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CAMPUS DE EXCELENCIA INTERNACIONAL



**FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA**

**UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA**

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**GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES**

Trabajo de Fin de Grado

**A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO  
ELIOT'S *THE WASTE LAND* AND  
FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY***

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**Salamanca, 2015**



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This thesis is submitted for the degree of English Studies

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## Resumen

El propósito de este trabajo es comparar el poema de T.S. Eliot *The Waste Land* (1922) y la novela de F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby* (1925). El estudio estará basado en las referencias intertextuales y temas comunes de ambas obras, a saber: la pérdida de la visión trascendente en el mundo contemporáneo; el materialismo presente en la sociedad; el sentimiento de desolación y hastío del hombre moderno, la concepción del destino regido por la Rueda de la Fortuna, y finalmente, la percepción de la muerte como requisito necesario para la regeneración.

**Palabras clave:** T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, hombre moderno, corrupción, materialismo, civilización, clases sociales, regeneración.

## Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to compare T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* (1922) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). The study is based on the intertextual references and common themes found in both works, i.e.; the loss of a transcendental vision in modern civilization; materialism in the society; the feeling of isolation and boredom of modern man; the notion of destiny seen as ruled by the Wheel of Fortune, or fate, and finally, the conception of death as a necessary step towards regeneration.

**Key words:** T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, modern man, corruption, materialism, civilization, social classes, regeneration.

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## 1. Introduction: The Literary Context

Together with authors like James Joyce and Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot shaped Twentieth-Century Modernism. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) rapidly gained popularity and the poem became one of the most renowned statements of its time. In it, the poet establishes a parallelism between contemporary history (the aftermath of the Great War) and mythical chronicles. The description of Eliot's fragmented European culture is rendered by a welter of poetic voices, which skillfully unify the poem under a dominant motif: the imminent fall of modern civilization. Eliot presents a world as a "heap of broken images" (line 22)<sup>1</sup>, in which its inhabitants are obsessed with materialism and instant gratification, and devoid of a spiritual and transcendental dimension.

Moreover, Eliot's interpretations and literary style stirred up a new type of writing and marked a before-and-after in the history of poetry, which prompted future writers. F. Scott Fitzgerald was one of them. The publication of *The Great Gatsby* in 1925 acquired the same type of popularity as *The Waste Land*. In fact, several descriptions of Fitzgerald's novel echo passages of the *The Waste Land*. Likewise, *The Great Gatsby* also holds up a mirror to society of Fitzgerald's time. The 1920s commercial welfare rapidly grew and brought with it a rampant and unrestrained consumerism which resulted in a great contrast between the high and the lower classes. In this scenario Fitzgerald presents the main protagonist of his novel: Jay Gatsby, who follows his own type of 'pipe-dream'. Gatsby's urge is transcendental, as it is said in the novel, he has "an extraordinary gift for hope" (*TGG* 4), which eventually turns into the idealization of an elusive dream. Fitzgerald skillfully uses the character of Gatsby to explore the human condition as it is reflected in a world characterized by social disruption and uncertainty. Both works share significant points that blend Eliot and Fitzgerald's vision of Western society, something that caught the attention of subsequent authors.

When *The Great Gatsby* was first published, the novel did not receive positive reviews. Fitzgerald wanted approval from his colleagues and he sent off inscribed copies of his book to Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein and T. S. Eliot asking them for their opinion. All of them responded, but Eliot's answer definitely encouraged Fitzgerald:

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<sup>1</sup> See Patea, Viorica ed. T.S. Eliot *La Tierra Baldía*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra. 2011. Print. Unless otherwise indicated, all section references of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* are referred to this edition.

Dear Mr. Scott Fitzgerald,

*The Great Gatsby* with your charming and overpowering inscription arrived the very morning I was leaving in some haste for a sea voyage advised by my doctor. I therefore left it behind and only read it on my return a few days ago. I have, however, now read it three times. I am not in the least influenced by your remark about myself when I say that it has interested and excited me more than any new novel I have seen, either English or American, for a number of years.

