

ẨN DỤ Ý NIỆM VỀ GIẤC MƠ MỸ TRONG TÁC PHẨM *THE GREAT GATSBY* CỦA TÁC GIẢ F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

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Nghiên cứu này nhằm khám phá cách dùng và ý nghĩa của các phép ẩn dụ ý niệm được sử dụng trong tiểu thuyết nổi tiếng *"The Great Gatsby"* của Scott Fitzgerald, xem xét cách thức Fitzgerald sử dụng những công cụ ngôn ngữ và tri nhận này để phân tích Giấc mơ Mỹ và xã hội Mỹ vào những năm 1920. Phương pháp tiếp cận dựa trên Lý thuyết ẩn dụ ý niệm để chứng minh cách hiểu các khái niệm trừu tượng thông qua hình ảnh cụ thể, kết nối ngôn ngữ học tri nhận và phân tích văn học. Kết quả phân tích ngữ liệu cho thấy phép ẩn dụ của Fitzgerald thực hiện nhiều chức năng khác nhau: giúp người đọc hiểu các vấn đề xã hội, thể hiện thủ pháp văn học đặc biệt của tác giả, cung cấp những hiểu biết sâu sắc về hệ tư tưởng văn hóa của Thời đại nhạc Jazz. Những ẩn dụ này có thể được xem là nền tảng cho sự tồn tại của cuốn tiểu thuyết, tạo ra câu chuyện kể với nhiều cung bậc và tiếp tục gây được tiếng vang với độc giả gần một thế kỷ qua. Bài báo đóng góp cho cả nghiên cứu văn học và ngôn ngữ học tri nhận, minh chứng và giải thích vai trò của phân tích ẩn dụ ý niệm trong việc thực hiện kết nối liên ngành, trên cơ sở đó đưa ra những cách tiếp cận mới cho văn học cổ điển. Bài báo cũng nêu bật tiềm năng của phân tích so sánh và giúp khám phá sâu hơn về ngôn ngữ ẩn dụ trong những bối cảnh văn hoá - lịch sử cụ thể.

Từ khoá: ẩn dụ ý niệm, ngôn ngữ học tri nhận, phân tích văn học, văn học, hình ảnh biểu tượng.

*This study examines the use and significance of conceptual metaphors in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, focusing on how these linguistic and cognitive devices are used to critique the American Dream and American society in 1920s. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this study illustrates how abstract concepts are understood through concrete imagery, bridging cognitive linguistics and literary analysis. The findings reveal that Fitzgerald's metaphors serve as cognitive tools for understanding societal complexities, demonstrate his literary artistry, and reflect the cultural zeitgeist of the Jazz Age. These metaphors can be considered central to the novel's enduring relevance, creating a multi-layered narrative that resonates with readers nearly a century after its publication. This study contributes to literary studies and cognitive linguistics, highlighting the role of metaphor analysis in connecting these fields and offering fresh perspectives on classic literature. It also underscores the potential for comparative studies and further exploration of metaphorical language in understanding cultural and historical contexts.*

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, cognitive linguistics, literary analysis, literature, symbolic images.

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CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS ABOUT THE AMERICAN DREAM IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY*

1. Introduction

The study of metaphor, a burgeoning field in linguistic research, has captured the attention of scholars for centuries. This fascination has given rise to two primary perspectives: traditional metaphor, which aligns with rhetorical studies, and modern metaphor, which is rooted in cognitive linguistics. Traditional metaphors can be traced back to scholars from Aristotle to Richards. In his influential work *Poetics*, Aristotle (1968) defines metaphor as “giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or species to species, or on the grounds of analogy”. The traditional view holds that metaphor is simply a rhetorical phenomenon, a shift from one word to another, enhancing the expressiveness and ornamentation of language. This implies that only skilled linguists or writers can effectively employ metaphors, making their use challenging for the average individual.

In the 1980s, the landscape of metaphor studies experienced a profound shift with the release of “Metaphors We Live By” by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Their groundbreaking work redefined the concept of metaphor, asserting that it is not simply a literary or rhetorical device but an essential element of thought and action deeply intertwined with cognition. This

cognitive perspective, endorsed by scholars like Kovecses (1986), delved into the conceptualization of emotions such as anger, pride, and love in everyday language, highlighting the role of metaphor in shaping human understanding and worldview (Lan, 2005).

