*Clarity of thought*

*Explaining esoteric terms*

*Leveling an appropriately sized argument*

*Making sense of life*

Henry Dixon

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American Literature

Mr. Baker

*The Great Gatsby*

**Best word**

Thesis

Best sentences

The Identity of Gatsby

The epigram of a work of literature is the first section of the given work, it often sets the tone or theme for the remainder of the work; it creates a context in which the piece is to be understood. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* begins with an epigraph featuring a poem ostensibly by Thomas Park D'Invilliers entitled *Then Wear the Gold Hat*. Thomas Parke D'Invilliers is surprisingly a pen name of Francis Scott Fitzgerald and a character in his novel, *This Side Of Paradise*. Although one may expect an unframed quote to be attributed to a real person (i.e. someone who either exists or once existed), D'Invilliers (who never existed in this universe) is credited with the composition that opens *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald's creation of D'Invillers as faux persona is far less significant than D'Invillers misrepresentation as a real person, which blurs the line between real and fabricated entities, a theme that **bleeds** through the rest of the novel. Instead of crediting the real person (in this case, Fitzgerald himself) who composed and recorded the quotation, Fitzgerald creates the character of D'Invillers to whom he attributes the opening lines of the novel. One of the main differences between Fitzgerald and D'Invillers as attributable entities is that Fitzgerald (like all real people) has a detailed past whereas D'Invillers is formed from comparatively tenuous information.

Unsurprisingly, this theme of identities masked behind fabricated personas continues in James Gatz' creation of the eponymous Jay Gatsby, who "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself" (Ch. 6). Gatsby is a mysterious shell of a character about whom most characters are wholly clueless. When Nick first inquires about Gatsby at Gatsby's party, Jordan Baker supplies Nick with the ubiquitous conception of the mysterious host: "He's just a man named Gatsby" (Ch. 3). Nick corroborates this surface view of Gatsby -- the view epitomized in Jordan Baker's comment -- when he eventually speaks with Gatsby, saying that he "knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying" (Ch. 3). Like most of Gatsby's closer acquaintances, Nick and Jordan both comprehend the pertinence of one's history in his or her credibility. They do not see Gatsby as a sincere individual due to his lack of depth, shown by Gatsby's tendency to answer the same question about his past with inconsistent or different responses. Unlike the Nick's thorough understanding of Gatsby's apparent veneer, Owl Eyes' superficial point of view results in Owl Eyes' near solitary appearance at Gatsby's funeral. The desertion of Gatsby's funeral by almost everyone in the novel suggests that Gatsby's lack of sincere and credible depth (i.e. the fact that Gatsby's origins are nebulous, indefinite and enigmatic to most) precludes him from most of his friends' loyalty to him after his death.

Although Nick attempts to convince Klipspringer, Meyer Wolfsheim, and presumably other people whom Nick considers to be friends of Gatsby to attend the then late Gatsby's funeral, the list of attendees of Gatsby's funeral ultimately includes Nick Carraway, Henry C. Gatz, and Owl Eyes. Klipspringer and Wolfsheim both fabricate reasons as to why they would not attend the funeral; Klipspringer reports that he plans to attend "sort of a picnic or something" (Ch. 9), and Wolfsheim asserts that he does not wish "to get mixed up in it in any way" (Ch. 9). Both of the reasons provided merely excuse the aforementioned from attendance without providing a reasonable explanation as to why they did not desire to attend the funeral of a purported friend. Owl Eyes' radically different attitude towards Gatsby as a character effects his arrival at the funeral.

When Nick first encounters Owl Eyes, the latter is examining the books of Gatsby, exclaiming the fact that "they're real" (Ch. 3). He notes that although Gatsby was not actually using the books -- evidenced in that he failed to "cut the pages" (Ch. 3) -- Owl Eyes says, "this fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism!" (Ch. 3). Owl Eyes is primarily concerned with matching the titles of the books to words. In the opinion of Owl Eyes, the particular words that the book contains are wholly irrelevant to how real the books are. Likewise, the precise facts of Gatsby's past are unimportant so long as they exist. Instead of investigating the details of each text, Owl Eyes is satisfied with the fact that a text does exist; Owl Eyes views Gatsby in a similar way that he views Gatsby's library. Unlike Klipspringer and Wolfsheim, Owl Eyes cares little about the inconsistency of Gatsby's past and the way in which his past affects his credibility as a person.

At the core of the discussion of James Gatz' creation of Jay Gatsby is the nature of identity and the ways in which one can truly, honestly, and sincerely be oneself. After all, it is impossible to say with full certainty that James Gatz is any more real than his conception of himself (presumably a more focused and romanticized version) in Jay Gatsby. Indeed, Gatsby cannot say who he truly is because the nature of embodying an identity is one of the least clean-cut and defined issues in humanity. However, the way that Gatsby creates his identity through a basis of deceit, dishonesty, insincerity, and mistruths effect a change in his relationships with others. The condition upon which his relationships are evaluated is not his identity, but the way his identity is formed. Klipspringer and Wolfsheim both avoided attending the funeral because they view Gatsby as a dishonest mélange of stories, all of which have dubious verity. Owl Eyes serves as a symbolic representation of someone who takes people and things at very slightly more than face value: he judges a book by its cover and the mere fact that it has an inside. Fitzgerald's framework of misrepresentation, which began during the epigraph at the very beginning of the novel, questions the identities of James Gatz and Jay Gatsby. Fundamentally, can a discrete identity created by someone become real? Does the fact that Fitzgerald embodies Thomas Park D'Invilliers disqualify the sincerity of D'Invilliers as an entity? The identity of Gatsby is uncertain, but his relationships with others and his perception by the public indicate the flaws in Gatsby's creation.