AN AMERICAN DREAM: THE FATAL GAMBIT FOR SUTPEN AND GATSBY

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The intention of this thesis is to demonstrate the parallel lines that delineate the characters of Thomas Sutpen from William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! and Jay Gatsby from F. Scott Fitzgearald's The Great Gatsby, as men of distinctive American character in fatal pursuit of the American dream. The attainment of that dream, defined as an individual goal of personal success, which is sought in a state of unlimited possibility, which is ultimately expressed in socially acceptable terms, and which can be gained by faithful and arduous pursuit, is the all consuming passion of each character's life.

Using the dream-goal and common American character traits as a basis for comparison, ten parallels between the lives of Sutpen and Gatsby are explored through close analysis of the texts of the novels. These parallels include (1) insignificant beginnings and lack of family ties; (2) lack of formal education and the resultant reliance on self-education; (3) self-creation of one's own personality; (4) self-discipline and the use of a timetable in pursuit of the dream; (5) the accumulation of wealth as a secondary but integral part of the dream-goal; (6) "shady" methods and manipulations to obtain wealth; (7) qualified success after achieving wealth; (8) attempts at social respectability and acceptability although remaining essentially "outsiders;" (9) over-simplification of reality leading to ill-founded assumptions of success; and (10) the failure to ultimately achieve the dream goal.

The discussion attempts to demonstrate not only that Sutpen and Gatsby are parallel literary figures, but also that the undeviating pursuit of the American dream-goal is a fatal process for the dreamer who fails to recognize the difference between the ideal and the real, the spiritual and the material, aspects of the dream. This dream quest carries perilous consequences for the dreamer who ignores the responsibilities inherent in human relationships. However, the dream, which is part of America's national heritage, also holds the promise that to fail magnificently is also a feat, one which both Sutpen and Gatsby achieve.
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Sharon Shreve Strohmaier
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Chapter 1: Introduction

With discovery of the New World, seemingly unsullied by man's intentional and unintentional evil, it appeared that mankind indeed had been given one final chance at earthly paradise. Eden could be regained in an environment free from the mistakes of the past, and man's full potential could blossom free and unfettered for the first time since the shadow of the serpent and the fragrance of the apple had left him hopelessly beguiled and thralled. America came to symbolize man's last and best chance for renewal and rebirth, and the American was christened the "new man." This promise of unlimited possibility is the myth that is America and the challenge that it articulates to the American who dreams.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (1776)
In this manner, Thomas Jefferson, the drafter of the Declaration of Independence, delineates both the promise and the fatality of the American potential for freedom. Herein lies the foundation of the American dream, which seems to guarantee that man has now finally seized the possibility of self-determination and will prevail. What most of the resultant American dreamers failed to grasp is that these words do not guarantee happiness, but merely its pursuit. There is no guarantee that the happiness pursued will be achieved, nor that the pursuit itself will be an unmitigated blessing. For the new man, the dream is both the blessing and the curse of the American potential.

In American literature, there are two particularly striking examples of individual American dreamers in pursuit of their respective happinesses. These two are Jay Gatsby from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Thomas Sutpen from William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* Though the focuses of the two novels are obviously dissimilar, they do provide an intriguing basis for comparison. On the one hand, *The Great Gatsby* is ablaze with the sophisticated glitter and tinsel of the somewhat decadent American jazz age, a "roaring" time when money was the measure of all things and all people, while *Absalom, Absalom!*, shadowed by the curse of slavery and the burden of history, broods tortuously on the dark,
portentous rumblings of the American Civil War, echoing through the corridors of time and space. In spite of the novels' apparently disparate subjects and purposes, the two protagonists are remarkably alike.

Even though they differ by virtue of the essential nature of the happiness each pursues, both Sutpen and Gatsby spring from the same basic American character, and in this respect they are similar men. Neither proves to be successful in his pursuit of the dream, and in both instances the reader sees the fatality of the attempt to follow the siren call of unlimited possibility to that point where the American promise breaks up on the rocks of reality. Both individual dreams if pursued to their ultimate end are equally and ultimately fatal, leaving the dreamer dead and the dream unfulfilled.

While the lives and eventual fates of Sutpen and Gatsby are remarkably alike, the dream goal takes on a different form for each dreamer. Supremely rational, Sutpen pursues a design of dynastic supremacy in the frontier South of the nineteenth century. Less than one hundred years later, amid the frenzy of America's "roaring twenties," Gatsby pursues a dream of romantic perfection, symbolized by his obsession for the idealized Daisy. While for Sutpen the woman is a necessary adjunct, something to be rationally fitted into his
grandiose scheme, for Gatsby the woman herself is the
goal. In either case, however, the path of pursuit
leads to the same final destination and destruction.
The ultimate fate of the American hero in unflagging
pursuit of the American dream is the same. The dream
remains unfulfilled.

Before proceeding into the actual comparison of
Sutpen and Gatsby, it should be noted why these two
particular characters were singled out for this study.
While a number of American novels lend themselves as
subjects of a study of the American dream, the correla-
tions between Absalom, Absalom! and The Great Gatsby,
and likewise between the characters Sutpen and Gatsby,
give these two novels and these two heroes a special
significance.

The form of the novels is similar in that the
events depicted in each are not related in chronological
form. Each novel records the events in the hero's life
"... not in the order in which they took place but in
the order in which they become significant in the
recolletion ..."\(^1\) of the narrator. There are a
number of studies on the significance of the ordering
of the material in these novels, not the least of which

\(^1\) Don W. Hunt, "The Theological Center of Absalom,
Absalom!," Religious Perspectives in Faulkner's Fiction:
Yoknapatawpha and Beyond, ed. J. Robert Barth, S. J.
(Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press,
1972), pp. 143-44.
are in Milton Stern's *The Golden Moment* and Joseph W. Reed, Jr.'s *Faulkner's Narrative*. It is not necessary here to detail the specific chronological gyrations. Suffice it to say that in the relating of their respective stories, both Faulkner and Fitzgerald rely on the effectiveness of deliberately withheld meaning, and, as Reed points out, in *Absalom, Absalom!*, "The book's 'whodunit' qualities can fasten the reader on Thomas Sutpen as an instance of the American Dream, a Jay Gatsby in patchwork gray."4

Not only do the two novels have a correspondingly convoluted ordering of events, but there is a correlation between the narrators relating these non-chronological happenings. As Henry J. Piper has pointed out, in *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait*, both Faulkner and Fitzgerald "... were to make brilliant use of the intellectually detached but emotionally and morally involved first-person narrator."5 Neither Sutpen nor Gatsby is allowed to tell his own story. Instead, interested observers are given the task of telling the tales.


4Ibid., p. 146.

Absalom, Absalom! has four narrators: Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson, Shreve McCannon, and Quentin Compson. However as Michael Millgate notes, while Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson make essential contributions to the total narrative structure and Shreve is an active participant in the imaginative reconstruction of Sutpen's life, "... the burden of recreation, interpretation, and suffering falls inexorably on Quentin." While Quentin must rely on both Miss Rosa and his father for many of the details of Sutpen's life, he is the one who ultimately supplies the raw materials for the imaginative collaboration with Shreve, and it is Quentin who has discovered the key to Sutpen's problem with Bon. Thus while Absalom, Absalom! does have four narrators, Quentin is the one who knows the story in its most complete form, and he is the one who bears most of the narrative responsibility since he is the character who when not speaking, is the one spoken to.

Quentin's counterpart in The Great Gatsby is Nick Carraway. While this entire narrative is filtered through just one narrator, he does not do all of his reporting first-hand. Like Quentin he must rely on what other characters tell him, to provide the most complete version of Gatsby's story. Jordan Baker supplies much of the information about Daisy before her

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marriage, while Gatsby himself reveals some of his own past. Meyer Wolfsheim, Gatsby's father, and the variety of minor characters who speculate about Gatsby's life all contribute to the final narration as provided by Nick. In addition Nick himself adds his own suppositions on the things that Gatsby thought and felt. "Whatever deficiencies in knowledge Nick has are made up for amply by his fertile imagination."⁷

If Gatsby's character gains form and substance by the additions of Nick's imagination, obviously, as Brooks describes him, Sutpen, "more than most characters in literature . . . is an imaginative construct, a set of inferences—an hypothesis put forward to account for several peculiar events."⁸ During the last four sections of the novel Shreve and Quentin are not relating a factual account, but rather through imagination, they are drawing a picture of what may have been. Their account is plausible but it is an imaginative, not a factual, reconstruction.

The fact that in both novels the narrators take the liberty of exercising their own imaginations, however, is not a negative quality in the realm of


fiction. Both characters benefit in substance from the imaginative ways in which their lives are revealed, taking on an expanded dimension of reality. As Quentin says of his imaginings, "If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain." 9

The two heroes who emerge from these intricate combinations of chronology and narration have special qualities springing from the way in which they are presented. As Reed emphasizes, "Sutpen takes on substance only when abstracted. In life he can be only Sutpen to be seen by Jefferson and told about by Rosa or by various Compsons to designated hearers. Once abstracted and invented upon he can be fully realized as a character, in the way a fictional character takes on more than life." 10 What he lacks in the reality of actual events, he is given in the reality of fiction.

Gatsby, too, gains from the method by which his story is told. As Piper points out, "It is useless to demand that he approximate the reality of the other characters in the novel, since the question of his reality is itself the subject matter of the story. He is an ideal figure, and . . . the reality he achieves is that of the myth that creates and sustains him." 11


10Reed, Narrative, p. 173.

11Piper, Portrait, p. 121.
His reality springs from "his Platonic conception of himself"\textsuperscript{12} as filtered through the imagination and mind of Nick Carraway, who in turn acknowledges Gatsby in his fictional, larger than life proportions.

From the devices of deliberately withheld meaning and narrative poetic license emerge two characters unique in American fiction because of their acknowledged heroic substance. Brooks sees Sutpen as a heroic and tragic figure. He achieves a kind of grandeur. Even the obsessed Miss Rosa sees him as great, not as petty and sordid. His innocence resembles that of Oedipus. . . . His courage resembles that of Macbeth, and like Macbeth he is "resolute to try the last." Perhaps the most praiseworthy aspect of Faulkner is his ability to create a character of heroic proportions and to invest his downfall with something like tragic dignity. The feat is, in our times, sufficiently rare.\textsuperscript{13}

In a similar vein Marius Bewley describes Gatsby as . . . a "mythic" character. . . . Not only is he an embodiment (as Fitzgerald


\textsuperscript{13}Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, p. 307.
makes clear at the outset) of that conflict between illusion and reality at the heart of American life; he is an heroic personification of the American romantic hero, the true heir of the American dream. "There was something gorgeous about him," Nick Carraway says, and although "gorgeous" was a favorite word with the 'twenties, Gatsby wears it with an archetypal American elegance.\(^\text{14}\)

Surely characters such as these have a special significance in American literature and a corresponding importance as subjects for study.

While both *The Great Gatsby* and *Absalom, Absalom!* have received substantial critical treatment individually, only occasionally does there appear a one or two sentence comparison of the two characters to be considered here. There has not been a serious in depth detailed analysis of the relationship between Sutpen and Gatsby as American heroes in pursuit of the American dream. While Cleanth Brooks' essay "The American 'Innocence' in James, Fitzgerald and Faulkner"\(^\text{15}\) provides a brief outline of the problem to be


explored here, Brooks' main concern is innocence as an
American trait and the moral implications resulting from
that innocence. He does not fully explore the depth of the
parallels between the two characters, nor does he deal with
the American dream as the driving force behind them.

Therefore, to give this subject the attention that it merits, it is the intent of this paper to illuminate by comparison the characters of Sutpen and Gatsby as Americans in pursuit of that illusive commodity, the American dream. Following the definition of terms, I will examine the parallel lines in the lives of Gatsby and Sutpen with close attention to the text of each work. These basic similarities between Sutpen and Gatsby can be grouped into ten categories: (1) insignificant beginnings and lack of family ties; (2) lack of formal education and the resultant reliance on self-education; (3) self-creation of one's own personality; (4) self-discipline and the use of a timetable in pursuit of the dream; (5) the accumulation of wealth as a secondary but integral part of the dream goal; (6) "shady" methods and manipulations to obtain wealth; (7) qualified success after achieving wealth; (8) attempts at social respectability and acceptability although remaining "outsiders;" (9) oversimplification of reality leading to ill-founded assumptions of success; and (10) the failure to ultimately achieve the dream goal.
Chapter 2: The American Dream and the New Man

Milton Stern has pointed out the difference between ". . . The Democracy as metaphor, in which we were all liberated young demi-gods, or will be, and the democracy as actuality, in which our point-present identities are too often quite mortally something else." So, too, is there a difference between the American dream as concept and the American dream as reality.

Since the concept of the American dream evokes a multitude of connotations, it is essential to designate some specific meaning for the term. The "American dream" will be defined here as an individual goal of personal success, which is sought in a state of unlimited possibility and freedom, which finds its ultimate expression in socially acceptable terms, and which can be gained by arduous and faithful pursuit. This is, of course, the American dream in its ideal form. What it becomes in actuality will be explored later.

The American dream as ideal is a unique concept. As Lionel Trilling points out, "Ours is the only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one. . . ." The character of the American dream sprang from a new

16 Stern, Moment, p. 17.

nation created on a new land by people shaped and made new by new experiences. Because the old ways did not always apply to the new frontier situations, Americans were free to create new values and lifestyles. Out of these new people, surviving in an oftentimes hostile environment, there sprang a dream based on human equality and the rights of the common man, a dream given utterance in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

While being set forth through community oriented documents, this dream is nevertheless an expression of and for the individual. "This was the American Dream," wrote William Faulkner, "A sanctuary on the earth for individual man: a condition in which he could be free not only of the old established closed-corporation hierarchies of arbitrary power which had oppressed him as a mass, but free of that mass into which the hierarchies of church and state had compressed and held him individually thralled and individually impotent."18 Thus Faulkner outlines two main tenets of the American dream. He sees it based both on freedom from the old established restrictive dogmas and freedom allowing for the possibility of escape from the masses into individuality. The American dream is first and foremost an individual enterprise. It is a personal dream of individual freedom, which can produce an interloper in Mississippi in 1833 who

can say "Be Sutpen's Hundred" (AA 9), and the largest plantation in the country "IS." It is this spark of individual imagination that gives substance to the American dream.