F. Scott Fitzgerald is widely recognized as one of the most influential American novelists, mainly due to the success of his novel, *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald uses vivid imagery and metaphors to visually portray his characters and settings, conveying deeper meanings beyond mere physical appearance. Furthermore, his use of primarily compound-complex sentences mirrors the complexity of the characters and settings in the novel. *The Great Gatsby* is an exemplary text for exploring conceptual metaphors within literature. The novel, set in the 1920s, encapsulates the opulence and eventual disillusionment of the Jazz Age. The story of Jay Gatsby, narrated by Nick Carraway, delves into themes of the American Dream, class division, and the tension between illusion and reality. The rich use of metaphors in the novel adds depth to the narrative, inviting readers to uncover the underlying meanings embedded in the text. Despite extensive literary analysis, only some studies have applied conceptual metaphor theory from cognitive linguistics to this novel.

This study aims to enhance the analysis of critical metaphors in *The Great Gatsby* to provide a deeper understanding of the work. The goal is to reveal insightful interpretations of the novel's underlying themes and critique of the American Dream through a detailed examination of these metaphors. This approach not only seeks to enhance our appreciation of Fitzgerald's masterpiece but also aims to make a meaningful contribution to the broader field of cognitive linguistics by demonstrating the practical application of metaphor theory in literary analysis.

The article begins by thoroughly presenting fundamental theories and metaphors, with a specific focus on conceptual metaphors and exploring relevant research related to *The Great Gatsby*. Subsequently, the researcher outlines the chosen research methodology. The article's central part meticulously analyzes the American Dream metaphors within the novel, mainly focusing on two pivotal images: "the valley of ashes" and "the green light," to delve into their symbolic significance and multi-layered implications. In the article's concluding section, the researcher synthesizes the essential points highlighted throughout the study, comprehensively summarizing the significant findings.

2. Literature review

2.1. Metaphors and their functions in literature

In recent times, metaphor theorists have emphasized the presence of general

metaphorical patterns within and across languages. On the other hand, literary scholars focus on the role of specific metaphorical patterns within particular literary genres, texts, or individual authors' works. This approach to metaphor highlights the unique use of metaphorical patterns while also making assumptions about what is considered more typical for metaphor use in and outside literature.

In a seminal study, Lodge (1977) illustrates that the distinction between metaphor and metonymy, as proposed by Roman Jakobson, can elucidate the disparities among various modes of discourse, genres, literary schools, authors, texts, and textual segments. Despite challenges to Lodge's assertions, he offers insightful observations on the varying frequencies and usages of metaphor in poetry as opposed to prose and in modernist writing compared to realistic and anti-modernist writing.

Multiple studies have explored the uses and functions of metaphor in specific genres. For instance, Crisp (1996) posits that the hallmark of imagist poetry lies in employing metaphors that embody what Lakoff and Turner (1989) define as 'image metaphors,' involving the representation of visual images rather than concepts. Crisp contends that image metaphors originate from rejecting abstract concepts and dedication to crafting poems centered on tangible, visually perceptible objects. The preference for image metaphors over conceptual metaphors reflects the literary

goals of poets such as Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme. They believed that metaphor is anti-conceptual instead of being conceptual. It presents an experience of the unique individual that general concepts cannot capture (Crisp, 1996).

Literary scholars have traditionally focused on using metaphors by individual authors in their works, considering metaphorical patterns as a crucial element of a writer's style and literary agenda. For example, Lodge (1977) argues that Philip Larkin favored metonymy over metaphor in his poems as a deliberate departure from the style of poets like Dylan Thomas, whom he refers to as a metaphoric writer if ever there was one. Additionally, he depicts Virginia Woolf's move towards experimentation and modernism as a transition from a metonymic to a metaphoric style.

More recently, scholars influenced by cognitive metaphor theory have expanded the understanding of metaphorical patterns to encompass a writer's style and an expression of their unique worldview. For instance, Margaret Freeman (1995, 2000) contends that Emily Dickinson's poetry is distinguished by metaphorical patterns reflecting the predominance of partly idiosyncratic conceptual metaphors, such as "Life is a voyage in space." These metaphors contrast with culturally dominant conceptual metaphors of the time, creating what Freeman terms Dickinson's 'conceptual universe.' Similar studies have delved into W. H. Auden's use of

personification (Hamilton, 1996) and Gerard Manley Hopkins' use of metaphors to reconcile the material and the transcendent (Sobolev, 2011).

