him speak about it, his former colleague Phil and his old flame Edith Bradin feel only repulsion and disgust. Beneath the “resplendent display” (Fitzgerald 1994: 50) of furniture, silk underwear, engagement rings, platinum wrist-watches, and under the splendid surface of what promises to be “the best party since the war” (Fitzgerald 1999: 50), there lurk forces of riot and violence, cheap restaurants, an ugly humanity, “ill-nourished, devoid of all except the very lowest form of intelligence”, people that were “cold, and hungry in a dirty town of a strange land; they were poor, friendless; tossed as driftwood from their births, they would be tossed as driftwood to their deaths.” (Fitzgerald 1994: 53)

It was against that side of the coin, namely poverty and dereliction, that Fitzgerald wrote his novels, short stories, novellas and essays, where the American Dream of the most flamboyant decade in American history took the shape of a gorgeous city of lights, fast cars, flickering crowds, tall buildings, gilded hotels, extravagant parties, jazz and lascivious tango, where one could invent oneself, chase one’s chimeras and die for them.

Looking back at his and Zelda’s taking up position in New York in 1920, Fitzgerald recalled in 1932 that “to my bewilderment, I was adopted...as the arch type [*sic*] of what New York wanted.” (Fitzgerald quoted in Prigozy: 4) When he wrote *The Great Gatsby*, their marriage had gone through periods of crises, and what the novel does is to fictionalize their lives into a mesmerizing world of parties and booze, an artificially created and artificially maintained island of material eccentricity. Like Scott himself, Jay Gatsby is capable of (re-)inventing himself through fabricating his persona and acting his role. Like Zelda, Daisy, born in Louisville, is a married flapper of vague and uncertain feelings whose only solid foothold is money and what it can buy. Why the Buchanans came to live in New York is not known, although Tom’s reply to Nick is that he would be “a God-damned fool to live anywhere else” (Fitzgerald 1993: 9), but it is certain that Gatsby chose the city in order to enjoy Daisy’s proximity, and in doing so “he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail.” (Fitzgerald 1993: 95)

With those romantic ideals in mind, the mysterious Jay Gatsby stages his sublime performance, faithfully following the lines in the motto of the novel:

Then wear the golden hat, if that will move her;  
If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,  
Till she cry, ‘Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover,

<sup>1</sup> In a letter dated July 1921, Fitzgerald wrote that “we will be the Romans of the next generation as the English are now.” (Brucoli 1994: 47)

I must have you!’ (Fitzgerald, 1993: 2)

It does not matter at all that the poet who allegedly wrote these lines, Thomas Parke D’Invilliers, did not exist in real life and that he was Fitzgerald’s invention. D’Invilliers is a very young poet, a character in *This Side of Paradise*, who introduces the protagonist Amory to Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and various other writers and their writings, and to poetry. Fitzgerald had his own invented character write a poem to preface his novel *The Great Gatsby* for the designed effect of increasing the layers of make-believe, thus making his fabrications stand stronger than reality, to the point of supplanting it.

Jay Gatsby is a mysterious figure, and the further progress readers make with reading the novel, the less they or the other characters, including Tom Buchanan, Nick Carraway and Daisy, actually know about him. His halo of mystery is more important than his figure. That is so because Gatsby designedly created his ideal self to match Daisy’s artificially fabricated persona and also the image of Daisy and of his romantic love for her he has built in his head.

Interested in exploring the American Dream of money, success and fulfilled love in everything he wrote, Fitzgerald wanted *The Great Gatsby* to probe into something far beyond that: he wanted to give a taste of shattered illusions and fatal delusions which brought New York and its dreamers in the 1920s to a bitter awareness of their failures and futility. Fitzgerald’s theme was no longer simply that of the whims and illusions of young love but

...the loss of those illusions that give such colour to the world so that you don’t care whether things are true or false as long as they partake of the magical glory.” (Fitzgerald quoted by Kirk Curnutt 2004: 7)

Thus, in the very first pages of the novel, distance creates a space of magic enticement:

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water. (Fitzgerald 1993: 6)

That distance, together with the green light, “minute and far away” (Fitzgerald 1993: 16), one of the “enchanted objects” (Fitzgerald 1993: 60) surrounding Daisy to which Gatsby feels irresistibly and fatally attracted, and in which he believes as an “orgastic future that year by year recedes before us” (Fitzgerald 1993: 115) put the whole city of New York into the perspective of a modern American sublime, which various periods in its history may revive but never repeat.