Out of these individualistic roots of the American dream there blooms forth, as Marius Bewley calls it, "the romantic enlargement of the possibilities of life,"¹⁹ providing fertile ground for the development of the intense individualism which produces strong willed characters like Sutpen and Gatsby. This concept of heightened possibility, based on the assumption that all men have access to freedom, equality, and unlimited opportunity, is the flower of the American dream. It connotes the image of strong, free, equal men successfully pursuing and achieving individually set goals of happiness. One of the most common manifestations of this enlargement of possibility is the cliche that even the poor boy born in a log cabin can be President. Even the poor boy who begins as "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (GG 130) can achieve his dream-goal, erect his white mansion, and live happily ever after. In the guise of this success myth, the American dream becomes the individual's vision of what he can achieve or become when he is given free reign to exercise his full potential.

Tradition has it that every American child receives, as part of his birthright, the freedom to mold his own life. There are, to be

sure, many dissenters from this aspect of the national folklore. Social critics have long insisted on the limitations that circumstances impose on life patterns, and historians have raised serious questions about the nature and extent of social mobility in American society. Despite such skepticism, however, the idea that ours is an open society, where birth, family, and class do not significantly circumscribe individual possibilities, has a strong hold on the popular imagination. The belief that all men, in accordance with certain rules, but exclusively by their own efforts, can make of their lives what they will has been widely popularized for well over a century. The cluster of ideas surrounding this conviction makes up the American myth of success.20

While it would be impossible to define every possible permutation that the individual's American dream might assume, there is one fundamental similarity in these goals of personal success. They are almost always defined in socially acceptable, quite frequently monetary terms. Fitzgerald in particular felt that money was a truly distinctive American symbol, "a kind of 'fin' which gave Americans

their peculiar mobility and grace."21 As he describes it in The Crack-Up: "In England, property begot a strong place sense, but Americans, restless and with shallow roots, needed fins and wings."22 This is not, of course, to discount the idealistic base of the dream. "While the success myth's symbols were material, its impulse was idealistic."23 Thus the dream in America is a dualism of the ideal and its material embodiment.

These two apparently contradictory elements have been a part of America since its inception. In Two Brief Discourses, one Directing a Christian in his General Calling; another Directing him in his Personal Calling (1701), Cotton Mather, the spokesman of earliest America, lays the groundwork for the fusion of the ideal and the material. As Irvin G. Wyllie points out in his book The Self-Made Man in America, Mather teaches that "in addition to serving Christ, which was man's general calling, all men were obliged to succeed in some useful secular employment, in order to win salvation in this life as well as in the next."24 One must build one's own place in the society of men.

21 Charles S. Holmes, "Fitzgerald: The American Theme," The Pacific Spectator, 6 (Spring 1952), 244.


23 Weiss, Success, p. 7.

This relationship between the need to strive for spiritual gain and the need to seek material gain has been reinforced throughout American history. For example, A. Whitney Griswold has explored the views of Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin, and Timothy Dwight on material success and finds them in agreement that "individual prosperity was a highly desirable thing." Griswold further elaborates that, "For three centuries, Americans have been taught to admire material success: the 'frontier,' perhaps provided the economic basis for the lesson. The growing sense of nationalism, the democratic leveling of social barriers, immense natural resources have combined to make us a nation of 'rugged individualists,' intent upon getting rich." Hand in hand with this assumption of the legitimacy of seeking after wealth comes the correlative assumption that "spiritual satisfaction would automatically accompany material success." Society approves of the wealthy man because "material facts were their own justification." The wealthy man is assumed to have achieved his American dream; his ship has come in, and he is one of God's elect. He has seized

26Ibid., p. 475.
the heightened possibilities of American life and has prevailed in ways accessible to his countrymen. They only need follow his example.

In its purest form this enlargement of possibilities suggests that individual limitations are self-imposed, determined only by the dimensions of the goal the individual seeks. If the dreamer works hard enough and long enough, all things can be achieved. Any problems can and eventually will be solved. "In a land where achievement was more important than titles of nobility there was always the possibility that a nobody could become a man of consequence if he worked hard and kept his eye on the main chance." 29 Faithful and arduous pursuit is the key. A man needs only to seize that key and keep turning it in the lock until the door of American promise yields to him.

This then is the American dream as an ideal: the individual American's dream of personal success, which he seeks in the freedom of unlimited possibility, which he defines in socially acceptable terms, and which he can gain if he just pursues it faithfully and arduously enough. It is the golden chance for human potential.

Coming on the scene to seize this golden chance is the new man, the American, "a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history." 30

29 Wyllie, Self-Made Man, p. 11.

Although much has been written about the character of the American as the new man, it was R.W.B. Lewis in *The American Adam* who most aptly analyzed, distilled, and defined just what this special American character was. For Lewis the new habits to be engendered on the new American scene were suggested by the image of a radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources.  

All of these characteristics come together to form, as part of the American myth, the vital American hero commensurate with the American dream. On the threshold of a new land, he is essentially a new man, self-created, like the nation which nurtures him, ready for any opportunity that might come his way.  

For the purposes of this study, a particularly apt discussion of the American as a unique new character type is outlined in Arthur M. Schlesinger's essay "What Then Is the American, This New Man?" Schlesinger acknowledges the

American as a unique national type and sees the "new man" as "the product of the interplay of his Old World heritage and New World conditions." 32 He further emphasizes the importance of this new world with the qualification that "the conditions offered by an undeveloped continent fixed the frame within which the new life must be lived, the mold within which the American character took form." 33 The new continent offers that enlargement of possibility which shapes the new character. While many traditions and values came to America from the Old World, only those which could be translated into viable useful elements on the frontier survived in the developing continent. Those ideas that could not be transformed by or molded into the new frame had to be discarded as unnecessary.

Schlesinger compiles a list of peculiarly American character traits that combine to produce this new man. These include:

... a belief in the universal obligation to work; the urge to move about; a high standard of comfort for the average man; faith in progress; the eternal pursuit of material gain; an absence of permanent class barriers; the neglect of abstract thinking and of the aesthetic side of life; boastfulness; a deference

32 Arthur M. Schlesinger, "What Then Is the American, This New Man?," American Historical Review, 48 (January 1943), 227.

33 Ibid., p. 228.
for women; the blight of spoiled children; the general restlessness and hurry of life, always illustrated by the practice of fast eating; and certain miscellaneous traits such as overheated houses, the habit of spitting, and the passion for rocking chairs and ice water.34

Obviously some of the items on this list are far more significant than others and not all of them apply equally well to the study at hand. Yet taken as a whole they provide a remarkable portrait of the character of the people who evolved on the North American continent, and in particular they provide enlightenment as to the basic similarities between Sutpen and Gatsby as Americans.

Schlesinger's first item—the belief in the universal obligation to work—is a quality springing from America's long-standing agrarian tradition. "For the colonial farmer ceaseless exertion was the price of survival. Every member of the community must be up and doing."35 Likewise if a man counts the pursuit of his own particular dream as a necessary part of his survival, then work is a necessary adjunct in achieving that dream. For this reason, Thomas Sutpen and "the twenty negroes worked together, plastered over with mud against the mosquitoes and, as Miss Coldfield told Quentin,

34 Ibid., p. 226.
35 Ibid., p. 231.
distinguishable one from another by his beard and eyes alone . . ." (AA 37). For two years he and the slaves work continually "in the sun and heat of summer and the mud and ice of winter, with quiet and unflagging fury" building the house (AA 38). Sutpen can not be content merely to supervise the activities of his slaves. He chooses rather to join with them in a sort of equality of labor, to hasten the consummation of his dream. He would no more think of letting others do all the work, than he would accept any compromise of his design. It is his dream to be built with his own labor.

For Jay Gatsby, the emphasis on work is shifted somewhat. Gatsby, living in the urban society of 1920s America, has a different concept of work, no longer equated with the physical toil of establishing civilization in the wilderness. Work has been translated into monetary terms. Thus it takes Gatsby "just three years to earn the money" (GG 91) that provides him with his mansion and the accompanying trappings of wealth. While Gatsby is not engaged in the same sort of labors as occupy Sutpen, nonetheless Gatsby does affirm a commitment to work as he sees it. They both demonstrate that American penchant for work, laboring unstintingly toward their respective goals.

Consonant with this attitude toward work, the American applies this same seriousness of purpose to every other phase of his living. Particularly striking is the American
attitude toward festivity. As Schlesinger notes, merrymaking is serious business for the American. "Into it goes all the fierce energy that once felled the forests and broke the prairies. We play games not for their own sake but in order to win them. We attend social gatherings grimly determined to have a 'good time.'"36 This concept of the function of recreation shows itself in diverging ways in the lives of Sutpen and Gatsby, due in part to the different eras in which these men lived. In Sutpen's frontier experience, recreation has little place. However, he does indulge in the rather barbaric custom of fighting no holds barred with his slaves, a contest from which he usually emerges victorious. He plays to win, just as he works to win.

Gatsby, on the other hand, views social gatherings as a possible means for achieving his version of the American dream. He assumes his particular role of Trimalchio of West Egg on the chance that Daisy might "wander into one of his parties, some night" (GG 80). While this does not happen, Gatsby still conducts these parties as seriously as he conducts his business, and it appears to Carraway that at these parties Gatsby "... grew more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased" (GG 50). Both Gatsby and Sutpen, approach their respective recreational pursuits with the same singleness of purpose which they apply to their more traditional labor.

36 Ibid., p. 233.
Schlesinger sees the American's immense capacity for work transformed almost automatically into the eternal pursuit of material gain. The American's intensely acquisitive spirit springs in most part from the individualism of the pioneer farmer. "In the absence of hereditary distinctions of birth and rank the accumulation of wealth constituted the most obvious badge of social superiority, and once the process was begun, the inbred urge to keep on working made it difficult to stop."37 It is this American acquisitive spirit that drives Sutpen to obtain "that hundred miles of land which he took from a tribe of ignorant Indians, nobody knows how, and a house the size of a courthouse..." (AA 16). His eternal pursuit of material gain makes him "the biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the county" (AA 72) at the height of his success, and this same pursuit will not let him rest even after the war when Sutpen's Hundred is reduced to "Sutpen's One" (AA 168). No matter how many obstacles he meets, he still pursues material gain with unflagging stint, "impervious... to fatigue" (AA 13). He continues to be driven by this acquisitive American spirit to the end of his life.

In like manner Gatsby pursues the American ideal of material success and acquires "a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanning

37Ibid., p. 239.
new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (GG 5). On the more personal side, he has masses of shirts "piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high" (GG 93) sent to him seasonally by his English buyer. While his years of material pursuit are cut short by his early death, he, like Sutpen, is dedicated to the American commandment that material gain is the legitimate badge of success, and his acquisitions are abundant.

Another American trait that Schlesinger explores is the urge to move about, the American wanderlust, which was fostered by the continued westward movement of the American frontier and has been perpetuated into the time when there is no more west to which the young men might go. "With the advent of the cheap automobile and the passion for long distance touring, the rippling movement of humanity came to resemble the waves of the ocean. In 1940 the American people owned more motor-cars than bathtubs. The pursuit of happiness was transformed into the happiness of pursuit." 38 Although both Gatsby and Sutpen precede the 1940's version of the wandering American, each pursues a circuitous course in his quest for his dream. Sutpen is born in the hill country of West Virginia, slides down to the Tidewater area, and seeks his fortune first in Haiti and then in Mississippi.

38 Ibid., p. 237.
When the dream can't be fulfilled in one place, then the American moves on down the road. Gatsby comes from North Dakota to West Egg via enrollment at St. Olaf College, cruises on the Tuolomee with Dan Cody, assignment to the military camp at Louisville, Kentucky, and brief studies at Oxford, England. In Fitzgerald's words, Americans "beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (GG 182), and the dreamer may like Gatsby fall prey to the "foul dust [which] floated in wake of his dreams. . . ." (GG 2). Yet for both Sutpen and Gatsby the actual dream and the motion of the pursuit of those dreams are inextricably entangled.

If the urge to move about can not be satisfied geographically, then according to Schlesinger, the American adopts other forms of motion. If he "... has no purposeful work on hand, the fever in his blood impels him nevertheless to some form of visible activity. When seated he keeps moving in a rocking chair."39 For Sutpen this continual activity is evidenced by "that unsleeping care which must have known that it could permit itself but one mistake; that alertness for measuring and weighing event against eventuality" (AA 53), which visibly relaxes just prior to his marriage to Ellen Coldfield. Mr. Compson describes Sutpen at that time when "the flesh on his bones had become quieter . . . as though

39 Ibid., p. 232.
after the three years he could trust his eyes alone to do
the watching, without the flesh on his bones standing sentry
also" (AA 48). However, even after his second marriage,
Sutpen remains constantly active, and when he rides home
again after the long exhausting war experience, he "did not
seem to sit but rather seemed to project himself ahead like
a mirage, in some fierce dynamic rigidity of impatience. . . ."
(AA 159). Never is Sutpen completely at rest. His American
blood keeps him ever moving, ever giving vent to his own
dynamic energy.

Though engaged in very different labors, Gatsby, too,
is continually in motion. No matter how relaxed and refined
he hopes to appear, "... that resourcefulness of movement
that is so peculiarly American . . . was continually breaking
through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness.
He was never quite still; there was always a tapping foot
somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a hand"
(GG 64). Like Sutpen, Gatsby's restless movements cannot be
quieted, and he, too, is perpetually in motion.

The belief in the absence of permanent class barriers
is also a basic American trait that Schlesinger notes.
"Geographic or horizontal mobility was the concomitant of a
still more fundamental aspect of American life: social or
vertical mobility. The European notion of a graded society
in which each class everlastingly performed its allotted
function vanished quickly amidst primitive surrounding that invited the humblest persons to move upward as well as outward. Instead of everybody being nobody, they found that everybody might be somebody." In this American atmosphere of enlarged possibility, the boy Sutpen believes he can gain the white mansion with "a barrel stave hammock between two trees . . . and a nigger . . . who did nothing else but fan him and bring him drinks" (AA 228). Likewise the young soldier Gatsby believes he can possess "... the bought luxury of starshine . . . of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor" (GG 149-150). Both of these characters believe as Schlesinger notes, that the rightful "feeling of the American was 'I'm as good as you are' rather than 'I'm no better than anyone else.'"41

Since the absence of permanent class barriers is a long standing American belief, "... the class struggle in America has consisted in this struggle of Americans to climb out of one class into a higher one. The zest of competition frequently led to sharp trading, fraud, and chicanery, but in the public mind guilt attached less to the practices than to the ineptitude of being caught at them."42 Thus, though the city of Jefferson had once tried mob action against

40 Ibid., p. 237.
41 Ibid., p. 237.
42 Ibid., p. 239.
Sutpen, when "at last civic virtue came to a boil" (AA 44) over the presumed dishonest sources of his wealth, eventually "he was accepted; he obviously had too much money now to be rejected . . ." (AA 72). Though the assumption of Sutpen's dishonesty may never have been completely dispelled, he at least does not suffer the more heinous fate of having any of those "shady" methods revealed, and he does appear to have indeed been accorded, though perhaps grudgingly, his niche in the top echelon of his society.