When I have more time I should like to write to you more fully and tell you exactly why it seems to me such a remarkable book. In fact it seems to me to be the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James. (qtd. in Springer)

With this letter, T.S. Eliot situated Fitzgerald in the tradition of Henry James and established his novel as a turning point in Great American literature. Over the years, *The Great Gatsby* gained more and more relevance to the extent that it currently constitutes a landmark in American culture.

Interestingly, the more we analyze Fitzgerald's work, the more it seems to be inspired by Eliot's *The Waste Land*. As James E. Miller affirms: "It is possible that he [Eliot] saw in *The Great Gatsby* a reflection of some of the kinds of images of the horror of modern life that he himself had given currency in his poem" (243). Indeed, more immediate than the novel itself, is the setting of the Valley of Ashes that reminds readers of the characteristic landscape of *The Waste Land*. However, the parallel between Eliot's poem and Fitzgerald's novel goes beyond this descriptive imagery. There are many other intertextual references and common themes that relate Eliot and Fitzgerald's works, i.e.: the loss of a transcendental vision in modern civilization; materialism in the society; the feeling of isolation and boredom of modern man; the notion of destiny seen as ruled by the Wheel of Fortune, or fate, and finally, the conception of death as a necessary step towards regeneration. Departing from authors like Letha Audhy (1986), Richard Lehan (1990) and Kermit W. Moyer (1984), who have already studied the comparison between *The Waste Land* and *The Great Gatsby* in depth, I will analyze the main themes and symbols that Eliot's poem and Fitzgerald's novel have in common.

## **2. F. Scott Fitzgerald's Waste Land**

The setting of both works frames the main plot of both stories. *The Waste Land's* setting is a kind of kaleidoscope of different cities and civilizations, and corresponds to Fitzgerald's "Valley of Ashes":

Unreal City,  
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many  
 I had no thought death had undone so many.  
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (*TWL* lines 60-5)<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, Fitzgerald's description of the Valley of Ashes bears a resemblance with the waste land:

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as the shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is the valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke, and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (*TGG* 26)<sup>3</sup>

Eliot's "brown fog" and Fitzgerald's "powdery air" provides a ghostly dimension of the same atmosphere that wraps and confines every wastelander. Human beings, unable to see through the fog, succumb to the superficial world that condemns them to the emptiness of their routine. Thus, they keep going aimlessly, wasted, and divided. They have no spiritual guide anymore.

Besides the parallelism of these two desolate lands, one major correspondence is the big sign of the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which proffers a strong connection between both stories:

But above the gray land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose. ... But his eyes, dimmed a little by many countless days, under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground. (*TGG* 26)

The imagery of this billboard deeply penetrates the reader's imagination, especially when George (Myrtle's husband) eventually equates its eyes with the eyes of God. In fact, what comes to our mind when we think about God? Wisdom, infinitude, omnipresence.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, "*TWL*" abbreviation will be used for references of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* from Patea, Viorica ed. T.S. Eliot *La Tierra Baldía*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra. 2011. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, "*TGG*" abbreviation will be used for references of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* from Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Planet eBook. 2012. PDF

““God sees everything”” (*TGG* 170), George says, and he was right, for the timeless vision of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg presides over the main action and the denouement of the novel. As John W. Bicknell affirms: “This grotesque image, reappearing throughout the story, eventually becomes a symbol of what God has become in the modern world, an all-seeing deity – indifferent, faceless, blank.” Hence, Doctor T.J. Eckleburg is the forgotten god of a secularized modern world and his eyes have just “foretold the rest” (*TWL* line 229). A different attitude is adopted in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, in which the all-seeing eye is represented by means of Tiresias’ blindness. Tiresias, the famous soothsayer of Thebes, articulates Eliot’s poem, as he is “the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest” (Eliot’s notes, *TWL* 290) His ability to foresee the future goes back to the fact that he was gifted with the capacity of prophecy and he shared both male and female features, which provided him an absolute knowledge. He is the type of blind prophet who possesses the entire truth.