Harold Bloom argued that “If there is an American sublime, going beyond irony, in modern American fiction, then it is located most centrally in *The Great Gatsby*.” (Bloom 2010: 4) As Edmund Burke accounts for it in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, the sublime is a mode of profusion, excess, vastness, infinity, magnitude, magnificence, which alone, or in various combinations, like that of power, strength, violence, pain, awe and terror, “are ideas that rush upon the mind together.” (Burke 1812: 111-112) Of the qualities that throw the mind in a state contemplating the sublime, Burke’s idea of what he calls “the terrible uncertainty of the thing described” (Burke 1812: 108) is a major source. In Fitzgerald’s novel, an unsettling sense of that uncertainty is

provoked in the first place by Gatsby himself. Nick Carraway's first encounter with Gatsby is shrouded in the mystery of a moonlit summer night when

I saw that I was not alone – fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbour's mansion and was standing with his hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars. (Fitzgerald 1993: 15)

Nick feels the impulse of approaching the figure, but he has the "sudden intimation" that it prefers to be alone. The distance and the darkness add to the strange effect the solitary figure has upon the viewer. The mysterious apparition stretches "out his arms towards the dark water in a curious way" and he seems to be trembling. The only discernable thing is "a single green light, minute and far away", and

When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness. (Fitzgerald 1993: 16)

Fitzgerald calculated the effect very carefully: Nick, a young man, determined to improve himself through reading and to make his mark in New York, inhabits the first fifteen pages or so of the novel without meeting his neighbour. When he thinks he sees him, the distance, the darkness surrounding him and Gatsby's transported solitude "rush upon" Nick's mind, which, when testing the figure's questionable presence one more time, is confronted with the bafflement of its mysterious disappearance.

Not even halfway through the book can anybody be sure who Gatsby is. Tom Buchanan insists that he would like to know, but his supposition that he might be "some big bootlegger" (Fitzgerald 1993: 69) meets Nick's firm denial. In another episode of sublime effect, Buchanan's trivializing enquiry is suffused by music:

Daisy began to sing with the music in a husky, rhythmic whisper, bringing out a meaning in each word that it had never had before and would never have again. When the melody rose, her voice broke up sweetly, following it, in a way contralto voices have, and each change tipped out a little of her warm human magic upon the air. (Fitzgerald 1993: 69)

Like in other memorable scenes of modernist fiction, music de-solidifies the solid world of business and money and brings back the past to one's mind. Even if Gatsby is disappointed by Daisy's reaction, the music triggers that moment when he is certain that four years can be swept away with a sentence which is only in his head but never uttered. "The terrible uncertainty of the thing described" recurs in this scene, this time in the form of

...an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable for ever. (Fitzgerald 1993: 71)

The novel's plot is thin, but its substance is dense and rich in sublime moments. Some of those are Gatsby's parties, described in a style which strikes notes of bitter sensuality. In the "crowd of great and confused images" "the mind is hurried out of itself" (Burke 1812: 106) and compelled to gaze at a sublime of a twilight zone, in which the past tense of the narrative-descriptive passages signals melancholy and nostalgia:

There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motorboats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. (Fitzgerald 1993: 26)

The sublime of Gatsby's parties, so packed with visual images, sounds and smells and so sparkling, is artificial. The "cataracts of foam", the "wafer of a moon" (Fitzgerald 1993: 37) shining over his house, his garden and house glowing with electric light are Gatsby's design, the theatre hall he fabricated for these performances meant to impress Daisy.