This focus on individual language use is characteristic of literary studies but also raises the issue of metaphor's role in individuals' idiolects and personal worldviews. Kovecses (2005) has pointed out that our everyday experience suggests that different people use metaphors in partly different ways. However, this 'individual variation' has yet to receive much attention from metaphor scholars. This is a problem in studies of literary metaphor and the cognitive representation of metaphor in cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology (Blasko, 1999).

The idiographic approach to literary analysis focuses on examining the use of metaphor in individual literary texts across all three main genres. Scholars study the specific effects and achievements of metaphorical choices and patterns in conveying themes, atmospheres, and worldviews. Notably, there have been analyses of Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, attempting to explain the effects of his metaphors for aging and death. Metaphorical patterns also play a significant role in interpreting literary narratives, as seen in studies of novels like *A Passage to India* and 1984. Nevertheless, the use of metaphor in individual plays, particularly in Shakespeare's works, has received comparatively less attention. However, studies show how metaphorical

patterns contribute to projecting the worldviews of individual characters in both novels and plays. In literary studies, metaphor analysis often takes an idiographic approach, which involves examining the use and function of selected metaphors within specific texts. This method typically delves deeply into individual texts, but it can also encompass studies that explore groups of texts by a single author or within a particular genre.

2.2. Characteristics of metaphors

2.2.1. Universality

Metaphors are crucial in various disciplines, including philosophy, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, psychology, sociology, and education. They have captured the interest of philosophers for centuries. For instance, Kant explored conceptual metaphors from a cognitive standpoint, observing that language is rich with expressions indirectly derived from metaphorical thinking. In 1960, the German philosopher Blumenberg underscored the pervasive use of metaphorical reasoning in facilitating abstract and scientific understanding. Furthermore, metaphors are prevalent in the natural sciences; in physics, for instance, concepts like electricity are often elucidated through metaphors related to water, such as the flow of electricity or electrical pressure. Metaphors are ubiquitous in everyday thought processes and communication, making abstract concepts more accessible. Research by

Lakoff and Johnson revealed that approximately 70% of language expressions are rooted in metaphorical concepts. Additionally, Ortony (1929) posited that all languages possess an innate metaphorical quality.

2.2.2. Systematic character of metaphor

Conceptual metaphors do not exist in isolation, as metaphorical entailments create coherent systems of metaphorical concepts and corresponding expressions, as explained by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In English, the concept of time is often illustrated through various metaphors that reflect its multifaceted nature. One common metaphor is “Time is Money,” as seen in phrases like “I’ve invested a lot of time in her” or “He’s living on borrowed time.” Another metaphor is “Time is a Limited Resource”, which is evident in expressions such as “So little time, so much to do.” or “You are running out of time.” Additionally, time is frequently depicted as a valuable commodity, highlighted by phrases like “I do not have the time to give you” or “Thank you for your time”. These metaphors collectively help us understand the abstract concept of time by relating it to more tangible and familiar ideas.

Understanding the fundamental concepts of money, scarcity of resources, and the value of commodities is crucial for gaining insight into the abstract notion of time. These metaphors share an interconnectedness, with the commonly used expression “time is money,”

conveying that time is akin to a limited resource, thus underlining its value as a precious commodity. This interconnectedness emphasizes the role of metaphor in molding our understanding of complex and abstract concepts.

2.2.3. Power of enriching semantic meaning

Metaphors are a fundamental element of linguistic systems. They play a vital role in enriching words with new meanings and expanding their semantic range, bridging the gap between the known and the unknown. As suggested by Lakoff and Turner (1989), metaphors enable mapping one semantic domain onto another, allowing for a deeper understanding of abstract or complex ideas by associating them with more concrete concepts.

Cognitive semantics posits that acquiring new lexical meanings is deeply rooted in cognitive processes, which interconnect various word meanings. An illustrative example is the word “sweet”, which conveys various meanings. It can refer to the literal sugary taste, but it is also used metaphorically to describe a “sweet person” or a “sweet deal”. These metaphorical uses originate from the pleasant and desirable nature of the taste of sweetness. (Sweetser, 1990)

This process of metaphorization significantly enriches language by enabling more nuanced and expressive communication. It allows words to transcend their original meanings, adapting

to diverse contexts and facilitating the expression of complex, abstract, or emotional concepts. Therefore, metaphors are powerful tools for expanding linguistic capabilities and enhancing our ability to convey intricate ideas and experiences.