Tiresias possesses a deep knowledge of the half-living characters in the poem, both men and women, for he is an objective onlooker beyond time. As Viorica Patea states: “Tiresias is the blind prophet whose eyes, closed to physical light, allow him to discern the light of wisdom. His inner vision comes from his refusal of the material world, ... by losing the outside view and rejecting the world of appearances, he acquires a spiritual revelation”<sup>4</sup>(139). His eyes are wise, timeless, visionary, and unspoiled, just like the premonitory eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, a symbol of the eyes of God. It could be said, then, that both *The Great Gatsby* and *The Waste Land* explore the question of a secularized world, where God appears as a blind spectator. However, it is important to point out that “Eliot is of course concerned with the loss of faith and love in the modern world, while Fitzgerald explores the more limited theme of the corruption in the American dream by materialism” (Audhuy, 111). In other words, Fitzgerald somehow uses the blank eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg to display to what extent the culture of advertisement and business have damaged people’s spiritual beliefs. Materialism has become the new religion in America.

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<sup>4</sup>“Tiresias es el profeta ciego cuyos ojos, cerrados a la luz física, le facultan para percibir la luz de la sabiduría. Su visión interior procede de su renuncia al mundo aparente de las cosas, ... al perder la vista exterior y renunciar al mundo de las apariencias, adquiere una revelación espiritual” [My translation from Viorica Patea edition]



Without a spiritual presence, no inhabitant of these lands can undergo a change, a complete transformation. Thereby the citizens of both worlds have lost their values, for they have already succumbed to the world of appearances, to “a new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about...” (*TGG* 172). Undeniably, Eliot foresaw this situation in his poem, and Fitzgerald borrowed this “ashen” description to indict a profane, secular and materialistic America. This disconsolate vision of the world is, in a sense, brought into life in the Valley of Ashes. Although this area is confined geographically, its essence spreads throughout the character’s mind just like powder, leaving behind a trace of death. In this sense, the theme of both the novel and the poem is the decline of modern civilization. However, Fitzgerald and Eliot are deeply concerned with the absence of love in society as a consequence of its inherent consumerism. Both authors skillfully depicted two opposite but very interrelated scenes to exemplify that materialism is actually a modern disease that affects all, both upper and lower classes.

There are various interiors in *The Waste Land* and *The Great Gatsby* that show this parallelism. In *The Waste Land* the action unfolds in a ladies boudoir and in a pub. These spaces correspond to Fitzgerald’s description of Daisy’s rich mansion and of Myrtle’s shabby apartment. In the first place, the neurasthenic woman in her boudoir, like Daisy, is described by the emblems of her culture (a golden Cupid, the sevenbranched candelabra, Cleopatra’s furnished throne, Philomel’s painting and Virgil’s laquearia), which constitute symbols of the Western tradition of love (*TWL* 218). Correspondingly, Daisy is also described by means of her wealthy mansion, for she is actually “the golden girl” whose voice is “full of money” (*TGG* 128). If Eliot chooses his symbols from the Western tradition of love (Shakespeare’s Cleopatra, Virgil’s Dido, Ovid’s Philomel, among other literary allusions), Fitzgerald utilizes symbols characteristic of twentieth century consumerism. The dichotomy lies between the sumptuous majestic surroundings and the women’s inner barrenness. To a certain extent, both the lady in the boudoir and Daisy lose their grip on reality so as to become another “unreal” part of society.

The same contrast between material possessions and spiritual poverty can be found in Myrtle’s apartment and in the pub of Eliot’s poem. In both settings gossip and empty conversations prevail in Eliot’s section of “A Game of Chess”, where a treacherous friend talks with impunity about Lil’s life:

But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling  
 You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.  
 (And her only thirty-one.) (lines 155 – 7)

This feeling of emptiness and meaningless also characterizes Fitzgerald's lower classes (Myrtle and George and the other inhabitants of the Valley of Ashes), who are variants of Eliot's poor wastelanders. If the first ladies are described by means of their sumptuous interiors, Lil and Myrtle are portrayed by means of their outward appearance, something they use to be what they are not. Both Fitzgerald and Eliot's characters have lost their capacity to love and their existence is reduced to a mere physiological materialism.