The "richness and profusion of images" (Burke 1812: 140) in the descriptions of Gatsby's place and parties mirror the larger scale effects of the sublime in the descriptions of the city of New York. After attending one of Gatsby's parties for the first time, Nick feels a surge of joy of living in New York, and he confesses:

I began to like New York, the racy, adventurous feel of it at night, and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye. (Fitzgerald 1993: 37)

What Nick finds compelling in this experience of the city which engages all his senses is what Burke called "the artificial infinite", which resides in "succession and uniformity of parts" (Burke 1812: 131). Being stirred by the sublime, Nick activates his imagination and starts daydreaming: he picks up women from the crowd and fancies entering their lives:

Sometimes, in my mind, I followed them to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets, and they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness. (Fitzgerald 1993: 37)

The moment is called "enchanted metropolitan twilight" (Fitzgerald 1993: 37), and the novel progresses through a series of such moments. In its last passages, these moments of sublime enchantment are subtly connected with "a transitory enchanted moment" when "man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired." (Fitzgerald 1993: 115) It is through these subtle connections of moments which in Joyce's terms are epiphanic that Fitzgerald created what Bloom calls "Gatsby's mythic projection" "of a more than Adamic innocence, in which his perpetual optimism, amoral goodness, and visionary hope are all centered in an escape from history, in a sense of being self-begotten." (Bloom 2010: 6)

According to Burke, "extreme light" has the same effect as darkness; "by overcoming the organs of sight" it "obliterates all objects." (Burke, 1812: 145) *The Great Gatsby* is lavishly bathed in artificial light. As Guy Reynolds remarked, "artificial light creates an

original form of American landscape, a kind of urban pastoral that is both natural and man-made.” (Reynolds in Fitzgerald 1993: viii) Although, as Reynold argues, the novel meshes natural and artificial light, electricity creates sublime effects by combining intensity and suddenness with a *frisson* of terror:

When I came home to West Egg that night I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o’clock and the whole corner of the peninsula was blazing with light, which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner, I saw that it was Gatsby’s house, lit from tower to cellar. (Fitzgerald 1993: 52)

Sublime effects are frequently achieved in the novel through other methods suggested by Burke when he tackled light as a source of the sublime: “the quiet lights in the houses” “burning out into the darkness” and “the stir and bustle among the stars” (Fitzgerald 1993: 71) are visual impressions Gatsby recalls from a night five years before when he and Daisy took a walk and kissed; indeed, that effect of light and darkness, treasured by Gatsby’s soul, opens up for him, across those moments in his life, “a ladder” that “mounted to a secret place above the trees”, and climbing it he could reach that place where “he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder.” (Fitzgerald 1993: 71) In the last dawn of Gatsby’s life, he and Nick open the windows and let in an intermittent and uncertain “grey-turning, gold-turning light” (Fitzgerald 193: 96), foreshadowing the end of Gatsby’s life of gilded luxury and his last plunge into the swimming pool of death.

Adding layers upon layers of the sublime, Fitzgerald calculated the effects of light and darkness, their intermittence and transience, aiming at a general air of arty refinement to suggest elegant luxury and, even more importantly, that reality is sham and dream and illusion are far more significant than it. Nothing and nobody are what they seem in Gatsby’s world. On his first visit to the Buchanans, Daisy insists that she is “sophisticated” and Nick feels “the basic insincerity of what she had said”; he also feels “as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort.” (Fitzgerald 1993: 71) The novel is full of such “as if” markers, which reinforce the odd sense that everything partaking of their world is make-believe. Sometimes, the trick may be mild, its consequences immaterial, and its artificiality can be trivialized in a jocular remark, like Tom’s, when in the same evening he draws Nick’s attention that not everything Daisy says is to be taken for granted. Some other times, however, the fake can be dangerous and even fatal, as it eventually is for Gatsby. On their last encounter, Nick pays him a compliment, and he notices that Gatsby responds with a sublimely “radiant and understanding smile, as if we’d been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact at all time.” (Fitzgerald 193: 98) That remark, which designedly deploys the “as if” marker in order to increase the character’s artificial aura, is followed by an elegant description of the arty effect of his suit against the white steps, undoubtedly an effect calculated by Gatsby himself, like all the other major and minor effects aimed at impressing Daisy. Looking retrospectively at Gatsby’s parties, the moment foreshadows the last act. An alert reader should already know that this is the last goodbye ever waved by Gatsby, with all its calculated effects of colour and glamour. Bidding him farewell, Nick remembers that the crowds of people who had attended Gatsby’s parties “guessed at his corruption”, but in spite of their contentious suspicions, he would stand on the steps, “concealing his incorruptible dream, as he waved goodbye.” (Fitzgerald 193: 98) What really matters, we are made to understand, is the incorruptibility of Gatsby’s dream, not his uncertain past corruption.