For Gatsby, too, the climb to the level of society he seeks is done with the aid of money tainted by the corruption of Meyer Wolfsheim and his cohorts. However, though the public speculates on the chicanery involved, that doesn't keep anyone from attending his parties. So long as Gatsby hasn't actually been caught, nobody is embarrassed, and the party can go on perpetually. Since he does "drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound" (GG 49), he appears to have "made it." Though the means might be a little shady, the end result is fine. Rising to one's rightful and natural social level is the American way, and both Sutpen and Gatsby accept this belief in complete faith that the ultimate goal will be reached.

Another contributing factor Schlesinger cites is the national optimism, the innate faith in progress. "The American character, whatever its shortcomings, abounds in courage, creative energy, and resourcefulness and is
bottomed upon the profound conviction that nothing in the world is beyond its power to accomplish." All America is thought to be moving onward and upward. All things are possible if they are just approached in the proper manner. Even at the time when Sutpen's design seems to be crumbling to dust, "... he still knew that he had courage, and though he may have come to doubt lately that he had acquired that shrewdness which at one time he believed he had, he still believed that it existed somewhere in the world to be learned and that if it could be learned he would yet learn it. . ." (AA 273).

In similar American style Gatsby, too, demonstrates that "extraordinary gift for hope" (GG 2) by assuming that the past can be repeated: "'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'" (GG 111). For these two optimistic Americans anything is possible; the movement is always into the bright promise of tomorrow. In Schlesinger's appraisal, "To doubt the future was to confess oneself a failure since the life history of almost any American documented the opposite view. The belief in progress blossomed spontaneously in such a soil." If Benjamin Franklin could succeed in his myriad endeavors, there can be no reason why Sutpen and Gatsby shall not be similarly

43 Ibid., p. 244.
44 Ibid., p. 240.
successful. The American mind, rooted in the ideal of unlimited possibility, assumes inevitable progress.

A direct outgrowth of the American's innate optimism, in Schlesinger's opinion, is a tendency towards boastfulness. This optimism "attained its most blatant expression in the national love of bragging. At bottom, this habit sprang from pride in a country of vast distances and mighty elevations and from an illimitable faith in its possibilities of being great as well as big."45 While Sutpen does not exhibit this tendency towards boastfulness, Gatsby certainly demonstrates a flair for this American quality. While he doesn't boast about what he is going to do, he certainly makes up a good story about what he already had done. He boasts, "... I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe--Paris, Venice, Rome--collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me long ago" (GG 66). This obviously is an inflated story, an adolescent imagination bragging about what it would have done if it had been given the chance, but it flows naturally from Gatsby's vibrant character nurtured on the unlimited possibilities of life, and it places Gatsby firmly in the American tradition of boastfulness.

Another American trait that Schlesinger points out is the neglect of abstract thinking. The American "had an

abiding suspicion of the theorist . . . preferring to trust his own quick perceptions and to deal from day to day with matters as they arose."46 For this reason Americans put more credence in the learning that comes from experience rather than that which comes from formal education. The practical things of life can be learned in the American "school of hard knocks," from which self-educated men emerge. Formal education just isn't practical. Thus Sutpen has "some schooling during a part of one winter" (AA 240), while Gatsby lasts two weeks at "the small Lutheran college of St. Olaf in southern Minnesota" (GG 100) and "only stayed five months" (GG 129) at Oxford. Both therefore emerge as self-made American men, quite bereft of any real formal education, but trusting to their own judgment--based on practical experience, not theory--to be able to face any eventuality, to surmount any obstacle.

Hand in hand with the American neglect of abstract thinking Schlesinger sees the neglect of the aesthetic side of life. In the practical work-oriented society that sprang up on the American continent, "the cult of beauty . . . had nothing to contribute to the stern business of living; it wasn't 'practical,'" which resulted in ". . . the architectural monotony and ugliness which have invariably offended

46 Ibid., p. 234.
travelers accustomed to the picturesque charm of Old World cities.\textsuperscript{47} Because aesthetic considerations were insignificant to most Americans, the actual attempts at beauty were often without grace or taste. Thus Sutpen's French architect has "to curb the dream of grim and castlelike magnificence at which Sutpen obviously aimed" (AA 38) in the building of his house. Sutpen's "fierce and overweening vanity or desire for magnificence" (AA 38) can't really grasp the aesthetic considerations needed to achieve his goal of grandeur. His ideas must be aligned with the qualities of grace and taste which until now he has seen no practical reason to cultivate. Thus the architect "created of Sutpen's very defeat the victory which, in conquering, Sutpen himself would have failed to gain" (AA 39), and Sutpen gains his American dream castle without himself having to grapple with the "impractical" aesthetics of the matter.

By Gatsby's time the American neglect of the aesthetic had taken on a little different focus though the "impracticality" of such consideration was still a deeply ingrained American bias and by no means a forgotten one. That anti-aesthetic "bias thus given to the national mentality lasted well into America's urban age."\textsuperscript{48} Though interest in aesthetic considerations increased with time, the area had been neglected too long to come immediately into flower. Thus it

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., p. 233.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p. 233.
is, that though Gatsby seeks to excell in the aesthetic side of life, he really is in "the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty" (GG 99), which leads him to live in an enormous house built by a brewer "early in the 'period' craze" (GG 89), to wear that "gorgeous pink rag of a suit" (GG 154), and to entertain at parties so raucous that "on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before" (GG 39). The descriptive terms, "craze," "rag," and "ravages" show just how far Gatsby misses his goal of beauty and grace. He has the means to acquire the aesthetic things of life, but he does not have the requisite accompanying taste. He really does not succeed in his attempt to live the cultured life, because he tries to force its blooming. Neither Sutpen nor Gatsby ever really possesses the sensibilities to overcome the American neglect of the aesthetic though both attempt to surround themselves with the proper accoutrements.

The final American attribute from Schlesinger's list to be considered here is the deference for women. "Toward women the American male early acquired an attitude which sharply distinguished him from his brother in the Old World. As in every new country, women had a high scarcity value, both in the colonies and later in the settling West,"\(^49\) and in consequence, a certain heightened regard sprang up

\(^49\)Ibid., p. 235.
for them. This deference manifests itself in the form of protection accorded as to a valued possession. The woman is put on a pedestal where she remains a possession, a rather valuable piece of property, which needs to be protected from harm, whether or not she needs or wants such protection. Both Sutpen and Gatsby exhibit this deferential attitude towards women at some point in their lives.

For Sutpen this attribute is most evident at the time when he has both the opportunity and certainly the reason to denounce Eulalia, his first wife. However his morality which included, at least at that time, a certain regard for women "would not permit him to malign or traduce the memory of his first wife, or at least the memory of the marriage even though he felt that he had been tricked by it, not even to an acquaintance in whose confidence and discretion he trusted enough to wish to justify himself. . . " (AA 272). Even to General Compson, who is probably the closest thing to a friend and confidant that he ever had, Sutpen cannot bring himself to speak maliciously of his first wife. He has possessed her as a priceless adjunct to his design and then renounced her, and he still holds her in that characteristic American deference. Though his attitude towards women is far from exemplary throughout, at least in this one instance he does protect one quite chivalrously.
For Gatsby this deference for women assumes colossal proportions when he meets Daisy and weds his fate to her; "... he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail" (GG 149). "He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them..." (GG 99), but once he meets Daisy, his whole life is dedicated to pursuing her, as his idealized vision conceives of her. When he attains her, he will have attained everything. She symbolizes for Gatsby the ultimate value, the ultimate possession, and therefore she needs to be protected. For that reason Gatsby is willing to assume full responsibility for Myrtle Wilson's death. While Daisy is driving the "death car" (GG 138), Gatsby says, "but of course I'll say I was" (GG 144). And, of course, he would have, too, if the situation had come to that. In his regard for Daisy as the ultimate woman, he will protect her at all costs. For Sutpen and Gatsby, however, the protective American deference proves to be also destructive of the woman as a person.

Schlesinger's list of characteristics of the new man applies well to both Sutpen and Gatsby, since each exhibits a remarkable number of those American traits. Of primary concern here are the belief in the universal obligation to work and the resultant seriousness of purpose in regard to most endeavors, the eternal pursuit of material gain for the purpose of achieving a high standard of creature comfort,
the urge to move about both geographically and socially, an innate faith in progress based on an eternal optimism, which in turn gives rise to a love of bragging, a neglect of abstract thinking and the aesthetic side of life, and a certain deference toward women. By these criteria, each man can be judged to be an American, the new man. The elements in varying combinations give rise to the typically American character which both Gatsby and Sutpen possess, and from their common American character spring many of the basic similarities between the two men.
Chapter 3: Sutpen and Gatsby as Parallel Characters

Springing from this common American character, the fundamental similarities between Sutpen and Gatsby are tenfold. These parallels include (1) insignificant beginnings and lack of family ties; (2) lack of formal education and the resultant reliance on self-education; (3) self-creation of one's own personality; (4) self-discipline and the use of a timetable in pursuit of the dream; (5) the accumulation of wealth as a secondary but integral part of the dream goal; (6) "shady" methods and manipulations to obtain wealth; (7) qualified success after achieving wealth; (8) attempts at social respectability and acceptability although remaining essentially "outsiders;" (9) over-simplification of reality leading to ill-founded assumptions of success; and (10) the failure to ultimately achieve the dream goal. These similarities shall be explored here through close analysis of the two texts.

Both Sutpen and Gatsby are the progeny of obscure origins and parentage. As children, both come from poor, rather shiftless families, and neither emerges from his insignificant beginning with any sustaining family ties. In the eyes of their respective communities, these men essentially "came out of nowhere" (AA 9), blossoming without any apparent roots.
Sutpen is born in the mountains of the territory later to become West Virginia, in one of the nondescript "log cabins boiling with children" (AA 221), and he thinks for a time at least that this is the way everyone lives. However after his mother's death,

... the whole passel of them from the father through the grown daughters down to ones that couldn't even walk yet, slid back down out of the mountains, skating in a kind of accelerating and sloven and inert coherence like a useless collection of flotsam on a flooded river... backward against the very current of the stream, across the Virginia plateau and into the slack lowlands about the mouth of the James River. (AA 223)

It is a trip attenuated by the frequent stops at doggeries and taverns where the family "waited for the father to drink himself insensible..." (AA 224), before they can continue their inertial trip down to the coast, where they find themselves "living in a cabin that was almost a replica of the mountain one..." (AA 227). The family home is characterized by "rough partly rotten log walls, the sagging roof whose missing shingles they did not replace but just set pans and buckets under the leaks, the lean-to room which they used for kitchen and which... had no chimney..." (AA 236). This is the home which Sutpen's father fills
with "alcohol snoring" (AA 237) and which Sutpen abandons completely when he strikes out on his own at the age of fourteen. Sutpen is the product of a brutally poor, dehumanizing environment and of a family totally without economic or social stability or sustaining family ties. Sutpen indeed comes out of nowhere.

Likewise Gatsby comes from insignificant beginnings. "His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people..." (GG 99)," and although the family life in North Dakota is never delineated as clearly as Sutpen's early family situation, the description of Gatsby's father at the time of the funeral is that of a man long accustomed to defeat and emptiness. He is "... a solemn old man, very helpless and dismayed, bundled up in a long cheap ulster against the warm September day" (GG 167-68), almost as if he wears the coat to ward off the chill of anticipated rebuff. Mr. Gatz is presented as a dull, ineffectual man who is overwhelmed by most of the situations he encounters. While Sutpen's father hides behind the bottle, Gatsby's father hides behind his gray muffled existence. His world is eons away from Gatsby's own gorgeous conceptions of possibility. Thus it is little wonder that while Gatsby is in Louisville he acutely feels that "he had no comfortable family standing behind him..." (GG 149). At that time, he truly is "a penniless young man without a past..." (GG 149), who left home at an early age to seek his fortune. He has worked as a student-janitor
at St. Olaf College for two weeks, as a Lake Superior clam-
digger for over a year, and then, at the age of seventeen, as personal attendant to the lavish Dan Cody. Unfortunately none of this provides Gatsby with a past that will serve as the foundation for his aspirations.

Springing from obscure, inhospitable origins, with no past or comfortable family traditions to rely on, Sutpen and Gatsby simply "haven't had the advantages" (GG 1) that are available to a Compson or a Carraway, by virtue of family tradition and social position. Nonetheless this lack of hereditary advantage does not pose an insurmountable obstacle for either Gatsby or Sutpen. In the unlimited possibility of the American promise, a Jay Gatsby can "drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound" (GG 49). Likewise Sutpen can ride into town, "man and beast looking as though they had been created out of thin air and set down in the bright summer sabbath sunshine in the middle of a tired foxtrot" (AA 32), and very soon thereafter have deed to what would become the largest plantation in the area, "built . . . apparently out of nothing . . . ." (AA 11).

Both men not only seemingly come out of nowhere, but they both come with nothing. Sutpen appears with only "the strong spent horse and the clothes on his back and a small saddlebag scarcely large enough to contain the spare linen and the razors, and the two pistols . . . with the butts worn smooth as pick-handles . . . ." (AA 33). He makes that
same suit of clothes last for the next five years until the day that he dons "a new hat . . . and a new broadcloth coat" (AA 46) and goes to propose to Ellen Coldfield. In similar manner, Wolfsheim describes Gatsby's return to the States after the war as, "A young major just out of the army and covered over with metals . . . . He was so hard up he had to keep on wearing his uniform because he couldn't buy some regular clothes" (GG 172). Nonetheless, though both start out with just the clothes on their backs, magnificent dreams fill their heads and hearts.

Even in death Sutpen remains without origin. His tombstone "did not divulge where and when he had been born" (AA 188); it only gives his name, confederate army ranking and date of death. Although Gatsby's tombstone is not described, that monument probably also only reflects the deceased's name, army standing and dates. Only if Mr. Gatz projects feelings onto stone, as Miss Rosa does at Judith's death, will more information about the origins of Jay Gatsby be revealed on his tombstone, and Mr. Gatz scarcely seems that imaginative! Sutpen and Gatsby do not escape their insignificant beginnings even in death.