2.3. Three types of conceptual metaphors

In “Metaphors We Live By”, Lakoff and Johnson divide conceptual metaphors into ontological, orientational, and structural metaphors.

2.3.1. Ontological metaphor

When discussing abstract ideas and concepts, it is helpful to regard them as physical entities. By embodying these concepts in physical form, we can elucidate them by drawing on the meaning derived from the physical world. As pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson, “Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them, and by doing so, reason about them.” For instance, phrases like “my mind is not operating”, “I am a little rusty”, and “He broke down” depict the human mind as a machine in the physical world. This enables us to express abstract thoughts in concrete terms. Ontological metaphors are rooted in direct perceptual experience, a foundational concept in cognitive linguistics. Lakoff and Johnson argue that the conceptual system of the human brain is metaphorical, indicating that the cognitive basis of human beings is the empirical basis of metaphor.

Ontological metaphors thus establish connections between abstract concepts and observable things in reality, facilitating their expression.

2.3.2. *Orientational metaphor*

Metaphors associated with spatial orientation, such as up and down, high and low, and center and periphery, are often employed to convey emotions, morality, and thoughts. These spatial metaphors establish a connection between physical location and abstract concepts. For instance, phrases like “I am feeling high” and “His mood sank” illustrate how we link emotions to vertical orientation. According to the proposition put forth by Lakoff and Johnson, our emotions, such as happiness, are systematically linked to our sensory-motor experiences, like being in an upright position. These consistent associations are the foundation for orientational metaphorical concepts, such as “happy is up” and “sad is down.” These metaphors aid us in making our emotions more tangible and connect them to other abstract concepts about overall well-being, such as health, vitality, and control. Our physical experiences and spatial orientation influence how we perceive and articulate our emotional states. Like ontological metaphors stem from our fundamental understanding of the world, orientational metaphors are rooted in our immediate perceptual experiences. These metaphors play an integral role in our cognitive processes, providing a framework for comprehending and expressing complex

emotional and abstract concepts through spatial and physical associations.

2.3.3. *Structural metaphor*

Structural metaphors are complex compared to ontological and orientational metaphors because they involve transferring concepts from one system to another. Even though these concepts belong to different cognitive domains, they exhibit corresponding and similar structures. For instance, in the structural metaphor “Argument is war”, the concepts of “war” are employed to understand “argument.” The concept of war encompasses ideas such as “attack,” “defense”, “counterattack”, “winners”, “losers”, and “tactics”. In the context of an argument, expressions like “Your claims are indefensible”, “His criticism was on target”, “She shot down and destroyed my arguments”, and “He attacked the argument” are commonly used. Metaphorical structure profoundly influences thought processes and impacts cognition. Structural metaphors establish one concept from the structure of another through partial mapping, highlighting one aspect of the target domain while neglecting others. For example, the metaphor “trade is war” emphasizes trade’s competitive and confrontational aspects while overlooking aspects like win-win cooperation.

2.4. *Previous studies on metaphors in The Great Gatsby*

Several scholars have delved into the metaphors in *The Great Gatsby* from

different perspectives. Ameel (2023) analyzed how metaphors from the novel have been adapted and utilized in urban planning discourse about New York City over several decades. He argues that these metaphors convey conflicting cultural meanings, highlighting “the destructive and disruptive impulses of the American dream and the fraught pastoral gaze that continues to aestheticize the environment, lamenting its destruction while preparing it for renewed exploitation” (Ameel, 2023). Westling (1996) examined the “fresh green breast” metaphor from an ecocritical perspective, arguing that it delves into a nostalgic longing for what was destroyed by one’s actions, combining guilt, gendered desire, and an aestheticized vision. According to Marx’s (1964) influential reading, the novel’s narrator is drawn to pastoral imagery but learns how destructive such images can be when cherished in place of reality.

In his analysis of classic sentences in *The Great Gatsby*, Peng (2023) utilized Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory from a cognitive linguistics standpoint. He identified examples of ontological, orientational, and structural metaphors in the novel, arguing that these conceptual metaphors contribute depth and convey profound meaning. For example, he suggests that the name “Daisy” is a structural metaphor, with its white petals symbolizing purity and nobility and its yellow center representing betrayal and deception.