It is an interesting fact that Tom Buchanan (Daisy's husband) is attracted to both by his wife and his beloved, Myrtle, which makes us think about the common link that connects these two women. Instead of their different economic situation, they both suffer from the same sense of emptiness, weariness and lack of real goals. High or low status becomes insignificant when people refuse to escape from boredom and mechanized movements. As Letha Audhuy explains: "Fitzgerald's and Eliot's pictures of society are thematically related: everywhere, at all levels of society prevails the same sterility, the same failure of love, the same empty relationships," (114).

A clear exemplification of this aimless lifestyle are Daisy's moans of boredom: "What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon? ... and the day after that, and the next thirty years? ... But it's so hot and everything's so confused" (*TGG* 126). Daisy's feeling of disorientation expresses her weariness and fear of emptiness. The lady in the room that firstly appears in "A Game of Chess" also articulates a series of incessant questions that suggest the same despair:

'What shall I do now? What shall I do?  
 ...  
 What shall we do tomorrow?  
 What shall we ever do?' (*TWL* lines 131-4)

These fragments identify the source of pain of the characters in Fitzgerald's novel and Eliot's poem. They all suffer the craving for material things, which prove to be unsubstantial and ephemeral. Jordan, Daisy and Tom's wealthy lives neither free them from vacuity, but transform all of them into the living dead of a fallen civilization.

Interestingly, both authors adopt the view which Eliot exemplifies in “What the Thunder Said”:

What is the city over the mountains  
 Cracks and reforms and burst in the violet air  
 Falling towers. Jerusalem Athens Alexandria  
 Vienna London  
 Unreal (lines 372-7)

Not only men and women from upper and lower classes are doomed to empty lives, but the whole Western world. Actually, London and New York are just two scenarios that foreshadow the idea of the fall of empires through time. This apocalyptic ending is also present in *The Great Gatsby* when Tom Buchanan quotes *The Rise of the Coloured Empires*, by Goddard (an allusion to Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy* (1920) that predicts the fall of Western civilization. Tom affirms that “Civilization’s going to pieces” (*TGG* 15), assuring that the white race is the dominant one and that the American dream is about to sink.

### 3. The American Adam and the Hollow Men

America was once the promise land, a kind of new Eden that embodied freedom, hope and individualism, and that in the twentieth century yields to consumerism, forgetting its original roots. In Fitzgerald’s novel, Gatsby becomes an Adamic hero whom Nick names him as “a son of God” (*TGG* 105). Gatsby has the same godlike ambition than the Dutch sailors that arrived in America for the first time. To live up to the expectations of the Adamic hero, Gatsby denies his origins, his parents, his birthplace, and his name, and creates a new and a self-made man; a self-made God. (Patea, *Critical Essays on the Myth of the American Adam*, 15- 40). As Richard Lehan states: “In making this connection so skillfully in *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald links myth and historical themes, creating a sense of destiny that is inseparable from the idea of godhead, nation and self.” (35) Nonetheless, Gatsby fails in believing that he can change the past, the world, and even his destiny “Can’t repeat the past? ... Why of course you can!” (118) But the past and his dreams escape between his fingers.

In this sense, the character of Jay Gatsby reminds us of Frazer's "Christ solar hero" on which *The Waste Land* is based. Just like Frazer's sacrificial Gods, Gatsby acquires the connotations of a Messiah and also perishes for his dream. Yet, despite his sacrifice for Daisy, Gatsby fails in building his dreams, for they are based on materialism. It can be said, then, that both American and European societies have lost their mythical vision, and that their inhabitants remain blind in a world of appearances.