In Burke's account, "visual objects of great dimensions are sublime" (Burke 1993: 259), and Fitzgerald's novel plays on that effect in order to reinforce the unmatched grandeur of New York in a decade when money made the city shine:

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world. (Fitzgerald 193: 44)

In this passage, the sight of New York rushes the mind in a contemplation of the sublime through a combination of vertical magnitude, magnificence, vastness and light, which mirrors effects similar to the descriptions of Gatsby's place.

*The Great Gatsby* is a story of power, violence and pain, which, especially in this combination, induce the sublime. New York in the 1920s was a citadel of money, populated by people like the Buchanans, who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money" (Fitzgerald 1993: 114). Gatsby's remark that Daisy's "voice is full of money" (Fitzgerald 1993: 76) has the value and impact of a significant realization for Nick, who works in finance. Nick thinks to himself:

That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money – that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbal's song of it...High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl...(Fitzgerald 1993: 76)

Money gives the whole city and its rich dwellers their smashingly glamorous, their sublime charm. At the same time, anybody who has it has power, and that includes Gatsby, the mysterious host of extravagant parties. Gatsby is, like the city itself, a strange combination of gross materialism and romantic idealism, "as tender as he is tough." (Bloom 2010: 5) He is the embodiment of the "dream of love and wealth" (Bloom 2010: 9), a Quixotic character in love with a chimera, which fills the mind and soul with the awe of the sublime.

Pain is Gatsby's prevailing feeling. Under the shiny crust of wealth and power there is a wounded soul, and under the sophisticated man a naïve boy, a desperate lover wearing his heart on his sleeve, who bounces high whenever he is in Daisy's presence. Gatsby's pain reaches maximum intensity in the moment of confrontation, which seals his doom. While Daisy stares "terrified between Gatsby and her husband", he "looked as if he 'had killed a man'" (Fitzgerald 1993: 86) The allusion to the serpent whispering his words in Adam's ear, which is subtly slipped in this passage, reinforces Gatsby's Adamic condition and sets the moment in a Biblical *illo tempore*. The violence associated with uncommitted murder rushes the plot into the disastrous dénouement of the murder Daisy commits by accident, followed by Gatsby being murdered under false suspicion.

The scene when Gatsby is shot while looking "up at an unfamiliar sky" and realizing, in the last moments of his life, "what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass" (Fitzgerald 1993: 103) is the last sublime of Gatsby's fabrication. It is the very last series of flickering images, where some of them show him the fake of his "created" world, while the last one is the hyperbole of his killer, an "ashen, fantastic figure gliding towards him through the amorphous trees." (Fitzgerald 1993: 103)

Although splendidly bathed in artificial lights, Fitzgerald's New York is a twilight zone. As a matter of fact, the lights are set against the city dusk in order to increase the contrast between a fabulous technological invention which could artificially turn night into day, inducing an exuberant party mood when the characters actually felt low-spirited. "At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness" (Fitzgerald 1993: 37), Nick broods while walking the city streets and enjoying the show. It is "through the cooling twilight" (Fitzgerald 1993: 87) that Daisy runs over Myrtle Wilson and kills her, and thus death puts an end to the party. It is also against this "twilight universe" that Daisy builds her "artificial world" which "was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes." (Fitzgerald 1993: 96) As appropriate, the very last image is that of a New York of "hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound." (Fitzgerald 1993: 115) Neither light nor darkness, neither day nor night, the twilight is a transition and an ambiguity which gives a sense of awe, and therefore of the sublime.