The study of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* has covered many aspects, from bibliographic history to thematic and stylistic analyses. Initially, research after Fitzgerald’s passing focused primarily on bibliographic efforts, aiming to preserve the authenticity of his texts. Notable works during this period include Brucoli’s (1973) “The Great Gatsby: A Facsimile of the Manuscript” discussions on textual corruption in reprints, emphasizing the importance of maintaining textual integrity. In the subsequent decades, scholarly focus shifted towards a more comprehensive analysis of Fitzgerald’s narrative techniques and the novel’s socio-cultural contexts. For example, Curnutt (2004) explored how the novel’s 1920s setting, a period of significant social and cultural change, influences its themes and characters. This approach balanced textual examination with the socio-historical context, shedding light on new attitudes towards identity, consumerism, leisure, and aging during the Jazz Age. Furthermore, studies have delved into the educational applications of *The Great Gatsby*, particularly in the realm of literature instruction. Bryer and VanArsdale (1994) highlighted the novel’s value in teaching historical contexts, cultural critiques, and figurative language, investigating social metaphors as a gateway to understanding the broader societal issues of the 1920s. This educational approach aligns with Carroll’s (2001) theory of the “fiction-to-world”

relation, which posits that fictional characters can serve as social metaphors, providing insights into historical and cultural phenomena. Furthermore, contemporary analyses have extended to examining the novel's relevance in modern times. Vogel's work (2015) discusses the renewed significance of the novel in the Obama era, reflecting on its themes of identity and race, which resonate with contemporary audiences.

The analysis of *The Great Gatsby* has evolved from focusing on preserving Fitzgerald's original texts to exploring the novel's rich thematic layers and educational potential. Previous studies provide a strong foundation for further exploration of the conceptual metaphors within the text, especially in how they reflect and critique the social dynamics of Fitzgerald's time and their ongoing relevance today. These studies demonstrate the potential for analyzing *The Great Gatsby* using conceptual metaphor theory and exploring how the novel's metaphors have been interpreted and repurposed in broader cultural contexts. This study aims to build on this groundwork by comprehensively analyzing critical conceptual metaphors throughout the novel and examining their contributions to its themes and enduring cultural impact.

3. Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive methodological framework to analyze key conceptual metaphors in F. Scott

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The primary methods used in this research include structural criticism and reader-response theory, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of the text's metaphorical elements.

3.1. Data collection

The research data were gathered from the novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald and first published in 1925. This novel, spanning nine chapters and approximately 180 pages, provided ample material for analyzing metaphorical language and narrative structure. The data primarily encompassed dialogues and character descriptions, focusing on interactions involving the protagonist, Jay Gatsby, and other central characters.

To collect the data, the researchers carefully read the novel multiple times to pinpoint passages containing significant metaphorical expressions and relevant descriptions. The data collection process involved meticulous annotation and extraction of pertinent text segments exemplifying conceptual metaphors. This thorough reading ensured that the data accurately represented the novel's metaphorical richness.

Subsequently, the researchers conducted data selection and reduction, separating relevant data from irrelevant ones to include only the most pertinent examples of metaphorical language for analysis. The most relevant data were used for detailed analysis, while the remaining

relevant data were retained for supplementary insights, and any irrelevant data were discarded.

3.2. Data analysis

The analysis employed two primary methods: structural criticism and reader-response theory, offering a comprehensive framework for interpreting the metaphors within the narrative.

As articulated by Barron (2002), structural criticism entails contextualizing a literary work within a broader framework. This methodology involves meticulously examining the text's narrative structure and symbolic elements through close reading and textual analysis and thoroughly scrutinizing the development of characters, plot progression, and thematic motifs. The objective is to unearth the underlying meanings and symbolism woven into the text by discerning patterns and recurring themes. For example, scholars have extensively analyzed the significance and thematic implications of the recurring metaphor of the "green light" at the end of Daisy's dock, enriching the literary work's understanding.

On the other hand, reader-response theory underscores the reader's active role in interpreting and assigning meaning to the text. As North (1995) highlighted, this theoretical approach emphasizes the subjective nature of reading experiences and how individual readers engage with and interpret the text based on their backgrounds, beliefs, and personal

experiences. Through an exploration of reader reviews and responses, the study examines how readers perceive and interpret the novel's metaphors, such as the symbolic representation of the American Dream through Gatsby's character.