However such obscure origins have a particular meaning for the American. They become, in R.W.B. Lewis' words, "... his complete emancipation from the history of mankind. He was to be recognized now for what he was--a new Adam, miraculously free of family and race, untouched by those dismal
conditions which prior tragedies and entanglements monotonously prepared for the newborn European."50 Surely both Sutpen and Gatsby are emancipated from their families and stand alone as new men on the threshold of a new world, a habitat of "... space as spaciousness, as the unbounded, the area of total possibility,"51 the arena of the American dream.

As has been discussed earlier, the formal education preparing Sutpen and Gatsby for their respective pursuits is at best sketchy. The American disregard for intellectual considerations is a long-standing one, and neither Sutpen nor Gatsby escapes it. This is not to say, however, that they hold no faith in learning. While neither takes full advantage of the educational opportunities of his time, both are firm believers in the benefits to be gained from experience and self-taught practical studies.

Therefore Sutpen determines his course of action by deciding that he needs to be ". . . clever and courageous: the latter of which I believed that I possessed, the former of which I believed that, if it were to be learned by energy and will in the school of endeavor and experience, I should learn" (AA 242). This is Sutpen's theory of education: if he doesn't already have the knowledge or skills necessary to the job at hand, then--optimistic American that he is--he

50 Lewis, Adam, p. 41.
51 Ibid., p. 91.
will learn them, if they are to be learned. He doubts not his capacity to master any new endeavor.

Gatsby's faith in learning is outlined in his Schedule and General Resolves, dated September 12, 1906. Among the items thus preserved on the last flyleaf of the *Hopalong Cassidy* book are "Study electricity, etc.;" "Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it;" "Study needed inventions;" and "Read one improving book or magazine per week" (GG 174). Naive as this partial listing may appear, it still reflects the American faith in self-education and self-improvement. Benjamin Franklin has found a true pragmatic son in Jimmy Gatz, soon to be Jay Gatsby. Gatsby may not be sure of what St. Olaf can do for him educationally, but he knows what he can do for himself.

In his self-study program, Sutpen "... must have almost taught himself to read ..." (AA 62), and from those same books he adopts "the bombastic phrases with which ... he even asked you for a match for his cigar or offered you the cigar" (AA 240). He speaks in "that pleasant faintly forensic anecdotal manner ..." (AA 250), which coming from anyone else would have elicited mirth, but from Sutpen is accepted without comment. Florid and underbred though his manner of speaking may be, he is Sutpen and he commands respect. His linguistic self-education goes even further. He discovers when he goes to seek his fortune in the West Indies, "that all people did not speak the same tongue" (AA 248), and, undaunted, he learns "to speak a new language"
With determination and the will to learn, Sutpen masters those verbal skills adjunctive to his design. Living in a later time, Gatsby—unlike Sutpen—probably learned to read in school, and his language is quite ordinary except for the frequent use of the phrase, "old sport." Probably he adopts this phrase to augment his "Oxford" image. For him, it is representative of the leisure class to which he aspires. Ironically, as Milton Hindus points out, that phrase "... is redolent of the 1890s rather than the 1920s ..."52 and, while still fitting the character, sounds just as affected as Sutpen's overblown, rhetorical patterns of speech.

Just as Sutpen painfully teaches himself to read and to speak the way he believes that a gentleman should, so he also teaches himself the manners that he assumes a gentleman would use. He salutes the people of Jefferson

... with that florid, swaggering gesture to the hat... He was like John L. Sullivan having taught himself painfully and tediously to do the schottische, having drilled himself and drilled himself in secret until he now believed it no longer necessary to count the music's beat, say. He may have believed that your grandfather or Judge Benbow might have

done it a little more effortlessly than he,
but he would not have believed that anyone
could have beat him in knowing when to do it
and how. (AA 46)

Sutpen teaches himself the social skills that he believes he
needs and places in them as much confidence as if he had
grown up surrounded by genteel traditions and manners.

While Gatsby may have had more opportunity to learn
gentlemanly manners than Sutpen, "Practice elocution, poise
and how to attain it" (GG 174) is still allotted an hour a
day on Gatsby's schedule of self-improvement and self-
education. He probably has spent many long hours perfecting
"his graceful, conservative fox-trot" (GG 106) so that it
will be ready for the night that Daisy will finally come to
one of his parties and dance with him. Gatsby, like Sutpen,
recognizes and cultivates the proper social graces requisite
to the level of society that he seeks.

For both men, however, their basic education is completed
in the school of hard knocks with a woman for a teacher.
Sutpen receives his lesson in reality from a West Indian
Creole planter and his daughter, Eulalia, who "deliberately
withheld . . . the one fact . . ." (AA 264) that would have
stopped Sutpen's marriage to her. Because Eulalia does
possess Negro blood, she is not an acceptable wife for
Sutpen, nor is their child an acceptable heir to his American
dream. When Sutpen learns of this deception, he calmly and
rationally ". . . provided for her and put her aside" (AA 240).
Then fully aware of the valuable time he has lost over this lesson, he starts anew on the pursuit of his dream.

In Gatsby's case, Ella Kaye serves to complete "his singularly appropriate education" (GG 102). While Gatsby is supposed to inherit "a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars" (GG 101) from Dan Cody, that estate passes intact into the hands of Ella Kaye. Though Gatsby "never understood the legal device that was used against him" (GG 101) to prevent his inheritance, he did emerge from this episode "... filled out to the substantiability of a man" (GG 102), ripe to seek his fortune and pursue his dream.

Just as Sutpen and Gatsby see to their own educations and learn by sometimes difficult experience, so each creates his own distinct personality and the arena in which that personality shall function. As Cleanth Brooks points out, it "... is not that they are all 'self-made' merely in the fact that they did not inherit their wealth ... . they are self-made--in the sense that they have created their own personalities and disciplined their minds in the service of a dream."53 Both Sutpen and Gatsby seek to mold their lives and their surroundings to create a sphere of unlimited possibility worthy of the dreams to be pursued there.

Reminiscent of R.W.B. Lewis' new Adam, each hero is "both maker and namer; his innocent pleasure, untouched by humility is colored by the pride of one who looks on his

53Brooks, Shaping Joy, p. 185.
work and finds it good. The things that are named seem to spring into being at the sound of the word." For the new Adam, the echoes of Genesis are still resounding in the new world. Thus it is that James Gatz, as maker, believes always in "a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing" (GG 100), and spins out "a universe of ineffable gaudiness ... in his brain ... ." (GG 99), filling his heart with heady dreams. James Gatz, as namer, re-christens himself "Jay Gatsby" and sallies forth to meet his destiny, confident in the fruitful outcome of his venture.

Thomas Sutpen, maker and namer, pronounces "Be Sutpen's Hundred like the oldentime Be Light" (AA 9) and creates the plantation that will be the foundation for the realizations of his dream. In like manner though he doesn't change his own name, he names all of his offspring, "the Charles Goods and the Clytemnestras and Henry and Judith and all of them" (AA 266), and even when he learns that his first born son has Negro blood, he still christens him "Charles Bon. Charles Good" (AA 265). This dynamic quality that compels Gatsby to adopt a new name and Sutpen to assume dominion over all around him is the force that they both harness for the shaping of their own characters.

Sutpen is nothing if he is not dynamic. According to Miss Rosa, he does not merely ride into the town of Jefferson,  

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54 Lewis, Adam, p. 51.
but rather "out of quiet thunderclap he would abrupt . . ." (AA 8), and he contrives ". . . somehow to swagger even on a horse . . ." (AA 16). Wherever he goes, he carries with him "his sober watchful mountain reserve" and "a good deal of latent insubordination . . ." (AA 241). Since he has already determined that to achieve his goal "all that was necessary was courage and shrewdness . . ." (AA 244), he channels his dynamic will toward attaining these qualities, and achieves some degree of success.

Sutpen makes of himself a man who ". . . not only went out to meet his troubles, he sometimes went out and manufactured them" (AA 105). He believes firmly in his capability to meet any test and conquer any adversary. While still quite young, he subdues a slave uprising on the West Indian sugar plantation

. . . maybe by yelling louder, maybe by standing, bearing more than they believed any bones and flesh could or should (should, yes; that would be the terrible thing: to find flesh to stand more than flesh should be asked to stand); maybe at last they themselves turning in horror and fleeing from . . . an indomitable spirit which should have come from the same primary fire which theirs came from but which could not have, could not possibly have. (AA 254)

While his shrewdness in this instance might be questioned,
his seemingly super-human courage carries the day. His
dynamic spirit and force of will are so strong that to Miss
Rosa he invariably evokes a "faint sulphur-reek" (AA 8), a
demonic quality that places him outside the scope of usual
human capabilities. He is constantly seeking to do more and
to be more than anyone would have expected from a simple
mountain boy.

The quality of Sutpen's self-imposed character receives
its most adulatory assessment from Wash Jones who says, "Be-
cause you are brave. It aint that you were a brave man at
one second or minute or hour of your life and got a paper to
show hit from General Lee. But you are brave, the same as
you are alive and breathing. That's where it's different.
Hit dont need no ticket from nobody to tell me that" (AA 284).
In Wash Jones' eyes at least, Sutpen has achieved the ultimate
level of human courage.

Since he creates his own distinct personality, "he was
not owned by anyone or anything in this world, had never
been, would never be, not even by Ellen, not even by Jones'
granddaughter" (AA 171). Like his unique destiny, this
personality which he molds, "... had fitted itself to him
... just as the fine broadcloth uniform ... had fitted
itself to the swaggering of all his gestures and to the
forensic verbiage ..." (AA 246), which were the outward
manifestations of the character of the man within. Sutpen is
his own man, self-made, dynamic, ready to accept the gambit
that life offers him.
Gatsby, too, is a dynamic individual and the personality that he creates is "... an unbroken series of successful gestures" which Carraway can only describe as "gorgeous" (GG 2). Gatsby is "quick and extravagantly ambitious" (GG 101) and expresses himself through his "resourcefulness of movement" (GG 64), his signature "in a majestic hand" (GG 41), and his remarkable smile.

It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it. . . . It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. (GG 48)

These are the qualities that Gatsby amasses for his pursuit of his dream, in preparation for his ultimate gesture, stretching "... out his arms toward ... a single green light, minute and far away ..." (GG 21-22), the symbol of his supreme goal.

Keeping in mind the details of Gatsby's North Dakota home life and parents, there is little wonder that "his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all" (GG 99). As he listens to the cadence of "the drums of his destiny" (GG 100), it does not take him long to formulate his own genealogy.
The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. 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. . . . 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. (GG 99)

As only a person lacking roots can do, Gatsby, like Sutpen, creates for himself a new and unique identity, a personality that becomes a function of the very dream he pursues.

In delineating a method of pursuit for their respective American dreams, both Sutpen and Gatsby draw upon the same dynamic energy resources of self-discipline and self-determination that they use to nurture their self-created personalities. Each outlines his specific plan of action in a blueprint of sorts and then sets out resolutely to follow through with that plan.

As Cleanth Brooks points out, "Sutpen is a 'planner' who works by blueprint and on a schedule. He is rationalistic and scientific, not traditional, not religious, not even superstitious." He is the epitome of the self-made, self-reliant American. As a youth he determines what he

55 Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, p. 306.
needs to do ". . . in order to live with himself for the rest of his life . . ." (AA 234), and from that time forward, he ". . . would accept nothing less, and drove through to get it at whatever cost" (AA 51). As he explains to Grandfather Compson, "I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family--incidentally of course, a wife. I set out to acquire these, asking no favor of any man" (AA 263). With these material goals in mind Sutpen works systematically to attain them, assuming that with determination there is no reason why he should not be successful.

Gatsby, too, follows a predetermined path as he pursues his dream. As a child, he outlines the schedule that he believes will prepare him for future successes.

Rise from bed .................. 6:00 A.M.
Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling ... 6:15-6:30 A.M.
Study electricity, etc. ............. 7:15-8:15 A.M.
Work .................. 8:30-4:30 P.M.
Baseball and sports ................. 4:30-5:00 P.M.
Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it .......... 5:00-6:00 P.M.
Study needed inventions ............. 7:00-9:00 P.M.

GENERAL RESOLVES

No wasting time at Shafters or [a name, indecipherable]

No more smokeing or chewing.
Bath every other day
Read one improving book or magazine per week
Save $5.00 [crossed out] $3.00 per week
Be better to parents (GG 174)

Several of the items listed here have already been dealt with as they apply to Gatsby's self-education. However, the significance of the schedule as a whole springs from its roots in the basic American mentality. In the essay "Fitzgerald's Jay Gatz and Young Ben Franklin,"56 Floyd C. Watkins traces the parallels between the above listing and Franklin's schedule and list of thirteen virtues. The correlations between the two are unmistakable. Adhering to an ingrained American bias, Gatsby, like Sutpen, believes that the systematic self-disciplined approach to life is bound to be the most successful.

Early in their lives both Sutpen and Gatsby suffer what some might assume to be irreparable blows to their aspirations. Sutpen's first wife and son prove to be totally unacceptable in terms of Sutpen's design, and Gatsby's beloved Daisy has married someone else. This would appear to put an end to the dreams. However both men, with characteristic determination and optimism, believe in what Kenneth Eble calls "the myth of the second chance which . . . grows out of the common Western experience of pulling stakes one

place and trying it again further West." When Eulalia in the West Indies is found wanting, Sutpen moves on to Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, where he focuses attention first on Ellen Coldfield, later of Rosa Coldfield, and finally on Millie Jones. Though Gatsby's move from wooing Daisy in Louisville to pursuing her on Long Island does not constitute a westward motion, he still believes that he will have another chance to gain possession of his goal. Both men exhibit that American urge to move about, coupled with a firm belief in the adage, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

On the premise of self-determination, both Sutpen and Gatsby order their lives, following a program of deliberate choices. Miss Rosa comments on Sutpen's remarkable self-discipline and drive in initially taming Sutpen's Hundred, "Because he was too young. He was just twenty-five and a man of twenty-five does not voluntarily undertake the hardship and privation of clearing virgin land and establishing a plantation in a new country just for money" (AA 17). He works harder than anyone would have expected him to work, "impervious anyhow to fatigue" (AA 13), because he has a set goal in mind and a self-imposed deadline to meet. Working under the same timetable pressure, Gatsby takes "just three years to earn the money" (GG 91) to buy his Long Island mansion.

Once the plantation house is built and the New York mansion is purchased, then the two timetables call for an abatement of the former haste. Thus Sutpen's house stands, "unpainted and unfurnished, without a pane of glass or a doorknob or hinge in it . . . for three years . . ." (AA 39), while he amasses his resources in preparation for the next phase of his design. Sutpen allows no rash impulses to interfere with his deliberated plan of action. In like manner Gatsby " . . . had waited five years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths--so that he could 'come over' some afternoon to a stranger's garden" (GG 80), and meet his lady fair. Gatsby selects his house " . . . so that Daisy would be just across the bay" (GG 79), with much the same deliberation as Sutpen uses when he " . . . marked down Miss Coldfield's father . . . " (AA 42) in church in preparation for asking for Ellen's hand in marriage.