The New York glamour is contrasted by the "valley of ashes", which Guy Reynolds calls "a kind of interzone" (Reynolds in Fitzgerald 1993: xv), marking a spatial transition. The valley is kept under the strange surveillance of T. J. Eckleburg's eyes, watching everything and everybody from the height of its advertisement facelessness. Fitzgerald's approach to the interzone of the valley of ashes must have been coloured by a perception which he shared with other early twentieth century artists: it is "a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the form of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with some effort, of ash-grey men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air." (Fitzgerald 1993: 16) Like the barbaric rhythms evoking the motor horns of modern civilization in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, premiered to a shocked audience in 1913, the cars driving through the desolate landscape of the valley of ashes are engulfed in clouds of dust and sometimes perform meaningless rituals of sacrifice when they rip open the bodies of people who cross their path. Like the arid landscape of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a poem published three years before *The Great Gatsby*, the valley of ashes is a place where nothing grows and nothing bears fruit. Like the hideously weed-overgrown garden in the "Time Passes" section in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, which came out two years after *The Great Gatsby*, the valley of ashes is a no man's land where low-tech gadgetry is the equivalent of weeds. That the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, a now useless and sad-looking billboard, seem to keep a vigilant watch of the place tells a lot about how short-lived modern fads are. The word that encapsulates the state of the valley of ashes is waste, and Fitzgerald had its interzone alternate with the glamour of New York in order to suggest the frailty and doom of modern civilization itself. Especially the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg, which Wilson stupidly takes for the eyes of God, make the landscape look like the city's grey other, a constant reminder that its gilded splendour is there only for a season and then will turn to ashes. That is an awareness that signals its presence in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, a novel published one year later.

*The Great Gatsby* is a novel about the big American Dream, the quest, and the equally big American disappointment of the 1920s, an aftermath of World War I. The valley of ashes is a reminder of that, too. It is also the epitome of the grey side of the coin called modern civilization. In counterpoint, the sublime glamour of New York is the epitome of the "incorruptible dream", which is not only Gatsby's, but America's dream, which has taken new shapes in the ages that followed. In his Introduction to *The Great Gatsby* Guy Reynolds argues that Fitzgerald's enthusiasm for modern technology and consumerism opened a line of writing continued by Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo. It is not only "the famous comparison between highways and radio circuits" (Reynold in Fitzgerald 1993: xviii) that unite Fitzgerald's 1920s and Pynchon's 1960s under the aegis of the American Dream, but



also the sense of the sublime associated with it, which magnifies it and makes it shine. Following the line into the 1980s, one recognizes the American Dream in the inescapably enticing shopping trips to the mall, the religious aura of the image, the mantras of TV commercials, the ambiguous translation of death into computerese in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*. Just like Fitzgerald and Pynchon before him, DeLillo gives it the luster of the sublime with his enumerations of consumer goods suggestive of the American plenitude, and a sense of artificial world of glossy surfaces of screens endlessly reflecting a prosperity under which an incurable fear of death lurks. In the very first year of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the American Dream and also the American disappointment were revisited by Salman Rushdie in *Fury*. Like Jay Gatsby, Malik Solanka is a bouncer, but he admits that Fitzgerald's character was "the highest bouncer of them all" who "failed too in the end, but lived out, before he crashed, that brilliant, brittle, gold-hatted, exemplary life." (Rushdie 2002: 82)

### Bibliography

1. Bloom, Harold (ed.). *F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*, New Edition, Infobase Publishing, New York, 2010. Print.
2. Bradbury, Malcolm and McFarlane, James (eds.). *Modernism. 1980-1930*, Penguin Books, 1978. Print.
3. Bruccoli, Matthew J. (ed.). *A Life in Letters. F. Scott Fitzgerald*, Maxwell Macmillan, New York, 1994. Print.
4. Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste; and Several Other Additions*. A New Edition, London, 1812. Print.
5. Curnutt, Kirk (ed.). *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004. Print.
6. Fitzgerald, Scott F., *The Great Gatsby*, Wordsworth Editions Limited, London, 1993. Print.
7. Fitzgerald, Scott F., *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz & Other Stories*, Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1994. Print.
8. Prigozy, Ruth (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, CUP, Cambridge, 2002. Print.
9. Rushdie, Salman. *Fury*, Vintage Press, 2002. Print.