The study aimed to comprehensively analyze the literary elements and symbolic imagery in *The Great Gatsby* by integrating structural criticism with reader-response theory. These methods allowed the researchers to delve into the story's structure and metaphors while integrating interpretations from actual readers. This led to a deeper comprehension of the metaphors' significance and impact on readers' emotional engagement with the narrative. In summary, this methodological approach created a robust framework for exploring the vital conceptual metaphors in the literary work, contributing to a nuanced interpretation of the novel's rich metaphorical landscape and broader thematic concerns.

4. Findings and discussions

The literary style of F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* is distinguished by its lyrical prose, rich symbolism, and keen social commentary. Fitzgerald's use of language is both poetic and precise, adeptly capturing the complexities of the American Dream and the moral decay of the Jazz Age. His intricate metaphors and vivid imagery convey profound themes, establishing *The Great Gatsby* as a cornerstone for the study of conceptual metaphor. For example, the recurring motif of the "green light" at the

end of Daisy's dock serves not only as a symbol of Gatsby's unattainable dreams but also as a broader metaphor for the elusive nature of the American Dream. The novel's exploration of these metaphors reveals its characters' deep-seated aspirations and disillusionment, reflecting broader societal issues. Through his masterful use of conceptual metaphor, Fitzgerald illuminates the human condition, making the book an essential text for understanding the interplay between language, symbolism, and cultural ideals. F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel provides a profound commentary on the American Dream through its vivid and symbolic imagery. Among the most potent symbols are "the green light" and "the valley of ashes," each serving as a metaphor for different facets of the American Dream and its ultimate hollowness. This article delves into these conceptual metaphors and their significance within the narrative, shedding light on their contribution to the broader themes of language and literature studies.

In *The Great Gatsby*, the metaphor of "the valley of ashes" is a powerful symbol that critiques the darker aspects of the American Dream. This metaphor represents the industrial wasteland between West Egg and New York City- a place of desolation and decay resulting from the relentless pursuit of wealth and success. In the novel, Fitzgerald (1925) describes it as:

This is a valley of ashes- a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes

take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (p. 20)

This bleak landscape is home to George and Myrtle Wilson, characters trapped in poverty and despair. "The valley of ashes" starkly contrasts the opulence of the Eggs and the vibrancy of New York City, symbolizing the dark underbelly of the American Dream. It serves as a reminder that the pursuit of success often leads to exploitation and suffering for those left in the margins. This passage exemplifies an ontological metaphor. It personifies ashes, attributing living qualities to them. It presents the abstract concept of desolation and waste, symbolized by ashes, as a tangible entity capable of growth, taking forms, and even resembling a human.

The color "grey" represents "the valley of ashes" as a symbol of death and disappointment, reflecting the moral and social decay resulting from pursuing wealth. "The valley of ashes" is a poignant symbol of the struggles faced by people experiencing poverty, exemplified by characters like George Wilson, who dwell amidst the squalid grey ashes. The evocative phrase "foul dust" captures the essence of "the valley of ashes", characterized as a vast desolate expanse that transcends geographical boundaries to encompass both East and West Egg, New York, and, by extension, the entire United States. This barren terrain is a powerful

metaphor for a desolate land that yields nothing but dust and death, akin to the lifeless landscape in Eliot's poetry. While there appears to be a stark contrast between the desolation of the wasteland and the opulence of East and West Egg, this contrast is illusory. In West Egg, Gatsby constructs a facade of "vast meretricious beauty" that thrives momentarily, only to wither under Daisy's gaze. Gatsby's dream, devoid of substance and meaning, ultimately perishes with him, leaving behind no legacy apart from Nick's story.

"The valley of ashes", as depicted in the novel, serves as a vivid and evocative metaphor, symbolizing the consequences of rapid industrialization and unrestrained ambition. The desolate landscape starkly conveys the societal and environmental decay resulting from the unrelenting quest for material success. This imagery prompts readers to contemplate the profound socioeconomic divide and the environmental degradation accompanying the relentless pursuit of prosperity. In the context of literary analysis, "the valley of ashes" provides a compelling focal point for exploring the complex implications of the American Dream, inviting critical examination of its impact on individuals and society.