Every action that either Sutpen or Gatsby takes is programmed to ultimately draw the dreamer closer to his dream goal. Each follows his systematic predetermined course, with unswerving self-discipline, so that it could be said of either man, if indeed the dreamer ". . . was mad, it was only his compelling dream which was insane and not his methods. . . ." (AA 166).

Sutpen formulates his life goals on the day that his father sends him to the plantation house with a message. At
the front door the boy Sutpen meets a "monkey nigger" wearing "broadcloth and linen and silk stockings" who tells him, ", . . . to go around to the back door even before he could state his errand . . . " (AA 233). This rebuff is totally beyond the scope of understanding for this thirteen or fourteen year old mountain boy, and he spends many hours wrestling with himself, trying to determine how he should achieve his revenge. He finally comes to see ", . . . his own father and sisters and brothers as the owner, the rich man (not the nigger) must have been seeing them all the time—as cattle, creatures heavy and without grace, brutally evacuated into a world without hope or a purpose for them . . . " (AA 235), and he determines, "You got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat them with" (AA 238). These are Sutpen's material goals, but his desire for wealth is really secondary to his ultimate aim.

For Sutpen the fundamental desire is to vindicate that rebuff by achieving a certain quality of life and by founding an enduring dynasty. He wants the "boy-symbol at the door" taken in

. . . where he would never again need to stand on the outside of a white door and knock at it: and not at all for mere shelter but so that that boy, that whatever nameless stranger, could shut that door himself forever behind him on all that he had ever known, and look ahead
along the still undivulged light rays
in which his descendants who might not
even ever hear his (the boy's) name, waited
to be born without even having to know that
they had once been riven forever free from
brutehood. . . . (AA 261)

With this as the ideal to which he dedicates himself, Sutpen wants to be "... even after he would become dead, still there, still watching the fine grandsons and great-grandsons springing as far as eye could reach . . ." (AA 271). He even calls his plantation "... Sutpen's Hundred as if it had been a king's grant in unbroken perpetuity from his great grandfather--a home, position . . ." (AA 16). Desiring a modicum of immortality, he wants to leave more of himself behind than just "a block of stone with scratches on it" (AA 127). As Sutpen explains to Grandfather Compson, "You see, all I wanted was just a son. Which seems to me, when I look about at my contemporary scene, no exorbitant gift from nature or circumstance to demand----" (AA 292), and to that end he expends "fifty years of effort and striving to establish a posterity. . . ." (AA 275). He is devoted without reservation to the "original gambit" (AA 32), of amassing a fortune and founding an enduring family line.

Gatsby is older than Sutpen when he finds the focus of his dream quest, and he has already been immersed in Dan Cody's world of material abundance. As a young soldier, Gatsby is stationed at Camp Taylor outside Louisville, where
he meets and falls in love with "the first 'nice' girl he had ever know" (GG 148). In his devotion, he looks at Daisy "... in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime ..." (GG 76). Even her house holds the young officer enthralled.

There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender, but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor-cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered. It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy--it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions. (GG 148)

Everything about Daisy Fay is exciting and desirable, symbolizing for Gatsby the ultimate promise of life.

Up until the time that Gatsby meets Daisy "his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot" (GG 99). He knows "... that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees--he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the
pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder" (GG 112). However he is willing to forego this expansion of the possibility of life for him alone in exchange for the wonderment of being together with Daisy. "He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete" (GG 112).

Gatsby realizes the limitations that he is placing upon himself when he chooses Daisy--perishable, mortal Daisy--as the goal of his quest, but without reservation he commits himself "to the following of a grail" (GG 149).

To fulfill his desire to possess Daisy completely, Gatsby must acquire great wealth in order to achieve and maintain the quality of life that Daisy symbolizes. His ideal impulse, like Sutpen's, finds expression in material terms and is given utterance in Daisy's own voice. "Her voice is full of money . . . that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it" (GG 120). When Daisy speaks it is "... as if her heart was trying to come out to you concealed in one of those breathless, thrilling words" (GG 15), those words emanating the siren song of unlimited wealth. However while the dream of Daisy and the necessity of wealth are hopelessly entangled in Gatsby's pursuit, the impulse to possess "the
king's daughter, the golden girl" (GG 120) is idealistic. Gatsby's all-consuming passion to be united with Daisy "alone in space" (GG 119) is the central goal. The pursuit of wealth is always secondary to his "incorruptible dream" (GG 155), and his devotion to the latter is unwavering.

Thus, both Sutpen and Gatsby desire wealth, but only as a secondary aim. However to obtain their primary goals, a high degree of wealth is essential, and both men will do what ever is necessary to achieve that goal. They both find themselves under that American obligation to work ceaselessly, in pursuit of material gain, because "the American dream and American wealth are inseparably related. The rich will take as a matter of course what the poor can't win."\(^{58}\)

To acquire the fortunes requisite to the scope of their respective dreams, both Sutpen and Gatsby resort to rather "shady" methods and manipulations to obtain their wealth. These methods, however, do not spring from any particular criminal bent, but rather they are seized by virtue of the "calculated expediency"\(^{59}\) that they represent.

Sutpen learns from his experiences in the West Indies that the "shrewdness" he needs is in reality "unscrupulousness" (AA 250), and by the time he reaches Jefferson, he

\(^{58}\)Stern, Moment, p. 163.

is ". . . a man that anyone could look at and see that, even if he apparently had none now, he was accustomed to having money and intended to have it again and would have no scruples about how he got it. . ." (AA 20). Similarly Jay Gatsby learns his fundamental business techniques from Dan Cody, ". . . the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon" (GG 101), and from Meyer Wolfsheim, "the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919" (GG 74). Gatsby resultant tactics in amassing his wealth lead at least one person to say, "I'm scared of him. I'd hate to have him get anything on me" (GG 33).

This ruthless approach to the acquisition of wealth is admitted even by those who are sympathetic to these two men. As Grandfather Compson says of Sutpen, "Given the occasion and the need, this man can and will do anything" (AA 46).

Likewise, with respect to Gatsby, Carraway ". . . was startled at his expression. He looked--and this is said in all contempt for the babbled slander of his garden--as if he had 'killed a man.' For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way" (GG 135). Both Sutpen and Gatsby are adjudged to be capable of any villainy.

Because each of these men appears apparently out of nowhere and mysteriously amasses a fortune, public opinion is rampant with wild speculations about the sources of both the men and their money. Sutpen is characterized as ". . . this Faustus, this demon, this Beelzebub fled hiding from
some momentary flashy glare of his Creditor's outraged face . . ." (AA 178), while Gatsby is called the "second cousin to the devil" (GG 61). Society is sure that anyone making that much money that quickly must be in league with the devil.

Even without the supernatural implications, the public speculations are colorfully romantic. With "... the two pistols . . . with the butts worn smooth as pickhandles and which he used with the precision of knitting needles . . ." Sutpen can "... ride at a canter around a sapling at twenty feet and put both bullets into a playing card fastened to the tree" (AA 33). Aware of this skill, the citizens of Jefferson do not find it difficult to picture him "... with a handkerchief over his face and the two pistol barrels glinting beneath the candelabra of a steamboat's saloon, even if no worse: if not something performed in the lurking dark of a muddy landing and with a knife from behind" (AA 44). Even after his plantation is established, and he is entrenching himself in the Southern traditions, public speculation does not rest.

There were some among his fellow citizens who believed even yet that there was a nigger in the woodpile somewhere, ranging from the ones who believed that the plantation was just a blind to his actual dark avocation, through the ones who believed that he had found some
Sutpen is unable to escape such suspicions that his gains can only have come through chicanery of one sort or another. Gatsby is the object of some equally imaginative assumptions. Myrtle Wilson's sister Catherine says that "... he's a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's. That's where all his money comes from" (GG 33). Later at one of his parties, it is whispered that Gatsby "... was a German spy during the war" (GG 44). Nick comments that, "It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world" (GG 44). At another party a young lady asserts, "He's a bootlegger... One time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenberg ..." (GG 61). In a similar vein, Tom Buchanan demands, "Who is this Gatsby anyhow? ... Some big bootlegger?" (GG 109). As Gatsby's reputation grows with the Long Island summer, "contempory legends such as the 'underground pipe-line to Canada' attached themselves to him, and there was one persistent story that he didn't
live in a house at all, but in a boat that looked like a house and was moved secretly up and down the Long Island shore" (GG 98). Like Sutpen's, Gatsby's wealth is assumed by the popular mind to be rooted in dishonesty and underhanded dealings. How else can this phenomenal accumulation of wealth be explained? The tradition of Poor Richard can account for only so much success.

While both Faulkner and Fitzgerald provide ample expression of the way characters such as Sutpen and Gatsby affect the fertile public imagination, each author is careful not to delineate too specifically the "shady" methods which his hero employs. Dealing with "the Chickasaw Indian agent" (AA 34), Sutpen acquires his hundred miles of land "... from a tribe of ignorant Indians, nobody knows how ..." (AA 16). Then he brings in the "manacled ... French architect" (AA 8) to build his house. Why the architect is manacled like Sutpen's black slaves is never revealed, but on at least one occasion the Frenchman escapes and is hunted down with "the dogs and the niggers" (AA 219), because the tasks Sutpen expects of him are not yet completed.

The most specific "shady" deal that Sutpen engages in is also never really explained. As Quentin tells Shreve, "Nobody ever did know for certain. It was something about a bill of lading, some way he persuaded Mr Coldfield to use his credit: one of those things that when they work you were smart and when they dont you change your name and move to Texas ..." (AA 259). While these items provide a basis
for the assumptions of Sutpen's dishonest means, the outline of his misdeeds remains sketchy, leaving room for the reader's imagination to fill in the supporting details.

Likewise Gatsby's actual "shady" transactions remain a mystery. His "business gonnegtion" (GG 71) with Wolfsheim is apparent; there is talk of "the betting laws" (GG 135) and an arrest stemming from some "bonds" (GG 167). However the most concrete example of Gatsby's gangland ties is exposed by Tom. "He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drugstores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter" (GG 134.) These items alone, however, are not enough to account for Gatsby's tremendous wealth, so as with Sutpen, the reader must fill in the gaps in Gatsby's criminal career.

One such critical speculation into the origins of Gatsby's immense wealth appears in "Jay Gatsby's Hidden Source of Wealth" by John H. Randall III. Basing his thesis on Gatsby's line, "I was in the drug business and then I was in the oil business" (GG 91), Randall suggests that Gatsby is a party to the Teapot Dome scandal. Whether or not one accepts Randall's idea, admittedly based on circumstantial evidence, the fact that Gatsby's wealth is the subject of critical speculation is tribute to the mystery with which Fitzgerald surrounds the "shady" actions of his character.

Randall further characterizes Gatsby as "... a robber baron, almost on a level with our folk-hero millionaire-picaros of the Gilded Age..."61 This parallels a statement by Brooks that "Sutpen is on all fours with the robber baron of the Gilded Age building a fake Renaissance palace on the banks of the Hudson."62 From "sulphur-reek" (AA 8) to robber baron, the parallels between Gatsby's gangsterism and Sutpen's ruthlessness are complete. Though the reader is not made aware of the specific misdeeds of the heros, the resultant wealth is without doubt ill-gotten, acquired through "shady" dealings and manipulations that will not bear close scrutiny.

Whatever the methods involved, both Sutpen and Gatsby do amass considerable fortunes and achieve a qualified success in the pursuit of their goals. The possession of wealth gives them at least temporary control of their situations, and they both appear to be on the verge of seizing those dreams which they so ardently pursue.

Sutpen has acquired a fine plantation with a magnificent mansion, complete with all the trappings of the southern tradition, including a wife, who will in turn provide him with a noble line of descendents. His mansion, furnished in "mahogany and crystal" (AA 44) and "surrounded by its formal

61Ibid., p. 257.
62Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, p. 298.
gardens and promenades, its slave quarters and stables and smokehouses..." (AA 39), is the ideal setting designed as background for the fruition of his dream. He becomes "...the biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the county...and now he acted his role too--a role of arrogant ease and leisure which, as the leisure and ease put flesh on him, became a little pompous" (AA 72).

Likewise, though her wedding needed to be washed "...out of her remembering with tears" (AA 58), Ellen Coldfield Sutpen blossoms in her position of "chatelaine to the largest, wife to the wealthiest, mother of the most fortunate" (AA 69). "She seemed not only to acquiesce, to be reconciled to her life and marriage, but to be actually proud of it. She had bloomed..." (AA 68). Though she "escaped at last into a world of pure illusion..." (AA 69), Ellen still accepts her role as "duchess peripatetic" (AA 69), and indeed for a time thrives on her position in Sutpen's design.

Just as Sutpen succeeds in marrying well, so his wife provides him with "...the two children, the son and the daughter by sex and age so glib to the design that he might have planned that too..." (AA 262). His noble line hereby established, Sutpen appears to have gained the success he so unswervingly pursues. He has reached his prime: "beard, body and intellect at that peak which all the different parts that make a man reach, where he can say I did all that I set out to do and I could stop here if I wanted to and no man to chide me with sloth, not even myself--" (AA 240). As
Quentin explains, "The design—Getting richer and richer. It must have looked fine and clear ahead for him now: house finished, and even bigger and whiter than the one . . ." (AA 260), where Sutpen had confronted Tidewater civilization. Surely, at least by appearances, Sutpen has achieved a modicum of success. Now all he needs to do is sit back and wait for his glorious line of descendents to emerge out of "... the still undivulged light rays . . ." (AA 261) of the future.

In a similar manner Gatsby attains a qualified success in the pursuit of his dream as personified by Daisy. He amasses his fortune and buys a mansion that will serve as the setting for his reunion with his lady fair. His huge house with its "feudal silhouette against the sky" and its "marble steps" holds "Marie Antoinette music-rooms and Restoration salons," "period bedrooms swathed in rose and lavendar silk and vivid with new flowers . . . dressing-rooms and poolrooms and bathrooms, with sunken baths. . . ." (GG 92). He is building here for himself the sort of residence which he believes that Daisy not only deserves but expects. He has set the stage for the reacquisition of Daisy Fay.

