

Fear of Intimacy in Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby Essay

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Relationships, specifically romantic relationships, play a very important part in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Upon reading Fitzgerald's 1925 novel, one will notice that there appears to be a behavioral pattern present in the relationships between Gatsby and Daisy, Daisy and Tom, and Nick and Jordan. As I explain in this paper, these relationships suffer from a fear of intimacy, a fear of the inevitable mutual emotional pain that occurs when humans grow close to one another. In the interest of clarity, let us first take a closer look at the theory that humans cannot grow close without harming one another, the theory known as the "hedgehog's dilemma." The concept of the hedgehog's dilemma was first introduced by German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer proposed the idea that human intimacy works in the same way hedgehogs huddle together for warmth, the closer they get to one another the more they hurt one another. While the hedgehogs physically harm each other with their quills due to their close physical proximity, humans hurt each other emotionally once they reach a certain degree of emotional closeness. Because of our fear of emotional devastation, we often develop a fear of intimacy. Schopenhauer's theory achieved even wider exposure after Sigmund Freud introduced it into the study of psychology in the early 1900s, giving it the name it is now commonly

known by. The marriage of Tom and Daisy Buchanan is arguably the most tumultuous relationship within the novel. Tom spends his time with two different women, both his wife Daisy and a mistress by the name of Myrtle Wilson. Tom's division of time between the two allows him to refrain from reaching any significant level of emotional intimacy with either w..... middle of papert least "half in love with her" (177). Nick's actions during and after he and Jordan's separation suggest that he is trying to repress and avoid memories of her that might harm him. He claims to not "know which of us hung up with a sharp click, but [he] knows [that he] didn't care" after the phone call that officially ends their relationship, and later during an in-person conversation with Jordan, "talked over and around what had happened to us together" (155, 177). Of all the characters in the novel, it is possible that Jordan Baker is the only one to directly address the fear that plagues them all. It certainly is like that is what she is implying in her last conversation with Nick, stating: "You said a bad driver was only safe until she met a bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn't I?" the bad drivers, in this case, being those with a fear of intimacy (177).

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