"The valley of ashes" represents a striking juxtaposition to the opulent world of Gatsby and the other affluent characters in *The Great Gatsby*. It underscores the profound environmental and social repercussions stemming from their

extravagant lifestyles. This desolate and grim landscape, strewn with the remnants of industrial detritus and suffused with an air of desolation, stands as a powerful visual and symbolic testament to the adverse effects of industrialization and the moral decay accompanying the unfettered pursuit of the American Dream. It prompts reflection on the profound emptiness and ethical corruption that can lurk beneath the veneer of material success, offering a bleak portrayal of the darker realities obscured by the glittering facade of prosperity. Furthermore, "the valley of ashes" is where the dreams of the less fortunate are buried under the detritus of the ambitions of the wealthy. It is home to characters like George and Myrtle Wilson, who are trapped in a cycle of poverty and despair, unable to escape their grim reality. Their lives are overshadowed by the ashes, representing the failure of the American Dream to deliver on its promises for all individuals.

In urban planning, this metaphor has been used to critique and draw attention to the negative consequences of unchecked industrial development. "The valley of ashes" has been invoked in highlighting the environmental degradation and social inequalities that arise from modern urbanization. This image in *The Great Gatsby* symbolizes the negative aspects of the American Dream, revealing the environmental degradation and human misery caused by the relentless pursuit of wealth and success.

“The green light” at the end of Daisy’s dock in *The Great Gatsby* is a profound and complex metaphor. It represents Gatsby’s hopes and dreams, giving a tangible form to his abstract desires. Fitzgerald beautifully writes, “Gatsby believed in “the green light”, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther....” This passage perfectly captures the essence of the green light as a symbol of Gatsby’s unattainable dreams and his ceaseless pursuit of an idealized future. The color green itself holds significance, evoking associations with vitality, new beginnings, and, significantly, wealth— all crucial elements of the American Dream. However, the light’s unending distance from Gatsby embodies the elusive nature of his ambitions. It symbolizes his yearning for Daisy and the broader concept of the American Dream—always within sight, yet somehow unachievable. This dual nature is evident when Nick observes Gatsby for the first time, as Fitzgerald (1925) writes.

...he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily, I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. (p.19)

“The green light” thus becomes an ontological metaphor, giving concrete

forms to abstract concepts of hope, ambition, and the idealized future. It represents the transformative power of dreams but also their potential to close our eyes to reality.

The text serves as a powerful metaphorical reflection on the elusive nature of the American Dream and the human condition. The “green light” symbolizes Gatsby’s unwavering aspiration for an idealized future with Daisy, representing the broader American Dream of prosperity, success, and happiness. “The green light”, always distant and just out of reach, signifies the perpetual pursuit of unattainable dreams. Gatsby’s belief in this “orgastic future” mirrors the relentless hope and optimism in the American psyche: the belief that tomorrow will fulfill today’s dreams.

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald is renowned for its rich metaphorical landscape, particularly the iconic symbols of “the green light” and “the valley of ashes”. These metaphors are powerful tools for social commentary, artistic expression, cognitive understanding, and literary devices. This article has comprehensively analyzed the multifaceted significance of these metaphors through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, literary technique, cultural studies, and critical thinking.

“The green light” and “the valley of ashes” in the story exemplify the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as

proposed by cognitive linguists. These metaphors are poetic embellishments and fundamental cognitive tools that enable readers to comprehend abstract concepts through concrete imagery. “The green light”, symbolizing hope and the American Dream, allows readers to conceptualize these intangible ideas as visible, tangible objects. Similarly, “the valley of ashes” serves as a concrete representation of moral and social decay, making these complex societal issues more accessible to the reader’s understanding. This alignment with cognitive linguistic theories underscores how metaphor functions as a primary human thought and communication mechanism, shaping our understanding of the world around us. Fitzgerald’s use of these metaphors demonstrates his masterful literary technique in critiquing 1920s American society. By embedding his social commentary within these vivid metaphorical constructs, he creates a narrative that resonates emotionally and intellectually. The allure of “the green light” and the bleakness of “the valley of ashes” work to explore the contradictions of the American Dream without resorting to heavy-handed didacticism. This subtle approach allows Fitzgerald to engage readers in a nuanced exploration of complex societal issues, making his critique all the more powerful and enduring.