With his wealth accumulating and his house in order Gatsby reintroduces himself to his lady love, and the meeting transforms him. "He literally glowed; without a word or a gesture of exultation a new well-being radiated
from him and filled the little room" (GG 90). As Carraway explains, Gatsby "... was consumed with wonder at her presence. 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" (GG 93).

The meeting of Gatsby and Daisy is a successful start at rekindling their wartime romance, and as the summer progresses "Daisy comes over quite often—in the afternoons" (GG 114) to visit in the house maintained for her pleasure. A further triumph for Gatsby comes at Daisy's house where, "Their eyes met, and they stared together at each other alone in space." With this, "She had told him that she loved him, and Tom Buchanan saw" (GG 119). This disclosure reveals just how far Gatsby has progressed toward his dream. Later when Daisy chooses to drive to New York with Gatsby rather than her husband, Gatsby must have felt certain that the achievement of his goal is at hand. All he needs now is Daisy's pronouncement that she had never loved Tom, and then the goal is reached. Like Sutpen, Gatsby is confident that the success thus far achieved guarantees the ultimate success of the dream quest. With their respective fortunes well in hand, both men have come within sight of their goals.

Since, one important characteristic of the American dream as defined here is its expression in socially acceptable terms, for success to be counted as complete, society's
appraisal cannot be overlooked. For both Sutpen and Gatsby, this desire for approbation is manifested in their repeated attempts at social respectability and acceptability. After determining the original dream goal, each strives to be recognized by the social tradition of his time. As already outlined in the discussion on self-education, this desire for acceptability prompts both Sutpen and Gatsby to cultivate such social graces as each deems necessary to further his particular ends. Thus armed with their self-taught manners and concepts of social propriety, not to mention their waxing fortunes, both men set out to entrench themselves firmly within the citadel of social respectability. Like Schlesinger's American, both assume that permanent class barriers do not exist.

For Sutpen the essence of his conquest of respectability lay in his need to acquire a new bride who could equip him with what his first wife had been unable to provide. However before he makes his choice of a new mate, he first studies the workings of the society of Yoknapatawpha County by inviting the men "... out to Sutpen's Hundred to camp in blankets in the naked rooms of his embryonic formal opulence; they hunted, and at night played cards and drank ..." (AA 40). From these first rather crude social contacts, Sutpen learns the arrangement of the social hierarchy which he intends to scale, and in turn plots his subsequent course of action.
Gatsby's drive for social respectability springs from his desire to be worthy of Daisy Fay. She embodies for Gatsby everything to which he aspires, "... the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves ..." (GG 150). Therefore to provide for himself the aura of the social position that he seeks, he becomes host to enormous house parties executed with dazzling opulence against the backdrop of his huge house. He surrounds himself with those individuals he assumes to be "... interesting people, night and day. People who do interesting things. Celebrated people" (GG 91), and he provides for those guests such luxuries as a diving tower, a private beach, motor-boats, aquaplanes, and the use of his Rolls-Royce (GG 39). Through these immersions in the ceremonies of the tinselled society of his time, Gatsby hopes to establish his rightful place in the tradition of wealth and to re-establish his relationship with Daisy.

It should be noted that during the course of each man's venture into the realm of entertaining, each personally shows considerable temperance. When Sutpen first comes to Jefferson he completely abstains from the use of alcohol. "He did not drink at all, he told them. He did not say that he used to drink and had quit, nor that he had never used alcohol. He just said that he would not care for a drink ..." (AA 33). At this point he has neither the time nor the money for conviviality. Later, when he entertains the hunting parties "... he drank very sparingly save when he
himself had managed to supply some of the liquor... keeping mentally, General Compson said, a sort of balance of spiritual solvency between the amount of whiskey he accepted and the amount of running meat which he supplied to the guns" (AA 40). In this way, Sutpen always retains a sense of order and control in these social situations, "asking no favor of any man" (AA 263). It is part of his design to avoid becoming indebted to anyone, even at his own hunting parties. He strives to maintain a measured degree of social propriety and to always retain the social advantage.

Similarly, Gatsby, as Carraway notes, does not drink, which ". . . helped to set him off from his guests, for it seemed to me that he grew more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased" (GG 50). It is this maintenance of strict control which endows ". . . with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell" (GG 56). A formal gentleman, ". . . no one swooned backward on Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link" (GG 50). That is not Gatsby's style. He takes his role as host very seriously. At one point he even purchases a "two hundred and sixty-five" (GG 43) dollar dress for a girl who had torn her gown on a chair at one of his parties. He practices the noblesse oblige that he assumes to be germane to the social tradition to which he aspires. At all times he observes a high degree of decorum and order, wishing to be simultaneously a socially
acceptable host and a respectable gentleman. Whether the influence be Sutpen's father's frequent alcoholic stupors and Dan Cody's hard drinking debauchery or the unrelenting single-minded pursuit of a larger goal, both Sutpen and Gatsby as hosts eschew alcohol-induced conviviality as the road to their social acceptance and respect and are similarly careful not to be put at a disadvantage socially when they entertain.

Parties however do not long remain the vehicles through which Sutpen and Gatsby seek to join established society. Sutpen knew that "he needed respectability, the shield of a virtuous woman, to make his position impregnable . . ." (AA 15), and from that Sunday morning, "when he entered the Methodist Church . . . in his ironed coat . . ." (AA 42) to seek out a bride, "... there were no more hunting parties out at Sutpen's Hundred . . ." (AA 43). With the same deliberation and determination that he uses to found his plantation and raise his house, "... he had now come to town to find a wife exactly as he would have gone to the Memphis market to buy livestock or slaves" (AA 42). As Mr. Compson relates to Quentin, Sutpen "... laid deliberate siege to the one man in the town with whom he could have had nothing in common, least of all, money . . . a man with a name for absolute and undeviating and even Puritan uprightness in a country and time of lawless opportunity, who neither drank nor gambled nor even hunted" (AA 42-43). However Goodhue Coldfield does possess that rare commodity
of unimpeachable respectability and, incidentally, a daughter of marriageable age, which by Sutpen's equation means "... so many ounces of respectability of prime quality will neutralize so many ounces of infamy.\textsuperscript{63}

At the time when Sutpen is in jail for offenses against what Jefferson considered to be the public decency, "... the best possible moral fumigation which Sutpen could have received ... in the eyes of his fellow citizens was the fact that Mr Coldfield signed his bond ..." (AA 50). However the ultimate social blessing that Sutpen gains is his marriage to Coldfield's daughter. Sutpen's goal is "... not the anonymous wife and the anonymous children, but the two names, the stainless wife and the unimpeachable father-in-law, on the license, the patent" (AA 51). From this bedrock of respectability, Thomas Sutpen can envision the time when he by "... ruthless will had carved a niche ..." (AA 156) in that tradition which he has chosen to be his own. So firm is this foundation, that Sutpen is the man who aids Colonel Sartoris in "... raising the regiment which departed in '61, with Sutpen, second in command, riding at Colonel Sartoris' left hand ..." (AA 80). It appears that in the Coldfield family Sutpen has indeed made a solid choice of in-laws and a marriage partner. His foray into Jefferson's traditional society has an auspicious beginning, now that the hunting parties have ended.

\textsuperscript{63}\textit{Brooks, Shaping Joy}, p. 189.
Like Sutpen, Gatsby, too, puts an end to "his career as Trimalchio" (GG 113), at the prompting of Daisy's unfavorable reaction. Just as he "... revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes" (GG 92), so with the parties, "... the whole caravansary had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes" (GG 114). Obviously his lavish entertaining is not the path to social acceptability in Daisy's circle.

Nonetheless respectability is still of utmost importance to Gatsby, especially with regard to Daisy. "'I don't want to do anything out of the way!' he kept saying" (GG 80). He is concerned that people will gossip about his relationship with Daisy so he fires all his servants now that "Daisy comes over quite often--in the afternoons" (GG 114). She has managed to maintain her reputation even within the activities of the fast Chicago crowd of which she and Tom were a part. They were "... young and rich and wild, but she came out with an absolutely perfect reputation. Perhaps because she doesn't drink" (GG 78). Like Gatsby, she values that extra element of control attendant upon sobriety. Gatsby is eager to preserve this spotless respectability of Daisy's, and on it he wishes to base a permanent relationship. "He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that,
After she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house—just as if it were five years ago" (GG 111). Gatsby assumes that this traditional consummation of his relationship with Daisy will bring him the social position and degree of respectability requisite to Daisy's expectations, which he obviously fails to meet with his role as "the proprietor of an elaborate roadhouse next door" (GG 64) to Carraway's. 

Despite their various machinations designed to integrate themselves into their respective societies, both Sutpen and Gatsby still remain essentially outsiders. Somehow the circumstances of their lives prevent them from ever really becoming a part of their communities. Perhaps it is their insignificant beginnings which do not let them rise socially or perhaps social estrangement is the price for "living too long with a single dream" (GG 162). In either event, acceptance into society is not their lot.

Sutpen is too wealthy to be ignored by the rest of Jefferson. However his children are raised in "... the solitude, the shadow of that father with whom not only the town but their mother's family as well had merely assumed armistice rather than accepting and assimilating" (AA 99). With even the Coldfields—not to mention the rest of Jefferson—having at best only temporarily suspended open hostility towards Sutpen, he unlike Colonel Sartoris, can hardly be numbered among the town's inner circle, which views him as an upstart, social interloper.
His alienation from the community is most obvious, however, at the time when he rejects an invitation to join the Ku Klux Klan. When the deputation approaches him, "... he refused, declined, offered them (with no change of gaunt ruthless face nor level voice) defiance if it was defiance they wanted, telling them that if every man in the south would do as he himself was doing, would see to the restoration of his own land, the general land and the South would save itself ..." (AA 161). In Brooks' analysis of this event, "Sutpen's motive is plain: his defiance does not spring from sympathy for the freed Negroes; but then neither does his repudiation of his first wife spring from any horror of the taint of Negro blood. For better or worse, Sutpen does not represent the feelings of his community. He is never a part of that community."64 His sole concern remains unchanged. His total commitment is always to the fulfillment of his own personal American dream, not to the community whose values he "... has tried to seize upon ... by abstraction and violence."65

Gatsby, too, is left standing outside the closed doors of the society to which he aspires. Part of the impediment is his obscure background. To most of the persons with whom


he seeks to associate, he will always remain, "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (GG 130). In spite of the elaborate story about being ". . . the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West . . ." (GG 65), Gatsby cannot seem to overcome his threadbare, impoverished background. His parties are disparaged by ". . . the staid nobility of the countryside—East Egg condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gayety" (GG 45). The manner in which Gatsby chooses to entertain marks him as being hopelessly "West Egg."

Gatsby also lacks the basic instinct necessary to sense the nuances at work in a social situation. When the three horseback riders, including Tom Buchanan, stop in for a drink at Gatsby's, the woman, "after two highballs" (GG 103), invites Gatsby to a dinner party that evening. This disturbs her two riding companions who obviously don't want him to attend. "'My God, I believe the man's coming,' said Tom. 'Doesn't he know she doesn't want him?''" (GG 104). The social rejection is there though Gatsby fails to perceive it at the proper moment. Even Carraway, who in the final analysis is Gatsby's lone friend, "... disapproved of him from beginning to end" (GG 154). Whether the deterrent be Gatsby's specific methods in seeking social approbation or his unwavering devotion to a single goal at the expense of everything else, like Sutpen, he is never able to achieve the level of acceptability and respectability that he seeks.
Perhaps the most poignant illustration of the social position of each man comes at his funeral. Sutpen is buried by his daughter:

so he rode fast toward church as far as he went, in his homemade coffin, in his regimentals and saber and embroidered gauntlets, until the young mules bolted and turned the wagon over and tumbled him, saber plumes and all, into a ditch from which the daughter extricated him and fetched him back to the cedar grove and read the service herself. And no tears, no bereavement this time too. . . . (AA 186)

Similarly, in spite of all of Nick's efforts, "nobody came" (GG 175) to Gatsby's funeral.

About five o'clock our procession of three cars reached the cemetery and stopped in a thick drizzle beside the gate--first a motor hearse, horribly black and wet, then Mr. Gatz and the minister and I in the limousine, and a little later four or five servants and the postman from West Egg, in Gatsby's station wagon, all wet to the skin . . . . I heard a car stop. . . . It was the man with owl-eyed glasses. (GG 175)

These are the only ones out of all of Gatsby's former entourage who bother to pay their respects at his death. Not even Daisy sends a message or flowers. Carraway recounts that
someone murmured, "'Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on,' and then the owl-eyed man said, 'Amen to that,' in a brave voice" (GG 176), but "The poor son-of-a-bitch" (GG 176) is Gatsby's only eulogy.

The conspicuous absence of mourners at each funeral tells the whole tale. Both men strive unceasingly to become a part of the social traditions of their times, and both fail. They remain outsiders. According to Brooks, in Sutpen's society, "Men did rise in one generation from log cabins to great landed estates. But the past is important, blood was important, and Southern society thought of itself as traditional." 66 Similarly, Gatsby's society springs from "... a nation arriving at the respectability of established wealth and class." 67 Whether the power be established family blood lines or "old" established family fortunes, it is too great for either Sutpen or Gatsby to surmount. The paths of both men follow "... the one distinctly American narrative theme: that of the solitary hero and his moral engagement with the alien tribe." 68

As men "... propelled by lonely, personal, and self-generated energy," 69 both Sutpen and Gatsby remain outside

66 Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, p. 297.
68 Lewis, Adam, p. 85.
69 Ibid., p. 86.
the realm of social respectability and acceptability. Their backgrounds and their methods preclude their entrance into traditional society, and both, like Sutpen's "boy-symbol at the door . . . stand on the outside of a white door and knock at it . . ." (AA 261), and are not admitted.

One of the elements that contributes to the ultimate exclusion from society of both Sutpen and Gatsby is a pronounced inclination to oversimplify reality. Each one assumes that by merely following the ritual motions of society, he will automatically be admitted to the fold; he never sees the underlying substance that gives meaning to those rituals. This one instance of oversimplification is symptomatic of the myopic world view that both men entertain. Demonstrating a remarkably innocent nature, both Sutpen and Gatsby tend to oversimplify reality and then base ill-founded assumptions of guaranteed success upon that elemental view of life. Both, following in the illustrious tradition of Poor Richard, believe, with characteristic American optimism, that indeed all things are possible.

They labor towards the fruition of their respective dreams under the illusions that they are in complete control. They both believe that the application of hard work or wealth or the force of sheer will can achieve any goal. "Sutpen's grand scheme admits of no external force that he cannot conquer through his will and desire." 70 As Mr. Compson

tells Quentin, "He had been too successful, you see; his was that solitude of contempt and distrust which success brings to him who gained it because he was strong instead of merely lucky" (AA 103). With the modicum of success he has already experienced, he trusts implicitly in his self-cultivated abilities to make good on his "original gambit" (AA 32).