The dichotomy lies precisely in the relation between the grandeur of the past civilizations and the wasted reality of the present, which provides comparative flashbacks throughout history and time. Modern citizens adopt a careless behavior towards salvation and accept their own boredom. They follow mechanized movements, where "each man fixed his eyes before his feet" (*TWL* line 65). No one escapes from this circular march that burns every inhabitant into a cog. They are composed of mechanical links in a dehumanized chain. They are lifeless puppets moving in circles, doomed to an empty reiteration of the same routine (Patea 110). Curiously, this same notion of circular movements is found in Fitzgerald's novel, for it is, in essence, an extended flashback of the story, a technique that "gives the novel a formal circularity ... which reflects structurally a series of circular movements within the story itself" (Moyer 216)

The beginning of *The Great Gatsby* corresponds with the end of the story, when everything has already happened and Nick feels the necessity to share his experience with us. Then, the story moves backwards to the very beginning telling us about Nick's adventure on the East Coast. Thus, the story unfolds into the past, connecting the first section of the novel. In this way, the story moves back and forth constantly, it ends where it started, in circular withdrawal. This structure calls up the idea that "the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.", a conception that Eliot remarks in other of his poems, *Four Quartets* (Eliot 221).

#### 4. “Death by Water” and the Death of the Solar Hero

In *The Waste Land* the Wheel is a central motif. The Wheel of Fortune appears in the poem [(“and here the Wheel” (line 51))] as the fourth card of Madame Sosostris’ tarot and it reveals the irredeemable fate of all the characters. The wheel spins and spins on spiral movements, unstoppable, punishing the wastelanders to empty revolutions. No one can escape from it, as no one can escape from its fate. The Wheel represents the beginning and the end, and life and death, as it is the natural order of things. Apart from its structure, *The Great Gatsby* also shows a series of images that resemble the circularity of the Wheel of Fortune, as the spherical shape of East and West Egg. A more eloquent description of this is Jordan’s in Chapter Seven: “Life starts all over again when it gets crips in the fall” (*TGG* 126). Once again, this statement hides more than it reveals at surface level, for Jordan establishes a connection between life and death when she unwittingly predicts the end of the story in autumn. Jordan here resembles Eliot’s Madame Sosostris, a failed prophetess. Madame Sosostris warned the hero to fear a death by water, when in reality his “death by water” ensured his rebirth (*TWL* 204 - 8). Unconsciously, Jordan acquires the same powers as a prophetess and foresees Gatsby’s death (and rebirth) on the first day of autumn, ratifying his condition of a solar hero, who dies at solstice. Gatsby, like the wastelanders, repeats an ancient script and draws his identity from myth. And what is more, through Gatsby’s fall, the ultimate meaning of death changes. Death now becomes a necessary step towards regeneration, thus completing the revolutions of the Wheel.

Everything must return to its origin to continue with the chain of the cycle of life. Once again, both T. S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald agree on the same conception of death in their corresponding texts. The first one develops this idea throughout all the poem, but especially in part IV, “Death by Water”:

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,  
 Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell  
 And the profit and loss.  
 ...  
 He passed the stages of his age and youth  
 Entering the whirlpool. (lines 312 - 18)

Phlebas represents every man in the poem and his death by the water is a desperate call to the citizens of the Unreal city, hurrying them to awake their spiritual identity.

Something better is waiting for them behind the doors of Death. “Those are pearls that were his eyes” (*TWL* line 48), Eliot reminds us over and over. It is Ariel’s promise of the spiritual regeneration, which is embodied by the character of Phlebas. Once Phlebas gave up his materialistic concerns and his empirical ego, he was able to free himself from the material world and thus transcend. The function of water here is paradoxically purifying, inasmuch as Phlebas will undergo a metamorphosis into “something rich and strange” (Shakespeare 126). “Death by water” is clearly “executed” (Eliot notes, *TWL* 286) in Chapter Nine of Fitzgerald’s novel, where Gatsby also dies, curiously, in his pool. It is not by accident that both Phlebas and Gatsby share the same profession. The first one is a Phoenician sailor, and Gatsby’s ‘Platonic dream’ starts the moment he met Dan Cody and boarded his yacht. In this sea adventure, Gatsby remodeled his young self and turned it into the idealist adult later presented in the novel.