The metaphors of “the green light” and “the valley of ashes” offer profound insights into the cultural ethos of the Jazz

Age. They contrast the era’s buoyant optimism, symbolized by the beckoning green light, and its underlying social and economic disparities, embodied by the desolate valley of ashes. These metaphors reflect the disillusionment of the post-World War I generation and the moral ambiguities of the Prohibition era, providing a glimpse into a society wrestling with rapid change and conflicting values. Through these metaphors, Fitzgerald captures the essence of an era torn between hope and despair, progress and decay. Examining these metaphors encourages readers to delve into deeper textual analysis, urging them to look beyond surface meanings to uncover societal truths. It demonstrates how literary analysis can be a potent tool for social critique and historical understanding. By scrutinizing the layers of meaning in “the green light” and “the valley of ashes”, readers are compelled to think critically about the essence of the American Dream, social inequality, and the human condition. This literature reading method cultivates skills beyond literary appreciation, prompting readers to apply similar analytical thinking to comprehend contemporary society.

The metaphors of “the green light” and “the valley of ashes” in *The Great Gatsby* transcend their role as literary devices, serving as powerful tools for social commentary and artistic expression. They bridge linguistic and literary studies, offering profound insights into language, culture, and the human experience. Fitzgerald’s use of these metaphors weaves

a rich tapestry that continues to resonate with readers nearly a century after its publication, challenging us to contemplate our dreams, aspirations, and the society in which we live. The enduring power of these metaphors lies in their ability to encapsulate complex ideas about hope, disillusionment, and social inequality through inaccessible, evocative imagery. “The green light” remains a poignant symbol of the allure of the American Dream, while “the valley of ashes” serves as a sobering reminder of its potential pitfalls. Together, they paint a nuanced picture of an era - and, by extension, human nature - caught between optimism and despair, progress and decay. By examining these metaphors through various analytical lenses, we gain a richer understanding of Fitzgerald’s masterpiece and its enduring relevance to discussions about the American Dream and its contradictions. The story, through its metaphorical depth, challenges readers to engage critically with literature and, by extension, with the world around them, cementing its place as a timeless classic of American literature.

5. Conclusion

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is considered a masterpiece of conceptual metaphor, using vivid imagery like “the green light”, “the valley of ashes”, and the closing metaphor of boats against the current to express the characters’ profound aspirations and inevitable disillusionments. These metaphors go beyond being just literary devices and serve as powerful tools

for social commentary, artistic expression, and cognitive understanding.

“The green light” at the end of Daisy’s dock serves as a central metaphor in the novel, embodying Gatsby’s unattainable dreams and the elusive nature of the American Dream. This symbol connotes hope, renewal, and wealth, juxtaposed against its constant unattainability, highlighting this dream’s inherent contradictions and ultimate futility. Similarly, “the valley of ashes” represents the stark reality of social decay and inequality.

These metaphors align with Conceptual Metaphor Theory, illustrating how abstract concepts can be comprehended through concrete imagery. They serve as cognitive bridges, enabling readers to grasp complex ideas about human experience and societal structures. Fitzgerald’s use of these metaphors highlights his exceptional literary technique, intertwining social commentary within vivid metaphorical constructs to craft a narrative that resonates emotionally and intellectually. Furthermore, these metaphors offer valuable insights into the cultural zeitgeist of the Jazz Age, capturing the tension between the era’s exuberant optimism and its underlying social and economic disparities. They reflect the disillusionment of the post-World War I generation and the moral ambiguities of the Prohibition era, providing a window into a society grappling with rapid change and conflicting values.

From a broader perspective, this analysis demonstrates how studying conceptual metaphors in literature can bridge linguistic and literary studies, providing insights into language, culture, and human experience. It encourages critical thinking and deeper textual interpretation, showcasing how literary analysis can be a tool for social critique and historical understanding. The use of conceptual metaphors in the novel is integral to its enduring relevance and power. These metaphors create a multi-layered narrative that resonates with readers almost a century after its publication, offering a richer understanding of Fitzgerald's artistic vision, the complexities of the American Dream, and its contradictions.

Future research could explore other aspects of metaphor in the novel, such as the metaphor of love and its implications for the characters' relationships and motivations. Comparative studies with other works from the same era could shed light on the unique and universal aspects of Fitzgerald's use of metaphor, contributing to a more nuanced appreciation of their role in literature and language across different cultures and periods.

In conclusion, *The Great Gatsby*, through its metaphorical depth, remains a timeless classic that challenges readers to critically engage with literature and the world around them. It solidifies its place as a cornerstone of American literature and a continual source of scholarly interest and

debate, exemplifying the power of language to convey complex ideas and emotions and making it an invaluable subject for ongoing linguistic and literary analysis.

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