Like other "innocents" that Brooks finds in Faulkner's works, Sutpen's "... innocence amounts finally to a trust in rationality--an overweening confidence that plans work out, that life is simpler than it is."71 Likewise, Gatsby lives "... in faith that man can shape his life at will, compelling it to yield the beauty he seeks and the meaning he needs."72 He honestly believes that if he pursues "his incorruptible dream" (GG 155) with "unwavering devotion" (GG 110) that he can overcome any obstacle. Attainment of the dream goal will come just as the attainment of wealth--by whatever means--has also come.

For Sutpen a large part of his difficulty arises from his absolute belief in the power of money. When he puts aside his first wife and child, he tries to appease them with what he considers to be an ample and more than fair financial settlement. Assuming that he has "... bought immunity from her for no other coin but justice" (AA 265),

71 Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, p. 308.

he believes that financial compensation can be substituted for moral consideration, that he can always "balance his moral ledger" (AA 297) by sufficient money payment. Innocently, he "... believed that the ingredients of morality were like the ingredients of pie or cake and once you had measured them and balanced them and mixed them and put them into the oven it was all finished and nothing but pie or cake could come out" (AA 263). The success is guaranteed. This is never fail, no fault baking at its best.

Since his total passion is always committed to the successful completion of his design and not to those persons that he manipulates along the way, he always assumes that people are expendable or at least interchangeable. Therefore when Eulalia and Charles are found wanting, Sutpen shrewdly leaves them behind. Later, after the war, when Sutpen's Hundred lay fallow and wasted and Ellen is dead and Henry disappeared, Sutpen "... believed he could restore by sheer indomitable willing the Sutpen's Hundred which he remembered and had lost." (AA 184). With all determination and confidence, he knows "... he could at least depend on the courage to find him will and strength to make a third start toward that design as it had found him to make the second with ..." (AA 273). Here as in everything else he assumes a successful outcome.

However as he launches into his third attempt at his design, he is not unaware of the mounting pressures of time, particularly with regard to siring a new son. He knows he
is "... now past sixty and that possibly he could get but one more son, had at best but one more son in his loins, as the old cannon might know when it has just one more shot in its corporeality" (AA 279). Therefore, when his attentions turn to Rosa, Sutpen, out of his "... kind of despairing conviction of his irresistibility or invulnerability ... approached her ..." (AA 180) to "... suggest that they breed together for test and sample and if it was a boy they would marry ..." (AA 177), and she, permanently enraged, refuses. He, however, still believes there is a chance for him to beget a son even after the time when he realizes "... at last that his dream of restoring his Sutpen's Hundred was not only vain but that what he had left of it would never support him and his family ..." (AA 180-81). Still measuring his morality out like money, he "bought his way" (AA 181) into the life of Millie Jones, "... using out of his meager stock the cheap ribbons and beads and the stale violently-colored candy with which even an old man can seduce a fifteen-year-old country girl ..." (AA 182-83). On this one last chance he stakes his dream, innocently believing he must succeed this time since an investment as great as his has been must eventually show a return.

Gatsby, too, is plagued with the naive belief that "... he can buy his dream ..."73 and "... recover intact

his first, fresh love for Daisy. . ."74 Even though Daisy
marries someone else while Gatsby is overseas, he has learned
well "... what his nation has taught him. Get rich, and
you can turn the clock back, do it all over again, regain
the life which existed in the youthful dream."75 Thus his
vision of life acknowledges neither time nor limit. He
assumes all things are possible. He believes Daisy's
marriage to Tom can be "all wiped out forever" (GG 132) by
Daisy's pronouncement that she has never loved her husband,
and then everything can be "just the way it was before"
(GG 111). He is positive that his time with Daisy can be
repeated, and now he won't be hampered by insufficient
funds, in his pursuit of the girl whose "voice is full of
money" (GG 120). He will provide the "string of pearls
valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars" (GG 77)
for this wedding, just as he has equipped himself with the
other trapping to impress Daisy. William Fahey notes that
"... five months at Oxford do not make an Oxford man, nor
does a chestful of medals prove that a man is valorous any
more than a vast estate on Long Island indicates that he has
arrived socially. But Gatsby, with naive innocence, believes
they do,"76 just as he believes that his dream is there for

74 Ernest Lockridge, ed., "Introduction, "Twentieth Century
Interpretations, p. 12.

75 Stern, Moment, p. 250.

76 William A. Fahey, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the American
Similarly he is positive that Daisy feels the same mutually exclusive love for him as he feels for her. As Stern points out, "It would have to be inconceivable to him that a love which had excluded every other reason for existence should have been shared, that he had not been to Daisy what she had been to him."77 Innocently and simplistically, Gatsby attaches ". . . some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured" (GG 152). Daisy's relationship with Tom " . . . was just personal" (GG 152), but her fidelity to Gatsby must be as immense as man's "capacity for wonder" (GG 182). Being "possessed by intense life" (GG 97) and having that "instinct toward his future glory" (GG 100), Gatsby believes that he can do anything, even repeat the past, and win the girl on the second time around, or ". . . clutching at some last hope . . ." (GG 148), the third time.

While both men are confident in success, unforeseen complications arise. There has been a mistake in planning that could slow the forward progress toward their goals. However both remain innocently confident that any error is correctable. When Charles Bon, Sutpen's part-Negro first born son, appears at Sutpen's Hundred, Sutpen takes his problem to Grandfather Compson

77Stern, _Moment_, p. 256.
... not calling it retribution, no sins of the father come home to roost; not even calling it bad luck, but just a mistake: that mistake which he could not discover himself... to review the facts for an impartial... mind... Not moral retribution you see: just an old mistake in fact which a man of courage and shrewdness... could still combat if he could only find out what the mistake had been.

(AA 267-68)

Oversimplifying reality, Sutpen is sure that his problem with Bon is "only a minor tactical mistake" (AA 269), "... that mistake which he believed was the sole cause of his problem." (AA 271). His old "pie baking" morality which has always colored his egocentric view of reality "... was already falling into pattern, already showing him conclusively that he had been right, just as he knew he had been, and therefore what had happened was just a delusion and did not actually exist" (AA 280). Once he determines what that mistake is and corrects it, he will assuredly be back on the road to his American dream, just as if he had never been sidetracked.

Gatsby, too, feels that a mistake has been made in the course of his quest and he seeks to identify that problem. He tells Tom, "'She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved any one except me!'" (GG 131).
This, however, does not encompass the full range of Gatsby's uneasiness, and he communicates this to Carraway. "He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was . . ." (GG 111-12). Out of his "extraordinary gift for hope" (GG 2), he still believes that he can simply return to that time past and "fix everything" (GG 111) for a clearer pursuit of his ideal.

Because both Sutpen and Gatsby do hold innocently simple views of reality as it pertains to their own powers and potentialities, they assume that their respective ventures must be successful and to this conception both are faithful to the end. Sutpen never realizes where his mistake lay. Grandfather Compson affirms that, "He never did give up" (AA 268). Like Rosa Coldfield, Sutpen retains always that "bitter and implacable reserve of undefeat" (AA 11). Never gaining in self-knowledge, he pursues his dream to the end of his life. Rosa is horrified that he is "... allowed to die without having to admit that he was wrong and suffer and regret it" (AA 305). However critics agree that such insight is not vouchsafed for Sutpen. He is unregenerate, innocently pursuing his dream to the day of his death.
In Gatsby's case the critical assessment is less clear cut. Some critics, including Fahey,\textsuperscript{78} Mizener,\textsuperscript{79} and Stern,\textsuperscript{80} see Gatsby as finally realizing the futility of his quest, while others, such as Bewley,\textsuperscript{81} Piper,\textsuperscript{82} and Trilling,\textsuperscript{83} see him as innocent to the end. Since, however, the hints of Gatsby's underlying uncertainty, such as the disenchantment of the green light (GG 94), Gatsby's vigil over nothing (GG 146), and the phone call that never came (GG 162), come from Carraway's vision rather than Gatsby's, it appears that only Carraway is fully aware of meaning of the events that transpire. It is Nick, not Gatsby, who visualizes the real nightmare, who looks up "... at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass" (GG 162). As Bewley points out:

Gatsby never succeeds in seeing through the sham of his world or his acquaintances very clearly. It is the essence of his romantic American vision that it should lack the seasoned powers of discrimination. But it invests

\textsuperscript{78}Fahey, \textit{Dream}, p. 85.


\textsuperscript{80}Stern, \textit{Moment}, p. 259.

\textsuperscript{81}Bewley, "Criticism," p. 39.

\textsuperscript{82}Piper, \textit{Portrait}, pp. 150-51.

\textsuperscript{83}Trilling, "Fitzgerald," p. 18.
those illusions with its own faith, and thus it discovers its projected goodness in the frauds of its crippled world. . . . It is a vision totally untouched by the scales of values that order life in a society governed by traditional manners. . . . 84

In all innocence and simplicity, Gatsby defines and pursues "his incorruptible dream" (GG 155), and "... to this conception he was faithful to the end" (GG 99). Like Sutpen, Gatsby retains his oversimplified view of reality throughout his life and never in despair fears that the dream quest will fail.

Obviously, however, both men do ultimately fail to achieve the dream goal. Sutpen has sired no suitable heirs, and Gatsby is allowed no lasting reunion with Daisy. The two dreamers, along with their life-directing dreams, are dead, never having been aware that the goals they so ardently sought were already behind them in the past. Instead, always believing in the myth of the second chance, Sutpen and Gatsby try to repeat the patterns of their lives, indiscriminately manipulating persons and things along the way, until the two dreamers are in turn destroyed.

As has already been noted, both Sutpen and Gatsby, when frustrated in their initial attempts to achieve their goals, 84Bewley, "Criticism," p. 39.
set out undaunted to regain what they have lost. Thus Sutpen moves from the West Indies to Mississippi, and Gatsby moves from Louisville to Long Island. Neither in his innocence, however, is able to reassess his position and really learn where his "mistake" lies. Thus both men are victims of their own naive inability to see beyond the already established pattern. For Sutpen, this inability to locate his error dooms him to a repetition of his sins. At best, he can think only in terms of some practical mistake, some miscalculation in "strategy" which threw him off the "schedule" he had set himself for the completion of his project. The actual source of his frustrations remains concealed from him; he questions neither the limitations of his own rationalism nor the justice underlying the design itself. 85

Never seeing beyond his own oversimplified vision of reality, he fails to realize that he has admitted no one who has stood outside his door and knocked.

Likewise, to Gatsby, with his inexhaustible capacity for optimism and hope

... nothing was final, irrespective of actions and circumstances, so long as the dream

engaged his heart. The past remained open to perfection; events could not end. His reenactment of past interlude in another time, another place, and other circumstances—this and his death compose a text for our instruction: to repeat a pattern is not to understand the complexities and limitations of that pattern. 86

Obviously Gatsby's view of reality prevents him from understanding that his pattern leaves no room for Daisy as a person or for the changes that time inevitably brings. He fails to grasp the finite dimensions of his world. Thus, both men blindly try to restage scenarios for which the final curtain should already have fallen and which the head puppeteer—or the master weaver—fails to properly direct and control, and the result is as vain and "as thin as a repeated dream." 87 In the background, "... the stage manager ... was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shadows and shapes of the next one" (AA 73), dooming the repetitive manipulation of persons and things to failure.

However, with his design to complete and his schedule to keep, Sutpen's disregard for human concerns comes as a matter of course. He simply does not recognize the mutual bond of human interdependence the way Judith does. As she

86 Callahan, Illusions, p. 22.
87 Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, p. 104.
tells Grandmother Compson:

You get born and you try this and you don't know why only you keep on trying it and you are born at the same time with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying and they don't know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug. . . . (AA 127)

Though Judith understands these individual strivings, Sutpen's illusions of control prevent him from seeing the people around him as anything but pawns to be manipulated into positions in his design. Therefore, he can regard Charles Bon not as a long lost son at last come home, but simply as a "mistake." Though Sutpen has no real abhorrence of black blood, acknowledgment of a part Negro son is beyond his scope. His design will not be acceptable to him if Bon is made a part of it, and Sutpen is resolute in that conviction. The consequences of this incapacity for feeling are grave. Bon is murdered, and Sutpen's acknowledged son Henry, the murderer, is doomed to life as a fugitive. Judith is left a widow before she could become a bride, and Bon's remaining descendents are left to suffer the rest of family's ill-fated
portion. Sutpen's manipulations have gone awry. He has been unable, in the final assessment, even at the expense of his children, to force the successful completion of his design.

Gatsby, too, commits the sin of trying to manipulate the people around him to his own ends. Not even Daisy escapes this dehumanizing force, because in Gatsby's mind she is inextricably linked to the money, power, and position, which are the fruits of American success. Daisy has ceased to be a person to Gatsby, "... because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. 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" (GG 97). Now after a five year separation, he comes to her and asks her not only to leave her husband, but to completely erase from her life everything from that five year period. Her response sums up her position as a person not a pawn. "'Oh, you want too much!' she cried to Gatsby. 'I love you now--isn't that enough? I can't help what's past.' She began to sob helplessly. 'I did love him once--but I loved you too'" (GG 133). Trying to force Daisy to fit into his idealized conception of her, Gatsby expects more of Daisy than she as a person is able to give.

This force of will to succeed allows both Sutpen and Gatsby to flourish for a time. However Sutpen is "... unaware that his flowering was a forced blooming..."
which will wither when Bon, that "elegant and indolent esoteric hothouse bloom" (AA 97) comes to Sutpen's Hundred to graft a new scion onto the family tree, where "... (now) five faces looked with a sort of lifeless and perennial bloom like painted portraits hung in a vacuum ..." (AA 75). Though the growth appears sound, Sutpen's design, rooted in cruelty and disregard for human needs, will perish. Likewise, though Gatsby remembers the moment when Daisy "... blossomed for him like a flower. ..." her breath is "perishable" (GG 112), and the ephemeral flower will fade and die no matter how much force of energy Gatsby applies. The hopes for a second chance with Sutpen's second family and Gatsby's staged reunion with Daisy spring from the compelling impetus of the dreamers' will, but both are fated to failure, because the chance to fulfill those dreams is already past. The force bloomings are futile since the dreams are already doomed.