Departing from Eliot and Fitzgerald’s conception of water as a regenerative force, it seems interesting to highlight that Gatsby refused to get into his pool during the summer: ““You know, old sport, I’ve never used that pool all summer?””(TGG 164). It was not until the first day of autumn, the day Jordan “foresaw”, and the day on which Gatsby died, that he finally decided to plunge into the pool. Gatsby and his dreams perished in the purifying water, an image that Fitzgerald expresses in a poetical way: “The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly, tracing, like the leg of compass, a thin red circle in the water”(173). Once again, the “red circle” resembles the wheel motif and thus the perfect union between life and death: one cannot exist without the other. Audhuy denotes this aspect when she affirms that “Gatsby’s death would be a necessary sacrifice to regenerate the land.” (120) underlining the view that only through a penance America could be redeemed.

Eliot ends his poem with moral statements that bring about redemption: “give”, “sympathize”, “control”, the words that come from the parable of the Thunder and that corresponds to Fitzgerald’s conclusions. In this sense, “give” implies an existential refusal of the world of material appearances; “sympathize” connotes the idea of compassion beyond the prison house of egocentrism, and “self-control” encompasses the notion of individual regeneration. “Dattam. Dayadhvam. Damyata.” (*TWL* line 433), the last words of *The Waste Land* are Eliot’s manifest of human revival.

Nevertheless, the denouement of *The Waste Land* and *The Great Gatsby* is, at surface level, completely different. Eliot's poem concludes with a hopeful note towards humanity bringing together Buddha's Fire Sermon, Vedanta wisdom and Christian precepts. In the poem, although the world is collapsing "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down" (line 427), the poetic voice takes the determination to at least, put his "lands in order" (line 426). On the other hand, Fitzgerald presents this same intention in a different way. Gatsby has died, he believed in the green light, and once it is gone, the contemplation of a better world seems to be unnoticed, but Fitzgerald will introduce the notion of redemption through another character: Nick. Nick travelled from the West Coast and arrived to New York completely amazed with the wild lifestyle of his cousin Daisy and her friends and acquaintances, but he eventually discovered that their lives were steeped in egoism and boredom. Nick returned to the West with the feeling that "I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever;" (TGG 4) In his original birthplace Nick will find his regeneration. The American Frontier still separates one world from the other and supports the last pieces of the American dream. There, humanity can recover his "memory and desire" (TWL line 3) in a natural environment, where man has not yet damaged life's primary essence. In this way, the wheel keeps on moving and the life cycle is completed once again: Phlebas embarked upon a voyage towards the purification of his inner-self and Nick undertook a trip towards his origins, where consumerism and boredom had not still spoiled the human heart.

## 5. Conclusion

"The Valley of Ashes" and the "Unreal city" shape the plots of both texts, inasmuch as character's action converges within them. A strong connection with society is established once these settings are described. They are barren areas and so are their inhabitants, which seem to be part of a human chain of blindness. Above these landscapes, we find the vision of God, which has been damaged by the notion of capitalism in the modern world. Consumerism appears at all levels of society, both in men and women, and both in upper and lower classes. This absence of love, together with boredom and weariness rule the lives of the characters of both texts. At this point, both authors emphasize the grandeur of past civilizations (in Europe and America respectively),

something that highlights the lack of real goals in modern society. The citizens of these new communities become vulgar copies of their ancestors. And what is more, they cannot recover their past. The Wheel of Fortune dictates the fate of all, they cannot escape from its revolutions, not even the “son of God.” Nonetheless, both Eliot and Fitzgerald procure a salvation for their inhabitants, which is regeneration. Rebirth is difficult to bring about, yet is not impossible.

It is important to say that, although T.S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald shared some opinions about their corresponding works, and that they stated a profound admiration to each other, these strong thematic connection between *The Waste Land* and *The Great Gatsby* make us think to what extent materialism and lack of moral values were important concerns to both of them. Eliot and Fitzgerald lamented the predicament of the modern man, and they found writing to be the proper vehicle to denounce their disenchantment with modernity.



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