Although Sutpen fails to recognize it, his design is bankrupt from the day that he repudiates Eulalia and tries to appease her monetarily. It is only when Bon presents him with his crushing dilemma that Sutpen realizes that "... no matter which course he chose, the result would be that that design and plan to which he had given fifty years of his life had just as well never have existed at all by almost exactly fifty years ..." (AA 272). However even at this juncture, he does not give up. Likewise Gatsby's dream "was already behind him" (GG 182), when he makes his "irresistible journey to Louisville" (GG 152) at the end of the war.
When his train leaves town, "... it was all going by too fast now for his blurred eyes and he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever" (GG 153), but he, too, continues his dream quest. Long after there is any chance to gain their goals, Sutpen and Gatsby both are still parlaying their positions. But though the "... dead dream fought on ... trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undauntingly ..." (GG 135), it is nonetheless dead. Whether the death be recorded, like the Old South's, on "a sheet of notepaper with ... the best of French watermarks dated seventy years ago ... and written upon in the best of stove polish manufactured not twelve months ago in a New England factory" (AA 129) or engraved "as a night scene by El Greco" (GG 178) in the gallery of the mind of Gatsby's last tortured friend, the dream of "... the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes ..." (GG 182) has died, leaving a host of victims in its wake. The force blooming has failed to bear fruit.

With the dream dead all that remains to complete the cycle is the death of the dreamer. After years of drinking together "under the scuppernong arbor on the Sunday afternoons" (AA 282), Wash Jones, as an image of Father Time, kills Sutpen with "the rusty scythe" (AA 185) that had leaned on the porch of the old fishing camp for two years while Jones put off cutting down the weeds. Instead of
weeds, Jones cuts down Sutpen in retaliation for his treatment of Millie Jones who has just given birth to Sutpen's child, a baby girl. Sutpen's response, "'Well, Millie, too bad you're not a mare like Penelope. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable'" (AA 281), is more than Jones can bear. For once in his life, he will not be inhumanly manipulated. He kills Sutpen and, taking full responsibility for his act, calmly waits for the retributive death he knows awaits him from "the curious and the vengeful--men of Sutpen's own kind" (AA 289). Then when the posse arrives, he destroys his granddaughter Millie and Supten's unnamed infant daughter before racing out to meet his fate; "... he ran with the scythe above his head, straight into the lanterns and the gun barrels, making no sound, no outcry while de Spain ran backward before him ..." (AA 292). Wash--presumably short for Washington, that fine old American name--Jones, the one who remained unchanged in spite of the war, has gotten his revenge on the upstart man who wanted too much and was willing to do anything to get it. Washington has eliminated one more American dreamer with a dead dream.

Gatsby, too, comes to a violent end, and Fitzgerald is careful to make clear the associated implications for America. While relaxing in his swimming pool for the first time all summer and waiting for Daisy's call, Gatsby is shot by George Wilson, a man "'deranged by grief'" (GG 164) at the
death of his wife Myrtle. The fact that Gatsby is not responsible for her death is the ultimate irony, for which Tom Buchanan gets the last laugh. Conveniently, it is Daisy's husband who actually directs Wilson to Gatsby, thus drawing suspicion away from the Buchanan household. Obviously Wilson is a pawn here as in everything else he does, and the murder is a "mistake." Yet how could Gatsby hope to escape such a fate, mistaken or not, when "... foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams" (GG 2)? As Lehan points out: "Symbolically, the 'green breast of the new world' becomes this Valley of Ashes. ... Certainly Gatsby's dreams turn to ashes; and it is dramatically and thematically appropriate that the custodian of the Valley of Ashes, George Wilson, should be Gatsby's murderer. ... Wilson is the executioner of a dream--and that ... dream gives way to ashes...."88 Adding further to the ironic significance of this scene of ashed destruction is Trask's interpretation of the billboard oculist. "For Dr. T. J. Eckleburg is none other than a devitalized Thomas Jefferson, the pre-eminent purveyor of the agrarian myth"89 which Trask sees as the basic nurturing element for the now defunct American dream. In broader terms, Trask asks, "What is it that Dr. Eckleburg's eyes survey? It is the valley of democracy turned to ashes--the


The new man has ventured forth into what he believed to be a new world, and he has found it to be empty, a sham, a trick, and the much touted American dream to be a fatal trap. Gatsby and his dream are dead.

For both Sutpen and Gatsby the repetitious actions and manipulations that were supposed to yield a rich reward have instead led to the death of the dreams and the destruction of the dreamers. In spite of the qualified successes of their near superhuman achievements in the creation of distinctive personalities, embellished by self-education and self-discipline in the rise above their insignificant beginnings, the accumulation of great wealth (even though the means may have been questionable), and the strong attempts at social acceptability and respectibility, both Sutpen and Gatsby remain social "outsiders," who are plagued by such innocent, oversimplified views of reality and ill-founded assumptions of success that they fail to recognize that point where unlimited possibility turns into repetitious futility. Thus they "... beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (GG 182), innocent dreamers sacrificed to a dead dream.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p. 200.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

If the dreams of Sutpen and Gatsby are dead and the dreamers themselves have died, the need remains to explore the consequences that these fatalities may bear for subsequent Americans who dare to dream in grandiose American terms. To accomplish that, certain relationships between the American dream and the new man must be established.

As defined here the American dream is an individual goal of personal success, which is sought in the freedom of unlimited possibility, which is defined in socially acceptable terms, and which can be gained through arduous and faithful pursuit. This concept of the dream springs organically from those previously discussed characteristics which Schlesinger uses to define the American as the "new man." From his American wanderlust, his belief in the absence of permanent class barriers, and his overwhelming national optimism comes the concept of the freedom of unlimited possibility. From his pursuit of material gain as a badge of social superiority and from his deference for women as prized pieces of property comes the expression in socially acceptable terms. From his hard work and seriousness of purpose, as well as his chicanery, and from his neglect of abstract thinking and aesthetics in favor of self-education
and practicality comes his belief in the success of the faithful and arduous pursuit of any goal. Working in concert, these characteristics of the new man are joined together to define the unique dream for the new land.

As new men, who begin with nothing and aspire to everything, Sutpen and Gatsby pursue those dreams which arise out of their American nature, never questioning the basic concept of the dream to which they commit their lives. Possessing that American quality which Fitzgerald calls "a willingness of heart"\(^9^1\) to believe in that dream, neither Sutpen nor Gatsby is aware of the gulf separating the dream as concept and the dream as actuality. Neither is truly aware of the actual conditions and limitations which determine the reality of this hotly pursued happiness.

While all men are created equal in their right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, all men are not equally blessed with the talent or opportunity to seize that happiness if and when it appears. Even the "sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth" (GG 1). Whether or not the American dreamer will admit it, social and economic barriers exist, and goodness and industry do not always prevail. Therefore all individual dreams of personal success do not come true, since the freedom of unlimited possibility for the individual does not exist no

\(^9^1\) Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, p. 197.
matter how arduously pursued. The reality of human society fetters both the dreamer and the dream.

One of the major limiting and distorting factors for the dream comes from the pursuit of wealth as an adjunct to the pursuit of happiness. The pursuit of material gain, while springing from an idealistic base, too often becomes an end in itself rather than a means. As John F. Callahan points out:

According to Franklinian doctrine (Calvinism distilled through Poor Richard), a man's worth, or, if one prefers, God's election of man, is determined and demonstrated by his material success. Thus, in actuality, the Alger myth of the self-made man takes on a horrifying literal meaning. Man was not a man until he had proven himself by owning the world. In terms of identity one was no longer born of woman into a society where one found purpose and a place. Instead, one symbolically gave birth to himself by becoming "worth his weight in gold."  

While carrying the original American spiritual-material dicotomy to its ultimate conclusion, this assessment of the American character in pursuit of its dream of personal success, carries with it the full implications of what

92Callahan, Illusions, p. 8.
it means to spring from a country created in its own image, a country sprung from its own "Platonic conception" (GG 99) of itself. Among other things it means that the rags to riches myth is built on the naive and fallacious assumption, as William A. Fahey notes, that "material possessions are synonymous with happiness, harmony, and beauty." The self-made man, pursuing his ideal, falls victim to the actuality of America, and the American promise is shattered on the rocks of reality.

Obviously, when viewed both as a concept and as an actuality, the American dream is potentially both a blessing and a curse. The fatality of the dream is that the pursuit of happiness can too easily turn into the nightmare of pursuit, as it does for Sutpen and Gatsby. Because of their respective American traits of unwavering optimism and self-reliance, neither is able to deter from his set course even after the time when it becomes obvious to all but him that he will not attain it. Rosa Coldfield recognizes "... that dream-state in which you run without moving from a terror in which you cannot believe, toward a safety in which you have no faith ..." (AA 142), but Sutpen does not. He recognizes only his own self-determination. Likewise, Carraway is aware that "There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy, and the tired" (GG 81), but Gatsby is

93Fahey, Dream, p. 70.
conscious only of his dream. Such single-minded, driving pursuit, while providing the impetus for such qualities as self-education and self-discipline, presages the inherent failure of the dreamer.

In viewing these failed dreams, it appears that indeed there was what Gatsby and Sutpen would term a "mistake." Both had begun following such luminous prospects, and yet when their tales are told, the promise has come to naught. Perhaps Trilling best explains what goes awry. He notes, "In the bright dreams begins the responsibility which needs so much prudence and dominance to sustain..."94 Though their dreams were undoubtedly bright, neither Sutpen nor Gatsby feels responsible for anyone or anything beyond himself and his dream. Neither maintains any sustaining perception of other people as human beings with needs and desires of their own. Sutpen shows this oversimplification in his dealings with both his wives and all of his children; Gatsby demonstrates this particularly in his relationship with Daisy. In none of these associations is there any assumption of the humanity of the others involved. As far as Sutpen and Gatsby are concerned, only the dream is real.

This form of self-assertiveness can have devastating consequences. As Callahan points out, "For aggression (owning, exploiting, annihilating the other person) and

idealization (turning the other into an image within the perceiver or lover's mind) both destroy personality."95 Sutpen's aggressive approach to living and Gatsby's idealized conception of life are equally destructive to the dreamers, their dreams, and those around them. With Sutpen representing the nineteenth century strong willed, self-made, self-sustaining American and Gatsby embodying the all consuming drive for money and position in twentieth century America, the unilateral pursuit of the dream becomes a manipulative, dehumanizing, circling path. The "mistake" that plagues both Sutpen and Gatsby is not an error so much in the execution of their respective plans, but rather a flaw in the basis of the designs themselves, a flaw which annihilates the common bond between human hearts.

Sutpen ruthlessly uses people, especially his wives, to piece together his design, without regard to the ethics of the methods involved. Displaying this characteristic American deference towards women, he treats his wives like valuable pieces of property so long as they fulfill their function within that design. They are, however, expendable, and like other property they can be replaced if necessary. Such amoral balancing of the moral human ledger proves costly for both Sutpen and the South. To build an "... edifice not on the rock of stern morality but on the shifting sands of

opportunism and moral brigandage" (AA 260) is to undermine the entire program. He builds his design on sand, and it crumbles when Bon appears.

Similarly, Gatsby loses sight of Daisy as a person and seeks to possess her as the literal object of his affection. In the process of feeding this colossal vision of reality, he resorts to increasing levels of crime to finance his romance. There is no question for him about founding his conduct "on the hard rock or the wet marshes" (GG 2). The swampy area is much more profitable. Unfortunately his methods cannot be divorced from his money, and Daisy cannot accept those methods. That same gulf that separates Gatsby from Daisy as a possession divides him also from Daisy as a person, and his dream built on the wet marshes washes away when lashed by Tom's onslaught of accusations during the confrontation at the hotel and by the crisis of Myrtle Wilson's death. Between the "shady" methods of operation and the destruction of persons, either by aggression or idealization, Sutpen and Gatsby have doomed their designs to inadequate and unstable foundations. The "mistake" lies there.

The mistake also lies in their inability to distinguish between the dream as ideal and the dream as actuality. The American optimism that provides the energy to pursue the dream, blinds both Sutpen and Gatsby to the reality of the
situation. They never see the futility of pursuing their specific courses, and they become victims of their own single-minded American characters.

However, illusive as the concept of the American dream may be, and in this case fatal, too, the dream does remain a reality of American life. It is part of our national heritage, and there is a redeeming element in it. Though as a goal it may be unattainable, nevertheless to fail magnificently is also a feat. According to Faulkner, the Sutpen story fascinates Quentin so, because "... he grieved the fact (because he hated and feared the portentous symptom) that a man like Sutpen, who to Quentin was trash, originless, could not only have dreamed so high but have had the force and strength to have failed so grandly." 96 Sutpen gives his total being over to accomplishment of his goal, and holding nothing back, he follows through on "the original gambit" (AA 32) without stint. Likewise "Gatsby is the foolhardy idealist who cannot take the common-sense view, who refuses to accept an equivocal love." 97 He is obsessed by the wonder of life, and he spends his days pursuing that wonder, trying to create for himself the splendors which his imagination paints for him. He, too, is great in the scope of his failure.

97Piper, Portrait, p. 102.
In reference to the pursuit to which he and his writing contemporaries had committed their lives, Faulkner summarizes, "All of us failed to match our dream of perfection. So I rate us on the basis of our splendid failure to do the impossible." The important consideration is not that the dream has failed, but that the dreamer, his methods aside, was inspired to dream at all. It is significant that this new world, "... that flowered once for Dutch sailor's eyes--a fresh, green breast of the new world" (GG 182), polluted and ashen as it may now be, still generates for some American dreamer "something commensurate to his capacity for wonder" (GG 182).

In living out their American destinies as new men, Sutpen and Gatsby have parallel ascending and descending fortunes, yet their American character traits hold steady and firm throughout their respective American odysseys. They each have a dream which evokes unwavering devotion. They each struggle; they each make mistakes; they each fail grandly. However throughout they remain innocently unable to discern the difference between the pristine promise of this pursuit of happiness and the reality of actual pursuit. Herein the fatality lies, the key to which is contained in an often cited Fitzgerald definition: "... the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed

ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the
ability to function." American dreamers need the ability to
believe in the dream and to simultaneously understand its
reality, without losing the impetus to pursue that dream.
The dreamer also must be flexible enough to change his
course of pursuit if reality so dictates. Otherwise the
"... price for living too long with a single dream" (GG 162)
is very high. It might even be the death of the dream and
the sacrifice of the dreamers, like Sutpen and Gatsby. The
potential for this "incorruptible dream" (GG 155) carries
with it a weighty responsibility, and only those who possess
both that sense of responsibility and "an extraordinary gift
for hope" (GG 2) should dare to accept the gambit.


Schlesinger, Arthur M. "What Then Is the American, This New Man?," American Historical Review, 48 (January 1943), 225-44.


